

Chapter 160

(Senate Bill 18)

AN ACT concerning

Task Force on Military Service Members, Veterans, and the Courts

FOR the purpose of creating a Task Force on Military Service Members, Veterans, and the Courts; providing for the composition, chair, and staffing of the Task Force; providing that a member of the Task Force may not receive compensation but may be reimbursed for certain expenses; requiring the Task Force to study the military service–related mental health issues and substance abuse problems that may apply or arise in certain court cases and to consider recommending the establishment of a special court for eligible defendants who are veterans or members of the armed services on active duty who appear to suffer from certain problems related to military service; requiring the Task Force to make certain recommendations; requiring the Task Force to report certain findings and recommendations to the Governor, Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, and the General Assembly; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the Task Force on Military Service Members, Veterans, and the Courts.

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That:

- (a) There is a Task Force on Military Service Members, Veterans, and the Courts.
- (b) The Task Force consists of the following members:
 - (1) one member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of the Senate;
 - (2) three members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
 - (3) two members of the Judiciary, appointed by the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals;
 - (4) the Attorney General of Maryland, or the Attorney General's designee;
 - (5) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, or the Secretary's designee;

(6) the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, or the Secretary's designee;

(7) the Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services, or the Secretary's designee;

(8) the Executive Director of the Office of Problem Solving Courts; and

(9) three veterans or members of the United States armed forces, appointed by the Governor.

(c) The Governor shall designate the chair of the Task Force.

(d) The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Administrative Office of the Courts shall jointly provide staff for the Task Force.

(e) A member of the Task Force:

(1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Task Force; but

(2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

(f) The Task Force shall:

(1) study military service-related mental health issues and substance abuse problems of veterans and members of the armed services on deployment that may appear in civil, family, and criminal cases;

(2) study ways the courts may address the incidence of violence, drug use and addiction, alcohol use and addiction, mental health conditions, and crimes committed by some veterans and members of the armed services on active duty, particularly as these problems manifest themselves in cases filed in court; and

(3) make recommendations regarding the establishment of a special court for eligible defendants who are military members or veterans and who appear to suffer from mental illness, alcohol or drug abuse, or post-traumatic stress syndrome, any of which appear to be related to military service and the readjustment to civilian life which is necessary after combat service.

(g) On or before December 1, 2013, the Task Force shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Chief Judge of the Maryland Court of Appeals and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2012. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 9 months and, at the end of June 30, 2014, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

Approved by the Governor, May 2, 2012.