

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 196 (Chair, Health and Government Operations
Committee)(By Request - Departmental - Veterans and
Military Families)
Health and Government Operations

**State Government - Department of Veterans and Military Families - Board and
Commission - Membership and Oversight**

This departmental bill repeals the War Memorial Commission and instead requires the Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) to provide oversight of the War Memorial Building. The bill alters the membership of the Board of Trustees of the Maryland Veterans Trust and the Maryland Veterans Commission and specifies that a majority of the voting members of the trust and the commission are a quorum.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect State operations or finances, as discussed below.

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect Baltimore City operations or finances, as discussed below.

Small Business Effect: DVMF has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). The Department of Legislative Services concurs with this assessment.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

War Memorial Building

DVMF must adopt regulations that provide for the management of the War Memorial Building in a manner that (1) permits the greatest possible use of the building by the people of the State and by patriotic organizations in the State, and (2) to the extent possible, permits use by patriotic organizations without cost. DVMF must enforce the regulations. DVMF may use, for the maintenance and administration of the building, any funds that the General Assembly or the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore appropriate for those purposes. The State and Baltimore City jointly must hold title to the War Memorial Building and the memorial site.

Board of Trustees of the Maryland Veterans Trust

The bill alters the membership of the of the Board of Trustees of the Maryland Veterans Trust so that the one member from the House of Delegates and the one member from the Senate are *nonvoting* trustees. In addition, the bill clarifies that a majority of the *voting* trustees is a quorum.

Maryland Veterans Commission

The bill repeals the requirement that the commission have one member appointed from each of the State's eight congressional districts. Instead, one member must be appointed as a nonvoting member from each county veteran commission. The bill also repeals the requirement that one member be appointed from a list of individuals submitted to the Governor by the following organizations: American Ex-Prisoners of War, Inc., and the Polish Legion of American Veterans. The requirement that one member be an honorary nonvoting member appointed from a list of individuals submitted to the Governor by the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association is also repealed. Instead, one member must be a designee from a Maryland nonprofit organization representing veterans and military families.

An organization's representative seat may be removed if the organization fails to appoint a new commissioner for two continuous years. An organization may be removed from the commission if a representative from the organization is not recommended by that organization.

The bill also repeals the prohibition against a new organization from being eligible for representation on the commission, by appointment of the Governor, unless it is

congressionally chartered. The bill specifies that a majority of the voting members of the commission is a quorum.

Current Law:

Board of Trustees of the Maryland Veterans Trust

Chapter 742 of 2009 established the Maryland Veterans Trust and the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund (MVTF) to provide monetary and other assistance to veterans and their families and public and private programs that support veterans and their families. Generally, MVTF consists of (1) gifts and grants; (2) contributions from the sale of tickets from instant ticket lottery machines, donations from video lottery facility players, designated fees from specified special registration plates, and specified civil penalties related to persons providing veterans benefits and veterans benefits appeals services; and (3) the net proceeds from contributions under a State income tax checkoff. Generally, the Board of Trustees of the trust oversees and solicits funds for MVTF. The board consists of 11 members, with the Secretary of Veterans and Military Families, ex officio (or their designee) serving as the chair. DVMF must provide staff, supplies, and office space for the trust.

Maryland Veterans Commission

The Maryland Veterans Commission advises the Secretary of Veterans and Military Families on all matters pertaining to veterans' issues. The commission, consisting of 29 voting members and honorary nonvoting members, meets quarterly. DVMF provides staff for the commission.

War Memorial Building and War Memorial Commission

The War Memorial Building, constructed in 1927, is located across the street from Baltimore City Hall. The building is open and available for meetings of veterans groups and patriotic societies, and for civic gatherings. The State and Baltimore City jointly must hold title to the War Memorial Building and the memorial site. Maintenance costs are shared equally by the State and Baltimore City.

The War Memorial Commission provides management of the War Memorial Building. Established in 1927, the commission became part of the Department of General Services in 1970, and was transferred to MDVF (then the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs) in 1999. The commission consists of 10 members appointed by the Secretary of Veterans and Military Families and the Mayor of Baltimore City. The commission must adopt regulations that provide for the management of the War Memorial Building that (1) permits the greatest possible use of the building by the people of the State and by patriotic organizations in the State, and (2) to the extent possible, permits the use by the patriotic

organizations without cost. The commission may use, for the maintenance and administration of the building, any funds that the General Assembly or the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore appropriate.

DVMF and Baltimore City advise that the bill does not change the operations of the War Memorial Building. Under the bill, both DVMF and Baltimore City must have joint ownership of the building, as required under current law. In addition, both DVMF and Baltimore City advise that maintenance costs will continue to be shared for the building. Therefore, the bill is not anticipated to materially affect State or Baltimore City operations or finances.

Background: MDVA advises that the War Memorial Commission is no longer necessary as the department's Cemetery and Memorial Program will assume oversight responsibility to ensure the War Memorial Building is preserved. Provisions impacting the Maryland Veterans Commission are intended to streamline the work of the commission and make it easier to provide oversight and obtain a quorum for commission business.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: SB 254 (Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee)(By Request - Departmental - Veterans and Military Families) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City; Department of Veterans and Military Families; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 18, 2025
rh/jc

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ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESSES

TITLE OF BILL: State Government - Department of Veterans and Military Families -
Board and Commission - Membership and Oversight

BILL NUMBER: HB 196

PREPARED BY: Peter Pantzer

PART A. ECONOMIC IMPACT RATING

This agency estimates that the proposed bill:

WILL HAVE MINIMAL OR NO ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND
SMALL BUSINESS

OR

WILL HAVE MEANINGFUL ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND
SMALL BUSINESSES

PART B. ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS