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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2017

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A N A C T

RELATING TO MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE -- VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Introduced By: Senators Felag, DiPalma, Seveney, Lombardo, and Archambault

Date Introduced: April 25, 2017

Referred To: Senate Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Sections 30-17.1-9, 30-17.1-10, 30-17.1-11 and 30-17.1-12 of the General  
2 Laws in Chapter 30-17.1 entitled "Veterans' Affairs" are hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **30-17.1-9. Definitions.**

4 When used in this chapter, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

- 5 (1) "Advisory Committee" means the veterans' services strategic plan advisory committee  
6 as established in § 30-17.1-10.
- 7 (2) "Committee" means the veterans' committee pursuant to the provisions of § 30-17.1-  
8 11(c).
- 9 (3) "State agencies" means state entities responsible for the implementation of services  
10 for Rhode Island veterans and their families including:
- 11 (i) The office of veterans' affairs;
- 12 (ii) The ~~division of planning~~ [Rhode Island public transit authority](#);
- 13 (iii) The department of human services;
- 14 (iv) The ~~Rhode Island board of education~~ [office of post-secondary education](#);
- 15 (v) The department of behavioral healthcare, developmental disabilities and hospitals;
- 16 (vi) The department of health;
- 17 (vii) The division of elderly affairs;
- 18 (viii) The department of business regulation;
- 19 (ix) The ~~department of the attorney general~~ [Rhode Island veteran's court](#);

1 (x) The department of labor and training;

2 (xi) The Rhode Island commerce corporation; ~~and~~

3 (xii) The office of the secretary of state; ~~and~~

4 ~~(xiii) The Rhode Island national guard.~~

5 (4) "Veterans' services strategic plan ("VSSP")" means the strategic plan as established in  
6 § 30-17.1-11.

7 **30-17.1-10. Veterans' services strategic plan advisory committee established.**

8 (a) There is hereby created a veterans' services strategic plan advisory committee known  
9 as "the Rhode Island veterans' services strategic plan advisory committee" consisting of ~~thirteen~~  
10 ~~(13)~~ fourteen (14) members as follows:

11 (1) One of whom shall be the director of the office of veterans' affairs, or his or her  
12 designee, who shall serve as chairperson;

13 (2) One of whom shall be the director of the department of human services, or his or her  
14 designee;

15 (3) One of whom shall be the ~~associate~~ executive director of the public transit authority  
16 ~~division of planning~~, or his or her designee;

17 (4) One of whom shall be the ~~chair of the Rhode Island board of education~~ post-  
18 secondary education commissioner, or his or her designee;

19 (5) One of whom shall be the director of the department of behavioral healthcare,  
20 developmental disabilities and hospitals, or his or her designee;

21 (6) One of whom shall be the director of the department of health, or his or her designee;

22 (7) One of whom shall be the director of the division of elderly affairs, or his or her  
23 designee;

24 (8) One of whom shall be the director of the department of business regulation, or his or  
25 her designee;

26 (9) One of whom shall be the ~~attorney general~~ chief judge of the district court, or his or  
27 her designee;

28 (10) One of whom shall be the director of the department of labor and training, or his or  
29 her designee;

30 (11) One of whom shall be the director of the Rhode Island commerce corporation, or his  
31 or her designee;

32 (12) One of whom shall be the secretary of state, or his or her designee;

33 (13) One of whom shall be the adjutant general of the Rhode Island national guard, or his  
34 or her designee; ~~and~~

1 [\(14\) One of whom shall be a representative for Rhode Island municipal governments.](#)

2 (b) Forthwith upon the passage of this chapter, the members of the advisory committee  
3 shall meet at the call of the chairperson and organize. Thereafter, the committee shall meet  
4 ~~quarterly and~~ at the call of the chairperson or three (3) members of the advisory committee.

5 (c) All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,  
6 documentation, and otherwise to the committee and its agents as is deemed necessary or desirable  
7 by the advisory committee to facilitate the purposes of this chapter.

8 (d) The ~~department of human services~~ [office of veterans' affairs](#) is hereby directed to  
9 provide suitable quarters and staff for the advisory committee.

10 (e) ~~All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,  
11 documentation, and otherwise to the commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or  
12 desirable by the advisory committee to facilitate the purposes of this chapter.~~

13 (f) The members of the advisory committee shall receive no compensation for their  
14 services. ~~Members of the committee shall serve for a term of three (3) years and may not succeed  
15 themselves more than once after January 1, 2016.~~

16 **30-17.1-11. The duties of the committee.**

17 (a) The advisory committee acting through the office of veterans' affairs, shall work in  
18 conjunction with the department of human services to develop, maintain and annually update a  
19 five-year (5) statewide veterans' services strategic plan ("VSSP") that includes goals and  
20 measurable outcomes to ensure that all departments deliver comprehensive services and supports  
21 for veterans and their families.

22 (b) The advisory committee shall conduct an analysis of study toward the development of  
23 the "VSSP" that shall include, but not be limited to, the following veterans' issues:

- 24 (1) ~~Access to benefits~~ [Living in poverty](#);
- 25 (2) ~~Employment opportunities~~ [Disability benefits](#);
- 26 (3) ~~Veteran-owned small-business growth~~ [Employment and training](#);
- 27 (4) ~~Educational attainment~~ [Education](#);
- 28 (5) ~~Job-skills training~~ [Family members and caregivers](#);
- 29 (6) ~~Behavioral health~~ [Financial planning](#);
- 30 (7) ~~Long-term health care options~~ [Homelessness](#);
- 31 (8) ~~Criminal justice issues~~ [Legal services](#); and
- 32 (9) ~~Homelessness~~. [Long-term care](#);
- 33 [\(10\) Mortuary affairs](#);
- 34 [\(11\) Healthcare](#);

1 [\(12\) Transitional assistance; and](#)

2 [\(13\) Transportation.](#)

3 (c) ~~Establish a veterans' committee comprised of no fewer than five (5)~~ [The chairperson](#)  
4 [of the committee shall consult regularly with](#) veterans [and community groups that, representing](#)  
5 [represent](#) diverse interests and viewpoints [and the federal department of veterans' affairs, that](#)  
6 ~~shall provide to receive~~ input ~~to the advisory committee~~ on all matters pertaining to the  
7 preparation or implementation of the veterans' services strategic plan. ~~The committee shall~~  
8 ~~receive administrative support from the departments and the members shall not receive~~  
9 ~~compensation for their service. The committee shall meet at least quarterly and at the call of the~~  
10 ~~co-chairs or four (4) members of the veterans' committee.~~

11 (d) The "VSSP" shall:

12 (1) Be based upon comprehensive data gained through open and transparent engagement  
13 of veterans' stakeholders;

14 (2) Produce veteran-centric policies and procedures informed by forward looking  
15 planning;

16 (3) Realistically assess resource adequacy and capabilities delivered;

17 (4) Ensure that existing resources are aligned to mission critical objectives;

18 (5) Compliment, as well as leverage, existing U.S. Veterans' Administration programs  
19 and best practices;

20 (6) Foster state, federal, and private partnerships that seamlessly deliver exceptional  
21 services to the state's veteran population; and

22 (7) More effectively coordinate the delivery of veterans' services to all current and future  
23 veterans in Rhode Island.

24 **30-17.1-12. Meeting and reporting requirements for the advisory committee.**

25 (a) The advisory committee shall meet regularly on ~~a quarterly~~ [an annual](#) basis and at the  
26 call of the chairperson or three (3) committee members.

27 (b) The advisory committee shall provide a copy of the veterans' services strategic plan  
28 "VSSP" to the senate president, speaker of the house, senate fiscal advisor and house fiscal  
29 advisor one year after the ~~enactment of~~ [amendment of](#) this act.

30 (c) The advisory committee shall report annually to the governor and the general  
31 assembly, no later than April of each year, on the progress made in achieving the goals and  
32 objectives set forth and any other pertinent information. [A progress update of the "VSSP" in the](#)  
33 [office of veterans affairs annual report will satisfy this requirement.](#)

34 (d) The advisory committee shall update the "VSSP" every five (5) years and provide a

1 copy of the plan to the senate president, speaker of the house, and senate and house fiscal  
2 advisors.

3 (e) The advisory committee shall be subject to the provisions of § 38-2-1 et seq., Access  
4 to Public Records Act, and § 42-46-1 et seq., Open Meetings Act.

5 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE -- VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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1           This act would provide for amendments to the veterans' services strategic plan advisory  
2 committee to provide effective support for veterans and to collaborate and coordinate existing  
3 state, federal, and private veterans' services to meet and exceed the needs and expectations of  
4 Rhode Island veterans and their families.

5           This act would take effect upon passage.

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