

2024 -- H 7552

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

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A N A C T

RELATING TO MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE -- VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Introduced By: Representatives Vella-Wilkinson, Batista, Solomon, Casimiro, Shallcross  
Smith, Rea, Finkelman, Ajello, and Azzinaro

Date Introduced: February 07, 2024

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 30-17.1 of the General Laws entitled “Veterans’ Affairs” is hereby  
2 amended by adding thereto the following sections:

3 **30-17.1-14. Municipal veterans’ service officer – Establishment.**

4 (a) Every city and town shall maintain a municipal veteran's service officer (“MVSO”).  
5 The designated MVSO shall be a military veteran or may be a collateral duty assigned to a military  
6 veteran already on staff.

7 (b) The MVSO shall serve as a keystone for veterans' and military families regarding local  
8 veterans’ programs and benefits. This person shall also work with the state office of veterans’  
9 affairs to apply for state grants to be used for outreach to municipal residents from the veteran  
10 community.

11 **30-17.1-15. Appropriation to office of veterans’ affairs to fund grant awards to**  
12 **municipalities to assist veterans.**

13 (a) There shall be appropriated in the state budget for the fiscal year commencing July 1,  
14 2025, out of any monies not otherwise appropriated, the sum of one hundred thousand dollars  
15 (\$100,000) to the office of veterans’ affairs (“OVA”) for outreach and support to municipal  
16 residents from the veterans’ community, as provided for in subsection (b) of this section.

17 (b)(1) The OVA shall take the most recently-available data from the U.S. Census Bureau -  
18 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, and break down and disaggregate the number of  
19 veterans living in each city and town in the state.

1           (2) The OVA shall disaggregate and divide the one hundred thousand dollar (\$100,000)  
2 appropriation among the thirty-nine (39) cities and towns, based on the veteran population living  
3 in each municipality;

4           (3) The OVA shall send by both electronic mail and regular U.S. postal mail, a grant award  
5 letter to the mayor, town manager, or town administrator of each municipality in the state, and shall  
6 send a copy of the letter to the corresponding city or town council, as well as to the municipal  
7 veterans' service officer, if one has been appointed. This letter shall indicate that the municipality  
8 may apply for the matching grant, and describe how the grant dollars shall be used based on a list  
9 of approved services which align with OVA services. These services shall include outreach and  
10 support to veterans living within the municipality. A municipality may propose to expend the funds  
11 through the municipality, an instrumentality of the municipality, or through a local agency or entity  
12 servicing veterans in the community, or through any combination thereof. A municipality shall be  
13 required to apply to receive the grant on or before June 30, 2025. Applications shall be reviewed  
14 by the OVA on a rolling basis as they are received.

15           (4) Once the application process is completed, and the OVA is satisfied with the  
16 application, the grant funds shall be issued.

17           (5) Any municipality receiving a grant under this section shall report on activities, the  
18 number of clients serviced, and such other matters as the OVA requires as a condition of receiving  
19 the grant.

20           (6) The grant application and reports shall be listed on the state transparency portal.

21           (c) The OVA shall periodically publish a suggested list of approved grant-funded activities  
22 with the request for proposals (RFP) announcement and due dates. Furthermore, the OVA shall  
23 conduct periodic training and networking opportunities for all MVSOs to share "lessons learned"  
24 and relevant legislative updates.

25           (d) If a municipality does not apply for a grant on or before June 30, 2025, the money so  
26 appropriated shall be returned to the general fund.

27           (e) The OVA shall provide a statewide status report of the MVSO program to the governor,  
28 the speaker of the house, and the president of the senate, on or before August 31, 2025, and annually  
29 on or before August 31 thereafter.

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

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T

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1           This act would provide that every city and town must maintain a municipal veterans'  
2 service officer. The act would also authorize a one hundred thousand dollar (\$100,000)  
3 appropriation to be used to fund matching grants for the support and outreach for veterans.

4           This act would take effect upon passage.

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