

HOUSE No. 3172

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

John C. Velis

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act to establish a special commission to study the services and support of military veterans.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

John C. Velis

Sean Garballey

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

4th Hampden

23rd Middlesex

HOUSE No. 3172

By Mr. Velis of Westfield, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 3172) of John C. Velis and Sean Garballey for an investigation by a special commission (including members of the General Court) of the services and support of military veterans. Veterans and Federal Affairs.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court
(2015-2016)**

An Act to establish a special commission to study the services and support of military veterans.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 There shall be a special commission to study and make recommendations pursuant to
2 chapters 13 and 115 of the General Laws. The Commission shall study and evaluate current
3 laws, regulations and practices related to providing services and other support to military
4 veterans and to make recommendations to improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of
5 state and local programs.

6 The committee shall consist of 11 members: 1 member of the senate who shall be the
7 chair of the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs or a designee; who shall serve as co-
8 chair of the commission; 1 member of the house of representatives who shall be the chair of the
9 joint committee on veterans and federal affairs or a designee, who shall serve as co-chair of the
10 commission; the secretary of the department of veterans' services or a designee; the
11 undersecretary of the office of consumer affairs and business regulation or a designee; the
12 Secretary of Administration and Finance or a designee; the president of the Mass. Veterans'

13 Service Agents Association, Inc. or a designee; the executive director of the Massachusetts
14 Municipal Association or a designee; the president of the Local Officials Human Services
15 Council or a designee; the veterans' benefits and services commissioner in and for the city of
16 Boston; and two unaffiliated veterans, acting as private citizens not employed by a city, town, or
17 group providing services to veterans, appointed by the Governor with consideration to veterans
18 disabled in combat since 2001.

19 The Commission shall study and evaluate all veterans within the Commonwealth, and
20 analyze the current system for identifying veterans in need of services, providing, administering
21 and financing services and access to services, and coordinating the actions of federal, state and
22 local government agencies in a manner that is effective and efficient.

23 The Commission shall compare the services available to veterans with the number of
24 identified veterans in need of services.

25 The Commission shall oversee two sub commissions. One sub commission shall be
26 specifically dedicated to the study and evaluation of the resources available at public institutions
27 of Higher Education for veterans and the graduation rate for veterans at public institutions of
28 Higher Education within the Commonwealth. The second sub commission shall be dedicated to
29 studying the experiences of veterans in the court system of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
30 as related to diversion programs as defined by Section 10 of Chapter 266 of the General Laws.
31 This commission shall study the success rate of diversion programs and how many veterans are
32 served by these programs.

33 The Commission shall evaluate the fiscal impact on local government of the current
34 system of municipal financing of veterans' benefits subject to reimbursement through the state

35 budget and of the rules governing state and local administration of the program. The
36 Commission shall consider alternative methods of financing and administration, including
37 regionalization, that would improve services to veterans, and be more efficient.

38 The Commission shall file the report of the study with recommendations for legislation
39 no later than December 1, 2015 with the clerks of the house of representatives and senate who
40 shall forward the same to the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint
41 committee on veterans and federal affairs.