

# SENATE . . . . . No. 2052

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## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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In the Year Two Thousand Fourteen  
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SENATE,

Report of the committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two branches, with reference to the House amendment to the Senate Bill relative to veterans' allowances, labor, outreach, and recognition (Senate, No. 1885) (amended by the House by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in place thereof the text of House document numbered 3735),-- reports, in part, a "Bill relative to veterans' allowances, labor, outreach, and recognition" (Senate, No. 2052)

For the Committee:

Michael F. Rush

Stephen M. Brewer

Bruce E. Tarr

Carlo Basile

Brian S. Dempsey

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

*Department of Veterans' Services*

1410-0024 For costs associated with implementing the training and certification of veterans' benefits and services officers..... \$350,000

SECTION 3. Section 61 of chapter 7 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2012 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after subsection (i 1/2 ) the following subsection:-

(i3/4) SDO shall, every 3 years and in consultation with the department of veterans' services, establish goals for participation of service-disabled, veteran-owned business enterprises in all areas of state procurement contracting, including contracts for public construction, design services and commodities and service. In calculating such goals, the secretary shall base the determination on an understanding of the pool of service-disabled, veteran-owned business enterprises available for participation.

SECTION 4. Section 35CC of chapter 10 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 6, the word "including" and inserting in place thereof the following word:- and.

SECTION 5. Section 8E of chapter 12 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the word "U.S.A.", in line 17, the following words:- ; Department of Massachusetts, Marine Corps League, Inc.

SECTION 6. Chapter 15A of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

34           Section 43. (a) No student at a postsecondary institution shall incur academic or financial  
35 penalties by virtue of performing military service on behalf of the United States. A student who  
36 enrolls in an academic course at any of the institutions in subsection (b) but is unable to complete  
37 an academic course because that student is called to or enlists in active duty, as defined in section  
38 1 of chapter 15E, shall have the option to complete the course at a later date without penalty or  
39 withdraw from the course with a full refund of fees and tuition paid. If the academic course is no  
40 longer available upon the student's return from active duty, the student shall be permitted to  
41 complete a replacement course for equivalent credit without penalty. If the student chooses to  
42 withdraw from the course, the student's record shall reflect that the withdrawal is due to active  
43 duty.

44           (b) This section shall apply to all postsecondary institutions including: (i) the system of  
45 public institutions of higher education, established in section 5; (ii) private occupational schools,  
46 as defined in section 263 of chapter 112; and (iii) private colleges, universities and other  
47 institutions of higher learning.

48           SECTION 7. Section 8 of chapter 15E of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2012  
49 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the word "military", in line 86, the  
50 following words:- , National Guard or Reserve.

51           SECTION 8. Section 67A of chapter 33 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
52 amended by inserting after the word "action", in line 3, the following words:- or who died in  
53 service while in a designated combat area in the line of duty.

54           SECTION 9. Section 8A of chapter 58 of the General Laws is hereby repealed.

55 SECTION 10. Section 5 of chapter 59 of the General Laws is hereby amended by striking  
56 out the first paragraph, as appearing in the 2012 Official Edition, and inserting in place thereof  
57 the following paragraph:-

58 The following property shall be exempt from taxation and the date of determination as to  
59 age, ownership or other qualifying factors required by any clause shall be July 1 of each year  
60 unless another meaning is clearly apparent from the context; provided, however, that any person  
61 who receives an exemption pursuant to clause Seventeenth, Seventeenth C, Seventeenth C½,  
62 Seventeenth D, Twenty-second, Twenty-second A, Twenty-second B, Twenty-second C,  
63 Twenty-second D, Twenty-second E, Twenty-second F, Thirty-seventh, Thirty-seventh A, Forty-  
64 first, Forty-first B, Forty-first C, Forty-first C½, Forty-second, Forty-third, Fifty-sixth or Fifty-  
65 seventh shall not receive an exemption on the same property pursuant to any other provision of  
66 this section, except clause Eighteenth or Forty-fifth.

67 SECTION 11. Clause Twenty-second E of said section 5 of said chapter 59, as so  
68 appearing, is hereby amended by striking out the last paragraph.

69 SECTION 12. Said section 5 of said chapter 59, as amended by chapter 46 of the acts of  
70 2013, is hereby further amended by inserting after clause Twenty-second E the following  
71 clause:-

72 Twenty-second F, Real estate of soldiers and sailors who are veterans, as defined in the  
73 clause Forty-third of section 7 of chapter 4, and their spouses who, according to the records of  
74 the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or of any branch of the armed forces of the  
75 United States by reason of injury received while in service and in the line of duty are  
76 paraplegics; provided, however, that the veteran or spouse shall be a legal resident of the

77 commonwealth, the veteran's last discharge or release from the armed forces was under other  
78 than dishonorable conditions and the veteran was domiciled in the commonwealth for at least 6  
79 months prior to entering service or resided in the commonwealth for 5 consecutive years prior to  
80 the date of filing for exemption pursuant to this clause; provided further, that the real estate is  
81 occupied as the veteran's domicile; provided further, that if the property is greater than a single-  
82 family house, then only that value of so much of the house as is occupied by the person as the  
83 person's domicile shall be exempted; and provided further, that an exemption pursuant to this  
84 clause shall continue unchanged for the benefit of the surviving spouse after the death of the  
85 disabled veteran as long as the surviving spouse of the qualified veteran shall remain an owner  
86 and occupant of the domicile subject to the exemption.

87         No real estate shall be exempt if the assessors adjudge that it has been conveyed to a  
88 soldier or sailor to evade taxation.

89         After the assessors have allowed an exemption pursuant to this clause, no further  
90 evidence of the existence of the facts required by this clause shall be required in any subsequent  
91 year in the city or town in which the exemption has been allowed; provided, however, that the  
92 assessors may refuse to allow an exemption in any subsequent year if they become aware that the  
93 soldier or sailor did not satisfy all of the requirements of this clause at the time the exemption  
94 was first granted.

95         Two thousand dollars of this exemption or up to \$175, whichever basis is applicable,  
96 shall be borne by the city or town and the balance shall be borne by the commonwealth;  
97 provided; however, that the state treasurer shall annually reimburse the city or town for the  
98 amount of the tax which otherwise would have been collected on account of this balance.

99           Notwithstanding this section, in any city or town which accepts this clause, the  
100 exemptions available pursuant to clauses Twenty-second, Twenty-second A, Twenty-second B,  
101 Twenty-second C, Twenty-second D, Twenty-second E and Twenty-second F may be granted to  
102 otherwise eligible persons who have resided in the commonwealth for 1 year prior to the date of  
103 filing for exemptions pursuant to the applicable clause.

104           SECTION 13. Section 5C of said chapter 59, as appearing in the 2012 Official Edition,  
105 is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 13 and 14, the words “of section eight A of chapter  
106 fifty-eight and”.

107           SECTION 14. Said chapter 59 is hereby amended by inserting after section 5C the  
108 following section:-

109           Section 5C½. In a city or town that accepts this section and is certified by the  
110 commissioner to be assessing all property at full and fair cash valuation, a taxpayer who  
111 otherwise qualifies for an exemption pursuant to any clause specifically listed in the first  
112 paragraph of section 5 for which receipt of another exemption on the same property is prohibited,  
113 shall be granted an additional exemption that shall be uniform for all exemptions and the amount  
114 of which shall not exceed 100 per cent of the exemption for which the taxpayer qualifies, as may  
115 be determined by the legislative body of the city or town, subject to its charter, not later than the  
116 beginning of the fiscal year to which the tax relates. Notwithstanding any provision of this  
117 chapter to the contrary, the exemption shall be in addition to any exemption allowable pursuant  
118 to said section 5; provided, however, that in no instance shall the taxable valuation of the  
119 property, after all applicable exemptions, be reduced below 10 per cent of its full and fair cash  
120 valuation, except through the applicability of clause Eighteenth of said section 5; and provided

121 further, that the additional exemption shall not result in any taxpayer paying less than the taxes  
122 paid in the preceding fiscal year. Acceptance of this section by a city or town shall not increase  
123 the amount that it otherwise would have been reimbursed by the commonwealth pursuant to the  
124 respective clause.

125 SECTION 15. Section 5N of said chapter 59, as appearing in the 2012 Official Edition, is  
126 hereby amended by inserting after the figure “4”, in line 5, the following words:- or a spouse of a  
127 veteran in the case where the veteran is deceased or has a service-connected disability.

128 SECTION 16. Section 59 of said chapter 59, as so appearing, is hereby amended by  
129 striking out the third paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:-

130 An application for exemption under clause Seventeenth, Seventeenth C, Seventeenth C½,  
131 Seventeenth D, Eighteenth, Twenty-second, Twenty-second A, Twenty-second B, Twenty-  
132 second C, Twenty-second D, Twenty-second E, Twenty-second F, Thirty-seventh, Thirty-  
133 seventh A, Forty-first, Forty-first B, Forty-first C, Forty-first C½, Forty-second, Forty-third,  
134 Fifty-second, Fifty-third, Fifty-sixth and Fifty-seventh of section 5 may be made on or before  
135 December 15 of the year to which the tax relates or, if the bill or notice is first sent after  
136 September 15 of that year, within 3 months after the bill or notice is so sent.

137 SECTION 17. Section 1 of chapter 60A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
138 amended by striking out, in lines 135 and 136, the words “continental United States” and  
139 inserting in place thereof the following word:- commonwealth.

140 SECTION 18. Chapter 68 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after  
141 section 19 the following section:-



142           Section 19A. Any person or charitable organization established for an advocacy,  
143 benevolent, educational, humane, patriotic, philanthropic, scientific or social welfare purpose on  
144 behalf of veterans or the military that intends to solicit contributions from persons within the  
145 commonwealth or to have contributions solicited on its behalf by other charitable organizations  
146 shall, prior to such solicitation, apply for designation as a veterans' charitable organization on a  
147 form issued by the division that shall include, but not be limited to: (i) the name of the  
148 organization and the purpose for which it is organized; (ii) the address of the organization and  
149 the address of any offices in the commonwealth or, if the organization does not maintain an  
150 office, the name and address of the person having custody of its financial records; and (iii) the  
151 charitable purposes for which solicited contributions shall be used. The secretary of veterans'  
152 services shall publish on the department's website a list of the names of each veterans' charitable  
153 organization. Designation as a veterans' charitable organization shall be valid for 3 years. Any  
154 person or organization applying for designation as a veterans' charitable organization shall be  
155 exempt from any registration fee or renewal fee pursuant to section 19.

156           SECTION 19. Section 28 of said chapter 68, as appearing in the 2012 Official Edition, is  
157 hereby amended by adding the following words:-

158           (f) No person or organization shall claim to be a representative of a veterans' charitable  
159 organization with the intent to solicit contributions that benefit or profit any person or  
160 organization other than the veterans' charitable organization.

161           SECTION 20. Section 1 of chapter 90 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
162 amended by inserting after the definition of "Intersecting way" the following definition:-

163 “Killed in action”, a casualty classification determined by the United States Department  
164 of Defense when a member of the armed forces of the United States has been killed while  
165 performing military operations while serving the United States in a conflict recognized by the  
166 United States Department of Defense.

167 SECTION 21. Section 2 of said chapter 90, as so appearing, is hereby amended by  
168 inserting after the word “RECIPIENT”, in line 407, the following words:- and the words  
169 “COMBAT WOUNDED”.

170 SECTION 22. Said section 2 of said chapter 90, as so appearing, is hereby further  
171 amended by striking out the twenty-first paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following  
172 paragraph:-

173 The registrar shall furnish without charge to the owner of a private passenger motor  
174 vehicle who is a Gold Star parent, child, sibling, grandchild or spouse of a member of the  
175 military, upon presentation of satisfactory evidence of such status as determined by the registrar,  
176 a distinctive registration plate that reads "Gold Star Family" for 1 private passenger motor  
177 vehicle owned and principally used by that person or a distinctive "Gold Star Family" emblem to  
178 be affixed to a registration plate for a motorcycle privately owned and principally used by that  
179 person. The registrar may issue a distinctive “Gold Star Family” registration of up to 6 characters  
180 for 1 private passenger motor vehicle owned and principally used by that person. A Gold Star  
181 parent, child, sibling, grandchild or spouse of a member of the military that was killed in action  
182 or otherwise died as a result of immediate injuries sustained from such action may have a “KIA”  
183 designation on the “Gold Star Family” emblem affixed to a registration plate for a private  
184 passenger motor vehicle or motorcycle privately owned and principally used by that person. The

185 registrar shall furnish at no additional cost a “KIA” designation on any previously issued “Gold  
186 Star Family” registration plate for an individual who meets the requirements of this section.

187 SECTION 23. Section 1B of chapter 112 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
188 amended by adding the following subsection:-

189 (f) The director and each of the boards of registration and examination under the  
190 supervision of the director shall waive the commonwealth’s portion of the initial application fee  
191 and the initial fee for a license application or certification granted pursuant to this section.

192 SECTION 24. Chapter 115 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after  
193 section 3A the following section:—

194 Section 3B. (a) The secretary of veterans’ services shall establish standards and  
195 promulgate regulations for the mandatory training and certification of veterans’ benefits and  
196 services officers. Veterans’ benefits and services officers shall be trained and certified within 6  
197 months of the officer’s appointment under section 3. Training shall be offered annually and shall  
198 be administered by the secretary of veterans’ services and approved by the Massachusetts  
199 Veterans’ Service Officers Association and Massachusetts Municipal Association.

200 The secretary shall formulate a certification test in conjunction with the Massachusetts  
201 Veterans’ Service Officers Association, which shall ensure the candidate possesses the core  
202 knowledge to effectively serve veterans. The secretary shall make the test available at the  
203 mandatory annual training and shall provide a reasonable schedule of make-up training and  
204 testing. The certification test shall assess areas of knowledge including, but not limited to, the  
205 following: veterans’ benefits contained in this chapter; federal and local benefits, including  
206 employment, education, health care, retirement and other veterans’ benefits, and alternative

207 resources, including those partially or wholly subsidized by the federal government, such as  
208 Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability benefits and federal  
209 pension and compensation entitlements. At the request of any appointing authority, the secretary  
210 shall offer training and testing to any person who works for or in conjunction with a certified  
211 veterans' services officer or agent. Upon petition to the secretary by the appointing authority, a  
212 person appointed as a veterans' benefits and services officer may be exempted by the secretary  
213 from the requirements of this section.

214 (b) A person who receives an appointment as a veterans' benefits and services officer or  
215 who is currently employed as a veterans' benefits and services officer under section 3 shall be  
216 certified. To be certified as a veterans' benefits and services officer, the candidate shall, at a  
217 minimum, meet the following qualifications: (i) be appointed locally under section 3; (ii) attend a  
218 mandatory training within 6 months of appointment, administered by the secretary of veterans'  
219 services; (iii) attend a mandatory training once every calendar year; and (iv) take and pass the  
220 test offered at each administered training once every 3 years. The secretary of veterans' services  
221 shall consider candidates who complete the requirements of this section a certified veterans'  
222 benefits and services officer.

223 As used in this section, "veterans' benefits and services officer" shall include: (A) full-  
224 time and part-time veterans' agents under this chapter, chapter 471 of the acts of 1972, chapter  
225 68 of the acts of 1984 and 108 CMR; (B) full-time directors of veterans' services districts under  
226 this chapter, said chapter 471, said chapter 68 and said 108 CMR; (C) county veterans' agents  
227 under chapter 128 of the acts of 1982; and (D) the veterans' benefits and services commissioner  
228 in and for the city of Boston under this chapter.

229 (c) During the period of employment, a person holding a veterans' benefits and services  
230 officer certificate under this section shall be under the direct supervision of the appointing  
231 authority in section 3. The appointing authority shall regularly evaluate the performance of  
232 assigned duties by the veterans' benefits and services officer.

233 (d) Failure of a veterans' benefits and services officer to comply with this chapter shall  
234 result in reduction of the reimbursement allowance, paid by the commonwealth under section 6,  
235 from 75 per cent to 50 per cent. The reduction shall remain in effect: (i) for a time period  
236 designated by the secretary; (ii) until the appointing authority is in full compliance; (iii) until a  
237 plan is agreed upon by the appointing authority and the secretary to be in full compliance by a  
238 date agreed to by the secretary and the appointing authority; or (iv) by removal of the veterans'  
239 benefits and services officer.

240 (e) The department shall, for any reduction in the reimbursement allowance made under  
241 subsection (d), deposit the reimbursement in a trust account. Upon the appointing authority's full  
242 compliance under subsection (d), the department shall add this amount to a subsequent  
243 reimbursement made to the city or town under section 6.

244 (f) Veterans' benefits and services officers or agents shall not disclose any information  
245 transmitted in confidence by and between a veteran and a veterans' benefits and services officer  
246 or agent, except as follows: (i) when the disclosure is made for the benefit of the veteran; (ii) the  
247 disclosure is reasonably necessary to assist the veteran; or (iii) under a lawful order to make such  
248 disclosure. For the purposes of this subsection, information received by a veterans' benefits and  
249 services officer or agent which arises out of and in the course of providing assistance shall  
250 include, but not limited to, communications, reports, records, working papers or memoranda.

251 SECTION 25. Chapter 149 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after  
252 section 44½ the following section:-

253 Section 44¾. Notwithstanding chapter 151B, a private, nonpublic employer may provide  
254 a preference in promoting or hiring to: (i) a veteran; (ii) the spouse of an honorably discharged  
255 veteran who the United States Department of Veterans Affairs determines to be 100 per cent  
256 disabled as a result of enemy action or a service-connected accident; or (iii) the surviving spouse  
257 of a veteran.

258 SECTION 26. Chapter 272 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after  
259 section 42A, as appearing in the 2012 Official Edition, the following section:-

260 Section 42B. Whoever willfully pickets, loiters or otherwise creates a disturbance within  
261 500 feet of a funeral home, church, temple, burial or other building where military funeral  
262 services are being held, shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$2,000 or by imprisonment  
263 for not more than 2 years in a house of correction, or both.

264 SECTION 27. Section 4 of chapter 73 of the acts of 1986 is hereby repealed.

265 SECTION 28. The secretary of health and human services shall establish and implement  
266 an ongoing veterans' home modification program through the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
267 commission. The commissioner of the Massachusetts rehabilitation commission, in collaboration  
268 with the secretary of veterans' services, shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary to carry  
269 out a veterans' home modifications program for any veteran called to active duty after September  
270 11, 2001, who has suffered a service connected disability and who requires home modifications  
271 services to function more independently in the veteran's home and community. The purpose of  
272 the veterans' home modification program is to provide funding on behalf of veterans for home

273 modifications services made necessary by the functional limitations associated with the veteran's  
274 service connected disability. The commissioner and secretary of veterans' services shall, to the  
275 best of the commissioner's and the secretary's knowledge, identify veterans eligible for this  
276 program and provide a cost estimate for appropriations for this program for fiscal year 2015 and  
277 beyond. The cost estimate shall be reported to the house and senate committees on ways and  
278 means and the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs not later than November 1, 2014.

279 SECTION 29. (a) There is hereby established the Massachusetts Servicemember Post-  
280 Deployment Council to make recommendations regarding the implementation of a program in  
281 the commonwealth to support service members transitioning to civilian life after deployment.

282 (b) The council shall consist of 27 members: 2 members of the senate appointed by the  
283 president of the senate, 1 of whom shall be a member of the joint committee on veterans and  
284 federal affairs and 1 of whom shall be a member of the joint committee on mental health and  
285 substance abuse; 1 member appointed by the minority leader of the senate shall be the ranking  
286 minority member of the senate who is on the joint committee on children, families and persons  
287 with disabilities, the joint committee on labor and workforce development or the joint committee  
288 on housing, or the member's designee; 2 members of the house of representatives appointed by  
289 the speaker of the house of representatives, 1 of whom shall be a member of the joint committee  
290 on veterans and federal affairs and 1 of whom shall be a member of the joint committee on  
291 mental health and substance abuse; 1 member appointed by the minority leader of the house of  
292 representatives shall be the ranking minority member of the house of representatives who is on  
293 the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities, the joint committee on  
294 labor and workforce development or the joint committee on housing, or the member's designee;  
295 1 member shall be the secretary of health and human services, or a designee from the executive

296 staff to include representation from the department of public health, the department of mental  
297 health, the department of children and families and the Massachusetts rehabilitation commission;  
298 1 member shall be the secretary of veterans' services, or a designee; 1 member shall be the  
299 adjutant general of the national guard, or a designee; 1 member shall be the commissioner of the  
300 Massachusetts rehabilitation commission, or a designee; 1 member shall be the undersecretary  
301 of the department of housing and community development, or a designee; 1 member shall be the  
302 secretary of labor and workforce development, or a designee; 1 member shall be the secretary of  
303 education, or a designee; and 14 members shall be appointed by the governor from a list of  
304 nominees submitted by each of the following organizations: Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide  
305 Prevention, the Massachusetts Psychological Association Inc., Massachusetts Psychiatric  
306 Society, Inc., Massachusetts Association for Mental Health, Inc., Association for Behavioral  
307 Healthcare, Inc., Massachusetts Veterans' Service Officers Association, Massachusetts Women  
308 Veterans' Network, The Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital Home Base  
309 Program, the Massachusetts Military Heroes Fund, Inc., the United States Department of  
310 Veterans Affairs, the Massachusetts Hospital Association, Inc., the Military Friends Foundation  
311 and the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, Inc.; provided, however, that 2  
312 such members shall be veterans of Operation New Dawn, Operation Enduring Freedom or  
313 Operation Iraqi Freedom.

314 (c) The term of office for each appointed member shall be 2 years, or until a successor is  
315 appointed in the case of a vacancy. The council shall, at its first organizational meeting, elect a  
316 member to serve as chairperson for a 2-year term. The council shall also elect a vice-chairperson  
317 for a 2-year term and a clerk for a 2-year term. No member shall receive any compensation for  
318 serving on the council.



319 (d) The council shall perform and make recommendations pertaining to how best to  
320 operationalize and quantify its duties, which may include, but shall not be limited to: (i)  
321 examining and evaluating the effectiveness of veterans' suicide prevention policies; (ii)  
322 examining and evaluating the effectiveness of resilience training for veterans' personnel; (iii)  
323 developing recommendations on ways in which veterans' support service needs may be promptly  
324 assessed upon return from deployment; (iv) developing recommendations for methods by which  
325 the commonwealth may identify, evaluate and refer service members returning to civilian life  
326 post-deployment for assistance with education, employment, health care, housing and other  
327 services; (v) providing recommendations for improving communication between mental health  
328 support services and veterans who may benefit from such services; (vi) providing  
329 recommendations for improving observation and treatment plans for returning veterans; (vii)  
330 developing recommendations for providing mental health counseling services to combat the  
331 effects of post-traumatic stress injuries for post-deployment veterans; (viii) examining ways in  
332 which the commonwealth may reduce stress, anxiety and depression among returning veterans  
333 and family members of returning veterans; (ix) providing recommendations on improving health  
334 access assistance, including analyzing: (1) barriers prohibiting veterans from receiving coverage  
335 upon their residency in the commonwealth; (2) tools to educate active duty members who intend  
336 to reside in the commonwealth on their ability to acquire health care coverage in the  
337 commonwealth; (3) the resources available to military members to help afford coverage upon  
338 discharge; (4) the fluctuating income of service members upon discharge; and (5) the number of  
339 veterans who are discharged and, upon residency in the commonwealth, are without health care  
340 coverage; provided, however, that the council may form a subcommittee to implement this  
341 clause; and (x) identifying the needs of women veterans relative to issues including, but not

342 limited to, compensation, rehabilitation, outreach, health care, education and other issues facing  
343 women veterans in the community. The council may hold public hearings to assist in the  
344 collection and evaluation of data and testimony.

345 (e) The council shall submit its findings and recommendations, including a detailed re-  
346 entry program plan relative to servicemembers who return to civilian life after deployment,  
347 together with recommendations for legislation to carry out those recommendations by filing the  
348 same with the house and senate clerks, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the  
349 joint committee on veterans and federal affairs and the joint committee on mental health and  
350 substance abuse not later than September 15, 2015.

351 SECTION 30. (a) The department of public health shall issue to the department of  
352 veterans' services guidance for acute hospitals and ambulance service providers in order to  
353 establish the systematic identification of veterans and military service members following  
354 clinical care to assist in appropriate referrals and to enable and promote access to all available  
355 resources, supports and benefits; provided, however, that such guidance shall be consistent with  
356 the privacy protections offered by federal and state laws.

357 (b) The department of veterans' services shall submit quarterly aggregate data reports on  
358 all referrals to the department of public health.

359 SECTION 31. (a) There is hereby established a special commission to study and make  
360 recommendations to create an office of veterans' employment and business assistance with the  
361 goal of expanding business and employment opportunities for veterans.

362 (b) The commission shall consist of 14 members: 3 members of the senate, 1 of whom  
363 shall be the chair of the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs, 1 of whom shall be the

364 chair of the joint committee on labor and workforce development and 1 of whom shall be a  
365 member of the senate who is on the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs or the joint  
366 committee on economic development and emerging technologies to be appointed by the minority  
367 leader of the senate, or the members' designee; the secretary of labor and workforce  
368 development, or a designee; the secretary of veterans' services, or a designee; 3 members of the  
369 house of representatives, 1 of whom shall be the chair of the joint committee on veterans and  
370 federal affairs, 1 of whom shall be the chair of the joint committee on labor and workforce  
371 development and 1 of whom shall be a member of the house of representatives who is on the  
372 joint committee on veterans and federal affairs or the joint committee on economic development  
373 and emerging technologies to be appointed by the minority leader of the house of  
374 representatives, or the members' designee; the secretary of housing and economic development,  
375 or a designee; and 5 members appointed by the governor, who shall consist of 1 member from  
376 each of the following organizations: Veterans Business Council, North East Veteran Resource  
377 Center, Massachusetts Small Business Development Center, Center for Women & Enterprise,  
378 Inc. and Veterans Inc. The speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the  
379 senate shall select 2 members from the commission membership to serve as co-chairpersons.

380 (c) The commission shall: (i) examine and report on barriers to employment facing  
381 returning veterans; (ii) examine barriers to starting a veteran-owned business or nonprofit; (iii)  
382 identify opportunities to promote the development of business enterprises and nonprofit  
383 organizations owned and operated by veterans; (iv) examine relationships that can be enhanced  
384 between state agencies and private-sector employers to promote private-sector awareness of  
385 barriers to veteran employment and the potential benefits of hiring veterans; (v) study the  
386 feasibility of state-level veteran career counseling and training options, including coordination

387 with 1-stop career centers and all outreach programs and initiatives relative to veterans’  
388 employment services; (vi) examine outreach programs and initiatives relative to employment  
389 services for veterans and conduct a demographic and geographic analyses of the veteran  
390 population who is seeking services through the division of career services; (vii) identify  
391 opportunities to maximize revenues aimed at accomplishing the goals in this section including,  
392 but not limited to, the availability of federal grants and matching funds; (viii) develop and  
393 implement an action plan to address the needs and deficiencies of underserved geographic  
394 locations in need of greater veteran outreach efforts; and (ix) consider particular challenges faced  
395 by female veterans and disabled veterans when related to the objectives of the commission.

396 The examination shall include, but not be limited to: (i) a report on the number of  
397 veterans residing in each municipality; (ii) a report on the number of veterans actively seeking  
398 employment services in each community; (iii) coordinating with local, state and federal entities  
399 to estimate the number of veterans in each community currently unemployed or underemployed;  
400 and (iv) a determination of the geographic location of each local veteran employment  
401 representative assigned to career centers or other employment outreach locations.

402 The examination shall include an assessment of staffing levels, funding levels and  
403 outreach efforts performed by local veteran employment representatives and a projection of  
404 underserved geographic locations in need of greater veteran outreach efforts.

405 (d) The commission may hold hearings and invite testimony from experts and the public.  
406 The commission shall review and identify best practices learned from similar efforts in other  
407 states.

408 (e) The commission shall report to the general court the results of its investigation and  
409 study and the action plan as developed in clause (viii) of subsection (c) and make  
410 recommendations together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry out its recommendations  
411 by filing the report with the clerks of the senate and the house of representatives not later than  
412 June 15, 2015.

413 SECTION 32. (a) There is hereby established the Massachusetts veterans long-term care  
414 and housing master plan commission. The commission shall study, evaluate and make  
415 recommendations regarding the future needs surrounding the housing and residential care  
416 demands of veterans, veterans' spouses and veterans' dependents. The commission shall also  
417 study the feasibility of waiving the homestead fee, established in section 38 of chapter 262 of the  
418 General Laws, for disabled veterans.

419 (b) The commission shall consist of 16 members: the house of representatives and senate  
420 co-chairs of the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs, or their designees, who shall  
421 serve as co-chairs of the commission; the secretary of veterans' services, or a designee; 4  
422 members appointed by the secretary of health and human services, 1 of whom shall be an expert  
423 in healthcare delivery systems, 1 of whom shall be an expert in healthcare facilities management,  
424 1 of whom shall be a member of the trustees of the Soldiers' Home in Massachusetts and 1  
425 whom shall be a member of the trustees of the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke; 1 member appointed  
426 by the secretary of administration and finance, who shall be an employee of the division of  
427 capital asset management and maintenance; the president of the Massachusetts Veterans' Service  
428 Officers Association, or a designee; the executive director of the interagency council on housing  
429 and homelessness, or a designee; 1 member appointed by the secretary of veterans' services who  
430 is a private citizen, not employed by an agency, city, town or group providing services to

431 veterans and who has extensive knowledge of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs;  
432 1 member appointed by the secretary of the executive office for administration and finance who  
433 is a private citizen, not employed by an agency, city, town or group providing services to  
434 veterans, with extensive knowledge of real estate, construction and development; 2 members  
435 from the governor's advisory committee on women veterans; and 2 members appointed by the  
436 secretary of veterans' services who are private citizens, not employed by a city, town or group  
437 providing services to veterans, and who are combat veterans of conflicts since 2001.

438 (c) The commission shall study and evaluate the emerging changes in veterans' care and  
439 delivery of services relative to long-term health care and housing with the goal of ensuring all  
440 services provided by the state are strategically balanced by region and are in-line with and  
441 complimentary to those services provided by the federal government and other service providers.  
442 The commission shall study and evaluate the current capital needs for both the Soldiers' Home in  
443 Massachusetts and the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke and examine best practices in other states for  
444 the purpose of developing a long-term master plan and recommendations relative to long-term  
445 capital spending.

446 (d) The commission shall convene its first official meeting not later than June 10, 2014.  
447 The commission shall file a preliminary report of the study with recommendations for long-term  
448 capital spending not later than April 30, 2015 with the secretary of administration and finance  
449 and the clerks of the senate and the house of representatives, who shall forward the report to the  
450 house and senate committees on ways and means, the house and senate committees on bonding,  
451 capital assets and state expenditures and the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs.

452 SECTION 33. (a) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, there shall  
453 be a 2-year veterans court program and study administered and managed by a veterans court  
454 program director for the purpose of developing a model to implement veterans courts across the  
455 commonwealth. The veterans court program director shall be selected by the chief justice of the  
456 trial court and the secretary of the department of veterans' services after a publically advertised  
457 request for applicants. The director shall be an employee of the trial court.

458 (b) There shall be established a veterans court advisory board consisting of 8 members:  
459 the attorney general, or a designee; the secretary of veterans' services, or a designee; the chief  
460 justice of the trial court, or a designee; the executive director of the Massachusetts District  
461 Attorneys Association, or a designee; the commissioner of the department of mental health, or a  
462 designee; the commissioner of the department of public health, or a designee; a member of the  
463 community who has served or a family member of someone who has served, designated by the  
464 secretary of veterans' services; and the chief counsel of the committee for public counsel  
465 services, or a designee.

466 (c) The veterans court program director shall meet quarterly with the veterans court  
467 advisory board and together the director and board shall make recommendations to the chief  
468 justice of the trial court and to the court administrator on the implementation of sections 20 and  
469 21 of chapter 108 of the acts of 2012. The veterans court program director shall have duties that  
470 include, but are not limited to: (i) developing a detailed summary of data collected through  
471 existing veterans courts in Norfolk county, the city of Boston or any other jurisdictions where  
472 veterans court services may operate; (ii) recommending best practices for implementing a  
473 veterans court; (iii) analyzing costs associated with implementing veterans courts across the  
474 commonwealth; (iv) studying the efficacy of the models used in the program; and (v)

475 coordinating with Mission Direct Vet to develop a summary of the organization's findings and  
476 efficacy of Mission Direct Vet pilot programs.

477 (d) The chief justice of the trial court with the advice and consent of the veterans court  
478 advisory board shall submit a detailed report of findings, recommendations and plans to expand  
479 veterans courts throughout the commonwealth to the joint committee on veterans and federal  
480 affairs, joint committee on the judiciary, joint committee on mental health and substance abuse  
481 and house and senate committees on ways and means not later than 2 years after the date of hire  
482 of the veterans court program director.

483 SECTION 34. (a) Veterans' benefits and services officers appointed before the effective  
484 date of this act shall be trained and certified at the first training administered by the secretary of  
485 veterans' services as required by section 3B of chapter 115 of the General Laws.

486 (b) The secretary of veterans' services shall adopt all necessary rules, regulations and  
487 procedures in conjunction with the commission established by section 19 of chapter 108 of the  
488 acts of 2012 to implement section 24 not later than 180 days after the effective date of this act.

489 SECTION 35. The department of veterans' services, in conjunction with the department  
490 of revenue, shall study the feasibility and analyze the merits of implementing a sliding scale  
491 property tax abatement for veterans and spouses, currently implemented under clause Twenty-  
492 second of section 5 of chapter 59 of the General Laws, based upon a percentage of disability as  
493 defined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. The study shall include, but not be  
494 limited to: (i) the methodology of granting such exemption in other states; (ii) the utilization of a  
495 sliding scale, based upon the percentage of the veteran's disability, in awarding the property tax  
496 exemption to veterans and spouses; (iii) the impact on disabled veterans; and (iv) any anticipated



497 monetary cost to the commonwealth or to municipalities that the exemption may cause. The  
498 department of veterans' services, in conjunction with the department of revenue, shall submit its  
499 findings and legislative recommendations to the clerks of the senate and the house of  
500 representatives, the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on  
501 veterans and federal affairs not later than November 1, 2014.

502 SECTION 36. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the portion of  
503 state highway route 44, that runs between United States highway route 3 in the town of Plymouth  
504 in a westerly direction for a distance of 14.4 miles to interstate highway route 495 in the town of  
505 Middleborough, shall be designated and known as the Gold Star Highway in recognition of the  
506 brave men and women who died while actively serving in our nation's armed services. The  
507 Massachusetts Department of Transportation shall erect and maintain suitable markers bearing  
508 that designation in compliance with the standards of the department.

509 SECTION 37. On the effective date of this act, any person or charitable organization  
510 established for an advocacy, benevolent, educational, humane, patriotic, philanthropic, scientific  
511 or social welfare purpose on behalf of veterans or the military which intends to solicit  
512 contributions from persons within the commonwealth or to have contributions solicited on its  
513 behalf by other charitable organizations shall comply with section 19A of chapter 68 of the  
514 General Laws not later than 90 days after the effective date of this act.

515 SECTION 38. Section 23 shall take effect 90 days after the effective date of this act.