

2013 -- S 0479

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2013

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A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS'  
AFFAIRS

Introduced By: Senators Felag, Bates, Cote, Raptakis, and Pearson

Date Introduced: February 28, 2013

Referred To: Senate Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs

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 **30-17.1-8. Legislative findings.** -- (a) The general assembly hereby finds that there is a  
4 gap in resources and information necessary to effectively support and address the needs of  
5 veterans' and our state agencies must work together more effectively to collaborate, coordinate,  
6 leverage and ultimately enhance existing state, federal and private veterans' services to meet and  
7 exceed the needs and expectations of Rhode Island's veterans and their families.

8 **30-17.1-9. Definitions.** -- When used in this chapter, the following terms shall have the  
9 following meanings:

10 (1) "Advisory Committee" means the Veterans' Services Strategic Plan Advisory  
11 Committee as established in section 30-17.1-10.

12 (2) "Committee" means the veterans' committee established pursuant to the provisions of  
13 subsection 30-17.1-11(c)(8).

14 (3) "State agencies" means state entities responsible for the implementation of services  
15 for Rhode Island veterans' and their families including:

16 (i) The division of veterans' affairs;

17 (ii) The department of statewide planning;

18 (iii) The department of human services;

- 1 (iv) The Rhode Island board of higher education;  
2 (v) The department of behavioral healthcare, developmental disabilities and hospitals;  
3 (vi) The department of health;  
4 (vii) The division of elderly affairs;  
5 (viii) The department of business regulation;  
6 (ix) The department of the attorney general;  
7 (x) The department of labor and training;  
8 (xi) The economic development corporation;  
9 (xii) The department of education; and  
10 (xiii) The director of the Rhode Island office of housing and community resources/  
11 housing resources commission.

12 (4) "Veterans' Services Strategic Plan ("VSSP")" means the strategic plan as established  
13 in section 30-17.1-11.

14 **30-17.1-10. Veterans' services strategic plan advisory committee established. -- (a)**

15 There is hereby created a Veterans' Services Strategic Plan Advisory Committee known as "The  
16 Rhode Island Veterans' Affairs Strategic Plan Advisory Committee" consisting of thirteen (13)  
17 members as follows:

18 (1) One of whom shall be the director of the division of veterans' affairs or his  
19 or her designee, who shall serve as co-chairperson;

20 (2) One of whom shall be the director of statewide planning or his or her designee, who  
21 shall serve as co-chairperson;

22 (3) One of whom shall be the director of the department of human services, or his or her  
23 designee;

24 (4) One of whom shall be the chair of the Rhode Island board of higher education, or his  
25 or her designee;

26 (5) One of whom shall be the director of the behavioral healthcare, developmental  
27 disabilities and hospitals;

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

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

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

33 (9) One of whom shall be the attorney general, or his or her designee;

34 (10) One of whom shall be the director of the department of labor and training, or his or

1 her designee;

2 (11) One of whom shall be the director of the economic development corporation, or his  
3 or her designee;

4 (12) One of whom shall be the commissioner of the Rhode Island department of  
5 education, or his or her designee; and

6 (13) One of whom shall be the director of the office of housing and community  
7 resources/ housing resources commission, or his or her designee.

8 (b) Forthwith upon the passage of this chapter, the members of the committee shall meet  
9 at the call of the chairperson and organize. Thereafter, the committee shall meet quarterly and at  
10 the call of the chairperson or three (3) members of the committee.

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

14 (d) The department of human services, division of veterans' affairs, is hereby directed to  
15 provide suitable quarters and staff for the committee.

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

19 (f) The memberships of the committee shall receive no compensation for their services.  
20 Members of the committee shall serve for a term of three (3) years and may not succeed  
21 themselves more than once after January 1, 2016.

22 **30-17.1-11. Duties of the committee. --** (a) The committee, acting through the division  
23 of veterans' affairs, shall work in conjunction with the department of planning and development  
24 to develop, maintain and annually update a five (5) year statewide Veterans' Services Strategic  
25 Plan ("VSSP"), that includes goals and measurable outcomes to ensure that all departments  
26 deliver comprehensive services and supports for veterans and their families.

27 (b) The committee shall conduct an analysis of study toward the development of the  
28 "VSSP" that shall include, but not limited to, the following veteran's issues:

29 (1) Access to benefits;

30 (2) Employment opportunities;

31 (3) Veteran-owned small business growth;

32 (4) Educational attainment;

33 (5) Job skills training;

34 (6) Behavioral Health;

1 (7) Long-term health care options;

2 (8) Criminal Justice issues; and

3 (9) Homelessness.

4 (c) The "VSSP" shall:

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

7 (2) Produce veteran centric policies and procedures informed by forward looking  
8 planning;

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

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

11 (5) Compliment as well as leverage existing US Veterans' Administration programs and  
12 best practices;

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

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

17 (8) Establish a veterans' committee comprised of no fewer than five (5) veterans,  
18 representing diverse interests and viewpoints, that shall provide input to the advisory committee  
19 on all matters pertaining to the preparation or implementation of the Veterans' Services Strategic  
20 Plan. The committee shall receive administrative support from the departments and the members  
21 shall not receive compensation for their service. The committee shall meet at least quarterly and  
22 at the call of the co-chairs or four (4) members of the veterans committee.

23 **30-17.1-12. Meeting and reporting requirements of the advisory committee. -- (a)**  
24 The advisory committee shall meet regularly, on a quarterly basis and at the call of the  
25 chairperson or three (3) committee members.

26 (b) The advisory committee shall provide a copy of the Veterans' Services Strategic Plan  
27 "VSSP" to the senate president, speaker of the house, senate fiscal advisor and house fiscal  
28 advisor one year after enactment of this act.

29 (c) The advisory committee shall report annually to the governor and the general  
30 assembly, no later than April of each year, on the progress made in achieving the goals and  
31 objectives set forth and any other pertinent information.

32 (d) The advisory committee shall update the "VSSP" every five (5) years and provide a  
33 copy of the plan to the senate president, speaker of the house, senate and house fiscal advisor.

34 (e) The advisory committee shall be subject to the provisions of chapter 38-2, access to

1 [public records act, and chapter 42-46, open meetings act.](#)

2 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 STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS'  
AFFAIRS

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1           This act would create the Veterans' Services Strategic Plan Advisory Committee that  
2 would be responsible for developing, maintaining and annually updating a five (5) year statewide  
3 Veterans' Services Strategic Plan ("VSSP"), that includes goals and measurable outcomes to  
4 ensure that all departments deliver comprehensive services and supports for veterans and their  
5 families.

6           This act would take effect upon passage.

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