

**2013 -- S 0479 SUBSTITUTE B**

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LC01821/SUB B  
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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 committee  
11 as established in section 30-17.1-10.

12           (2) "Committee" means the veterans' committee pursuant to the provisions of subdivision  
13 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 division of planning;

18           (iii) The department of human services;

- 1 [\(iv\) The Rhode Island board of 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; and](#)
- 9 [\(xii\) The office of the secretary of state.](#)

10 [\(4\) "Veterans' Services Strategic Plan \("VSSP"\)" means the strategic plan as established](#)  
11 [in section 30-17.1-11.](#)

12 **30-17.1-10. Veterans' services strategic plan advisory committee established. -- (a)**

13 [There is hereby created a veterans' services strategic plan advisory committee known as "the](#)  
14 [Rhode Island veterans' services strategic plan advisory committee" consisting of twelve \(12\)](#)  
15 [members as follows:](#)

16 [\(1\) One of whom shall be the director of the division of veterans' affairs, or his or her](#)  
17 [designee, who shall serve as co-chairperson;](#)

18 [\(2\) One of whom shall be the director of the department of human services, or his or her](#)  
19 [designee, who shall serve as co-chairperson](#)

20 [\(3\) One of whom shall be the associate director of the division of planning, or his or her](#)  
21 [designee;](#)

22 [\(4\) One of whom shall be the chair of the Rhode Island board of education, or his or her](#)  
23 [designee;](#)

24 [\(5\) One of whom shall be the director of the department of behavioral healthcare,](#)  
25 [developmental disabilities and hospitals, or his or her designee;](#)

26 [\(6\) One of whom shall be the director of department of health, or his or her designee;](#)

27 [\(7\) One of whom shall be the director of the division of elderly affairs, or his or her](#)  
28 [designee;](#)

29 [\(8\) One of whom shall be the director of the department of business regulation, or his or](#)  
30 [her designee;](#)

31 [\(9\) One of whom shall be the attorney general, or his or her designee;](#)

32 [\(10\) One of whom shall be the director of the department of labor and training, or his or](#)  
33 [her designee;](#)

34 [\(11\) One of whom shall be the director of the economic development corporation, or his](#)

1 or her designee;

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 **30-17.1-11. The duties of the committee. --** (a) The advisory committee acting through  
18 the division of veterans' affairs, shall work in conjunction with the department of human services  
19 to develop, maintain and annually update a five (5) year statewide veterans' services strategic plan  
20 ("VSSP"), that includes goals and measurable outcomes to ensure that all departments deliver  
21 comprehensive services and supports 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;

25 (2) Employment opportunities;

26 (3) Veteran-owned small business growth;

27 (4) Educational attainment;

28 (5) Job skills training;

29 (6) Behavioral health;

30 (7) Long-term health care options;

31 (8) Criminal justice issues; and

32 (9) Homelessness.

33 (c) Establish a veterans' committee comprised of no fewer than five (5) veterans,  
34 representing diverse interests and viewpoints, that shall provide input to the advisory committee

1 on all matters pertaining to the preparation or implementation of the veterans' services strategic  
2 plan. The committee shall receive administrative support from the departments and the members  
3 shall not receive compensation for their service. The committee shall meet at least quarterly and  
4 at the call of the co-chairs or four (4) members of the veterans' committee.

5 (d) The "VSSP" shall:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 **30-17.1-12. Meeting and reporting requirements for the advisory committee. -- (a)**  
19 The advisory committee shall meet regularly, on a quarterly basis and at the call of the  
20 chairperson or three (3) committee members;

21 (b) The advisory committee shall provide a copy of the veterans' services strategic plan  
22 "VSSP" to the senate president, speaker of the house, senate fiscal advisor and house fiscal  
23 advisor one year after the enactment of this act.

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

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

30 (e) The advisory committee shall be subject to the provisions of chapter 38-2, access to  
31 public records act, and chapter 42-46, open meetings act.

1 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 a twelve (12) member veterans' services strategic plan advisory  
2 committee that would be responsible for developing, maintaining and annually updating a five (5)  
3 year statewide Veterans' Services Strategic Plan ("VSSP"), that includes goals and measurable  
4 outcomes to ensure that all departments deliver comprehensive services and supports for veterans  
5 and their families.

6           This act would take effect upon passage.

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