S T A T E O F N E W Y O R K

10145

I N A S S E M B L Y

June 17, 2014

Introduced by COMMITTEE ON RULES -- (at request of M. of A. Benedetto, Lupardo, Russell, Barrett, DenDekker, Lavine, Ryan, Skoufis) -- read once and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

AN ACT to amend the executive law, in relation to establishing the New York state veterans assistance program and the New York state veterans village pilot program

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Legislative findings. New York state is home to more than 900,000 veterans, seventy-two percent of whom have served during periods of conflict. The state is home to approximately 30,000 active duty military personnel and another 30,000 National Guard and reserve personnel.

The legislature finds that transitioning from active military to civilian life has proven difficult for many veterans. Studies have indicated that two-thirds of transitioning veterans experience a difficult transition from military to civilian life with nearly half not fully ready to make the transition at the time of deactivation. Of the two-thirds of veterans not ready to transition, many indicated they needed more time to determine what to do next or simply decompress from the stress inherent in active duty military service. While the federal government has recognized the difficulty of transitioning to civilian life and developed the Transition Assistance Program with the intent to help veterans make this transition, less than half of veterans say the program helped them reintegrate to civilian life. Furthermore, recent veterans returning home are less likely to have family that served in the military, meaning fewer networks between the military and civilian world exist for veterans to connect within the transition process.

The legislature finds homelessness, depression, mental health disease, and drug abuse are problems encountered by veterans more often than their civilian, non-military counterparts and, the anxiety and uncertainty of transitioning to the civilian world is frequently exacerbated by, or a direct result of, unhealed mental and physical wounds borne on the battlefield. In honor of the service, commitment, and sacrifice on

EXPLANATION--Matter in ITALICS (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [ ] is old law to be omitted.

LBD15539-03-4

behalf of our Nation, the legislature declares it is the public policy of New York state to promote and encourage the successful transition from military to civilian life for our returning veterans. The state aims to assist veterans in post service, reintegration into local communities and workforces, and provision of basic necessities and services crucial to civilian transition.

S 2. The executive law is amended by adding a new section 368-a to read as follows:

S 368-A. NEW YORK STATE VETERANS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. 1. FOR PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION THE TERM "VETERAN" MEANS A PERSON, MALE OR FEMALE, RESIDENT OF THIS STATE, WHO HAS SERVED IN THE ACTIVE MILITARY, NAVAL SERVICE OR AIR SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES DURING A WAR IN WHICH THE UNITED STATES ENGAGED, OR WAS A RECIPIENT OF THE ARMED EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL, MARINE CORPS EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL, OR GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL, AND WHO HAS BEEN RELEASED FROM SUCH SERVICE WITH AN HONORABLE OR GENERAL DISCHARGE.

2. THE STATE DIRECTOR, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE DIVISION OF MILITARY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS, THE COMMISSIONER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION, THE COMMISSIONER OF MENTAL HEALTH, THE COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH, AND THE NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF ALCOHOLISM AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES, OR ANY OTHER ENTITY THAT THE STATE DIRECTOR DEEMS NECESSARY SHALL ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A PROGRAM TO ASSIST VETERANS IN THEIR TRANSITION OUT OF MILITARY SERVICE. SUCH PROGRAM SHALL BE KNOWN AS "THE NEW YORK STATE VETERANS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM". SUCH PROGRAM SHALL PROVIDE COORDINATED MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNSELING, EMPLOYMENT AND JOB TRAINING, HOUSING ASSISTANCE, AND ANY OTHER RELATED INFORMATION OR SERVICES TO VETERANS. SUCH PROGRAM SHALL BE AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE STATE. WHERE PRACTICAL, SUCH PROGRAM SHALL OFFER ALL ITS SERVICES IN A CERTAIN AREA IN ONE FACILITY.

3. THE NEW YORK STATE VETERANS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM SHALL BE AVAILABLE TO VETERANS, WHO HAVE RECEIVED AN HONORABLE OR GENERAL DISCHARGE, DOCUMENTED BY A COPY OF THE VETERAN'S CERTIFICATE OF RELEASE OR DISCHARGE FROM ACTIVE DUTY ALSO KNOWN AS A DD-214 FORM OR AN HONORABLE SERVICE CERTIFICATE/REPORT OF CASUALTY FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE. THE PROGRAM SHALL BE AVAILABLE FROM THE DATE ON WHICH SUCH VETERAN WAS DISCHARGED FROM THE ACTIVE MILITARY SERVICE.

4. IN ESTABLISHING AND CARRYING OUT THE VETERANS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION, THE STATE DIRECTOR SHALL:

(I) PROVIDE INFORMATION CONCERNING FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, PROGRAMS OF MILITARY AND VETERANS' SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS OR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS, THAT MAY BE OF ASSISTANCE TO VETERANS;

(II) PROVIDE, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE COMMISSIONER OF LABOR, INFORMATION ABOUT EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, INSTRUCTION IN RESUME PREPARATION, JOB ANALYSIS, SEARCH, AND INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES, ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT LABOR MARKET, THE COST OF LIVING IN SPECIFIC GEOGRAPHIC AREAS OF THE STATE INCLUDING, TO THE EXTENT PRACTICABLE, THE COST AND AVAILABILITY OF HOUSING, CHILD CARE AND EDUCATION. THE STATE DIRECTOR SHALL ALSO WORK WITH MILITARY AND VETERANS' SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS, LOCAL VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS, AND OTHER APPROPRIATE ORGANIZATIONS IN PROMOTING AND PUBLICIZING JOB FAIRS AND CURRENT JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERANS;

(III) PROVIDE ANALYSIS OR VERIFICATION, TO THE EXTENT PRACTICABLE, OF JOB SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE ACQUIRED WHILE ON ACTIVE DUTY FOR USE IN SEEKING CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT AND IN OBTAINING JOB SEARCH SKILLS;

(IV) EVALUATE THE EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE BENEFITS TO WHICH THE MEMBER IS ENTITLED UNDER THE FEDERAL MONTGOMERY GI BILL, POST 911 GI BILL, AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS;

(V) PROVIDE FINANCIAL LITERACY AND PLANNING RESOURCES INCLUDING INFORMATION ON BUDGETING, SAVING, CREDIT, LOANS, AND TAXES, INCLUDING ASSISTANCE TO SUCH MEMBERS IN THEIR EFFORTS TO OBTAIN LOANS AND GRANTS FROM THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES;

(VI) PROVIDE RESOURCES ON SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, DISABILITY-RELATED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PROCUREMENT OF STATE CONTRACTS INCLUDING CONTRACTS SET ASIDE PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 17-B OF THIS CHAPTER;

(VII) INFORMATION CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND THE TREATMENT OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER, ANXIETY DISORDERS, DEPRESSION, SUICIDAL IDEATIONS, MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA, OR OTHER MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH SERVICE IN THE ARMED FORCES;

(VIII) PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN PREPARING APPLICATIONS FOR VARIOUS FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL VETERANS' BENEFITS INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, FEDERAL VA MEDICAL SERVICES; AND

(IX) PROMULGATE RULES AND REGULATIONS TO EFFECTUATE THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION.

S 3. The executive law is amended by adding a new section 368-b to read as follows:

S 368-B. NEW YORK STATE VETERANS VILLAGE PILOT PROGRAM. 1. BEGINNING JUNE THIRTIETH, TWO THOUSAND SIXTEEN THE STATE DIRECTOR SHALL ESTABLISH A NEW YORK STATE VETERANS VILLAGE PILOT PROGRAM. SUCH PROGRAM, SUBJECT TO THE RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE STATE DIRECTOR, SHALL IDENTIFY VETERANS THAT ARE HOMELESS OR MAY SOON BE HOMELESS AND PROVIDE HOUSING IN A DORMITORY TYPE HOUSING UNTIL PERMANENT HOUSING CAN BE PROVIDED TO SUCH VETERAN. SUCH PROGRAM SHALL ALSO PROVIDE, IN SUCH DORMITORY TYPE HOUSING, MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNSELING, EMPLOYMENT AND JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS, FINANCIAL LITERACY, ASSISTANCE PROVIDED PURSUANT TO SECTION THREE HUNDRED SIXTY-EIGHT-A OF THIS ARTICLE, OR ANY OTHER ASSISTANCE THE VETERAN MAY NEED. SUCH PROGRAM SHALL COORDINATE ANY ASSISTANCE THAT SUCH VETERAN RECEIVES.

2. THE STATE DIRECTOR SHALL PROMULGATE RULES AND REGULATIONS TO EFFECTUATE THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION.

3. BY DECEMBER THIRTY-FIRST, TWO THOUSAND SEVENTEEN AND ANNUALLY THEREAFTER, THE STATE DIRECTOR SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR, THE SPEAKER OF THE ASSEMBLY, AND THE TEMPORARY PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE WHICH SHALL INCLUDE, BUT NOT BE LIMITED TO, EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS AS NECESSARY.

4. THE STATE DIRECTOR, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE COMMISSIONER OF HOMES AND COMMUNITY RENEWAL, AND THE COMMISSIONER OF THE OFFICE OF GENERAL SERVICES, AND ANY OTHER AGENCY THE STATE DIRECTOR DEEMS NECESSARY, SHALL CONDUCT A STATEWIDE STUDY TO DETERMINE IF THERE ARE EXISTING FACILITIES, OWNED BY OR AVAILABLE TO THE STATE, THAT CAN BE USED TO HOUSE VETERANS IN NEED OF HOUSING. SUCH REPORT SHALL BE DELIVERED TO THE GOVERNOR, THE SPEAKER OF THE ASSEMBLY, AND THE TEMPORARY PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE BY DECEMBER THIRTY-FIRST, TWO THOUSAND FIFTEEN. SUCH STUDY SHALL INCLUDE, BUT NOT BE LIMITED TO:

(A) THE NUMBER OF MILITARY PERSONNEL CURRENTLY STATIONED IN NEW YORK STATE INCLUDING THEIR LOCATIONS, AND THE NUMBER OF MILITARY PERSONNEL STATING NEW YORK STATE AS THEIR HOME OF RECORD, INCLUDING THEIR CURRENT GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION;

(B) THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOMELESS VETERANS STATEWIDE;

(C) CURRENT TEMPORARY OR TRANSITIONAL HOUSING FACILITIES OR PROGRAMS OPERATED BY ANY PRIVATE OR NON-PROFIT COMPANY, OR ANY FEDERAL, STATE, OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENTITY CURRENTLY OPEN TO VETERANS IN NEW YORK STATE;

(D) EXISTING PROPERTIES OWNED BY OR AVAILABLE TO THE STATE THAT COULD BE USED TO CREATE HOUSING FACILITIES FOR VETERANS IN NEED;

(E) THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF OPENING, OPERATING, AND MAINTAINING HOUSING FOR VETERANS IN NEED THROUGHOUT THE STATE; AND

(F) RECOMMENDATIONS OR LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS BASED UPON THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY.

S 4. This act shall take effect on the one hundred eightieth day after it shall have become a law.