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

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I N A S S E M B L Y

April 15, 2016

Introduced by M. of A. RUSSELL -- read once and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

AN ACT to amend the executive law, in relation to creating the women veterans advisory committee

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

Section 1. Legislative findings. Women make up 15 percent of the veterans of the armed forces of the United States and continue to be an increasingly integral part of the operations of the armed forces of the United States around the world. Few studies have been conducted to determine and understand the unique challenges that women veterans may have, both post deployment and following separation from active duty. Many veterans who are women do not self-identify as veterans and may, therefore, fail to consider various programs and benefits that are available to them as a result of their military service.

S 2. The executive law is amended by adding a new section 361-c to read as follows:

S 361-C. WOMEN VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE. 1. THE WOMEN VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE IS HEREBY CREATED CONSISTING OF FIVE MEMBERS, WITH ONE MEMBER APPOINTED BY EACH OF THE FOLLOWING: (A) THE GOVERNOR; (B) THE TEMPORARY PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE; (C) THE SPEAKER OF THE ASSEMBLY; (D) THE MINORITY LEADER OF THE SENATE; AND (E) THE MINORITY LEADER OF THE ASSEMBLY. ALL APPOINTED MEMBERS MUST BE WOMEN, AND MUST BE FORMER MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES, INCLUDING, WITHOUT LIMITATION, THE NEW YORK ARMY NATIONAL GUARD AND THE NEW YORK AIR NATIONAL GUARD, WHO RECEIVED, UPON SEVERANCE FROM SERVICE, AN HONORABLE DISCHARGE.

2. IN MAKING APPOINTMENTS PURSUANT TO SUBDIVISION ONE OF THIS SECTION, THE FOLLOWING SHALL BE CONSIDERED:

(A) THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DIRECTOR OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS;

(B) WHETHER THE APPOINTMENTS PROVIDE A GEOGRAPHICAL BALANCE BETWEEN THE URBAN AND RURAL AREAS OF THIS STATE AND REPRESENT THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF THIS STATE; AND

(C) THE LEVEL OF ACTIVITY OF THE WOMAN IN THE VETERAN COMMUNITY.

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

LBD13709-08-6

3. THE COMMITTEE SHALL ELECT A CHAIR FROM AMONG ITS MEMBERS.
4. AFTER THE INITIAL TERMS, EACH MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE SERVES A TERM OF FOUR YEARS.
5. A VACANCY ON THE COMMITTEE MUST BE FILLED FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE UNEXPIRED TERM IN THE SAME MANNER AS THE ORIGINAL APPOINTMENT.
6. THE COMMITTEE SHALL MEET AT LEAST FOUR TIMES PER YEAR AT THE CALL OF THE CHAIR.
7. A MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE APPOINTED CONSTITUTES A QUORUM FOR THE TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS.
8. EACH MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE:
(A) SERVES WITHOUT COMPENSATION, EXCEPT THAT A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE WHO IS A STATE OFFICER OR EMPLOYEE MAY RECEIVE HER REGULAR COMPENSATION WHILE ENGAGING IN THE BUSINESS OF THE COMMITTEE; AND
(B) WHILE ENGAGED IN THE BUSINESS OF THE COMMITTEE, IS ENTITLED TO RECEIVE THE PER DIEM ALLOWANCE AND TRAVEL EXPENSES PROVIDED FOR STATE OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES GENERALLY.
9. THE COMMITTEE SHALL:
(A) SUPPORT AND ASSIST THE DIVISION OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS IN:
(I) LOCATING, EDUCATING AND ADVOCATING FOR ALL WOMEN VETERANS IN THIS STATE;
(II) DETERMINING THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF WOMEN VETERANS;
(III) CONDUCTING OUTREACH AND EDUCATION THROUGH VARIOUS MEANS, INCLUDING, WITHOUT LIMITATION, THE ORGANIZATION OF STATEWIDE WOMEN VETERANS EVENTS, THE PROMOTION OF BENEFITS AND SUPERIOR HEALTH CARE FOR WOMEN VETERANS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMS THAT INFORM PUPILS, BUSINESS LEADERS AND EDUCATORS ABOUT THE IMPORTANT ROLE WOMEN PLAY IN THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES;
(IV) EDUCATING WOMEN VETERANS AS TO BENEFITS AND PROGRAMS THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO THEM;
(V) AT LEAST ANNUALLY, MAKING SUCH RECOMMENDATIONS AS MAY BE DEEMED NECESSARY OR ADVISABLE TO THE GOVERNOR, THE STATE LEGISLATURE, THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE DIVISION OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS AND SUCH OTHER OFFICES OF THIS STATE AS MAY BE APPROPRIATE; AND
(VI) ADVOCATING ON BEHALF OF WOMEN VETERANS TO ENSURE THAT THE PROGRAMS AND POLICIES OF THIS STATE AND OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS REMAIN OPEN TO WOMEN AND MINDFUL OF THE ELEMENTS OF THE EXPERIENCE OF A VETERAN THAT ARE UNIQUE TO WOMEN.
(B) SUBMIT A REPORT ON OR BEFORE FEBRUARY FIFTEENTH OF EACH YEAR, OUTLINING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE DURING THE PRECEDING CALENDAR YEAR AND ANY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATURE. THE REPORT MUST INCLUDE, WITHOUT LIMITATION, INFORMATION PERTAINING TO:
(I) THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF WOMEN VETERANS;
(II) THE CONTRIBUTIONS THAT WOMEN VETERANS HAVE MADE ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES AND THIS STATE;
(III) THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF THE POPULATION OF WOMEN VETERANS; AND
(IV) STEPS TAKEN TO REDUCE MISINFORMATION AND IMPROVE SUPPORT FOR PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN VETERANS.
10. THE DIVISION OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS SHALL PROVIDE THE PERSONNEL, FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES REQUIRED BY THE COMMITTEE.
S 3. This act shall take effect immediately.