

1 ENROLLED

2 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

3 FOR

4 H. B. 2490

5
6 (By Delegates Iaquina, Fleischauer, Longstreth,
7 Stephens and Azinger)

8 [Passed April 13, 2013; in effect ninety days from passage.]

9
10 AN ACT to amend and reenact §18B-4-9 the Code of West Virginia,
11 1931, as amended, relating to providing services for and
12 addressing needs of student veterans enrolled in state
13 institutions of higher education; designating role and duties
14 of veterans advocates; and specifying certain provisions to be
15 implemented for student veterans.

16 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

17 That §18B-4-9 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended,
18 be amended and reenacted to read as follows:

19 **ARTICLE 4. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.**

20 **§18B-4-9. Development of services and facilities for student**
21 **veterans.**

22 (a) *Legislative findings.* -- The Legislature finds that
23 veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States that attend
24 institutions of higher education in this state have many unique

1 needs, issues and concerns that most traditional students do not
2 have. Many of these veterans have had or will be subject to
3 multiple deployments to active duty, including overseas deployment,
4 resulting in challenges to their pursuit of higher education.

5 (b) *Legislative intent.* -- It is the intent of the Legislature
6 that state institutions of higher education provide adequate
7 services and facilities for student veterans in order to better
8 serve their unique needs and to make West Virginia's state
9 institutions of higher education veteran-friendly.

10 (c) The commission, council and each state institution of
11 higher education shall establish and implement measures to assure
12 that veterans enrolled in the institutions receive services and are
13 provided facilities appropriate for their needs, that student
14 veterans complete programs of study and earn degrees, and that the
15 institutions become veteran-friendly by actively and effectively
16 providing academic and social support and assistance to student
17 veterans. The measures shall include, but are not limited to, the
18 following:

19 (1) Establishing veteran-friendly community and technical
20 college degree programs which recognize and award academic credit
21 toward degrees for various types of technical and vocational
22 military training and experience;

23 (2) Developing policies for each state institution of higher
24 education to grant academic credit for Armed Forces experiences;

1 (3) Developing programs to encourage student veterans to share
2 their specialized experience and knowledge gained through military
3 service by making presentations in class, public school programs
4 and local community organizations;

5 (4) Establishing and sponsoring an organization for student
6 veterans on campus and encouraging other veteran-friendly
7 organizations;

8 (5) Appointing and training specific faculty within each
9 degree program or major as liaisons and contacts for student
10 veterans;

11 (6) Providing information about programs that grant credit for
12 prior learning to student veterans and potential student veterans;

13 (7) Coordinating existing disability services on campus with
14 veteran disability services available from the United States
15 Department of Veterans Affairs, other federal and state agencies,
16 and private resources;

17 (8) Designating individuals to provide financial and
18 psychological counseling services on each campus who are trained to
19 effectively respond to the needs of veterans and to provide
20 services or referrals to services to fulfill these needs for
21 student veterans, and to the extent practicable, providing those
22 services and programs in one location;

23 (9) Developing training materials on responding to student
24 veteran needs to be available for continued professional

1 development of counselors to student veterans;

2 (10) Facilitating regular statewide meetings for all personnel
3 at state institutions of higher education who regularly provide
4 specific services to student veterans to discuss and develop best
5 practices, exchange ideas and experiences, and hear presentations
6 by individuals with generally accepted expertise in areas of the
7 various needs of student veterans;

8 (11) Gathering data on the status of student veterans,
9 including their graduation rates, comparing that rate with the
10 graduation rate of other students in the institution, and reporting
11 those results to appropriate state and federal agencies, including
12 the West Virginia Legislature;

13 (12) Establishing a program to create a collaborative
14 relationship between student veterans and alumni of the
15 institution, and with prospective employers to facilitate and
16 provide employment as well as social opportunities to graduating
17 student veterans;

18 (13) Developing and facilitating communications between state
19 institutions of higher education and various veteran organizations
20 in the state to advance veteran causes that benefit student
21 veterans; and

22 (14) Coordinating among all relevant departments within each
23 state institution of higher education including but not limited to
24 admissions, the registrar, the bursar, the veterans advocate and

1 financial aid to ensure that relevant deadlines or time-lines are
2 met for certifying veterans' enrollment as early as practicable to
3 ensure that assistance is received from the U.S. Department of
4 Veterans Affairs (DVA) in a timely fashion. Measures to achieve
5 greater coordination shall include but are not limited to:

6 (A) Identifying applicants who are veterans as early as
7 possible;

8 (B) Taking affirmative steps to reach out to veteran
9 applicants to inform them of relevant policies, time-lines or
10 deadlines for receiving veterans assistance;

11 (C) Developing a communications plan between departments,
12 applicants and students to ensure that deadlines or time-lines are
13 being met;

14 (D) Developing plans to assist students when U.S. Department
15 of Veterans Affairs benefits are not received in a timely fashion.
16 Such plans could include forbearance of payment deadlines, short-
17 term loans, grants, or a revolving fund.

18 (E) Making every effort to provide sufficient class sections
19 to meet the needs of students for classes which are required for
20 graduation, including where appropriate, giving student veterans
21 priority registration.

22 (d) *Veterans Advocates*. -- Each state institution of higher
23 education shall appoint or designate and train a person, preferably
24 a veteran, to serve as a veterans advocate on its campus. The

1 commission and council shall also provide training for veterans
2 advocates at each of the institutions under their respective
3 jurisdictions. The veterans advocate shall serve as the primary
4 point of contact and campus advocate for current and prospective
5 students who are veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States
6 or are current members of the Armed Forces of the United States,
7 including reserve components of the National Guard of this state or
8 any other state. The duties and responsibilities of the veterans
9 advocate include, but are not limited to the following:

10 (1) Assist and facilitate student veterans in utilizing
11 services, resources and facilities available at the institution;
12 and

13 (2) To the extent resources are available for such purposes,
14 provide services, programs and assistance to current and
15 prospective student veterans designed to encourage, promote and
16 facilitate the recruitment, retention and academic success of such
17 students.

18 (e) The commission and council jointly shall submit a report
19 to the Legislature on September 1, annually, on the progress toward
20 implementing this section.