

H. B. 2490

(By Delegates Iaquina, Fleischauer, Longstreth,
Stephens and Azinger)

[Introduced February 15, 2013; referred to the
Committee on Veterans' Affairs and Homeland Security then
Education.]

**FISCAL
NOTE**

A BILL to amend and reenact §18B-4-9 of the Code of West Virginia,
1931, as amended, relating to providing for the appointment of
veterans advocates at state institutions of higher education
for veterans, current members or reserves of the Armed Forces
of the United States or National Guard who are students; and
setting forth the responsibilities of those advocates.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

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

ARTICLE 4. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

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

(a) *Legislative findings.* -- The Legislature finds that
veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States that attend

1 institutions of higher education in this state have many unique
2 needs, issues and concerns that most traditional students do not
3 have. Student veterans that are returning to fulfill their needs
4 for higher education who have been or during their pursuit of
5 higher education may be deployed to active duty often face unique
6 issues and concerns that are unprecedented and unique to the
7 current generation of veterans of the post 9/11 era of service in
8 the Armed Forces. Many of these veterans have had or will be
9 subject to multiple deployments to active duty, including overseas
10 deployment, resulting in many unique issues and challenges in their
11 pursuit of higher education.

12 (b) *Legislative intent.* -- It is the intent of the Legislature
13 that state institutions of higher education provide adequate
14 services and facilities for student veterans in order to better
15 serve their unique issues and needs and to make West Virginia's
16 state institutions of higher education veteran-friendly.

17 (c) The commission and council each shall establish and
18 implement measures in the state institutions of higher education
19 under their respective jurisdictions to assure that veterans
20 enrolled in the institutions receive services and are provided
21 facilities appropriate for their unique needs, that student
22 veterans complete programs of study and earn degrees, and that the
23 institutions become veteran-friendly by actively and effectively

1 providing academic and social support and assistance to student
2 veterans. The measures shall include, but are not limited to, the
3 following:

4 (1) Establishing veteran-friendly community and technical
5 college degree programs which recognize and award academic credit
6 toward degrees for various types of technical and vocational
7 military training and experience;

8 (2) Developing policies for each state institutions of higher
9 education to grant academic credit for Armed Forces experiences;

10 (3) Developing programs to facilitate student veterans in
11 sharing their unique knowledge and experience in the military
12 through public school programs and local community organizations;

13 (4) Establishing and sponsoring an organization for student
14 veterans on campus and encouraging other veteran-friendly
15 organizations;

16 (5) Appointing and training specific faculty within each
17 degree program or major as liaisons and contacts for student
18 veterans;

19 (6) Providing information about the Regents Bachelor of Arts
20 Degree program to student veterans and potential student veterans;

21 (7) Coordinating existing disability services on campus with
22 veteran disability services available from the United States
23 Department of Veterans Affairs, other federal and state agencies,

1 and private resources;

2 (8) Providing counselors on each campus who are trained to
3 effectively respond to the unique needs of veterans and to provide
4 services or provide referrals to services to fulfill these needs
5 for student veterans;

6 (9) Developing training materials on responding to student
7 veteran needs to be available for continued professional
8 development of counselors to student veterans;

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

15 (11) Establishing a procedure to periodically apprise
16 appropriate state and federal agencies of the status of student
17 veterans in West Virginia;

18 (12) Establishing a program to create a collaborative
19 relationship between student veterans and alumni of the
20 institution, and with prospective employers to facilitate and
21 provide employment as well as social opportunities to graduating
22 student veterans; and

23 (13) Developing and facilitating communications between state

1 institutions of higher education and various veteran organizations
2 in the state to advance veteran causes that benefit student
3 veterans.

4 (d) Veterans Advocates. -- Each state institution of higher
5 education shall appoint or designate and train a person to serve as
6 a veterans advocate on the campus of that institution. The
7 commission and council shall also provide training for veterans
8 advocates at each of the institutions under their respective
9 jurisdictions. The veterans advocate shall serve as the primary
10 point of contact and campus advocate for students and prospective
11 students who are veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States
12 or are current members of the Armed Forces of the United States,
13 including reserve components or the National Guard of this state or
14 any other state. The duties and responsibilities of the veterans
15 advocate include, but are not limited to the following:

16 (1) Assist and facilitate student veterans in the utilization
17 of services, resources and facilities available at the institution;
18 and

19 (2) To the extent resources are available for such purposes,
20 provide services, programs and assistance to student veterans and
21 prospective student veterans designed to encourage, promote and
22 facilitate the recruitment, retention and academic success of
23 student veterans.

1 ~~(d)~~ (e) The commission and council jointly shall submit a
2 report to the Legislature on September 1, annually, on the progress
3 toward implementing ~~the provisions of~~ this section.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to provide for the appointment of veterans advocates at state institutions of higher education. The bill sets forth their responsibilities.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from the present law, and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.

This legislation was recommended for introduction and passage during the 2013 Regular Session of the Legislature by the Legislative Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs.