

Senate Bill No. 174

(By Senators Wells, Yost, Jenkins, Snyder, Fitzsimmons, Williams
and D. Hall)

[Introduced February 15, 2013; referred to the Committee on
Military; and then to the Committee on Education.]

**Interim
Bill**

**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.**

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

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

19 (c) The commission and council each shall establish and
20 implement measures in the state institutions of higher education
21 under their respective jurisdictions to assure that veterans
22 enrolled in the institutions receive services and are provided
23 facilities appropriate for their unique needs, that student

1 veterans complete programs of study and earn degrees, and that the
2 institutions become veteran-friendly by actively and effectively
3 providing academic and social support and assistance to student
4 veterans. The measures shall include, but are not limited to, the
5 following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

23 (7) Coordinating existing disability services on campus with

1 veteran disability services available from the United States
2 Department of Veterans Affairs, other federal and state agencies,
3 and private resources;

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

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

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

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

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

1 student veterans; and

2 (13) Developing and facilitating communications between state
3 institutions of higher education and various veteran organizations
4 in the state to advance veteran causes that benefit student
5 veterans.

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

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

21 (2) To the extent resources are available for such purposes,
22 provide services, programs and assistance to student veterans and
23 prospective student veterans designed to encourage, promote and

1 facilitate the recruitment, retention and academic success of
2 student veterans.

3 ~~(d)~~ (e) The commission and council jointly shall submit a
4 report to the Legislature on September 1, annually, on the progress
5 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.