

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

## **2020 REGULAR SESSION**

**Introduced**

### **House Bill 4693**

BY DELEGATES PACK, STEELE, COOPER, PAYNTER,

SUMMERS AND J. JEFFRIES

[Introduced February 05, 2020; Referred to the  
Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources  
then Government Organization]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §19-1-12 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating  
 2 to renaming the Veteran and Warriors Agriculture Program in order for it to serve law  
 3 enforcement and emergency services.

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

**ARTICLE 1. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.**

**§19-1-12. Veterans and ~~Warriors~~ Heroes to Agriculture Program and fund.**

1 (a) *Legislative findings.* --

2 West Virginians have a longstanding tradition of service in the armed forces of the United  
 3 States. Many veterans suffer from physical and emotional afflictions and are often unable to find  
 4 gainful employment upon returning from combat. Exploring opportunities to engage West  
 5 Virginia's veterans in agriculture is beneficial to the health and welfare of veterans, as well as to  
 6 the future of West Virginia's agricultural economy.

7 (b) *Veterans and ~~Warriors~~ Heroes to Agriculture Program.* --

8 The Department of Agriculture shall develop a Veterans and ~~Warriors~~ Heroes to  
 9 Agriculture Program to integrate veterans into the field of agriculture, and support veterans  
 10 currently working in agriculture. These programs may include, but are not limited to, using post-  
 11 mine land for agricultural development, promoting high tunnel crops and production, expanding  
 12 the apiary industry, developing cottage industries, exploring niche crops, raising more livestock,  
 13 increasing the aquaculture industry and helping veterans promote their agricultural products  
 14 through farmers markets and cooperatives. The department may call on the Department of  
 15 Veterans' Assistance and the state's Adjutant General ~~shall work together~~ for assistance to recruit  
 16 and train eligible veterans, and develop and support the program.

17 (c) *Veterans and ~~Warriors~~ and Heroes to Agriculture Fund.* -- ~~There is hereby created in~~  
 18 ~~the State Treasury a special revenue account, designated the Veterans and Warriors to~~  
 19 ~~Agriculture Fund~~ The Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture Fund is continued, but is renamed the  
 20 Veterans and Hereoes to Agriculture Fund. The fund shall consist of income from leasing the

21 department's property for the program, surplus funds which may be transferred from the fund  
22 created by §19-12A-6a, gifts, grants and donations, and legislative appropriations which may be  
23 made to support the program. Expenditures from the fund shall be used exclusively, in  
24 accordance with appropriations by the Legislature, to pay costs, fees and expenses necessary to  
25 administer the Veterans and ~~Warriors~~ Heroes to Agriculture Program. ~~Provided, That for fiscal~~  
26 ~~year ending June 30, 2015, expenditures are authorized from collections rather than pursuant to~~  
27 ~~an appropriation by the Legislature~~

28 (d) Notwithstanding any provision in this code to the contrary, should the Department of  
29 Agriculture deem it necessary to provide land for activities within this program, it is exempt from  
30 the purchasing requirements as they relate to the competitive leasing of state property.

31 (e) The commissioner may propose emergency or legislative rules for approval in  
32 accordance with the provisions of §29A-3-1 *et seq.* to effectuate the provisions of this section.

33 (f) Expansion of Veterans and Heroes to Agriculture Program. -- The Legislature finds that  
34 West Virginians also proudly answer the call to serve domestically in emergency response and  
35 law enforcement roles, including as police officers, sheriffs, firefighters, emergency medical  
36 technicians, and first responders. To that end, the commissioner is hereby authorized to expand  
37 the scope of the Veterans and Heroes to Agriculture program to provide agriculture assistance  
38 and training to additional West Virginia heroes that will allow these brave individuals to continue  
39 to answer the call of duty by producing and providing fresh, healthy, and local food to their fellow  
40 West Virginians.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to expand the scope of the Veterans to Agriculture Program to allow it to serve law enforcement, emergency responders, and other heroes who contribute to the safety of our state and nation.

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