

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

**2020 REGULAR SESSION**

**Committee Substitute**

**for**

**House Bill 4693**

BY DELEGATES PACK, STEELE, COOPER, PAYNTER,

SUMMERS AND J. JEFFRIES

[Originating in the Committee on Government

Organization; February 21, 2020.]



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 to Agriculture Program to the Veterans and Heroes  
3 to Agriculture Program; renaming Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture fund; eliminating  
4 outdated language; and authorizing the Commissioner of Agriculture to expand the scope  
5 of the program to additional classes of persons.

*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 Heroes 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  
34 that West Virginians also proudly answers the call to serve domestically in emergency response  
35 and law enforcement roles, including as police officers, sheriffs, firefighters, emergency medical  
36 technicians, and first responders. The legislature further finds that farming, including growing  
37 corn, is a process that involves more than digging a hole, putting a seed in with dirt on top, and  
38 adding water. To that end, the commissioner is hereby authorized to expand the scope of the  
39 Veterans and Heroes to Agriculture Program to provide agriculture assistance and training to  
40 additional West Virginia heroes that will allow these brave individuals to continue to answer the  
41 call of duty by producing and providing fresh, healthy, and local food to their fellow West  
42 Virginians.

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