

# American Legion Department of Illinois



## Legislative Commission Meeting Minutes

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Meeting date | time **3/25/2017 12 Noon** | Meeting location *Springfield, IL*

Meeting called by Legislative Commission

Type of meeting Committee Meeting

Facilitator Laimutis "Limey" Nargelenas

Permanent Secretary Kevin Kilkenney

### Attendees:

#### Chairman:

Laimutis "Limey" Nargelenas(4), lnargelenas@gmail.com

#### Vice Chairman:

Hank Robards(5)

hankrobards@hometel.com

#### Committee members:

Kevin Kilkenney(3),

kevk0648@gmail.com

Ken Trumbull(1),

kjt1347@aol.com

Richard Groharing(2) Excused

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## I. Review of Pending Illinois Legislative Bills

- 1) Chairman Nargelenas handed out a schedule for the remaining Illinois legislative session
- 2) It is now possible to personally issue a statement of support for a particular piece of legislation online through the ilga.gov website
- 3) Pending Legislation

### **SB 87, PROP TX-SURVIVING SPOUSE**

#### **Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Property Tax Code. Provides that, for the 2016 taxable year and thereafter, the exemption for veterans with disabilities carries over to the surviving spouse of a veteran who was killed in the line of duty in the current taxable year or any preceding taxable year. Provides that, for the 2015 taxable year and thereafter, the exemption for veterans with disabilities carries over to the surviving spouse of a veteran who did not obtain the exemption before death, but who would have qualified for the exemption in the current taxable year if he or she had survived. Effective immediately.

**Action:** Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

## **SB0871 PROP TX-DISABLED VETERANS**

### **Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Property Tax Code. Makes the following changes with respect to the homestead exemption for veterans with disabilities: (1) provides that the exemption amount shall not be deducted from the property's equalized assessed value, but shall be an abatement from the property's total property tax liability for the taxable year; (2) provides that, if the veteran is a recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor or is a former prisoner of war, then the property is exempt from taxation; (3) provides that the veteran is not required to have qualified for or obtained the exemption before death if the veteran was killed in the line of duty and the death is found to be service-connected; (4) makes changes concerning reapplication; and (5) provides that, if the veteran has a service-connected disability of 70% or more and the property has an equalized assessed value of \$100,000 or more, then the amount of the exemption is \$5,000 (currently, the property is exempt). Effective immediately. SB 871, PROP TX-DISABLED VETERANS

**Action:** Accept \_\_\_\_\_ **Reject** **X** **Request Modification or Information** \_\_\_\_\_

## **SB 872, PROP TX-VETERANS**

### **Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Property Tax Code. Provides that the homestead exemption for veterans with disabilities shall be prorated if the property is first used as a qualified residence by a veteran with a disability after January 1 of a taxable year. Effective immediately.

**Action:** Accept **X** **Reject** \_\_\_\_\_ **Request Modification or Information** \_\_\_\_\_

## **SB 1242, VETERANS' AFFAIRS-COMMISSIONS**

### **Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Department of Veterans Affairs Act. Provides that the Department of Veterans' Affairs shall assist the superintendent and staff of any Veterans Assistance Commission created under the Military Veterans Assistance Act with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' process of becoming accredited as a service organization representative of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs. Provides that this assistance shall include, but not be limited to, a certifying official of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs certifying with his or her signature on behalf of the superintendent and staff of a Veterans Assistance Commission the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' Application for Accreditation as a Service Organization Representative, and the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs filing the application with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Action:** Accept **X** **Reject** \_\_\_\_\_ **Request Modification or Information** \_\_\_\_\_

## **SB 605, PROP TX-SURVIVING SPOUSE**

### **Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Property Tax Code. Provides that, for the 2015 taxable year and thereafter, the exemption for veterans with disabilities carries over to the surviving spouse of a veteran who was killed in the line of duty in the current taxable year or any preceding taxable year. Provides that, for the 2016 taxable year and thereafter, the exemption for veterans with disabilities carries over to the surviving spouse of a veteran who did not obtain the exemption before death, but who would have qualified for the exemption in the current taxable year if he or she had survived. Effective immediately.

**Action:** Accept **X** **Reject** \_\_\_\_\_ **Request Modification or Information** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **SB 687, VETERANS BURIAL PLACES**

##### **Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Veterans Burial Places Act. Provides that when a headstone or memorial marker is provided for a United States War Veteran pursuant to specified federal law by the federal government, the Department of Veterans' Affairs shall pay an amount not to exceed \$300 (currently, \$100) to the next of kin or cemetery official responsible for the cost of transporting and erecting the headstone or memorial. Effective immediately.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### **SB 866, VETERANS-SERVICE ANIMALS**

##### **Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Department of Veterans Affairs Act. Provides that the Department of Veterans Affairs shall provide informational resources and education to veterans returning from deployment regarding service animals for individuals with disabilities including, but not limited to, resources and education on service animals that guide people who are blind, pull a wheelchair, alert a person with hearing loss, protect a person having a seizure, assist a person with a traumatic brain injury, and calm a person with post-traumatic stress disorder during an anxiety attack or psychiatric episode.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### **SB 1693, VITAL RECORDS-MILITARY SERVICE**

##### **Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Vital Records Act. Provides that the death certificate for an individual with a history of military service may include or may be amended to include the deceased individual's veteran status, the branch of the military that he or she served in, and the period of time that he or she served in the military. Effective immediately.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### **SB 1756, FLAG DISPLAY-GOVERNOR NOTICE**

##### **Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Flag Display Act. Provides that in lieu of notice being provided by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, any other State or federal entity, agency, or person holding such information may notify the Governor of the death by hostile fire of an Illinois resident member of the United States armed forces. Provides that if such notice is provided to the Governor by an entity, agency, or person other than the Department of Veterans' Affairs, then the obligation to notify the Governor of an Illinois resident soldier's death shall be considered fulfilled.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### **SB 1757, VETERANS' AFFAIRS-REFERENCES**

##### **Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Department of Veterans Affairs Act. Changes the short title of the Act to the Department of Veterans' Affairs Act. Amends various Acts by correcting references to the Department of Veterans' Affairs Act and the Department of Veterans' Affairs and by eliminating references to the Illinois Veterans' Commission, which was the predecessor agency of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Effective January 1, 2018.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

**SB 1620, PROCUREMENT-VETERAN PREF****Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Illinois Procurement Code. Provides that the certification of service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses and veteran-owned small businesses is an exclusive powers and functions of the State. Denies home rule powers. Effective immediately.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

**HB 2647, VETERANS' SUICIDE TASK FORCE****Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Department of Veterans Affairs Act. Contains provisions concerning the establishment of various programs and services for the benefit of veterans including a proactive outreach program for veterans that served in high casualty units, in units that experienced high conflict areas, and in units where at least one service member committed suicide following his or her service; a public awareness campaign concerning the trauma and internal injuries suffered by veterans; specified training concerning mental health services for employees of veterans service organizations, Veterans Assistance Commissions, and veterans' service associations; educational success programs for veterans experiencing specified difficulties in higher education; a family preparation course for the families of returning veterans; a licensing program for therapy dogs for veterans; a transition program for returning veterans that reside in the State; a system that allows veterans to file a specified federal form immediately upon discharge; creation of an employer training program; and a standard statewide peer-to-peer training program to familiarize veterans with the veterans' services available at the local, State, and federal levels. Requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs to adopt any rules necessary to implement these provisions.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

**HB 2652, VETERANS' SUICIDE TASK FORCE****Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Department of Veterans Affairs Act. Contains provisions concerning the establishment of various programs and services for the benefit of veterans including an educational success programs for veterans experiencing specified difficulties in higher education; a family preparation course for the families of returning veterans; a transition program for returning veterans that reside in the State; a system that allows veterans to file a specified federal form immediately upon discharge; creation of an employer training program; and a standard statewide peer-to-peer training program to familiarize veterans with the veterans' services available at the local, State, and federal levels. Requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs to adopt any rules necessary to implement these provisions.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

**HB 2653, VETERANS' SUICIDE TASK FORCE****Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Department of Veterans Affairs Act. Contains provisions concerning the establishment of various programs and services for the benefit of veterans including a proactive outreach program for veterans that served in high casualty units, in units that experienced high conflict areas, and in units where at least one service member committed suicide following his or her service; a public awareness campaign concerning the trauma and internal injuries suffered by veterans; and a licensing program for therapy dogs for veterans. Requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs to adopt any rules necessary to implement these provisions.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### HB 2654, VETERANS' SUICIDE TASK FORCE

##### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Department of Veterans Affairs Act. Provides that the Department of Veterans' Affairs shall provide training to frontline employees at veterans service organizations established under the Act on mental health services to identify veterans who might be at risk of suicidal thoughts. Provides that the training may include, but not be limited to, mental health first aid training and amplified suicide advanced training programs. Provides that the Department shall provide assistance to Veterans Assistance Commissions established under the Military Veterans Assistance Act and veterans' service associations, including, but not limited to, the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and AMVETS, in providing the training. Provides that the Department shall find combat veterans to serve as veteran service officers at veterans service organizations established under the Act for the purpose of having veteran services officers who are able to properly relate to fellow combat veterans. Requires the Department to adopt any rules necessary to implement these provisions.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### HB 2656, VETERANS' SUICIDE TASK FORCE

##### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Department of Veterans Affairs Act. Contains provisions concerning the establishment of various programs and services for the benefit of veterans including an educational success program for veterans experiencing specified difficulties in higher education; a family preparation course for the families of returning veterans; a transition program for returning veterans that reside in the State; a system that allows veterans to file a specified federal form immediately upon discharge; creation of an employer training program; and a standard statewide peer-to-peer training program to familiarize veterans with the veterans' services available at the local, State, and federal levels. Requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs to adopt any rules necessary to implement these provisions.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### HB 2657, VETERANS' SUICIDE TASK FORCE

##### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Department of Veterans Affairs Act. Contains provisions concerning the establishment of various programs and services for the benefit of veterans including a proactive outreach program for veterans that served in high casualty units, in units that experienced high conflict areas, and in units where at least one service member committed suicide following his or her service; a public awareness campaign concerning the trauma and internal injuries suffered by veterans; and a licensing program for therapy dogs for veterans. Requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs to adopt any rules necessary to implement these provisions.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### HB 2658, VETERANS-MENTAL HEALTH

##### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Department of Veterans Affairs Act. Provides that the Department of Veterans' Affairs shall provide training to frontline employees at veterans service organizations established under the Act on mental health services to identify veterans who might be at risk of suicidal thoughts. Provides that the training may include, but not be limited to, mental health first aid training and amplified suicide advanced training programs. Provides that the Department shall provide assistance to Veterans Assistance Commissions established under the Military Veterans Assistance Act and veterans' service associations, including, but not limited to, the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and AMVETS, in providing the training. Provides that the Department shall find combat veterans to serve as veteran service officers at veterans service organizations established under the Act for the purpose of having veteran services officers who are able to properly relate to fellow combat veterans. Requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs to adopt any rules necessary to implement these provisions.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### HB 2973, DISCHARGED SERVICEMEMBERS

##### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Department of Veterans Affairs Act. Provides that the Illinois Veterans' Advisory Council shall investigate the re-entry process for service members who return to civilian life after being engaged in an active theater. Provides that by July 1, 2018 and by July 1 of each year thereafter, the Council shall present a specified annual report. Provides that such investigation and annual report responsibilities shall be a continuation of the investigation and annual report responsibilities of the Illinois Discharged Servicemembers Task Force. Provides that through July 1, 2017, the Task Force shall present the specified annual report. Provides that as soon as is practicable after the Task Force presents its final report due by July 1, 2017, any information collected by the Task Force in carrying out its duties under specified provisions shall be transferred to the Council. Provides that the Task Force is dissolved on July 1, 2018. Amends the Board of Higher Education Act to make conforming changes. Effective immediately.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### HB 3017, FLAG DISPLAY-GOVERNOR NOTICE

##### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Flag Display Act. Provides that in lieu of notice being provided by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, any other State or federal entity, agency, or person holding such information may notify the Governor of the death by hostile fire of an Illinois resident member of the United States armed forces. Provides that if such notice is provided to the Governor by an entity, agency, or person other than the Department of Veterans' Affairs, then the obligation to notify the Governor of an Illinois resident soldier's death shall be considered fulfilled.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### HB 3018, VETERANS' AFFAIRS-REFERENCES

##### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Department of Veterans Affairs Act. Changes the short title of the Act to the Department of Veterans' Affairs Act. Amends various Acts by correcting references to the Department of Veterans' Affairs Act and the Department of Veterans' Affairs and by eliminating references to the Illinois Veterans' Commission, which was the predecessor agency of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Effective January 1, 2018.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### HB 3088, AABD-LIFE INSURANCE EXEMPTION

##### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Aid to the Aged, Blind, or Disabled Article of the Illinois Public Aid Code. In provisions concerning a claim against the estate of a deceased recipient, provides that, subject to federal approval, no claim of the State shall be enforced against any life insurance benefits or proceeds provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to the surviving spouse of the deceased recipient.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### HB 3659, AGR-VETERANS ANIMAL ADOPTION

##### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Animal Welfare Act. Provides that an animal shelter that creates or has an existing program where veterans of the United States Armed Forces may adopt an animal at a discounted rate or at no charge, the Department of Agriculture shall charge half the fee required for licensing or renewal for that animal shelter.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### HB 305, MUNI-PD COLLEGE REQUIREMENTS

##### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Illinois Municipal Code. Provides that the requirement that a police applicant possess an associate's degree may also be waived if the applicant has successfully received credit for a minimum of 60 credit hours toward a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university (currently, this requirement may be waived only if the applicant has served for 24 months of active duty or 180 days combat duty in the United States Armed Forces). Effective immediately.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### HB 329, CONCEALED CARRY-PROHIBIT PLACE

##### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Firearm Concealed Carry Act. Provides that a licensee under the Act shall not knowingly carry a firearm into any building, real property, or parking area under the control of (1) a licensed establishment as defined and licensed under the Video Gaming Act, or (2) a licensed fraternal establishment or licensed veterans establishment as defined and licensed under the Video Gaming Act, where alcoholic liquor is drawn, poured, mixed, or otherwise served for consumption on the premises. Provides that a licensee under the Act shall not knowingly carry a firearm into any building under the control of a licensed fraternal establishment, licensed veterans establishment, or licensed truck stop establishment, as defined and licensed under the Video Gaming Act, and alcoholic liquor is not drawn, poured, mixed, or otherwise served for consumption on the premises. Provides that any person (rather than the owner) lawfully in possession and control of private real property of any type may prohibit the carrying of concealed firearms on the property (deletes under his or her control). Provides that if the property is a private residence no sign need be posted and it shall be presumed that the carrying of concealed firearms is prohibited in the residence and a violation of the Act. Effective immediately

Action: Accept \_\_\_\_\_ Reject   X   Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### HB 3271, POLICE & FIRE-EXAMINATIONS

##### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Illinois Municipal Code. Provides that a civil service commission or a councilor board of trustees of a board of fire and police commissioners may provide for additional examinations to occur within a reasonable period after the commission receives an application from a person who, within the 6 months preceding an application, was discharged from the active or reserve components of any of the branches of the Armed Forces of the United States or the National Guard, of any state, and whose service was characterized as honorable or under honorable conditions. Effective immediately.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

#### HR 16, URGE CONGRESS-VETS-MEDS REFILL

##### Synopsis As Introduced

Urges Congress to pass legislation in support of the establishment of VA emergency prescription refill programs nationwide to ensure that, in emergency situations, veterans may receive medication directly from their local pharmacy and VA facility.

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_



Declares November 9, 2017 as "Illinois Women Veterans Day".

Action: Accept   X   Reject \_\_\_\_\_ Request Modification or Information \_\_\_\_\_

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## II. Review of National Legislative Agenda by Hank Robards

### III. Excerpt from The Legion Dispatch

# NDAA for fiscal year 2017 signed into law

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By James Oxford, National Legislative Commission chairman

JAN 09, 2017

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On Dec. 2, the House voted 375-34 to approve the conference report to **S. 2943**, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2017. The Senate followed suit on Dec. 8, approving the measure by a recorded vote of 92-7. It was signed into law by President Barack Obama on Dec. 23, and is now **P.L. 114-328**.

This measure sets the spending parameters and policy statements for America's military forces for this fiscal year, which began Oct. 1, 2016. This legislation sets Department of Defense (DoD) spending for the upcoming year at \$619 billion for base national defense. This includes the administration's base request of \$610 billion; \$5.8 billion supplemental request for operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Europe; and a further \$3.2 billion for Readiness Stabilization Funding to stop the drawdown of the military, which is fueling the readiness crisis.

Other highlights of the measure include:

- A 2.1 percent pay raise for troops;
- A stop to the drawdown and an increase to the end strength of America's armed forces;
- A solution to getting better technology into the hands of war fighters more quickly;
- An increase of funding for depot maintenance facilities, sustainment and modernization, and ship maintenance; and
- An increase of ship procurement, especially for submarines and amphibious ships.

The NDAA improves access to quality care for war fighters, military retirees and their families, while enhancing medical readiness. The measure also makes no changes to the Basic Allowance for Housing. Further, it makes reforms to ensure the military commissary benefit will be preserved. However, once again, Congress failed to repeal the Disabled Veterans Tax or to provide mandatory end-of-service physical examination to reserve component troops.



Other reforms contained in the NDAA include updating the Uniform Code of Military Justice, DoD organizational reform, and limiting the staff size of the National Security Council.

## **Veterans legislation passes**

The House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees compiled an omnibus bill consisting of VA-related provisions. H.R. 6416, the Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016, passed the Senate without amendment by voice vote on Dec. 10, after it passed the House on Dec. 6. The measure was signed by Obama on Dec. 16, and is now P.L. **114-315**.

This bill is named after Jeff Miller, chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, and Richard Blumenthal, ranking member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. This omnibus bill drew together a number of pending non-controversial veterans' bills that were bipartisan and voted out of committee months ago.

Hank Robards passed out the following informational handouts:

1. 115<sup>th</sup> Congress-1<sup>st</sup> Session Legislative Papers
2. Legislative Agenda for 115<sup>th</sup> Congress Pamphlet
3. The American Legion Legislative Agenda (submitted to accompany testimony before Congress by American Legion Commander Charles E Schmidt-March 1, 2017)

References Used:

<http://www.ilga.gov> used for reference to current Illinois legislation

<https://www.legion.org/dispatch/235527/ndaa-fiscal-year-2017-signed-law>

<http://www.veteransresources.org/rao-bulletin> used for reference to Federal legislation

Notes: