

1 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

2 FOR

3 **H. B. 2490**

4
5 (By Delegates Iaquina, Fleischauer, Longstreth,
6 Stephens and Azinger)

7 (Originating in the Committee on Education.)

8 [March 28, 2013]

9
10 A BILL to amend and reenact §18B-4-9 the Code of West Virginia,
11 1931, as amended, relating to providing services for and
12 addressing needs of student veterans enrolled in state
13 institutions of higher education; designating role and duties
14 of veterans advocates; and specifying certain provisions to be
15 implemented for student veterans.

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

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

19 **ARTICLE 4. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.**

20 **§18B-4-9. Development of services and facilities for student**
21 **veterans.**

22 (a) *Legislative findings.* -- The Legislature finds that
23 veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States that attend
24 institutions of higher education in this state have many unique

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

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

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

1 are not limited to, the following:

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

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

9 (3) Developing programs to ~~facilitate~~ encourage student
10 veterans ~~in sharing their unique knowledge and experience in the~~
11 ~~military through~~ to share their specialized experience and
12 knowledge gained through military service by making presentations
13 in class, public school programs and local community organizations;

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

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

20 (6) Providing information about ~~the Regents Bachelor of Arts~~
21 ~~Degree program~~ programs that grant credit for prior learning to
22 student veterans and potential student veterans;

23 (7) Coordinating existing disability services on campus with
24 veteran disability services available from the United States

1 Department of Veterans Affairs, other federal and state agencies,
2 and private resources;

3 (8) Designating individuals to provide financial and
4 psychological counseling services ~~Providing counselors~~ on each
5 campus who are trained to effectively respond to the ~~unique~~ needs
6 of veterans and to provide services or ~~provide~~ referrals to
7 services to fulfill these needs for student veterans~~;~~, and to the
8 extent practicable, providing those services and programs in one
9 location;

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

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

19 (11) ~~Establishing a procedure to periodically apprise~~
20 ~~appropriate state and federal agencies of the status of student~~
21 ~~veterans in West Virginia~~ Gathering data on the status of student
22 veterans, including their graduation rates, comparing that rate
23 with the graduation rate of other students in the institution, and
24 reporting those results to appropriate state and federal agencies,

1 including the West Virginia Legislature;

2 (12) Establishing a program to create a collaborative
3 relationship between student veterans and alumni of the
4 institution, and with prospective employers to facilitate and
5 provide employment as well as social opportunities to graduating
6 student veterans; ~~and~~

7 (13) Developing and facilitating communications between state
8 institutions of higher education and various veteran organizations
9 in the state to advance veteran causes that benefit student
10 veterans; and

11 (14) Coordinating among all relevant departments within each
12 state institution of higher education including but not limited to
13 admissions, the registrar, the bursar, the veterans advocate and
14 financial aid to ensure that relevant deadlines or time-lines are
15 met for certifying veterans' enrollment as early as practicable to
16 ensure that assistance is received from the U.S. Department of
17 Veterans Affairs (DVA) in a timely fashion. Measures to achieve
18 greater coordination may include but are not limited to:

19 (A) Identifying applicants who are veterans as early as
20 possible;

21 (B) Taking affirmative steps to reach out to veteran
22 applicants to inform them of relevant policies, time-lines or
23 deadlines for receiving veterans assistance;

24 (C) Developing a communications plan between departments,

1 applicants and students to ensure that deadlines or time-lines are
2 being met;

3 (D) Developing plans to assist students when U.S. Department
4 of Veterans Affairs benefits are not received in a timely fashion.
5 Such plans could include forbearance of payment deadlines, short-
6 term loans, grants, or a revolving fund.

7 (E) Making every effort to provide sufficient class sections
8 to meet the needs of students for classes which are required for
9 graduation, including where appropriate, giving student veterans
10 priority registration.

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

23 (1) Assist and facilitate student veterans in utilizing
24 services, resources and facilities available at the institution;

1 and

2 (2) To the extent resources are available for such purposes,
3 provide services, programs and assistance to current and
4 prospective student veterans designed to encourage, promote and
5 facilitate the recruitment, retention and academic success of such
6 students.

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