

E N R O L L E D

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

FOR

H. B. 2490

(BY DELEGATE(S) IAQUINTA, FLEISCHAUER, LONGSTRETH,
STEPHENS AND AZINGER)

[Passed April 13, 2013; in effect ninety days from passage.]

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

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. Many of these veterans have had or will be subject to
6 multiple deployments to active duty, including overseas deploy-
7 ment, resulting in challenges to their pursuit of higher education.

8 (b) *Legislative intent.* — It is the intent of the Legislature
9 that state institutions of higher education provide adequate
10 services and facilities for student veterans in order to better serve
11 their unique needs and to make West Virginia’s state institutions
12 of higher education veteran-friendly.

13 (c) The commission, council and each state institution of
14 higher education shall establish and implement measures to
15 assure that veterans enrolled in the institutions receive services
16 and are provided facilities appropriate for their needs, that
17 student veterans complete programs of study and earn degrees,
18 and that the institutions become veteran-friendly by actively and
19 effectively providing academic and social support and assistance
20 to student veterans. The measures shall include, but are not
21 limited to, the following:

22 (1) Establishing veteran-friendly community and technical
23 college degree programs which recognize and award academic
24 credit toward degrees for various types of technical and voca-
25 tional military training and experience;

26 (2) Developing policies for each state institution of higher
27 education to grant academic credit for Armed Forces experi-
28 ences;

29 (3) Developing programs to encourage student veterans to
30 share their specialized experience and knowledge gained through
31 military service by making presentations in class, public school
32 programs and local community organizations;

33 (4) Establishing and sponsoring an organization for student
34 veterans on campus and encouraging other veteran-friendly
35 organizations;

36 (5) Appointing and training specific faculty within each
37 degree program or major as liaisons and contacts for student
38 veterans;

39 (6) Providing information about programs that grant credit
40 for prior learning to student veterans and potential student
41 veterans;

42 (7) Coordinating existing disability services on campus with
43 veteran disability services available from the United States
44 Department of Veterans Affairs, other federal and state agencies,
45 and private resources;

46 (8) Designating individuals to provide financial and psycho-
47 logical counseling services on each campus who are trained to
48 effectively respond to the needs of veterans and to provide
49 services or referrals to services to fulfill these needs for student
50 veterans; and to the extent practicable, providing those services
51 and programs in one location;

52 (9) Developing training materials on responding to student
53 veteran needs to be available for continued professional develop-
54 ment of counselors to student veterans;

55 (10) Facilitating regular statewide meetings for all personnel
56 at state institutions of higher education who regularly provide
57 specific services to student veterans to discuss and develop best
58 practices, exchange ideas and experiences, and hear presenta-

59 tions by individuals with generally accepted expertise in areas of
60 the various needs of student veterans;

61 (11) Gathering data on the status of student veterans,
62 including their graduation rates, comparing that rate with the
63 graduation rate of other students in the institution, and reporting
64 those results to appropriate state and federal agencies, including
65 the West Virginia Legislature;

66 (12) Establishing a program to create a collaborative
67 relationship between student veterans and alumni of the institu-
68 tion, and with prospective employers to facilitate and provide
69 employment as well as social opportunities to graduating student
70 veterans;

71 (13) Developing and facilitating communications between
72 state institutions of higher education and various veteran
73 organizations in the state to advance veteran causes that benefit
74 student veterans; and

75 (14) Coordinating among all relevant departments within
76 each state institution of higher education including but not
77 limited to admissions, the registrar, the bursar, the veterans
78 advocate and financial aid to ensure that relevant deadlines or
79 time-lines are met for certifying veterans' enrollment as early as
80 practicable to ensure that assistance is received from the U.S.
81 Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) in a timely fashion.
82 Measures to achieve greater coordination shall include but are
83 not limited to:

84 (A) Identifying applicants who are veterans as early as
85 possible;

86 (B) Taking affirmative steps to reach out to veteran appli-
87 cants to inform them of relevant policies, time-lines or deadlines
88 for receiving veterans assistance;

89 (C) Developing a communications plan between depart-
90 ments, applicants and students to ensure that deadlines or time-
91 lines are being met;

92 (D) Developing plans to assist students when U.S. Depart-
93 ment of Veterans Affairs benefits are not received in a timely
94 fashion. Such plans could include forbearance of payment
95 deadlines, short-term loans, grants, or a revolving fund.

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

100 (d) *Veterans Advocates*. — Each state institution of higher
101 education shall appoint or designate and train a person, prefera-
102 bly a veteran, to serve as a veterans advocate on its campus. The
103 commission and council shall also provide training for veterans
104 advocates at each of the institutions under their respective
105 jurisdictions. The veterans advocate shall serve as the primary
106 point of contact and campus advocate for current and prospective
107 students who are veterans of the Armed Forces of the United
108 States or are current members of the Armed Forces of the United
109 States, including reserve components of the National Guard of
110 this state or any other state. The duties and responsibilities of the
111 veterans advocate include, but are not limited to the following:

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

114 (2) To the extent resources are available for such purposes,
115 provide services, programs and assistance to current and
116 prospective student veterans designed to encourage, promote and
117 facilitate the recruitment, retention and academic success of such
118 students.

119 (e) The commission and council jointly shall submit a report
120 to the Legislature on September 1, annually, on the progress
121 toward implementing this section.

That Joint Committee on Enrolled Bills hereby certifies that the foregoing bill is correctly enrolled.

Chairman, House Committee

Chairman, Senate Committee

Originating in the House.

In effect ninety days from passage.

Clerk of the House of Delegates

Clerk of the Senate

Speaker of the House of Delegates

President of the Senate

The within _____ this the _____
day of _____, 2013.

Governor

