

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

FOR

Senate Bill No. 469

(By Senators Miller, Yost, Wells, Carmichael, Snyder, Nohe,
Williams, Jenkins, D. Hall, Edgell, Stollings, Laird and Sypolt)

[Originating in the Committee on Agriculture and Rural
Development; reported February 11, 2014.]

A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new section, designated §19-1-11, relating to the Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture Program; granting the Department of Agriculture the authority to integrate veterans into the field of agriculture; creating the Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture special revenue account and fund; exempting the Department of Agriculture from certain purchasing requirements; requiring state departments to work together; and permitting rulemaking.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

That the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, be amended by adding thereto a new section, designated §19-1-11, to read as follows:

ARTICLE 1. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

§19-1-11. Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture Program and fund.

1 (a) *Legislative findings.* –

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

10 (b) *Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture Program.* –

11 The Department of Agriculture shall develop a Veterans
12 and Warriors to Agriculture Program to integrate veterans
13 into the field of agriculture, and support veterans currently

14 working in agriculture. These programs may include, but are
15 not limited to, using post-mine land for agricultural
16 development, promoting high tunnel crops and production,
17 expanding the apiary industry, developing cottage industries,
18 exploring niche crops, raising more livestock, increasing the
19 aquaculture industry and helping veterans promote their
20 agricultural products through farmers markets and
21 cooperatives. The department, Department of Veterans'
22 Assistance and the state's Adjutant General shall work
23 together to recruit and train eligible veterans, and develop
24 and support the program.

25 (c) *Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture Fund.* –

26 There is hereby created in the State Treasury a special
27 revenue account designated the Veterans and Warriors to
28 Agriculture Fund. The fund shall consist of income from
29 leasing the department's property for the program, income
30 from the department's farm account not utilized for farm
31 operations, private or charitable donations, legislative
32 appropriations to maintain and operate the programs – and

33 accrued interest. Expenditures from the fund shall be used
34 exclusively, in accordance with appropriations by the
35 Legislature, to pay costs, fees and expenses necessary to
36 administer the Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture
37 Program. Any balance remaining in the special revenue
38 account at the end of any state fiscal year shall not revert to
39 the General Revenue Fund but shall remain in the special
40 revenue account and shall be used solely in a manner
41 consistent with this section.

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

47 (e) The commissioner may propose emergency or
48 legislative rules for approval in accordance with the
49 provisions of article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code
50 to effectuate the provisions of this section.

(NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to grant the Department of Agriculture the authority to create and maintain a program to encourage, support and develop West Virginia veterans into the field of agriculture. The bill creates the Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture Fund. The bill makes findings and establishes intent. The bill exempts the Department of Agriculture from certain competitive bidding requirements. The bill requires state departments to work together. The bill sets forth funding requirements. The bill sets forth disbursements.

This section is new; therefore, strike-throughs and underscoring have been omitted.)