

# WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

## 2023 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

### Senate Bill 710

FISCAL  
NOTE

By Senators Blair (Mr. President) and Woelfel

(By Request of The Executive)

[Introduced February 20, 2023; referred  
to the Committee on Military; and then to the  
Committee on Finance]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new article,  
 2 designated §9A-7-1, §9A-7-2, §9A-7-3, §9A-7-4, §9A-7-5, §9A-7-6, §9A-7-7, and §9A-7-8,  
 3 all relating to establishing a pilot program to provide grants to veterans who relocate to  
 4 West Virginia to reside and work; creating the program; defining terms; creating the  
 5 Welcome Home Grant Program Fund; specifying distribution of grant awards; requiring  
 6 management and implementation by the Department of Veteran’s Affairs; requiring annual  
 7 reporting; and specifying a date for the termination of the pilot program unless extended by  
 8 the Legislature.

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

**ARTICLE 7. WELCOME HOME GRANT PROGRAM.**

**§9A-7-1. Legislative findings.**

1 The Legislature finds that it is imperative to attract hardworking people to West Virginia to  
 2 live and work. The Legislature recognizes that West Virginians have a proud history of military  
 3 service and is home to a significant number of United States veterans from all branches of military  
 4 service, men and women who have served their country honorably and are the very example of  
 5 work ethic, dedication, and citizenship needed in this State. Thus, the Legislature seeks to  
 6 incentivize United States veterans throughout the country to relocate themselves and their  
 7 families to West Virginia to live and work, through the Welcome Home Grant Program established  
 8 herein.

**§9A-7-2. Creation of the Welcome Home Grant Program.**

1 There is hereby established a Welcome Home Grant Program, to be administered by the  
 2 Department of Veteran’s Affairs, as a pilot program with the purpose of providing incentives in the  
 3 form of cash grants to assist in relocation costs for veterans who relocate themselves and their  
 4 families to West Virginia.

**§9A-7-3. Definitions.**

1 As used in this article:

2 (a) "Veteran" means an individual who:

3 (1) Served on active duty and was discharged or released from active duty with an  
4 honorable discharge or because of a service-connected disability;

5 (2) Served as a member of a reserve component under an order to active duty, served on  
6 active duty during a period of war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge or  
7 ribbon is authorized and was discharged or released from duty with an honorable discharge; or

8 (3) Served as a member of a National Guard or Reserve component and completed his or  
9 her military obligation and received an honorable discharge from said National Guard or Reserve  
10 component or was discharged from said National Guard or Reserve component because of a  
11 service-connected disability.

12 (b) "Relocation" means a veteran who is domiciled outside of West Virginia that becomes a  
13 full-time resident of West Virginia on or after January 1, 2024.

14 (c) "Department" means the Department of Veteran's Affairs.

**§9A-7-4. Creation of Welcome Home Grant Program Fund.**

1 There is hereby created in the State Treasury a special revenue fund account known as the  
2 Welcome Home Grant Program Fund. The fund shall be administered by the department solely for  
3 the purposes of this article. Any moneys remaining in the fund at the close of a fiscal year shall be  
4 carried forward for use in the next fiscal year.

**§9A-7-5. Grant awards.**

1 (a) Any veteran who relocates to West Virginia with the intent to remain a full-time resident  
2 in this state for a minimum of three years may be eligible for a grant of \$5,000 to cover relocation  
3 expenses under the Welcome Home Grant Program, subject to the availability of funding.

4 (b) Grants shall be awarded in the discretion of the secretary of the department. Upon  
5 application approval by the Department and proof of residency, a veteran shall receive a lump sum  
6 of \$5,000 to help cover relocation and similar costs, subject to available funding as appropriated  
7 by the Legislature.

8 (c) If a grant recipient fails to remain a full-time resident of West Virginia for the full three  
 9 years, then the recipient shall repay the pro rata portion of the award amount for the time the  
 10 recipient is not a full-time resident of the state.

**§9A-7-6. Department duties; rule-making authority.**

1 (a) The Department shall create and adopt procedures to implement the grant program  
 2 established in this article including, but not limited to, an application process, evidence necessary  
 3 for proof of residence, and evidence necessary for proof of employment.

4 (b) The Department, in partnership with the Department of Tourism based on its  
 5 experience with the marketing of similar programs, shall promote awareness of the program  
 6 through marketing and coordination with other state economic development programs.

7 (c) The Department shall adopt measurable goals, performance measures, and an audit  
 8 strategy to assess the utilization and performance of the program.

**§9A-7-7. Annual report required.**

1 The Department shall file a report with the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Government  
 2 and Finance, the Legislative Oversight Commission on Workforce Investment for Economic  
 3 Development, and the Governor at the end of each fiscal year for the life of the program,  
 4 commencing June 30, 2025. This report shall include the following:

- 5 (1) The number of veterans receiving grants under the program;
- 6 (2) The locations within this state of recipients of program grants and their domiciles prior  
 7 to relocation; and
- 8 (3) The types of work or professions and locations where grant recipients and their families  
 9 are employed after relocation.

**§9A-7-8. Termination of pilot program.**

1 Unless extended by act of the Legislature, this pilot program shall terminate on June 30,  
 2 2027.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create the Welcome Home Grant Program, a pilot

program to incentivize veterans to relocate to West Virginia to reside and to work.

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