



General Assembly

January Session, 2015

***Raised Bill No. 6855***

LCO No. 3489



Referred to Committee on PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS

Introduced by:  
(PRI)

***AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE REGARDING RESIDENTIAL SERVICES AT THE VETERANS' HOME.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 27-102l of the general statutes is repealed and the  
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2015*):

3 (a) There shall be a Department of Veterans' Affairs. The Veterans'  
4 Home shall be within the department and shall be located in Rocky  
5 Hill. The department head shall be the Commissioner of Veterans'  
6 Affairs, who shall be appointed by the Governor in accordance with  
7 the provisions of sections 4-5 to 4-8, inclusive, with the powers and  
8 duties prescribed therein.

9 (b) The commissioner may appoint a unit head to administer a  
10 veterans' advocacy and assistance unit for the aid and benefit of  
11 veterans, their spouses and eligible dependents and family members.  
12 Such unit shall conduct an annual training course for any city or town

13 employee designated a veterans' service contact person pursuant to  
14 subsection (b) of section 27-135. The unit shall have a staff of not less  
15 than eight men and women, including six service officers, and clerical  
16 personnel. The unit head and the service officers shall be veterans, as  
17 defined in section 27-103, or veterans who were awarded the armed  
18 forces expeditionary medal for service by the armed forces. At least  
19 one of the service officers shall be a woman having a demonstrated  
20 interest in the concerns of women veterans, who shall be responsible  
21 for addressing those concerns, and, effective upon the next opening of  
22 a service officer position occurring on or after July 1, 2010, at least two  
23 of the service officers shall be individuals having bilingual proficiency  
24 in English and Spanish, within existing authorized positions. Each  
25 service officer shall successfully complete a course in veterans' benefits  
26 within one year of commencement of employment and shall be  
27 assigned to one of the five congressional districts of the state.

28 (c) In addition to the powers and duties prescribed under section 4-  
29 8, the commissioner shall have the following powers and duties:

30 (1) To prepare studies and collect information concerning facilities  
31 and services available to members of the armed forces, veterans, their  
32 spouses or eligible dependents, including facilities and services for  
33 veterans who may have been exposed to a Vietnam herbicide during  
34 their periods of military service;

35 (2) To conduct interviews in the nursing homes or hospitals  
36 throughout the state to determine the number of veterans admitted  
37 and ascertaining which benefits such veterans are currently receiving  
38 and are entitled to receive;

39 (3) To cooperate with service agencies and organizations  
40 throughout the state in disseminating and furnishing counsel and  
41 assistance of benefit to residents of this state who are or have been  
42 members of the armed forces, their spouses or eligible dependents,  
43 which will indicate the availability of: (A) Educational training and

44 retraining facilities; (B) health, medical, rehabilitation and housing  
45 services and facilities; (C) employment and reemployment services; (D)  
46 provisions of federal, state and local laws affording financial rights,  
47 privileges and benefits; and (E) other matters of similar nature;

48 (4) To assist veterans, their spouses and eligible dependents and  
49 family members in the preparation, presentation, proof and  
50 establishment of such claims, privileges, rights and other benefits  
51 accruing to them under federal, state and local laws;

52 (5) To cooperate with all national, state and local governmental and  
53 private agencies securing or offering services or any benefits to  
54 veterans, their spouses or dependents;

55 (6) To develop and prepare a long-range plan and mission statement  
56 for the Veterans' Home and the veterans' advocacy and assistance unit;  
57 [and]

58 (7) To review all appeals made by veterans, their spouses or eligible  
59 dependents or family members and render the final decision thereon  
60 regarding the denial of admission to any program or the refusal to  
61 render any service or benefit which is administered by the Department  
62 of Veterans' Affairs, the discharge or transfer from any such program  
63 or any disciplinary action taken while participating in any such  
64 program; [.] and

65 (8) To provide, not later than January 1, 2016, transitional housing  
66 and permanent supportive housing within the Veterans' Home.

67 (d) The commissioner shall adopt, in accordance with the provisions  
68 of chapter 54, and enforce, such regulations and procedures for the  
69 operation, administration and management of the department and all  
70 programs and services under the jurisdiction of the department,  
71 including, but not limited to, procedures relating to admission and  
72 discharge or transfer of veterans in the Veterans' Home, a per diem fee  
73 schedule for programs, services and benefits provided by the Veterans'

74 Home, and the participation of eligible family members in programs or  
75 services provided by the home.

76 Sec. 2. (*Effective from passage*) The Commissioner of Veterans' Affairs  
77 shall submit two reports, one not later than September 1, 2015, and one  
78 not later than November 2, 2015, to the joint standing committee of the  
79 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to veterans'  
80 affairs and to the Legislative Program Review and Investigations  
81 Committee, on the progress made in implementing (1) transitional  
82 housing and permanent supportive housing as required pursuant to  
83 section 27-102l of the general statutes, as amended by this act; and (2)  
84 recommendations approved by the Legislative Program Review and  
85 Investigations Committee, dated December 19, 2014, relating to: (A)  
86 Appropriate staffing for such transitional housing and permanent  
87 supportive housing; (B) housing needs and preferences assessment of  
88 residents of the Veterans' Home and new applicants to the Veterans'  
89 Home; (C) admission of persons with psychiatric history; (D) provision  
90 of semi-private or private rooms to residents; (E) elimination of the  
91 veteran worker and detail programs and the transition of necessary  
92 positions therefrom, including the establishment of workforce  
93 readiness positions for transitional housing residents; (F) residential  
94 care fees; (G) provision of life and vocational skills classes for  
95 residents; (H) recruitment of volunteers and efforts to encourage  
96 residents to volunteer in the community; (I) safety and security rules  
97 and procedures for residents; (J) procedures for addressing rule  
98 violations by residents; (K) providing transitional housing that  
99 facilitates successful discharge to independent living and encourages  
100 personal responsibility; (L) providing permanent supportive housing  
101 that recognizes long-term stays and encourages independence; and  
102 (M) improvement of substance use treatment services.

103 Sec. 3. Section 27-106 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
104 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2015*):

105 (a) The commissioner shall adopt and enforce such rules as may be

106 necessary to ensure order, enforce discipline and preserve the health  
107 and ensure the comfort of the [patients] residents in the Veterans'  
108 Home, and shall discipline or dismiss any officer or [patient] resident  
109 of the home who disobeys or infringes upon such rules. The  
110 commissioner shall appoint, subject to the provisions of chapter 67,  
111 such officers and employees as are necessary for the administration of  
112 the affairs of the home, shall prescribe the relative rank, if any, of such  
113 officers and employees, and shall commission each such officer, who  
114 shall wear such uniform, if any, as is prescribed by the commissioner.

115 (b) The chief fiscal officer shall submit a semiannual plain language  
116 report to each resident of the Veterans' Home detailing the manner in  
117 which the institutional general welfare fund was used over the  
118 previous six months to directly benefit veterans or the Veterans' Home.  
119 Such report shall include a prominently displayed statement  
120 encouraging residents to submit suggestions for projects to be funded  
121 by the institutional general welfare fund and shall include a form for  
122 such submissions.

123 ~~[(b)]~~ (c) The chief fiscal officer shall submit an itemized list of  
124 expenditures made from the institutional general welfare fund to the  
125 commissioner at intervals not greater than two months. Such list shall  
126 include all such expenditures made during the two-month period  
127 preceding its submission. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 4-  
128 56, the commissioner shall prescribe procedures to limit and specify  
129 the uses for which expenditures may be made from the institutional  
130 general welfare fund so that only expenditures which, in the opinion of  
131 the commissioner and the board of trustees for the department  
132 appointed pursuant to section 27-102n, as amended by this act, directly  
133 benefit veterans or the Veterans' Home are permitted.

134 ~~[(c)]~~ (d) In addition to the estimate of expenditure requirements  
135 required under section 4-77, the commissioner shall submit an  
136 accounting of all planned expenditures for the next fiscal year from the  
137 institutional general welfare fund to the joint standing committee of

138 the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to  
139 appropriations and the budgets of state agencies at the time such  
140 estimate is submitted.

141 Sec. 4. Section 27-102n of the general statutes is repealed and the  
142 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2015*):

143 (a) There shall be a Board of Trustees for the Department of  
144 Veterans' Affairs. The board shall be comprised of the [commissioner]  
145 Commissioner of Veterans' Affairs, three residents of the Veterans'  
146 Home, one of whom shall be from transitional housing, one of whom  
147 shall be from permanent supportive housing and one of whom shall be  
148 from the health care facility, each of whom shall serve as a nonvoting  
149 member and be elected annually by the residents of their respective  
150 programs, and sixteen members who by education or experience shall  
151 be qualified in health care, business management, social services or  
152 law and who shall have a demonstrated interest in the concerns of  
153 veterans. A majority of the members of the board shall be veterans,  
154 including veterans of armed conflicts authorized by the President of  
155 the United States. Members shall be appointed as follows: Ten by the  
156 Governor, two of whom shall be representatives of two different  
157 Connecticut veterans' organizations, who shall serve at the pleasure of  
158 the Governor and one member each by the president pro tempore of  
159 the Senate, the speaker of the House of Representatives, the majority  
160 leader of the Senate, the majority leader of the House of  
161 Representatives, the minority leader of the Senate and the minority  
162 leader of the House of Representatives, whose terms shall be  
163 coterminous with the term of the appointing authority. The Governor  
164 shall appoint annually, from the board's members, a chairperson who  
165 shall not be the Commissioner of Veterans' Affairs. Members shall be  
166 sworn to the faithful performance of their duties. They shall receive no  
167 compensation for their services but shall be reimbursed for their  
168 reasonable expenses in the performance of their duties. On and after  
169 January 1, 2016, any board member absent from (1) three consecutive  
170 meetings of the board, or (2) fifty per cent of such meetings during any

171 calendar year shall be deemed to have resigned from the board,  
172 effective immediately.

173 (b) The board shall meet at least quarterly and upon the call of the  
174 commissioner, chairperson or a majority of the board members. A  
175 majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.

176 (c) The board shall advise and assist the commissioner in the  
177 operation of the Veterans' Home, the veterans' advocacy and assistance  
178 unit, the administration, expansion or modification of existing  
179 programs and services of the department and the development of new  
180 programs and services.

181 (d) The board shall review and approve any regulations prior to  
182 adoption by the commissioner concerning: (1) Procedures relating to  
183 admission and discharge or transfer of veterans in the home; (2) a per  
184 diem fee schedule for programs, services and benefits provided  
185 therein; and (3) the participation of eligible family members in  
186 programs or services provided by the home.

187 (e) The board shall request from the department information  
188 necessary to monitor the progress made by the Veterans' Home in  
189 implementing its mission. The department shall provide such  
190 information to the board in a timely manner.

191 (f) All board meeting notices, minutes and reports bearing a date of  
192 January 1, 2012, or later shall be posted in a conspicuous place on the  
193 department's Internet web site. Minutes from board meetings held on  
194 or after the effective date of this section shall be posted to such Internet  
195 web site not later than seven days after each such meeting is held. If  
196 applicable, minutes shall contain a statement that such minutes are  
197 considered draft minutes until approved by the board.

198 [(e)] (g) The board shall submit an annual report not later than  
199 February fifteenth to the Governor [,] and the joint standing  
200 [committees] committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of

201 matters relating to [public safety,] veterans' and military affairs, in  
202 accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, on its activities during  
203 the previous calendar year, progress in fulfilling its mission based on  
204 programmatic outcomes and [with its] recommendations, if any, for  
205 improving the delivery of services to veterans and the addition of new  
206 programs.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2015</i>	27-102l
Sec. 2	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2015</i>	27-106
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2015</i>	27-102n

**Statement of Purpose:**

To implement the recommendations of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee regarding residential services provided at the Veterans' Home in Rocky Hill.

*[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]*