



General Assembly

Amendment

February Session, 2016

LCO No. 4571



Offered by:

SEN. MARKLEY, 16th Dist.

REP. CARPINO, 32nd Dist.

To: Senate Bill No. 21

File No. 78

Cal. No. 125

**"AN ACT CONCERNING THE MILITARY DEPARTMENT'S
NONDISCRIMINATION LAWS."**

1 After the last section, add the following and renumber sections and
2 internal references accordingly:

3 "Sec. 501. Subsections (b) and (c) of section 27-102l of the 2016
4 supplement to the general statutes are repealed and the following is
5 substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2016*):

6 (b) (1) The commissioner may appoint a unit head to administer a
7 veterans' advocacy and assistance unit for the aid and benefit of
8 veterans [,] and their spouses, [and] eligible dependents and family
9 members. [Such unit shall conduct an annual training course for any
10 city or town employee designated a veterans' service contact person
11 pursuant to subsection (b) of section 27-135.] The unit shall have a staff
12 of not less than eight men and women, including six service officers,
13 and clerical personnel. The unit head and the service officers shall be
14 veterans, as defined in section 27-103, or veterans who were awarded

15 the armed forces expeditionary medal for service by the armed forces.
16 At least one of the service officers shall be a woman having a
17 demonstrated interest in the concerns of women veterans, who shall be
18 responsible for addressing those concerns, and, effective upon the next
19 opening of a service officer position occurring on or after July 1, 2010,
20 at least two of the service officers shall be individuals having bilingual
21 proficiency in English and Spanish, within existing authorized
22 positions. Each service officer shall successfully complete a course in
23 veterans' benefits within one year of commencement of employment
24 and shall be assigned to one of the five congressional districts of the
25 state.

26 (2) The unit staff shall, at least twice annually, conduct a training
27 course for any city or town employee designated a veterans' service
28 contact person pursuant to subsection (b) of section 27-135, as
29 amended by this act. The unit staff shall include in such training
30 course a summary of state and federal services and benefits, the duties
31 to be carried out by each veterans' service contact person, as described
32 in subsection (a) of section 27-135, as amended by this act, and any
33 assistance the unit staff may provide to any veterans' service contact
34 person related to such duties.

35 (3) (A) The veterans' advocacy and assistance unit shall develop a
36 written outreach plan identifying (i) strategies for conducting outreach
37 to veterans and their spouses, eligible dependents and family members
38 for purposes of providing assistance in claims for veterans' services or
39 benefits, and (ii) to the extent possible, specific events and other
40 opportunities to provide such assistance that are sponsored by the unit
41 or in which the unit is participating. The unit shall update such written
42 outreach plan as necessary to improve the efficacy of its outreach
43 efforts.

44 (B) The unit head and each service officer shall electronically track
45 information relating to outreach conducted or attended by the unit,
46 including, but not limited to, the title or type of any outreach event
47 conducted or attended and the number of veterans or their spouses,

48 eligible dependents or family members to whom substantive services
49 or referrals were provided.

50 (C) The unit shall utilize the notifications received from the
51 administrator of each nursing home and assisted living facility in the
52 state, pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (c) of this section, to
53 develop an annual schedule for each service officer to visit nursing
54 homes and assisted living facilities. The unit shall compile any
55 information collected as a result of such visits and provide quarterly
56 reports on such information to the Board of Trustees for the
57 Department of Veterans' Affairs.

58 (D) The unit shall provide quarterly reports to the Board of Trustees
59 for the Department of Veterans' Affairs on (i) concerns raised by
60 veterans or their spouses, eligible dependents or family members,
61 which concerns shall be summarized by type, frequency and
62 resolution, (ii) petitions filed by veterans or their spouses, eligible
63 dependents or family members received by the commissioner under
64 section 27-102(d)-54 of the regulations of Connecticut state agencies
65 for the four preceding months, and (iii) copies of any such petitions.

66 (c) In addition to the powers and duties prescribed under section 4-
67 8, the commissioner shall have the following powers and duties:

68 (1) To prepare studies and collect information concerning facilities
69 and services available to members of the armed forces [,] or veterans [,
70 their] or the spouses or eligible dependents of such members or
71 veterans, including facilities and services for veterans who may have
72 been exposed to a Vietnam herbicide during their periods of military
73 service;

74 (2) To [conduct interviews in the nursing homes or hospitals
75 throughout the state to determine the number of veterans admitted
76 and ascertaining which benefits such veterans are currently receiving
77 and are entitled to receive] require that the administrator of each
78 nursing home and assisted living facility in the state notify the
79 veterans' advocacy and assistance unit not later than April 1, 2017, and

80 every six months thereafter, of any new resident in such nursing home
81 or assisted living facility who is a veteran or a spouse, eligible
82 dependent or family member of a veteran, provided each such nursing
83 home or assisted living facility shall not release the identity of any
84 such new resident to the unit without the consent of the new resident.
85 As used in this subdivision, "new resident" means a resident of whom
86 such nursing home or assisted living facility has not previously
87 notified the veterans' advocacy and assistance unit;

88 (3) To cooperate with service agencies and organizations
89 throughout the state in disseminating and furnishing counsel and
90 assistance of benefit to residents of this state who are or have been
91 members of the armed forces [,] or their spouses or eligible
92 dependents, which will indicate the availability of: (A) Educational
93 training and retraining facilities; (B) health, medical, rehabilitation and
94 housing services and facilities; (C) employment and reemployment
95 services; (D) provisions of federal, state and local laws affording
96 financial rights, privileges and benefits; and (E) other matters of
97 similar nature;

98 (4) To assist veterans [,] and their spouses, [,] and eligible dependents
99 and family members in the preparation, presentation, proof and
100 establishment of such claims, privileges, rights and other benefits
101 accruing to them under federal, state and local laws;

102 (5) To cooperate with all national, state and local governmental and
103 private agencies securing or offering services or any benefits to
104 veterans [,] or their spouses or eligible dependents;

105 (6) To develop and prepare a long-range plan and mission statement
106 for the Veterans' Home and the veterans' advocacy and assistance unit;

107 (7) To review all appeals made by veterans [,] or their spouses, [,] or
108 eligible dependents or family members and render the final decision
109 thereon regarding the denial of admission to any program or the
110 refusal to render any service or benefit which is administered by the
111 Department of Veterans' Affairs, the discharge or transfer from any

112 such program or any disciplinary action taken while participating in
113 any such program; and

114 (8) If the Veterans' Home closes or ceases to provide housing to
115 veterans, to provide or arrange for housing to any veteran residing at
116 the home or the health care facility within the home on the date of such
117 closure or on the date the Veterans' Home ceases to provide housing to
118 veterans.

119 Sec. 502. Section 27-135 of the general statutes is repealed and the
120 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2016*):

121 (a) Any city or town, either separately or with one or more other
122 cities and towns, may, by ordinance, establish a local veterans'
123 advisory committee which shall have the responsibility of carrying out
124 locally the duties and purposes of this section and, within their charter
125 powers and as otherwise provided by law, may make available to such
126 local committees the necessary funds to carry out their duties and
127 responsibilities. The committee may (1) act as the coordinating agency
128 in all matters concerning veterans and their dependents, coordinating
129 the activities of public and private facilities concerned with veterans'
130 reemployment, education, rehabilitation and adjustment to peacetime
131 living; (2) cooperate with all national, state and local governmental and
132 private agencies in securing services and benefits to which a veteran or
133 his dependents may be entitled; (3) use the services and facilities of the
134 veterans organizations so far as possible to carry out the purposes of
135 this section; and (4) encourage and coordinate vocational training
136 services for veterans.

137 (b) (1) Any city or town that ~~[(1)]~~ has not established its own local
138 veterans' advisory committee separate from one or more other cities or
139 towns pursuant to subsection (a) of this section ~~[, and (2)]~~ and does not
140 otherwise provide funding for a veterans' service officer shall
141 designate a city or town employee to serve as a veterans' service
142 contact person in such city or town. The Commissioner of Veterans'
143 Affairs shall annually send to the chief executive officer of any such

144 city or town an electronic notification of such chief executive officer's
 145 duty to so designate a city or town employee in accordance with this
 146 subsection. Such chief executive officer shall, not later than thirty days
 147 after receipt of such notification, submit to the veterans' advocacy and
 148 assistance unit, as described in subsection (b) of section 27-102l, as
 149 amended by this act, the name and electronic mail address of the city
 150 or town employee so designated. As used in this subdivision, "chief
 151 executive officer" means the officer described in section 7-193.

152 (2) Any city or town employee designated as a veterans' service
 153 contact person shall carry out the duties described in subsection (a) of
 154 this section and [may complete an annual] shall complete a training
 155 course conducted by the veterans' advocacy and assistance unit, as
 156 described in subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of section 27-102l, as
 157 amended by this act. Each employee so designated prior to July 1,
 158 2016, shall complete such training course prior to January 1, 2017. Each
 159 employee so designated on or after July 1, 2016, shall complete such
 160 training course not later than one year after the date of such
 161 designation. Upon completion of such training course, a veterans'
 162 service contact person may thereafter receive electronically any new or
 163 updated training information from the veterans' advocacy and
 164 assistance unit and shall not be required to complete any other such
 165 training course."

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Sec. 501	October 1, 2016	27-102l(b) and (c)
Sec. 502	October 1, 2016	27-135