OLR Bill Analysis
sSB 968 (File 234, as amended by Senate "B")*

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MILITARY TO MACHINISTS PROGRAM FOR VETERANS.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the workforce development board for the state’s southwest region (i.e., The WorkPlace, Inc.) to:

1. by October 1, 2019, develop and operate two pilot programs within its workforce development region: the (a) Military to Machinists pilot program for veterans and (b) Veterans Platform to Employment pilot program;

2. starting by February 1, 2020, annually report to the Veterans Committee on (a) the operation of each pilot program and (b) the board’s recommendation to continue, discontinue, or expand each program; and

3. by October 1, 2019, identify appropriate written materials on mental health conditions common to veterans to distribute to employers.

The bill allows the southwest region workforce development board, in conjunction with other regional workforce development boards, to offer the pilot programs in other regions in the state.

It also requires the Department of Labor (DOL), when contacted by a veteran who is in need of employment or workforce development services to, under certain circumstances, provide the veteran with (1) contact information for the workforce development board and (2) information on the Military to Machinists pilot program.

Under the bill, a veteran is an individual (1) honorably discharged or released under honorable conditions from active service in the armed forces or (2) discharged under conditions other than
dishonorable or for bad conduct and has a “qualifying condition” (i.e., a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury, or who has disclosed a military sexual trauma experience). “Armed forces” means the U.S. Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, Air Force, or any reserve component, including the National Guard performing duty under Title 32 of federal law (e.g., certain Homeland Security missions).

*Senate Amendment “B” strikes the underlying bill which, effective October 1, 2019, would have established a Military to Machinists program in DOL within the department’s existing resources. Instead, it adds provisions related to two pilot programs, annual reporting, specified written material for employer distribution, and DOL’s workforce development assistance.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2019, except the provision on DOL’s workforce development assistance is effective October 1, 2019.

MILITARY TO MACHINISTS PILOT PROGRAM

Pilot Program

The Military to Machinists pilot program must help veterans in the region served by the program to:

1. earn an advanced manufacturing certificate from a qualifying certificate program (see below) and

2. secure employment, for certificate holders, with any eligible business in the advanced manufacturing field.

Under the bill, an “eligible business” is a business that operates in Connecticut, has been registered to conduct business for at least 12 months, and is in good standing with respect to all state and local tax payments. It does not include the state or any of its political subdivisions.

Workforce Development Liaisons

The bill requires the southwest workforce development board to designate a number of employees that the board determines
appropriate to act as liaisons to assist veterans on behalf of the pilot program.

The liaisons must help veterans served by the pilot program obtain funding for the cost of attending a qualifying advanced manufacturing certificate program. The funding may include, accessing existing tuition waivers for veterans and assistance from the Workforce Training Authority Fund.

The liaisons must also help eligible businesses apply (1) to DOL for a grant to subsidize on-the-job training and compensation for new employees (Unemployed Armed Forces STEP) and (2) for tax credits for apprenticeship training in manufacturing, construction, and plastic-related trades, if applicable.

Promotional Materials

Starting by February 1, 2020, the bill requires the board to annually develop or approve promotional materials describing the Military to Machinist pilot program and the various opportunities and benefits that the program may provide veterans in the state. The board must distribute the promotional materials to qualified veterans' charitable organizations and Operation Academic Support for Incoming Service Members centers (see BACKGROUND). It must revise and redistribute the materials as it deems appropriate.

Annual Report to the Veterans Committee

The bill requires the board, starting by February 1, 2020, to report annually to the Veterans Committee on (1) the operation of the pilot program and (2) the board’s recommendation to continue, discontinue, or expand the program. The board must submit the annual report until the pilot program terminates.

The report must include measures of the pilot program’s effectiveness, including data on the number of veterans:

1. served by the pilot program;

2. pursuing or earning advanced manufacturing certificates
through the program and the type and amount of funding assistance the veterans received; and

3. securing employment in advanced manufacturing with an eligible business through the program, including the (a) salaries earned by such veterans, (b) number of such veterans retaining employment in advanced manufacturing over time, and (c) number and amount of grants and tax credits received by eligible businesses hiring the veterans.

Definitions

**Advanced Manufacturing.** Under the bill, "advanced manufacturing" means a manufacturing process that makes extensive use of computer, high-precision or information technologies integrated with a high-performance workforce in a production system capable of furnishing a diverse mix of products in small or large volumes with either the efficiency of mass production or the flexibility of custom manufacturing in order to respond quickly to customer demands. It includes newly developed methods to manufacture existing products and the manufacture of new products emerging from new advanced technologies.

**Qualifying Advanced Manufacturing Certificate Program.** Under the bill, a "qualifying advanced manufacturing certificate program" is a for-credit or noncredit sub-baccalaureate advanced manufacturing certificate program offered by a public institution of higher education or a private occupational school in which at least 75% of the graduates of the program are employed in a field related to or requiring such certificate in the year following graduation.

**Private Occupational School.** By law, a “private occupational school” is a postsecondary career school operated by a person or entity offering or advertising vocational instruction in any form or manner in any trade, industrial, commercial, service, professional, or other occupation for any remuneration, consideration, reward, or fee. It does not include instruction offered (1) under public supervision and control, (2) by a school authorized by the General Assembly to confer
degrees, or (3) in the arts or recreation. It also does not include instruction conducted by a firm or organization solely for the training of its own employees or members.

**VETERANS PLATFORM TO EMPLOYMENT PILOT PROGRAM**

**Pilot Program**

Under the Veterans Platform to Employment Pilot Program, the bill requires the southwest workforce development board to provide training and subsidized employment for veterans who have experienced long-term unemployment in a manner similar to the Platform to Employment Program the board currently operates (see BACKGROUND).

**Required Services**

The Veterans Platform to Employment Pilot Program must provide veterans in the region with:

1. a preparatory program that includes services such as skills assessments, career readiness workshops, employee assistance programs, and coaching; and

2. employment assistance that includes identifying positions at local employers and providing subsidies to employers that hire veterans for trial work experiences that may lead to continued employment.

**Optional Additional Services**

This pilot program may offer additional services to assist veterans, including personal and family support services and financial counseling.

**Report to the Veterans Committee**

Under the bill, the southwest workforce development board, starting by February 1, 2020, must submit an annual report to the Veterans Committee on (1) the operation of the pilot program and (2) the board’s recommendation to continue, discontinue, or expand the program. The board must submit the annual report until the pilot
program terminates.

The report must include measures of the program’s effectiveness, including data on the number of veterans:

1. served by the program,
2. placed with employers by the program and the salaries earned by such veterans, and
3. retaining employment over time.

**WRITTEN MATERIALS ON VETERANS’ MENTAL HEALTH**

The bill requires the southwest workforce development board to identify appropriate written materials on mental health conditions common to veterans to distribute to employers. Such mental health conditions include post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide risk, depression, and grief.

The written materials must provide guidance on (1) identifying the signs and symptoms of the mental health conditions and (2) assisting employees who are veterans and who exhibit such signs and symptoms in the workplace.

The board (1) must distribute such materials to employers participating in or who may participate in either pilot program created under the bill and (2) may distribute the materials to other employers that may hire veterans.

**DOL’S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE**

By law, the DOL commissioner, within available resources, must maintain a state-wide network of job centers to provide workers, students, and employers comprehensive workforce development assistance, including educational and job training material, career planning, and job search assistance.

Under the bill, when contacted by a veteran who is in need of employment or workforce development services, DOL must provide the veteran with:
1. contact information for the workforce development board, if he or she lives closer to a workforce development board facility with a veterans unit than to a DOL facility offering such employment or workforce development assistance; and

2. information on the Military to Machinists pilot program, if he or she expresses an interest in advanced manufacturing and may be eligible for services from the pilot program.

BACKGROUND

Veterans’ Charitable Organizations

By law, a “qualified veterans’ charitable organization” is one that: (1) holds itself out to be established for any benevolent, educational, philanthropic, humane, scientific, patriotic, social welfare, or advocacy purpose relating to or on behalf of veterans; and (2) has been a Connecticut nonstock corporation for three or more years or a 501(c) tax exempt organization for three or more consecutive years. The Veterans Affairs Department maintains and publishes a list of qualified veterans’ charitable organizations.

Platform to Employment Program

The Connecticut legislature appropriated funds in 2014 to create the Platform to Employment (P2E) program in southwest Connecticut to find ways to help long-term unemployed residents return to work. In 2017 the legislature continued to fund P2E on a statewide basis with classes held in Bridgeport, Waterbury, New Haven, Hartford, Norwich, and New London areas.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Veterans’ Affairs Committee

Joint Favorable
Yea 16  Nay 0  (03/12/2019)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable
Yea 41  Nay 4  (05/13/2019)