



General Assembly

January Session, 2023

Substitute Bill No. 634



AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL VETERANS SERVICES.

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

1 Section 1. Section 27-135 of the general statutes is repealed and the
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2023*):

3 (a) As used in this section, "veteran" has the same meaning as
4 provided in subsection (a) of section 27-103 and "chief executive
5 officer" means the officer described in subdivision (2) of subsection (a)
6 of section 7-193.

7 (b) Prior to October 1, 2023:

8 (1) Any city or town, either separately or with one or more other
9 cities and towns, may, by ordinance, establish a local veterans'
10 advisory committee which shall have the responsibility of carrying out
11 locally the duties and purposes of this [section] subsection and, within
12 their charter powers and as otherwise provided by law, may make
13 available to such local committees the necessary funds to carry out
14 their duties and responsibilities. The committee may [(1)] (A) act as the
15 coordinating agency in all matters concerning veterans and their
16 dependents, coordinating the activities of public and private facilities
17 concerned with veterans' reemployment, education, rehabilitation and
18 adjustment to peacetime living; [(2)] (B) cooperate with all national,
19 state and local governmental and private agencies in securing services

20 and benefits to which a veteran or his dependents may be entitled; [(3)]
21 (C) use the services and facilities of the veterans organizations so far as
22 possible to carry out the purposes of this [section; and (4)] subsection;
23 and (D) encourage and coordinate vocational training services for
24 veterans.

25 [(b) (1)] (2) (A) Any city or town that has not established its own
26 local veterans' advisory committee separate from one or more other
27 cities or towns pursuant to [subsection (a) of this section] subdivision
28 (1) of this subsection and does not otherwise provide funding for a
29 veterans' service officer shall designate [(A)] (i) a city or town
30 employee, or [(B)] (ii) a volunteer who is a resident of such city or
31 town, and [(i)] (I) is a veteran, [as defined in subsection (a) of section
32 27-103, or (ii)] or (II) has practical experience handling veterans' issues,
33 to serve as a municipal [veterans'] veterans representative in such city
34 or town. The Commissioner of Veterans Affairs shall annually send to
35 the chief executive officer of any such city or town an electronic
36 notification of such chief executive officer's duty to so designate a city
37 or town employee or volunteer in accordance with this [subsection]
38 subdivision. Such chief executive officer shall, not later than thirty
39 days after receipt of such notification, submit to the Office of Advocacy
40 and Assistance, as described in subsection (b) of section 27-102l, as
41 amended by this act, the name and electronic mail address of the city
42 or town employee or volunteer so designated. [As used in this
43 subdivision, "chief executive officer" means the officer described in
44 section 7-193.]

45 [(2)] (B) Each municipal [veterans'] veterans representative shall
46 carry out the duties described in [subsection (a) of this section]
47 subdivision (1) of this subsection and shall complete a training course
48 conducted by the Office of Advocacy and Assistance, as described in
49 subdivision (3) of subsection (b) of section 27-102l, as amended by this
50 act, or attend a training session conducted by the manager of said
51 office, as described in subparagraph (A) of subdivision (2) of
52 subsection (b) of said section. Each municipal [veterans'] veterans

53 representative designated on or after October 1, 2019, shall complete
54 such training course not later than one year after the date of such
55 designation. Upon completion of such training course, a municipal
56 [veterans'] veterans representative may thereafter receive electronically
57 any new or updated training information from the Office of Advocacy
58 and Assistance and shall not be required to complete any other such
59 training course.

60 [(3)] (C) Any volunteer designated as a municipal [veterans']
61 veterans representative by a city or town pursuant to [subdivision (1)
62 of this subsection shall (A)] subparagraph (A) of this subsection shall
63 (i) be available to veterans in person, by telephone or by electronic mail
64 for any minimum number of hours per week that the city or town
65 designating the volunteer may establish, and [(B)] (ii) file a
66 performance report each month with the city or town designating the
67 volunteer that includes, but is not limited to, the names of veterans
68 assisted, services or referrals provided and any other information as
69 determined by the city or town.

70 (c) On and after October 1, 2023:

71 (1) (A) Each municipality shall, for the purposes of carrying out the
72 duties and responsibilities of this subsection:

73 (i) Establish, by ordinance, a municipal veterans advisory
74 committee. Such ordinance shall set forth the number of members of
75 such committee, the method of the members' selection, the members'
76 terms of office and the manner of filling any vacancy. The municipality
77 may make available to such committee the necessary funds to carry
78 out such duties and responsibilities;

79 (ii) Appoint a director of municipal veterans services, who shall be a
80 veteran or have practical experience handling veterans' issues and
81 shall be compensated by such municipality; or

82 (iii) Appoint one or more municipal veterans representatives, each
83 of whom shall be a veteran or have practical experience handling

84 veterans' issues and shall be a current municipal employee or
85 volunteer.

86 (B) (i) Two or more municipalities may jointly carry out the duties
87 and responsibilities under this subsection, provided such
88 municipalities shall enter into a memorandum of agreement or
89 understanding for such purpose, which memorandum may include
90 terms concerning sharing of expenses.

91 (ii) Any municipality that enacted an ordinance establishing a
92 committee, appointed a director or designated a representative
93 pursuant to subsection (b) of this section prior to October 1, 2023, shall
94 have satisfied the requirement under this subdivision.

95 (2) (A) Each municipal veterans advisory committee, director of
96 municipal veterans services or municipal veterans representative, as
97 applicable, shall (i) assist veterans and veterans' dependents in
98 accessing services and benefits to which such veterans or dependents
99 may be entitled; (ii) assist in coordinating the activities of public and
100 private facilities concerned with veterans' reemployment, education,
101 rehabilitation and adjustment to peacetime living; (iii) cooperate with
102 all national, state and local governmental and private providers in
103 connecting veterans and veterans' dependents with services and
104 benefits to which such veterans or dependents may be entitled; (iv)
105 encourage and coordinate vocational training services for veterans;
106 and (v) coordinate with veterans organizations, as practicable, to carry
107 out the purposes of this subsection.

108 (B) A member of such committee designated by such committee, or
109 such director or representative, as applicable, shall (i) be available to
110 veterans in person, by telephone or by electronic mail for a minimum
111 number of days or hours per week, as determined by the municipality;
112 (ii) file with the municipality each month a report that includes, but is
113 not limited to, the names of veterans and veterans' dependents who
114 were provided assistance, the services or referrals that were provided
115 and any other information required by the municipality; and (iii) not

116 later than one year after such member's, director's or representative's
117 designation or appointment, as applicable, complete a veterans
118 benefits and programs training course conducted pursuant to
119 subdivision (3) of subsection (b) of section 27-102l, as amended by this
120 act, by the Office of Advocacy and Assistance within the Department
121 of Veterans Affairs, except that any such member, director or
122 representative who completed such training course pursuant to
123 subsection (b) of this section prior to October 1, 2023, shall have
124 satisfied the requirement under subparagraph (B)(iii) of this
125 subparagraph. After completion of such training course, such member,
126 director or representative may thereafter receive electronically any
127 new or updated training information from said office and shall not be
128 required to complete any other such training course.

129 (3) The Commissioner of Veterans Affairs shall annually notify each
130 municipality's chief executive officer of the requirement under
131 subdivision (1) of this subsection. Not later than thirty days after
132 receipt of such notification, the chief executive officer shall provide to
133 the Office of Advocacy and Assistance the name and electronic mail
134 address of each member of the municipal veterans advisory
135 committee, the director of municipal veterans services or each
136 municipal veterans representative, as applicable.

137 Sec. 2. Subsection (b) of section 27-102l of the general statutes is
138 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective*
139 *October 1, 2023*):

140 (b) (1) The commissioner may appoint a manager to administer an
141 Office of Advocacy and Assistance for the aid and benefit of veterans
142 and their spouses, eligible dependents and family members. The office
143 shall have a staff of not less than [eight] ten men and women,
144 including [six] eight veterans' service officers, and clerical personnel.
145 The manager and veterans' service officers shall be veterans, as defined
146 in subsection (a) of section 27-103, or veterans who were awarded the
147 armed forces expeditionary medal for service by the armed forces.

148 (2) (A) The manager shall develop a training module on assisting
149 and serving women veterans with regard to state or federal services or
150 benefits and identifying and advising such veterans of community or
151 nonprofit programs focused on assisting and serving such veterans.
152 The manager shall hold and provide instruction for an annual training
153 session, in accordance with such module, to each veterans' service
154 officer and any [municipal veterans'] member of a municipal veterans
155 advisory committee, director of municipal veterans services or
156 municipal veterans representative, as described in subsection [(b)] (c)
157 of section 27-135, as amended by this act, or representative from an
158 Operation Academic Support for Incoming Service Members center at
159 a public institution of higher education in this state.

160 (B) At least one of the veterans' service officers shall be a woman
161 having a demonstrated interest in the concerns of women veterans,
162 who shall be responsible for addressing those concerns, and, effective
163 upon the next opening of a veterans' service officer position occurring
164 on or after July 1, 2010, at least two of the veterans' service officers
165 shall be individuals having bilingual proficiency in English and
166 Spanish, within existing authorized positions. At least two of the
167 veterans' service officers shall, in addition to carrying out the duties in
168 this section, be responsible for overseeing and supporting
169 municipalities' compliance with the provisions of section 27-135, as
170 amended by this act. Each veterans' service officer shall (i) successfully
171 complete a course in veterans' benefits not later than one year after
172 commencement of employment, (ii) attend the training session
173 described in subparagraph (A) of this subdivision, and (iii) be assigned
174 to one of the five congressional districts of the state.

175 (3) The office staff shall, at least twice annually, conduct a training
176 course for any [municipal veterans'] member of a municipal veterans
177 advisory committee, director of municipal veterans services or
178 municipal veterans representative. The office staff shall include in such
179 training course a summary of state and federal services and benefits,
180 the [duties to be carried out by each municipal veterans'

181 representative, as described in subsection (a) of] requirements under
182 section 27-135, as amended by this act, and any assistance the office
183 staff may provide to any [municipal veterans'] such member, director
184 or representative related to such [duties] requirements.

185 (4) (A) The office shall develop a written outreach plan identifying
186 (i) strategies for conducting outreach to veterans and their spouses,
187 eligible dependents and family members for purposes of providing
188 assistance in claims for veterans' services or benefits, and (ii) to the
189 extent possible, specific events and other opportunities to provide such
190 assistance that are sponsored by the office or in which the office is
191 participating. The office shall update such written outreach plan as
192 necessary to improve the efficacy of its outreach efforts.

193 (B) The manager and each veterans' service officer shall
194 electronically track information relating to outreach conducted or
195 attended by the office, including, but not limited to, the title or type of
196 any outreach event conducted or attended and the number of veterans
197 or their spouses, eligible dependents or family members to whom
198 substantive services or referrals were provided.

199 (C) The office shall utilize the notifications received from the
200 administrator of each nursing home and assisted living facility in the
201 state, pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (c) of this section, to
202 develop an annual schedule for each veterans' service officer to visit
203 nursing homes and assisted living facilities. The office shall compile
204 any information collected as a result of such visits and provide
205 quarterly reports on such information to the Board of Trustees for the
206 Department of Veterans Affairs.

207 (D) The office shall provide quarterly reports to the Board of
208 Trustees for the Department of Veterans Affairs on (i) concerns raised
209 by veterans or their spouses, eligible dependents or family members,
210 which concerns shall be summarized by type, frequency and
211 resolution, (ii) petitions filed by veterans or their spouses, eligible
212 dependents or family members received by the commissioner under

