

Legislative History of the Municipal Veteran Representative Program

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Issue

Provide a legislative history of the municipal veteran representative program under [CGS § 27-135](#).

Summary

The municipal veteran representative program began in 1949 after the legislature made permanent the work of the Veterans Advisory Committee established in 1943 (this program would eventually be codified as CGS § 27-135). Towns were allowed to establish local committees to assist veterans in addressing their needs post-WWII. The program was essentially unchanged until 2013, when a series of acts over the next decade would (1) make the program mandatory, (2) establish direct contact persons if a town had no committee, (3) require representative training and posting of their contact information, (4) allow volunteers to serve as municipal representatives, and (5) allow towns to share a committee or representative.

Original Legislation

During World War II (1943), Connecticut established the Veterans Advisory Commission to “provide a program for the orderly return to civilian life for veterans” (Military and Veterans Affairs Committee Hearing, April 21, 1949, pg. 4). According to the hearing transcripts, the commission did not provide actual veterans services but was intended as an “advisory and coordinating group to work with all agencies, federal; state; and local... so that veterans at the community level can be helped with their many problems... [and] to use the services of all agencies and organizations and not to compete with them.”

As part of its mission, the commission established local committees tasked with creating community veteran centers, leading to the establishment of 42 veteran service centers (Military and Veterans Affairs Committee Hearing, April 21, 1949, pg. 5). In 1949, the legislature adopted PA 223, allowing towns to establish local veteran advisory committees, either independently or jointly with other towns. The committees were tasked with several duties including (1) serving as the coordinating agency between veterans and other entities, (2) assisting veterans in obtaining benefits from all levels of government and private agencies, (3) utilizing veterans' organizations to implement the act's purposes, and (4) encouraging and coordinating vocational training for veterans.

PA 223 (1949)

SECTION 1. Any city or town, either separately or with one or more other cities and towns, may establish a local veteran's advisory committee which shall have the responsibility of carrying out locally the duties and purposes of this act and, within their charter powers and as otherwise provided by law, may make available to such local committees the necessary funds to carry out their duties and responsibilities.

SEC. 2. The committee may (a) act as the coordinating agency in all matters concerning veterans and their dependents, coordinating the activities of public and private facilities concerned with veterans' reemployment, education, rehabilitation and adjustment to peacetime living; (b) cooperate with all national, state and local governmental and private agencies in securing services and benefits to which a veteran or his dependents may be entitled; (c) use the services and facilities of the veterans organizations so far as possible to carry out the purposes of this act; and (d) encourage and coordinate vocational training services for veterans.

In 1957, the General Assembly specified that these committees must be established by ordinance.

Program Developments

Public Act 13-34 — Mandatory Contact Persons for Certain Towns

For several decades after the 1957 amendment, the program remained unchanged. Beginning in 2013, the legislature adopted several acts amending the program. The first act ([PA 13-34](#)) required towns, if they did not establish a committee or hire a veteran services officer, to appoint a municipal employee to carry out the committee's duties, as outlined in the statute. These positions were referred to as "veterans' service contact persons." In 2014, the legislature clarified that this requirement applied to any town that did not establish its own committee (e.g., had a joint or shared committee) ([PA 14-56](#)).

The statute as it appeared in 2014, incorporating these public acts, is shown below.

CGS § 27-135 (2014)

(a) Any city or town, either separately or with one or more other cities and towns, may, by ordinance, establish a local veterans' advisory committee which shall have the responsibility of carrying out locally the duties and

purposes of this section and, within their charter powers and as otherwise provided by law, may make available to such local committees the necessary funds to carry out their duties and responsibilities. The committee may (1) act as the coordinating agency in all matters concerning veterans and their dependents, coordinating the activities of public and private facilities concerned with veterans' reemployment, education, rehabilitation and adjustment to peacetime living; (2) cooperate with all national, state and local governmental and private agencies in securing services and benefits to which a veteran or his dependents may be entitled; (3) use the services and facilities of the veterans organizations so far as possible to carry out the purposes of this section; and (4) encourage and coordinate vocational training services for veterans.

(b) Any city or town that (1) has not established [a] its own local veterans' advisory committee separate from one or more other cities or towns pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, and (2) does not otherwise provide funding for a veterans' service officer shall designate a city or town employee to serve as a veterans' service contact person in such city or town. Any city or town employee designated as a veterans' service contact person shall carry out the duties described in subsection (a) of this section and may complete an annual training course conducted by the veterans' advocacy and assistance unit, as described in subsection (b) of section 27-102l.

PA 16-68 — Mandatory Training and Notification Requirements

In 2016, the legislature made several additional changes to the program ([PA 16-68](#)). First, representatives were required, instead of just allowed, to complete a training from the veterans' advocacy and assistance unit (which [PA 17-36](#) later renamed as the [Office of Advocacy and Assistance](#) (OAA), within the Department of Veterans Affairs). Additionally, the veteran's affairs commissioner was tasked with notifying the chief executive officer (CEO) of a municipality of their responsibilities under this section. The CEO, in turn, was to respond with the name and contact information of the designated municipal employee. In addition to this act, the legislature also expanded the training options a representative could complete to comply with this requirement ([PA 16-192](#)).

The statute as it appeared in 2016, incorporating these public acts, is shown below.

CGS § 27-135 (2016)

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

(b) (1) Any city or town that has not established its own local veterans' advisory committee separate from one or more other cities or towns pursuant to subsection (a) of this section and does not otherwise provide funding for a veterans' service officer shall designate a city or town employee to serve as a veterans' service contact person in such city or town. The Commissioner of Veterans Affairs shall annually send to the chief executive officer of any such city or town an electronic notification of such chief executive officer's duty to so designate a city or town employee in accordance with this subsection. Such chief executive officer shall, not later than thirty days after receipt of such notification, submit to the veterans' advocacy and assistance unit, as described in subsection (b) of section 27-102I, the name and electronic mail address of the city or town employee so designated. As used in this subdivision, "chief executive officer" means the officer described in section 7-193.

(2) Any city or town employee designated as a veterans' service contact person shall carry out the duties described in subsection (a) of this section and shall complete a training course conducted by the veterans' advocacy and assistance unit, as described in subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 27-102I, or attend a training session conducted by the unit head of said unit, as described in subparagraph (A) of subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of said section. Each employee so designated prior to July 1, 2016, shall complete such training course prior to January 1, 2017. Each employee so designated on or after July 1, 2016, shall complete such training course not later than one year after the date of such designation. Upon completion of such training course, a veterans' service contact person may thereafter receive electronically any new or updated training information from the veterans' advocacy and assistance unit and shall not be required to complete any other such training course.

PA 19-148 — Allowing Volunteers to Fill Role

The General Assembly adopted legislation in 2019 renaming the veteran service contact position, changing it to "municipal veteran service representative" and authorizing volunteers to fill this role, not just municipal employees ([PA 19-148](#)). Town residents who were a veteran or who had practical experience handling veterans' issues could serve as representatives if they (1) were available to veterans in person, by telephone, or by email for a minimum number of hours the town required and (2) filed a monthly performance report with the municipalities on the veterans served and service provided.

The statute as it appeared in 2019, incorporating this public act, is shown below.

CGS § 27-135 (2019)

(a) Any city or town, either separately or with one or more other cities and towns, may, by ordinance, establish a local veterans' advisory committee which shall have the responsibility of carrying out locally the duties and purposes of this section and, within their charter powers and as otherwise provided by law, may make available to such local committees the necessary funds to carry out their duties and responsibilities. The committee may (1) act as the coordinating agency in all matters concerning veterans and their dependents, coordinating the activities of public and private facilities concerned with veterans' reemployment, education, rehabilitation and adjustment to peacetime living; (2) cooperate with all national, state and local governmental and private agencies in securing services and benefits to which a veteran or his dependents may be entitled;

(3) use the services and facilities of the veterans organizations so far as possible to carry out the purposes of this section; and (4) encourage and coordinate vocational training services for veterans.

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

(2) Each municipal veterans' representative shall carry out the duties described in subsection (a) of this section and shall complete a training course conducted by the Office of Advocacy and Assistance, as described in subdivision (3) of subsection (b) of section 27-102I, or attend a training session conducted by the manager of said office, as described in subparagraph (A) of subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of said section. Each municipal veterans' representative designated on or after October 1, 2019, shall complete such training course not later than one year after the date of such designation. Upon completion of such training course, a municipal veterans' representative may thereafter receive electronically any new or updated training information from the Office of Advocacy and Assistance and shall not be required to complete any other such training course.

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

PA 23-34 — Reorganization and Allowance for Cooperation

The most recent change to this program occurred in the last legislative session. [PA 23-34](#) largely reorganized the law on these programs and made various changes. Most significantly, the law no longer requires municipalities to maintain their own committee or representative, allowing them to agree to share a committee, paid director, or representative. The act also generally applies the requirements established for municipal representatives to paid directors and committee members (e.g., training, posting of contact information, and providing their information to OAA).

The act also requires at least two veteran service officers (VSO) in OAA to be responsible for overseeing and supporting municipalities' compliance with municipal veterans representative program requirements, in addition to their other duties. It also increases the office's minimum

number of VSOs (from six to eight). More information on this act, including additional information on the act's changes, can be found [here](#).

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