

SENATE BILL No. 344

DIGEST OF INTRODUCED BILL

Citations Affected: IC 10-17-1.

Synopsis: Veterans service officers. Defines "qualified part-time service officer". Establishes the county service officer grant fund to provide grants to counties for salaries for county service officers, including qualified part-time service officers. Requires the Indiana department of veterans' affairs commission (commission) to adopt rules establishing minimum annual salaries that a county must pay for county service officers, including qualified part-time service officers, in order for the county to receive a grant. Provides that the Indiana department of veterans' affairs (department) shall administer the fund. Requires a county or city service officer appointed or employed after June 30, 2025, to be accredited by the National Association of County Service Officers. Requires each county to appoint a county service officer. (Current law provides that a county may appoint a county service officer.) Requires a county that does not contain a consolidated city to employ: (1) a full-time service officer or two qualified part-time service officers if the county has at least 5,000 veterans residing in the county; and (2) an additional qualified part-time service officer for each additional 2,500 veterans. Requires a county containing a consolidated city to hire at least one full-time service officer or two qualified part-time service officers for each 10,000 veterans residing in the county. Requires that a county or city service officer appointed or employed before July 1, 2025, must be accredited by the National Association of County Service Officers before July 1, 2027. Makes an appropriation.

Effective: July 1, 2025.

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January 13, 2025, read first time and referred to Committee on Veterans Affairs and The Military.



First Regular Session of the 124th General Assembly (2025)

PRINTING CODE. Amendments: Whenever an existing statute (or a section of the Indiana Constitution) is being amended, the text of the existing provision will appear in this style type, additions will appear in **this style type**, and deletions will appear in ~~this style type~~.

Additions: Whenever a new statutory provision is being enacted (or a new constitutional provision adopted), the text of the new provision will appear in **this style type**. Also, the word **NEW** will appear in that style type in the introductory clause of each SECTION that adds a new provision to the Indiana Code or the Indiana Constitution.

Conflict reconciliation: Text in a statute in *this style type* or ~~this style type~~ reconciles conflicts between statutes enacted by the 2024 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

SENATE BILL No. 344

A BILL FOR AN ACT to amend the Indiana Code concerning public safety and to make an appropriation.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Indiana:

- 1 SECTION 1. IC 10-17-1-1.7 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA CODE
- 2 AS A **NEW** SECTION TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY
- 3 1, 2025]: **Sec. 1.7. As used in this chapter, "director" refers to the**
- 4 **director of veterans' affairs appointed under section 5 of this**
- 5 **chapter.**
- 6 SECTION 2. IC 10-17-1-1.8 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA CODE
- 7 AS A **NEW** SECTION TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY
- 8 1, 2025]: **Sec. 1.8. As used in this chapter, "fund" refers to the**
- 9 **county service officer grant fund established by section 8.5 of this**
- 10 **chapter.**
- 11 SECTION 3. IC 10-17-1-1.9 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA CODE
- 12 AS A **NEW** SECTION TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY
- 13 1, 2025]: **Sec. 1.9. As used in this chapter, "qualified part-time**
- 14 **service officer" refers to a county service officer who:**
- 15 **(1) meets the qualifications described in section 9(e) of this**
- 16 **chapter;**
- 17 **(2) is not a full-time employee; and**



1 **(3) works an average of at least twenty (20) hours a week.**

2 SECTION 4. IC 10-17-1-4, AS AMENDED BY P.L.42-2020,
3 SECTION 1, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE
4 JULY 1, 2025]: Sec. 4. The commission shall do acts necessary or
5 reasonably incident to the fulfillment of the purposes of this chapter,
6 including the following:

7 (1) Adopt rules under IC 4-22-2 to:

8 **(A) administer this chapter; and**

9 **(B) establish minimum annual salaries that a county must**
10 **pay for county service officers and qualified part-time**
11 **service officers in order for the county to receive a grant**
12 **under section 8.6 of this chapter.**

13 (2) Advise the veterans' state service officer in problems
14 concerning the welfare of veterans.

15 (3) Determine general administrative policies within the
16 department.

17 (4) Establish standards for certification of state, county, and city
18 service officers.

19 (5) Establish and administer a written examination for renewal of
20 the certification of county and city service officers.

21 (6) Submit, not later than December 31 of each year, an annual
22 report to the legislative council in an electronic format under
23 IC 5-14-6 and to the governor concerning the welfare of veterans.

24 SECTION 5. IC 10-17-1-8.5 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA CODE
25 AS A NEW SECTION TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY
26 1, 2025]: **Sec. 8.5. (a) The county service officer grant fund is**
27 **established for the purpose of providing grants to counties under**
28 **section 8.6 of this chapter. The fund consists of:**

29 **(1) appropriations by the general assembly; and**

30 **(2) donations, gifts, grants, and bequests to the fund.**

31 **(b) The Indiana department of veterans' affairs shall administer**
32 **the fund.**

33 **(c) The treasurer of state shall invest the money in the fund not**
34 **currently needed to meet the obligations of the fund in the same**
35 **manner as other public funds may be invested.**

36 **(d) Money in the fund at the end of a state fiscal year reverts to**
37 **the state general fund.**

38 SECTION 6. IC 10-17-1-8.6 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA CODE
39 AS A NEW SECTION TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY
40 1, 2025]: **Sec. 8.6. (a) The Indiana department of veterans' affairs**
41 **shall award annual grants to a county from the fund for use by the**
42 **county to pay the salary of a county service officer or qualified**



1 part-time service officers in a county that meets the minimum
 2 salary requirements set forth in rules adopted by the commission
 3 under section 4(1)(B) of this chapter. The annual grant amount
 4 that a county may receive under this section equals:

5 (1) thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) for each full-time county
 6 service officer; and

7 (2) fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) for each qualified
 8 part-time service officer;

9 appointed or employed under section 9 of this chapter.

10 (b) The Indiana department of veterans' affairs shall prescribe
 11 county service officer performance criteria, which must be satisfied
 12 by the county service officer, including a qualified part-time
 13 service officer, in order for the county to receive a grant under this
 14 section. A county may apply for the grant in a manner prescribed
 15 by the Indiana department of veterans' affairs. A grant awarded
 16 under this section may be used only for the salary of a county
 17 service officer, including a qualified part-time service officer.

18 SECTION 7. IC 10-17-1-9, AS AMENDED BY P.L.42-2020,
 19 SECTION 4, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE
 20 JULY 1, 2025]: Sec. 9. (a) A county executive **shall:**

21 (1) ~~shall~~ designate and ~~may:~~ **shall:**

22 (A) appoint ~~a one (1) or more~~ county service officer ~~officers~~
 23 for a four (4) year term; or

24 (B) employ a county service officer; and

25 (2) ~~may~~ employ service officer assistants **in accordance with**
 26 **subsection (b) or (c);**

27 to serve the veterans of the county. **A county service officer or service**
 28 **officer assistant must work at least an average of twenty (20) hours**
 29 **per week.**

30 (b) **This subsection does not apply to a county containing a**
 31 **consolidated city. A county shall employ either a full-time service**
 32 **officer or two (2) qualified part-time service officers if the county**
 33 **has at least five thousand (5,000) veterans residing in the county,**
 34 **and must hire an additional qualified part-time service officer for**
 35 **each additional two thousand five hundred (2,500) veterans**
 36 **residing in the county. If the number of veterans exceeds the two**
 37 **thousand five hundred (2,500) increment, the number of qualified**
 38 **part-time service officers required to be hired is rounded up.**
 39 **Nothing in this section may be construed to prohibit a county from**
 40 **hiring a full-time service officer in lieu of hiring two (2) qualified**
 41 **part-time service officers.**

42 (c) **This subsection applies to a county containing a consolidated**



1 **city. A county shall employ either a full-time service officer or two**
 2 **(2) qualified part-time service officers for each ten thousand**
 3 **(10,000) veterans residing in the county.**

4 ~~(b)~~ **(d)** The mayor of a city may employ a service officer and may
 5 employ service officer assistants to serve the veterans of the city.

6 ~~(c)~~ **(e)** ~~If~~ The remuneration and expenses of a county ~~or city~~ service
 7 officer ~~are shall be~~ paid from the funds of the county ~~or city~~ employing
 8 the service officer **and if remuneration and expenses of a city service**
 9 **officer are paid from the funds of the city,** the service officer shall:

10 (1) be:

11 (A) an honorably discharged veteran who has at least six (6)
 12 months of active service in the armed forces of the United
 13 States; or

14 (B) a service officer assistant with not less than two (2) years
 15 of experience;

16 (2) be a resident of Indiana or become a resident of Indiana not
 17 more than six (6) months after the service officer's start date; and

18 (3) serve under the supervision of the director of veterans' affairs.

19 ~~(d)~~ **(f)** A service officer assistant must be a resident of Indiana or
 20 become a resident of Indiana not later than six (6) months after the
 21 service officer assistant's start date and:

22 (1) satisfy the requirements specified in subsection ~~(c)(1)~~; **(e)(1)**;
 23 or

24 (2) be the spouse, surviving spouse, parent, or child of a person
 25 who satisfies the requirements specified in subsection ~~(c)(1)~~;

26 **(e)(1).**

27 ~~(e)~~ **(g)** A rule contrary to subsection ~~(e)~~ **(e)** or ~~(d)~~ **(f)** is void.

28 ~~(f)~~ **(h)** County ~~and city~~ fiscal bodies ~~may shall~~ appropriate funds
 29 necessary for the purposes described in this section. **A city fiscal body**
 30 **may appropriate funds necessary for the purposes of this section.**

31 **(i) A county executive shall provide adequate facilities and**
 32 **support to ensure quality and timely operations by the county**
 33 **service officer, using criteria established by the Indiana**
 34 **department of veterans' affairs.**

35 SECTION 8. IC 10-17-1-10, AS AMENDED BY P.L.42-2020,
 36 SECTION 5, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE
 37 JULY 1, 2025]: Sec. 10. (a) Within thirty (30) days of their
 38 appointment, new county or city service officers must attend a new
 39 service officer orientation presented by the Indiana department of
 40 veterans' affairs and, according to the standards established under
 41 section 4(4) of this chapter, become certified to assist veterans and
 42 their dependents and survivors. The curriculum for the new service



1 officer orientation presented under this subsection shall be determined
2 by the director.

3 (b) Within one (1) year of appointment, new service officers must
4 attend a course presented by a national organization and become
5 accredited to represent veterans. **A service officer, including a
6 qualified part-time service officer, appointed or employed after
7 June 30, 2025, must be accredited by the National Association of
8 County Service Officers. A service officer, including a qualified
9 part-time service officer, appointed or employed before July 1,
10 2025, must be accredited by the National Association of County
11 Service Officers before July 1, 2027.**

12 (c) An individual employed as a state, county, or city service officer
13 under this chapter is required to become accredited by a national
14 ~~veterans~~ **veterans'** service organization through the United States
15 Department of Veterans Affairs Office of General Counsel not later
16 than one (1) year from the date of the individual's employment, in order
17 to represent veterans.

18 (d) Annually, all state, county, or city service officers shall undergo
19 a course of training to adequately address problems of discharged
20 veterans in the service officer's county, or city, including a thorough
21 familiarization with laws, rules, and regulations of the federal
22 government and the state that affect benefits to which the veterans and
23 dependents of the veterans are entitled. After a service officer has
24 undergone this sustainment training and successfully passed a written
25 test, the service officer shall be recertified by the director to assist
26 veterans for the following year.

27 SECTION 9. [EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2025] **(a) There is
28 appropriated to the county service officer grant fund established
29 by IC 10-17-1-8.5, as added by this act:**

30 **(1) for the state fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, and ending
31 June 30, 2026, two million dollars (\$2,000,000); and**

32 **(2) for the state fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026, and ending
33 June 30, 2027, two million dollars (\$2,000,000);**

34 **from the state general fund for use by the Indiana department of
35 veterans' affairs in carrying out the purpose of the county service
36 officer grant fund established by IC 10-17-1-8.5, as added by this
37 act.**

38 **(b) This SECTION expires July 1, 2027.**

