

12 0330-0344 For administration and transportation costs associated with a veterans court project
13 pilot program and study established in section 33 of this act \$100,000.

14 EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

15 Department of Veterans' Services

16 1410-0024 For costs associated with implementing the training and certification of veterans'
17 benefits and services officers..... \$350,000

18 SECTION 3. Clause forty-third of section 7 of chapter 4 of the General Laws, as
19 appearing in the 2012 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the definition
20 "Active service in the armed forces" the following definition:-

21 "Gold Star", the status of any member of the armed forces, reserve component of the
22 armed forces or National Guard who was deceased due to an injury, illness or disease, not due to
23 gross negligence or misconduct of the member, which was incurred or aggravated while serving
24 on military duty; provided, however, that for the purpose of determining Gold Star status, the
25 term "military duty" shall mean full-time duty in the active military service of the United States,
26 regardless of duration or purpose; provided, further, that active military service shall include
27 full-time training duty, annual training duty and attendance, while in the active military service,
28 at a school designated as a service school by law or by the Secretary of the Department of
29 Defense; provided further, that "military duty" shall also include full-time National Guard or
30 reserve duty; provided further, that any member of the armed forces, reserve component of the
31 armed forces or National Guard shall also be considered on military duty if that person is on
32 inactive duty training, funeral honors duty, traveling directly to or from such active or inactive
33 duty or training or while training before the commencement of military assignment or between
34 successive periods of such active or inactive duty.

35 SECTION 3A. Section 61 of chapter 7 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
36 amended by inserting after subsection (i ½) the following subsection:-

37 (i¾) SDO shall, on an annual basis and in consultation with the department of veterans'
38 services, establish goals for participation on public projects for service-disabled, veteran-owned
39 small businesses interested in and capable of providing construction and design services on
40 public construction and design projects. In calculating such goals, SDO shall incorporate data
41 from the United States Department of Defense and the Massachusetts National Guard reflecting
42 the percentage of the commonwealth's population that are service-disabled veterans.

43 SECTION 3B. Section 35CC of chapter 10 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is
44 hereby amended by striking out, in lines 6 and 7, the words "certain active duty members of the
45 armed forces who were killed in action" and inserting in place thereof the following words:-
46 persons with Gold Star status as defined in clause Forty-third of section 7 of chapter 4

47 SECTION 4. Subsection (a) of section 8E of chapter 12 of the General Laws, as so
48 appearing, is hereby amended by inserting, after the words "U.S.A.", in line 17, the following
49 words:- ; Department of Massachusetts, Marine Corps League, Inc.

50 SECTION 5. Chapter 15A of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the
51 following section:-

52 Section 43. (a) No student at a postsecondary institution shall incur academic or financial
53 penalties by virtue of performing military service on behalf of the United States. A student who
54 enrolls in an academic course at any of the institutions in subsection (b) but is unable to complete
55 an academic course because that student is called to, or enlists in, active duty, as defined in
56 section 1 of chapter 15E, shall have the option to complete the course at a later date without
57 penalty or withdraw from the course with a full refund of fees and tuition paid. If the academic

58 course is no longer available upon the student's return from active duty, the student shall be
59 permitted to complete a replacement course for equivalent credit without penalty. If the student
60 chooses to withdraw from the course, the student's record shall reflect that the withdrawal is due
61 to active military service.

62 (b) This section shall apply to all postsecondary institutions in the commonwealth
63 including: (i) the system of public institutions of higher education, as defined in section 5 of
64 chapter 15A; (ii) private occupation schools, as defined in section 263 of chapter 112; and (iii)
65 private colleges, universities or other institutions of higher learning.

66 SECTION 6. Subsection (m) of section 8 of chapter 15E of the General Laws, as
67 appearing in the 2012 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the word "military"
68 in line 86, the following words:- ", National Guard or Reserve".

69 SECTION 7. Section 67A of chapter 33 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
70 amended by inserting, after the word "action", in line 3, the following:- or who died in service
71 while in a designated combat area in the line of duty.

72 SECTION 8. Section 8A of chapter 58 of the General Laws is hereby repealed.

73 SECTION 9. Section 5 of chapter 59 of the General Laws is hereby amended by striking
74 out the first paragraph, as appearing in the 2012 Official Edition, and inserting in place thereof
75 the following paragraph:-

76 The following property shall be exempt from taxation and the date of determination as to
77 age, ownership or other qualifying factors required by any clause shall be July first of each year
78 unless another meaning is clearly apparent from the context; provided, however, that any person
79 who receives an exemption under clause Seventeenth, Seventeenth C, Seventeenth C½,
80 Seventeenth D, Twenty-second, Twenty-second A, Twenty-second B, Twenty-second C,

81 Twenty-second D, Twenty-second E, Twenty-second F, Thirty-seventh, Thirty-seventh A, Forty-
82 first, Forty-first B, Forty-first C, Forty-first C½, Forty-second, Forty-third, Fifty-sixth or Fifty-
83 seventh shall not receive an exemption on the same property under any other provision of this
84 section, except clause Eighteenth or Forty-fifth.

85 SECTION 10. Clause twenty-second E of said section 5 of said chapter 59, as so
86 appearing, is here by amended by striking out the last paragraph.

87 SECTION 11. Said section 5 of said chapter 59 is hereby amended by inserting after
88 clause Twenty-second E, as so appearing, the following clause:-

89 Twenty-second F, Real estate of soldiers and sailors, who are veterans, as defined in the
90 forty-third clause of section 7 of chapter 4, and their spouses, who according to the records of the
91 Veterans Administration or of any branch of the armed forces of the United States by reason of
92 injury received while in such service and in the line of duty are paraplegics; provided that: the
93 veteran or spouse is a legal resident of the commonwealth; the veteran's last discharge or release
94 from the armed forces was under other than dishonorable conditions; the veteran was domiciled
95 in the commonwealth for at least 6 months prior to entering such service or resided in the
96 commonwealth for 5 consecutive years prior to the date of filing for exemption under this clause;
97 provided, that such real estate is occupied as the veteran's domicile by such person; and provided
98 further, that if the property is greater than a single-family house, then only that value of so much
99 of the house as is occupied by the person as such person's domicile shall be exempted. An
100 exemption under this clause shall continue unchanged for the benefit of the surviving spouse
101 after the death of such disabled veteran as long as the surviving spouse of the qualified veteran
102 shall remain an owner and occupant of a domicile subject to the exemption.

103 No real estate shall be exempt if the assessors adjudge that it has been conveyed to a
104 soldier or sailor to evade taxation.

105 After the assessors have allowed an exemption under this clause no further evidence of
106 the existence of the facts required by this clause shall be required in any subsequent year in the
107 city or town in which the exemption has been allowed; provided, however, that the assessors
108 may refuse to allow an exemption in any subsequent year if they become aware that the soldier
109 or sailor did not satisfy all of the requisites of this clause at the time the exemption was first
110 granted.

111 Two thousand dollars of this exemption or up to the sum of \$175, whichever basis is
112 applicable, shall be borne by the city or town; the balance shall be borne by the commonwealth;
113 and the state treasurer shall annually reimburse the city or town for the amount of the tax which
114 otherwise would have been collected on account of this balance.

115 Notwithstanding this section, in any city or town which accepts this paragraph, said
116 exemptions available under clauses twenty-second, twenty-second A, twenty-second B, twenty-
117 second C, twenty-second D, twenty-second E and twenty-second F may be granted to otherwise
118 eligible persons who have resided in the commonwealth for 1 year prior to the date of filing for
119 exemptions under the applicable clause.

120 SECTION 12. Section 5C of said chapter 59, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
121 striking out, in lines 13 and 14, the words "of section eight A of chapter fifty-eight and".

122 SECTION 13. Said chapter 59 is hereby amended by inserting after section 5C the
123 following section:-

124 Section 5C½. In a city or town which accepts this section and is certified by the
125 commissioner to be assessing all property at full and fair cash valuation, a taxpayer who

126 otherwise qualifies for an exemption under any clause specifically listed in the first paragraph of
127 section 5 for which receipt of another exemption on the same property is prohibited, shall be
128 granted an additional exemption which shall be uniform for all exemptions and the amount of
129 which shall not exceed 100 per cent of the exemption for which the taxpayer qualifies, as may be
130 determined by the legislative body of the city or town, subject to its charter, not later than the
131 beginning of the fiscal year to which the tax relates. Notwithstanding any provision of this
132 chapter to the contrary, the exemption shall be in addition to any exemption allowable under
133 section 5; provided, however, that in no instance shall the taxable valuation of such property,
134 after all applicable exemptions, be reduced below 10 per cent of its full and fair cash valuation,
135 except through the applicability of clause Eighteenth of section 5; and provided, further, that the
136 additional exemption shall not result in any taxpayer paying less than the taxes paid in the
137 preceding fiscal year. Acceptance of this section by a city or town shall not increase the amount
138 which it otherwise would have been reimbursed by the commonwealth under the respective
139 clause.

140 SECTION 14. Section 5N of said chapter 59 of the General Laws, as appearing in the
141 2012 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the figure “4”, in line 5, the
142 following words:- or a spouse of a veteran in the case where the veteran is deceased or has a
143 service-connected disability.

144 SECTION 15. Section 59 of said chapter 59, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
145 striking out the third paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:-

146 An application for exemption under clause Seventeenth, Seventeenth C, Seventeenth C½,
147 Seventeenth D, Eighteenth, Twenty-second, Twenty-second A, Twenty-second B, Twenty-
148 second C, Twenty-second D, Twenty-second E, Twenty-second F, Thirty-seventh, Thirty-

149 seventh A, Forty-first, Forty-first B, Forty-first C, Forty-first C½, Forty-second, Forty-third,
150 Fifty-second, Fifty-third, Fifty-sixth and Fifty-seventh of section 5 may be made on or before
151 December 15 of the year to which the tax relates, or if the bill or notice is first sent after
152 September 15 of such year, within 3 months after the bill or notice is so sent.

153

154 SECTION 15A. Section 1 of chapter 60A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is
155 hereby amended by striking out, in lines 135 and 136, the words “continental United States” and
156 inserting in place thereof the following word:- commonwealth.

157

158 SECTION 16. Chapter 68 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
159 section 19 the following section:-

160 Section 19A. Any person or charitable organization established for an advocacy,
161 benevolent, educational, humane, patriotic, philanthropic, scientific or social welfare purpose on
162 behalf of veterans or the military which intends to solicit contributions from persons within the
163 commonwealth or to have contributions solicited on its behalf by other charitable organizations
164 shall, prior to such solicitation, apply to for designation as a veterans’ charitable organization on
165 a form issued by the division of public charities that shall include, but not be limited to: (i) the
166 name of the organization and the purpose for which it is organized; (ii) the address of the
167 organization and the address of any offices in the commonwealth or, if the organization does not
168 maintain an office, the name and address of the person having custody of its financial records;
169 and (iii) the charitable purposes for which solicited contributions shall be used. The secretary of
170 veterans’ services shall publish on the department’s website a list of the names of each veterans’
171 charitable organization. Designation as a veterans’ charitable organization shall be valid for 3

172 years. Any person or organization applying for designation as a veterans' charitable organization
173 shall be exempt from any registration fee or renewal fee under section 19.

174 SECTION 17. Section 28 of said chapter 68, as appearing in the 2012 Official Edition, is
175 hereby amended by adding the following subsection:-

176 (f) No person or organization shall claim to be a representative of a veterans' charitable
177 organization with the intent to solicit contributions that benefit or profit any person or
178 organization other than the veterans' charitable organization.

179 SECTION 18. Section 1 of chapter 90, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting
180 after the definition of "Intersecting way" the following definition:-

181 "Killed in action", a casualty classification determined by the United States Department
182 of Defense when a member of the armed forces of the United States has been killed while
183 performing military operations while serving the United States in a conflict recognized by the
184 United States Department of Defense.

185 SECTION 19. Section 2 of said chapter 90, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
186 inserting after the word "RECIPIENT", in line 407, the following words:- and the words
187 "COMBAT WOUNDED".

188 SECTION 20. Said section 2 of said chapter 90, as so appearing, is hereby further
189 amended by striking out the twenty-first paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following
190 paragraph:-

191 The registrar shall furnish without charge to the owner of a private passenger motor
192 vehicle who is a Gold Star parent, child, sibling, grandchild or spouse of a member of the
193 military, upon presentation of satisfactory evidence of such status as determined by the registrar,
194 a distinctive registration plate that reads "Gold Star Family" for 1 private passenger motor

195 vehicle owned and principally used by that person or a distinctive "Gold Star Family" emblem to
196 be affixed to a registration plate for a motorcycle privately owned and principally used by that
197 person. The registrar may issue a distinctive "Gold Star Family" registration of up to 6 characters
198 for 1 private passenger motor vehicle owned and principally used by that person. Provided
199 further, that a Gold Star parent, child, sibling, grandchild or spouse of a member of the military
200 that was killed in action or otherwise died as a result of immediate injuries sustained from such
201 action may have a "KIA" designation on the "Gold Star Family" emblem affixed to a registration
202 plate for a private passenger motor vehicle or motorcycle privately owned and principally used
203 by that person. The registrar shall furnish at no additional cost a "KIA" designation on any
204 previously issued "Gold Star" registration plate for an individual who meets the requirements of
205 this section.

206 SECTION 21. Section 2E of said chapter 90, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
207 adding the following subsection:-

208 (d) The registrar shall furnish, upon application, to the owner of a private passenger
209 motor vehicle, a distinctive registration plate which shall display on its face the words "Support
210 our Veterans" to honor men and women who have served in the armed forces of the United
211 States and the armed forces of the commonwealth. There shall be a fee of not less than \$50 for
212 such plates in addition to the established registration fee for a private passenger motor vehicle,
213 which shall be payable at the time of registration of the vehicle and at each renewal thereof. The
214 portion of the total remaining fee, after the deduction of costs directly attributable to the issuance
215 of such plates, shall be deposited in a registry retained revenue account. Of the remaining portion
216 of such fee, there shall be an application process designed and administered by the secretary of
217 the department of veterans' services to distribute such funds once during each fiscal year for the

218 purpose of administering grants to programs or organizations that fund additional services or
219 conduct research, including, but not limited to, the following: (i) veterans' mental health and
220 substance abuse; (ii) veterans' housing and homelessness; (iii) veterans' health care; (iv)
221 veterans' disability benefits; (v) long-term care of veterans; (vi) veteran employment and
222 employment training; (ix) veterans' education; and (x) Gold Star family support. In order to
223 expend funds from this account, the secretary of the department of veterans' services shall
224 appoint a 3-member funding authorization committee. The committee shall authorize the
225 expenditure of funds from this special fund through an application process developed and
226 administered by the committee. The secretary shall be a member and act as the chairperson of the
227 committee. One member of the committee shall be a member of the Governor's Advisory
228 Council on Veterans' Services, who shall be appointed by the governor. One member of the
229 committee shall be a veteran representative of the public with no financial interest in funding
230 programs and services, who shall be appointed by the governor. No member of the legislature
231 shall serve on the committee. Any entity awarded funds under this section, in any fiscal year,
232 shall not be eligible for funding for the next 2 subsequent fiscal years.

233 SECTION 22. Section 1B of chapter 112 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
234 amended by adding the following subsection:-

235 (f) The director and each of the boards of registration and examination under the
236 supervision of the director shall waive the initial license application fee or certification fee
237 granted under subsections (a) to (e), inclusive.

238 SECTION 23. Chapter 115 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
239 section 3A the following section:—

240 Section 3B. (a) The secretary of veterans' services shall establish standards and
241 promulgate regulations for the mandatory training and certification of veterans' benefits and
242 services officers. Veterans' benefits and services officers shall be trained and certified within 6
243 months of the officer's appointment under section 3. Training shall be offered annually and shall
244 be administered by the secretary of the department of veterans' services and approved by the
245 Massachusetts Veterans' Service Officers Association and Massachusetts Municipal Association.

246 The secretary shall formulate a certification test in conjunction with the Massachusetts
247 Veterans' Service Officers Association, which shall ensure the candidate possesses the core
248 knowledge to effectively serve veterans. The secretary shall make the test available at the
249 mandatory annual training and shall provide a reasonable schedule of make-up training and
250 testing. The certification test shall assess areas of knowledge including, but not limited to, the
251 following: veterans' benefits contained in this chapter; federal and local benefits, including
252 employment, education, health care, retirement and other veterans' benefits; and alternative
253 resources, including those partially or wholly subsidized by the federal government, such as
254 Medicaid, supplemental security income and social security disability benefits and federal
255 pension and compensation entitlements. At the request of any appointing authority, the secretary
256 shall offer training and testing to any person who works for or in conjunction with a certified
257 veterans service officer or agent. Upon petition to the secretary by the appointing authority, a
258 person appointed as a veterans' benefits and services officer may be exempted by the secretary
259 from the requirements of this section.

260 (b) A person who receives an appointment as a veterans' benefits and services officer, or
261 who is currently employed as a veterans' benefits and services officer under section 3, shall be
262 certified. To be certified as a veterans' benefits and services officer, the candidate shall, at a

263 minimum, meet the following qualifications: (i) be appointed locally under section 3; (ii) attend a
264 mandatory training within 6 months of appointment, administered by the secretary of the
265 department of veterans' services; (iii) attend a mandatory training once every calendar year; (iv)
266 take and pass the test offered at each administered training once every 3 years. The secretary of
267 veterans' services shall consider candidates who complete the requirements in this section a
268 certified veterans' benefits and services officer.

269 As used in this section, the term "veterans' benefits and services officer" shall include: (i)
270 full-time and part-time veterans' agents under this chapter, chapter 471 of the acts of 1972,
271 chapter 68 of the acts of 1984 and title 108 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations; (ii) full-
272 time directors of veterans' services districts under this chapter, said chapter 471 of the acts of
273 1972, said chapter 68 of the acts of 1984 and title 108 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations;
274 (iii) county veterans' agents under chapter 128 of the acts of 1982; and (iv) the veterans' benefits
275 and services commissioner in and for the city of Boston under this chapter.

276 (c) During the period of employment, a person holding a veterans' benefits and services
277 officer certificate under this section shall be under the direct supervision of the appointing
278 authority in section 3. The appointing authority shall regularly evaluate the performance of
279 assigned duties by the veterans' benefits and services officer.

280 (d) Failure of a veterans' benefits and services officer to comply with this chapter shall
281 result in reduction of the reimbursement allowance, paid by the commonwealth under section 6,
282 from 75 per cent to 50 per cent. The reduction shall remain in effect: (i) for a time period
283 designated by the secretary; (ii) until the appointing authority is in full compliance; (iii) until a
284 plan is agreed upon by the appointing authority and the secretary to be in full compliance by a

285 date agreed to by the secretary and the appointing authority; or (iv) by removal of the veterans'
286 benefits and services officer.

287 (e) The department shall, for any reduction in the reimbursement allowance made under
288 subsection (d), deposit said reimbursement in a trust account. Upon the appointing authority's
289 full compliance under subsection (d), the department shall add this amount to a subsequent
290 reimbursement made to the city or town under section 6.

291 (f) Veterans' benefits and services officers or agents shall not disclose any information
292 transmitted in confidence by and between a veteran and a veterans benefits and services officer
293 or agent, except as follows: (i) when the disclosure is made for the benefit of the veteran; (ii) the
294 disclosure is reasonably necessary to the assistance of the veteran; and (iii) under a lawful order
295 to make such disclosure. For the purposes of this subsection, information received by a veterans'
296 benefits and services officer or agent which arises out of and in the course of providing
297 assistance shall include, but not limited to, communications, reports, records, working papers or
298 memoranda.

299 SECTION 24. Chapter 149 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
300 section 44¹/₂, the following section:-

301 Section 44³/₄. Notwithstanding chapter 151B, a private, nonpublic employer in the
302 commonwealth may provide a preference in promotion or hiring to: (1) a veteran; (2) the spouse
303 of an honorably discharged veteran who the United States Veterans' Administration determines
304 to be 100 per cent disabled as a result of enemy action or a service-connected accident; or (3) the
305 surviving spouse of a veteran.

306 SECTION 25. Chapter 272 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
307 section 42A the following section:-

308 Section 42B. Whoever willfully pickets, loiters or otherwise creates a disturbance within
309 1,000 feet of a funeral home, church, temple, military funeral procession, burial or other building
310 where military funeral services are being held, shall be punished by a fine of not more than
311 \$2,000 or by imprisonment for not more than 2 years in a house of correction, or both.

312 SECTION 26. Section 4 of chapter 73 of the acts of 1986 is hereby repealed.

313 SECTION 27. The secretary of health and human services shall establish and implement
314 an ongoing veterans' home modification program through the Massachusetts rehabilitation
315 commission. The commissioner of the Massachusetts rehabilitation commission, in collaboration
316 with the secretary of veterans' services, shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary to carry
317 out a veterans' home modifications program for any veteran who was called to active duty after
318 September 11, 2001, who has suffered a service connected disability and who requires home
319 modifications services to function more independently in the veteran's home and community.
320 The purpose of the veterans' home modification program is to provide funding on behalf of
321 veterans for home modifications services made necessary by the functional limitations associated
322 with the veteran's service connected disability. The commissioner and secretary of veterans'
323 services shall, to the best of commissioner's and secretary's knowledge, identify veterans eligible
324 for this program and provide a cost estimate for the purpose of appropriations for this program
325 for fiscal year 2015 and beyond. The cost estimate shall be reported to the house and senate
326 committee on ways and means and the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs not later
327 than March 1, 2014.

328 SECTION 28. (a) There is hereby established the Massachusetts Servicemember Post-
329 Deployment Council to make recommendations regarding the implementation of a program in
330 Massachusetts to support service members transitioning to civilian life after deployment.

331 (b) The council shall consist of 27 members: 2 members of the senate appointed by the
332 president of the senate, 1 of whom shall be a member of the joint committee on veterans and
333 federal affairs and 1 of whom shall be a member of the joint committee on mental health and
334 substance abuse; 1 of whom shall be the ranking minority member of the senate who is on the
335 joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities, the joint committee on labor
336 and workforce development or the joint committee on housing, or the member's designee; 2
337 members of the house of representatives appointed by the speaker of the house of
338 representatives, 1 of whom shall be a member of the joint committee on veterans and federal
339 affairs and 1 of whom shall be a member of the joint committee on mental health and substance
340 abuse; 1 of whom shall be the ranking minority member of the house of representatives who is
341 on the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities, the joint committee on
342 labor and workforce development or the joint committee on housing, or the member's designee;
343 1 member shall be the secretary of health and human services, or a designee from the executive
344 staff to include representation from the department of public health, the department of mental
345 health, the department of children and families and the Massachusetts rehabilitation commission;
346 1 member shall be the secretary of veterans' services, or a designee; 1 member shall be the
347 adjutant general of the national guard, or a designee; 1 member shall be the commissioner of the
348 Massachusetts rehabilitation commission, or a designee; 1 member shall be the undersecretary
349 of the department of housing and community development, or a designee; 1 member shall be the
350 secretary of labor and workforce development, or a designee; 1 member shall be the secretary of
351 education, or a designee; and 14 members shall be appointed by the governor, 2 of whom shall be
352 veterans of Operation New Dawn, Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom, and
353 1 from a list of nominees submitted by each of the following organizations: Massachusetts

354 Coalition for Suicide Prevention, Massachusetts Psychological Association, Massachusetts
355 Psychiatric Society, Inc., Massachusetts Association of Mental Health, Association for
356 Behavioral Healthcare, Inc., Massachusetts Veterans' Service Officers Association,
357 Massachusetts Women Veterans Network, The Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General
358 Hospital Home Base Program, the Massachusetts Military Heroes Fund, the federal Veterans
359 Administration, the Massachusetts Hospital Association, the Military Friends Foundation and the
360 Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers.

361 (c) The term of office for each appointed member shall be 2 years, or until a successor is
362 appointed in the case of a vacancy. The council shall, at its first organizational meeting, elect a
363 member to serve as chairperson for a 2-year term. The council shall also elect a vice-chairperson
364 for a 2-year term and a clerk for a 2-year term. No member shall receive any compensation for
365 serving on the council.

366 (d) The council shall perform and make recommendations pertaining on how best to
367 operationalize and quantify the following duties which may include, but shall not be limited to:
368 (i) examining and evaluating the effectiveness of veterans' suicide prevention policies; (ii)
369 examining and evaluating the effectiveness of resilience training for veterans' personnel; (iii)
370 developing recommendations on ways in which veterans' support service needs may be promptly
371 assessed upon return from deployment; (iv) developing recommendations for methods by which
372 the commonwealth may identify, evaluate and refer service members returning to civilian life
373 post-deployment for assistance with education, employment, health care, housing and other
374 services; (v) providing recommendations for improving communication between mental health
375 support services and veterans who may benefit from such services; (vi) providing
376 recommendations for improving observation and treatment plans for returning veterans; (vii)

377 developing recommendations for providing mental health counseling services to combat the
378 effects of post-traumatic stress injuries for post-deployment veterans; (viii) examining ways in
379 which the commonwealth may reduce stress, anxiety and depression among returning veterans
380 and family members of returning veterans; (ix) providing recommendations on improving health
381 access assistance, including analyzing: (1) barriers prohibiting veterans from receiving coverage
382 upon their residency in the commonwealth; (2) tools to educate active duty members who intend
383 to reside in the commonwealth on their ability to acquire health care coverage in the
384 commonwealth; (3) the resources available to military members to help afford coverage upon
385 discharge; (3) the fluctuating income of service members upon discharge; and (5) the amount of
386 veterans who are discharged and upon residency in the commonwealth are without health care
387 coverage; provided, however, the council may form a subcommittee to implement this clause;
388 and (x) identifying the needs of women veterans relative to issues including, but not limited to,
389 compensation, rehabilitation, outreach, health care, education and other issues facing women
390 veterans in the community. The council may hold public hearings to assist in the collection and
391 evaluation of data and testimony.

392 (e) The council shall submit its findings and recommendations, including a detailed re-
393 entry program plan relative to servicemembers who return to civilian life after deployment,
394 together with recommendations for legislation to carry out those recommendations into effect by
395 filing the same with the house and senate clerks, the house and senate committees on ways and
396 means, the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs and the joint committee on mental
397 health and substance abuse not later than September 15, 2015.

398 SECTION 29. (a) The department of public health shall issue guidance to acute hospitals
399 and ambulance service providers in order to establish the systematic identification of veterans

400 and military service members following clinical care to effect appropriate referrals consistent
401 with the privacy protections offered by federal and state laws and regulations to the department
402 of veterans' services and to enable and promote access to all available resources, supports and
403 benefits.

404 (b) The department of veterans' services shall submit quarterly aggregate data reports on
405 all referrals to the department of public health.

406 SECTION 30. (a) There is hereby established a special commission to study and make
407 recommendations to create a state office of veterans' employment and business assistance with a
408 goal of expanding business and employment opportunities for veterans.

409 (b) The commission shall consist of 14 members: 3 members of the house of
410 representatives, 1 of whom shall be the chair of the joint committee on veterans and federal
411 affairs, 1 of whom shall be the chair of the joint committee on labor and workforce development
412 and 1 of whom shall be the ranking minority member of the house of representatives who is on
413 the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs or the joint committee on economic
414 development and emerging technologies, or the member's designee; 3 members of the senate, 1
415 of whom shall be the chair of the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs, 1 of whom
416 shall be the chair of the joint committee on labor and workforce development and 1 of whom
417 shall be the ranking minority member of the senate who is on the joint committee on veterans
418 and federal affairs or the joint committee on economic development and emerging technologies,
419 or the member's designee; the secretary of labor and workforce development, or a designee; the
420 secretary of veterans' services, or a designee; the secretary of housing and economic
421 development, or a designee; and 5 members appointed by the governor, who shall consist of 1
422 member from each of the following organizations: Veterans Business Council, Northeast Veteran

423 Resource Center, Inc., Massachusetts Small Business Development Center, Center for Women
424 and Enterprise, and Veterans, Inc. The speaker of the house of representatives and the president
425 of the senate shall appoint 2 members of the commission as co-chairpersons.

426 (c) The commission shall: (i) examine and report on barriers to employment facing
427 returning veterans; (ii) examine barriers to starting a veteran-owned business or nonprofit; (iii)
428 identify opportunities to promote the development of business enterprises and nonprofit
429 organizations owned and operated by veterans; (iv) examine relationships that can be enhanced
430 between state agencies and private-sector employers to promote private-sector awareness of
431 barriers to veteran employment and the potential benefits of hiring veterans; (v) study the
432 feasibility of state-level veteran career counseling and training options, including coordination
433 with 1-stop career centers and all outreach programs and initiatives relative to veterans'
434 employment services in the commonwealth; (vi) examine outreach programs and initiatives
435 relative to employment services for veterans in the commonwealth and conduct a demographic
436 and geographic analyses of the veteran population who is seeking services through the division
437 of career services; (vii) identify opportunities to maximize revenues aimed at accomplishing the
438 goals in this section, including, but not limited to, the availability of federal grants and matching
439 funds; (viii) develop and implement an action plan to address the needs and deficiencies of
440 underserved geographic locations in need of greater veteran outreach efforts; and (ix) consider
441 any particular challenges that may be faced by female veterans and disabled veterans when
442 related to the objectives of the commission.

443 The examination shall include, but not be limited to: (i) a report on the number of
444 veterans residing in each municipality; (ii) a report on the number of veterans actively seeking
445 employment services in each community; (iii) coordinating with local, state and federal entities

446 to estimate the number of veterans in each community currently unemployed or underemployed;
447 and (iv) a determination of the geographic location of each local veteran employment
448 representative assigned to career centers or other employment outreach locations throughout the
449 commonwealth. The examination shall include an assessment of staffing levels, funding levels
450 and outreach efforts performed by local veteran employment representatives and a projection of
451 underserved geographic locations in need of greater veteran outreach efforts.

452 (d) The commission may hold hearings and invite testimony from experts and the public.
453 The commission shall review and identify best practices learned from similar efforts in other
454 states.

455 (e) The commission shall report to the general court the results of its investigation and
456 study and the action plan as developed in clause (viii) of the first paragraph of subsection (c) and
457 make recommendations together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry out its
458 recommendations by filing such report with the clerks of the senate and the house, not later than
459 before January 15, 2015.

460 SECTION 31. (a) There shall be a special commission to study and make
461 recommendations under chapter 115 of the General Laws. The commission shall study and
462 evaluate current laws, regulations and practices related to providing services and support to
463 veterans and make recommendations to improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of
464 partnerships between federal, state and local programs.

465 (b) The committee shall consist of 7 members: 2 of whom who shall be the house and
466 senate chairs of the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs, or their designees, who shall
467 serve as co-chair of the commission; the secretary of the department of veterans' services, or a
468 designee; the secretary of administration and finance, or a designee; the president of the

469 Massachusetts Veterans' Service Officers Association, or a designee; the executive director of
470 the Massachusetts Municipal Association, or a designee; and the veterans' benefits and services
471 commissioner in and for the city of Boston, or a designee.

472 (c) The commission shall: (i) study and evaluate the current system for identifying
473 veterans in need of services; (ii) study the current state-level process for providing, administering
474 and financing services and access to services; and (iii) make recommendations to enhance the
475 coordination of the actions of federal, state and local government agencies to support measurably
476 better outcomes and efficiency for community-based veterans services. The commission shall
477 evaluate the fiscal impact on local government of the current system of municipal financing of
478 veterans' benefits subject to reimbursement through state appropriations and of the rules
479 governing state and local administration of chapter 115 of the General Laws. The commission
480 shall consider alternative efficient methods of financing and administration that would improve
481 services to veterans.

482 (d) The commission shall convene its first official meeting not later than February 1,
483 2014. The commission shall file a report of the findings of its study with recommendations for
484 legislation with house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on
485 veterans and federal affairs not later than December 1, 2015.

486 SECTION 32. (a) There is hereby established the Massachusetts veterans long-term care
487 and housing master plan commission. The commission shall also study the feasibility of waiving
488 the homestead fee established in section 38 of chapter 262 of the General Laws for disabled
489 veterans. The commission shall study, evaluate and make recommendations regarding the future
490 needs surrounding housing and residential care demand for veterans, spouses and dependents in
491 the commonwealth.

492 (b) The commission shall consist of 16 members: the house of representatives and senate
493 co-chairs of the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs, or their designees, who shall
494 serve as co-chairs of the commission; the secretary of veterans' services, or a designee; 4
495 members appointed by the secretary of health and human services, 1 of whom shall be an expert
496 in healthcare delivery systems, 1 of whom shall be an expert in healthcare facilities management,
497 1 of whom shall be a member of the board of trustees of the Soldiers' Home in Massachusetts
498 and 1 whom shall be a member of the board of trustees of the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke; 1 of
499 member appointed by the secretary of administration and finance, who shall be an employee of
500 the division of capital asset management and maintenance; the president of the Massachusetts
501 Veterans' Service Officers Association, or a designee; the executive director of the interagency
502 council on housing and homelessness, or a designee; 1 member appointed by the secretary of
503 veterans' services who is a private citizen, not employed by an agency, city, town or group
504 providing services to veterans, and who has extensive knowledge of the federal Veterans
505 Administration; 1 member appointed by the secretary of the executive office of administration
506 and finance who is a private citizen, not employed by an agency, city, town or group providing
507 services to veterans, with extensive knowledge of real estate, construction and development; 2
508 members from the governor's advisory committee on women veterans; 2 members appointed by
509 the secretary of veterans' services who are private citizens, not employed by a city, town or
510 group providing services to veterans, and who are combat veterans of conflicts since 2001.

511 (c) The commission shall study and evaluate the emerging changes in veterans care and
512 delivery of services relative to long-term health care and housing with the goal of ensuring all
513 services provided by the state are strategically balanced by region and are in-line with and
514 complimentary to those services provided by the federal government and other service providers.

515 The commission shall study and evaluate the current capital needs for both the Soldiers' Home in
516 Massachusetts and the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke and examine best practices in other states for
517 the purpose of developing a long-term master plan and recommendations relative to long-term
518 capital spending.

519 (d) The commission shall convene the first official meeting not later than January 10,
520 2014. The commission shall file a preliminary report of the study with recommendations for
521 long-term capital not later than April 30, 2014 with the secretary of administration and finance
522 and the house and senate clerks, who shall forward the report to the house and senate committees
523 on ways and means, the house and senate committees on bonding, capital assets and state
524 expenditures and the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs.

525 SECTION 33. (a) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, there shall
526 be a 2-year veterans court project pilot program and study administered in Norfolk county and
527 managed by a veterans court program director for the purpose of developing a model to
528 implement veterans courts across the commonwealth. The veterans court program director shall
529 be selected by the chief justice of the trial court and the secretary of the department of veterans'
530 services after a publically advertised request for applicants. The director shall be an employee of
531 the trial court.

532 (b) There shall be established a veteran court advisory board consisting of 8 members: the
533 attorney general of the commonwealth, or a designee; the secretary of veterans' services, or a
534 designee; the chief justice of the trial court, or a designee; the executive director of the
535 Massachusetts District Attorneys Association, or a designee; the commissioner of the department
536 of mental health, or a designee; the commissioner of the department of public health, or a
537 designee; a member of the community who has served or a family member of someone who has

538 served, designated by the secretary of veterans services; and the chief counsel of the committee
539 for public counsel services, or a designee.

540 (c) The veterans court program director shall meet quarterly with the veterans court
541 advisory board and together shall make recommendations to the chief justice of the trial court
542 and to the court administrator on the implementation of sections 20 and 21 of chapter 108 of the
543 acts of 2012. The veterans court program director shall have duties that include, but are not
544 limited to: (i) developing a detailed summary of data collected through the pilot program; (ii)
545 recommending best practices for implementing a veterans court; (iii) analyzing costs associated
546 with implementing veterans courts across the commonwealth; (iv) studying the efficacy of the
547 models used in the pilot program; and (v) coordinating with Mission Direct Vet to develop a
548 summary of the organization's findings and efficacy of Mission Direct Vet pilot programs.

549 (d) The chief justice of the trial court with the advice and consent of the veterans court
550 advisory board shall submit a detailed report of findings, recommendations and plans to expand
551 veterans courts throughout the commonwealth to the joint committee on veterans and federal
552 affairs, joint committee on the judiciary, joint committee on mental health and substance abuse
553 and house and senate committees on ways and means not later than 2 years after the date of hire
554 of the veterans court program director.

555 SECTION 34. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the highway
556 constituting the turnpike and Boston extension, as defined in section 1 of chapter 6C, shall be
557 designated and known as the Purple Heart Massachusetts Turnpike, for inclusion in the National
558 Purple Heart Trail, in recognition of the members of the armed forces of the United States who
559 are wounded by an instrument of war in the hands of the enemy. The Massachusetts Department

560 of Transportation shall erect and maintain suitable markers bearing that designation in
561 compliance with the standards of the department.

562 SECTION 35. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the portion of
563 state highway route 44, that runs between United States highway route 3 in the town of Plymouth
564 in a westerly direction for a distance of 14.4 miles to interstate highway route 495 in the town of
565 Middleborough, shall be designated and known as the Gold Star Highway in recognition of the
566 brave men and women who died while actively serving in our nation's armed services. The
567 Massachusetts Department of Transportation shall erect and maintain suitable markers bearing
568 that designation in compliance with the standards of the department.

569 SECTION 36. (a) Veterans' benefits and services officers appointed before the effective
570 date of this act shall be trained and certified at the first training administered by the secretary of
571 veterans' services as required by section 3B of chapter 115 of the General Laws.

572 (b) The secretary of veterans' services shall adopt all necessary rules, regulations and
573 procedures in conjunction with the commission established by section 19 of chapter 108 of the
574 acts of 2012 to implement section 23 not later than 180 days after the effective date of this act.

575 SECTION 37. The department of veterans' services, in conjunction with the department
576 of revenue, shall study the feasibility and analyze the merits of implementing a sliding scale
577 property tax abatement for veterans and spouses, currently implemented under clause Twenty-
578 second of section 5 of chapter 59 of the General Laws, based upon a percentage of disability as
579 defined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. The study shall include, but not be
580 limited to: (i) the methodology of granting such exemption in other states; (2) the utilization of a
581 sliding scale, based upon the percentage of the veteran's disability, in awarding the property tax
582 exemption to veterans and spouses; (iii) the impact on disabled veterans; and (iv) any anticipated

583 monetary cost to the commonwealth or to municipalities that the exemption may cause. The
584 department of veterans' services, in conjunction with the department of revenue, shall submit its
585 findings and legislative recommendations to the clerks of the house of representatives and senate,
586 the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on veterans and
587 federal affairs not later than March 15, 2014.

588 SECTION 38. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, all secretariats,
589 departments, commissions and agencies required to submit reports under this act shall file the
590 reports by the date required via electronic means with the chairs of any committees named as
591 recipients and with the clerks of the senate and house of representatives. The house and senate
592 clerks shall develop procedures and requirements for secretariats, departments, commissions and
593 agencies regarding the preparation of the reports to facilitate their collection and storage and the
594 reports shall be made available to the public on the general court's website. When a legislative
595 commission is established, the clerks of the senate and house of representatives shall include on
596 the general court's website the date the commission was established, the members of the
597 commission and the reporting date of the commission.

598 SECTION 39. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, Bridge
599 number D12026-1XX on state highway route 131 over the Quinebaug river in the town of
600 Dudley shall be dedicated and known as the Private First Class Ranger Christopher P. Dona,
601 Army, memorial bridge in memory of United States Army Private Christopher Dona, who was
602 killed in a tragic parachuting accident on June 13, 2013 at the Fort Stewart-Hunter Army Airfield
603 base. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation shall erect and maintain suitable markers
604 bearing that designation in compliance with the standards of the department.

605 SECTION 40. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the
606 Massachusetts Department of Transportation shall erect a suitable marker at the intersection of
607 state highway route 122 and Hartford avenue in the town of Uxbridge in honor of United States
608 Marine Corps Private Edward Sullivan, recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, 1898.

609 SECTION 41. On the effective date of this act, any person or charitable organization
610 established for an advocacy, benevolent, educational, humane, patriotic, philanthropic, scientific
611 or social welfare purpose on behalf of veterans or the military which intends to solicit
612 contributions from persons within the commonwealth or to have contributions solicited on its
613 behalf by other charitable organizations shall comply with section 19A of chapter 68 of the
614 General Laws not later 90 days after the effective date of this act.