

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 146 Session of 2025

INTRODUCED BY BAKER, BROOKS, BARTOLOTTA, FONTANA, BROWN, PENNYCUICK, COSTA AND STEFANO, JANUARY 22, 2025

SENATOR MASTRIANO, VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, AS AMENDED, JANUARY 28, 2025

AN ACT

1 Amending Title 51 (Military Affairs) of the Pennsylvania
2 Consolidated Statutes, in State Veterans' Commission and
3 Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans' Affairs, further
4 providing for Veterans' Trust Fund; AND ESTABLISHING THE <--
5 VETERANS' TRUST FUND BOARD.

6 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
7 hereby enacts as follows:

8 Section 1. Section 1721 of Title 51 of the Pennsylvania <--
9 Consolidated Statutes is amended by adding a subsection to read:

10 § 1721. Veterans' Trust Fund.

11 * * *

12 (e.1) Grant Evaluation Committee.

13 (1) The Grant Evaluation Committee is established within
14 the department.

15 (2) The Grant Evaluation Committee shall consist of the
16 following members:

17 (i) Five members appointed by the Adjutant General,
18 including the chairperson of the Pennsylvania State
19 Veterans Commission or a designee, the chairperson of the

~~Pennsylvania War Veterans Council or a designee and a county director of veterans affairs.~~

~~(ii) One veteran appointed by the President pro tempore of the Senate.~~

~~(iii) One veteran appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate.~~

~~(iv) One veteran appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.~~

~~(v) One veteran appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.~~

~~(3) The Grant Evaluation Committee shall:~~

~~(i) Review and evaluate applications for grants provided under this subchapter.~~

~~(ii) Provide recommendations on the use of funds under this subchapter to the Adjutant General.~~

~~(4) The review and evaluation of applications for grants provided under this subchapter and the making of recommendations for the use of funding under this subchapter performed by individuals pursuant to the statement of policy for the maintenance and use of the fund required under subsection (c) prior to the effective date of this subsection shall be performed by the Grant Evaluation Committee as provided under paragraph (3).~~

~~* * *~~

~~Section 2. This act shall take effect in 60 days.~~

SECTION 1. SECTION 1721(E) OF TITLE 51 OF THE PENNSYLVANIA CONSOLIDATED STATUTES IS AMENDED AND THE SECTION IS AMENDED BY ADDING A SUBSECTION TO READ:

§ 1721. VETERANS' TRUST FUND.

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1 (E) OPERATION.--

2 (1) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADOPT A STATEMENT OF POLICY FOR
3 THE MAINTENANCE AND USE OF THE FUND WITHIN 60 DAYS OF THE
4 EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS SECTION. THE POLICY SHALL BE PUBLISHED
5 AS A NOTICE IN THE PENNSYLVANIA BULLETIN, BUT SHALL NOT BE
6 SUBJECT TO REVIEW UNDER SECTION 205 OF THE ACT OF JULY 31,
7 1968 (P.L.769, NO.240), REFERRED TO AS THE COMMONWEALTH
8 DOCUMENTS LAW, SECTIONS 204(B) AND 301(10) OF THE ACT OF
9 OCTOBER 15, 1980 (P.L.950, NO.164), KNOWN AS THE COMMONWEALTH
10 ATTORNEYS ACT OR THE ACT OF JUNE 25, 1982 (P.L.633, NO.181),
11 KNOWN AS THE REGULATORY REVIEW ACT.

12 (2) THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND BOARD IS ESTABLISHED AS AN
13 ADVISORY BOARD WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT. THE FOLLOWING SHALL
14 APPLY:

15 (I) THE PURPOSE OF THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND BOARD IS
16 TO INCREASE DONATIONS TO ENSURE THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT
17 AND IMPACTFUL DISTRIBUTION OF MONEY IN THE VETERANS'
18 TRUST FUND.

19 (II) THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND BOARD SHALL HAVE THE
20 FOLLOWING DUTIES:

21 (A) ADVISE THE DEPARTMENT ON THE PRIORITIES OF
22 THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND GRANTS.

23 (B) REVIEW VETERANS' TRUST FUND GRANT
24 APPLICATIONS.

25 (C) RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE VETERANS'
26 TRUST FUND.

27 (D) RECOMMEND PERFORMANCE AUDIT METRICS FOR
28 ORGANIZATIONS RECEIVING VETERANS' TRUST FUND GRANTS.

29 (E) RECOMMEND LEGISLATIVE OR POLICY CHANGES TO
30 ENHANCE THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND.

1 (F) REVIEW AUDITS AND REPORTS WITH THE
2 DEPARTMENT AND THE CHAIRPERSON AND MINORITY
3 CHAIRPERSON OF THE VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY
4 PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE OF THE SENATE AND THE
5 CHAIRPERSON AND MINORITY CHAIRPERSON OF THE VETERANS
6 AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE OF THE
7 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

8 (III) MEMBERS OF THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND BOARD
9 SHALL BE VETERANS, FAMILY MEMBERS OF VETERANS AND
10 INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE IN SERVING
11 VETERANS. IN DETERMINING WHO TO APPOINT TO THE VETERANS'
12 TRUST FUND BOARD, CONSIDERATION SHALL BE GIVEN TO SUBJECT
13 MATTER EXPERTS IN VETERANS ISSUES REGARDING BEHAVIORAL
14 HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER
15 INJURIES, PHYSICAL DISABILITIES, HOUSING OR OTHER SOCIAL
16 DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH. THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND BOARD
17 SHALL CONSIST OF THE FOLLOWING:

18 (A) THE DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL FOR VETERANS'
19 AFFAIRS OR A DESIGNEE, WHO SHALL SERVE EX OFFICIO.

20 (B) TWO MEMBERS RECOMMENDED BY THE ADJUTANT
21 GENERAL AND APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR.

22 (C) TWO MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDED BY
23 THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION AND APPOINTED BY
24 THE GOVERNOR.

25 (D) ONE MEMBER RECOMMENDED BY THE ADJUTANT
26 GENERAL FROM EACH OF THE FIVE PA VETCONNECT PROGRAM
27 REGIONS, THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA AND THE CITY OF
28 PITTSBURGH AND APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR.

29 (IV) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED UNDER THIS SUBPARAGRAPH,
30 MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR TO THE VETERANS' TRUST

1 FUND BOARD SHALL SERVE A TERM OF FOUR YEARS AND UNTIL A
2 SUCCESSOR HAS BEEN APPOINTED. THE INITIAL MEMBERS
3 APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR TO THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND
4 BOARD SHALL SERVE TERMS AS FOLLOWS AS DETERMINED BY THE
5 GOVERNOR:

6 (A) TWO MEMBERS SHALL SERVE A TERM OF ONE YEAR.

7 (B) THREE MEMBERS SHALL SERVE A TERM OF TWO
8 YEARS.

9 (C) THREE MEMBERS SHALL SERVE A TERM OF THREE
10 YEARS.

11 (D) THREE MEMBERS SHALL SERVE A TERM OF FOUR
12 YEARS.

13 (V) UPON RECOMMENDATION FROM THE ADJUTANT GENERAL,
14 THE GOVERNOR MAY DECLARE A VACANCY TO EXIST IF A MEMBER
15 APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR TO THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND
16 BOARD FAILS TO ATTEND THREE CONSECUTIVE MEETINGS OF THE
17 VETERANS' TRUST FUND BOARD WITHOUT GOOD CAUSE. THE
18 GOVERNOR SHALL FILL A VACANCY DECLARED UNDER THIS
19 SUBPARAGRAPH FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE UNEXPIRED TERM.

20 (VI) THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND BOARD SHALL ANNUALLY
21 ELECT A CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON AT THE FIRST
22 MEETING COMMENCING NO LATER THAN MARCH 31, 2025. THE
23 DEPARTMENT SHALL DESIGNATE AN EXECUTIVE SECRETARY TO THE
24 VETERANS' TRUST FUND BOARD.

25 (VII) MEMBERS OF THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND BOARD
26 SHALL RECEIVE NO COMPENSATION FOR THEIR SERVICES BUT
27 SHALL RECEIVE REIMBURSEMENT FOR THEIR NECESSARY AND
28 PROPER EXPENSES INCURRED IN EXECUTING THEIR DUTIES AS
29 MEMBERS OF THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND BOARD.

30 (VIII) THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND BOARD SHALL MEET

1 UPON THE CALL OF THE CHAIRPERSON OR THE DEPUTY ADJUTANT
2 GENERAL OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS. SIX MEMBERS OF THE
3 VETERANS' TRUST FUND BOARD SHALL CONSTITUTE A QUORUM.

4 (IX) VOTING MEMBERS OF THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND
5 BOARD MAY NOT BE CURRENT EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT.

6 (X) IF A MEMBER OF THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND BOARD
7 HAS AN INTEREST IN AN ORGANIZATION APPLYING FOR A GRANT
8 FROM THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND, THE MEMBER SHALL REFRAIN
9 FROM FURTHER DISCUSSION WITH THE APPLICANT AND MAY NOT
10 MAKE A RECOMMENDATION REGARDING THE APPROVAL OR
11 DISAPPROVAL OF THE APPLICATION. IF A MEMBER OF THE
12 VETERANS' TRUST FUND BOARD HAS A CONFLICT OF INTEREST
13 WITH AN ORGANIZATION APPLYING FOR A GRANT FROM THE
14 VETERANS' TRUST FUND, THE MEMBER SHALL RECUSE ONESELF.

15 * * *

16 (G) AUDIT.--BY JULY 31, 2026, AND EVERY TWO YEARS
17 THEREAFTER, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL SUBMIT A PERFORMANCE AUDIT TO
18 THE CHAIRPERSON AND MINORITY CHAIRPERSON OF THE VETERANS AFFAIRS
19 AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE OF THE SENATE AND THE
20 CHAIRPERSON AND MINORITY CHAIRPERSON OF THE VETERANS AFFAIRS AND
21 EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF
22 REPRESENTATIVES. THE PERFORMANCE AUDIT SHALL BE CONDUCTED IN
23 ACCORDANCE WITH GENERALLY ACCEPTED GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS
24 AND EXAMINE THE IMPACTS ON VETERANS BY ORGANIZATIONS FUNDED
25 THROUGH THE VETERANS' TRUST FUND.

26 SECTION 2. THIS ACT SHALL TAKE EFFECT IN 60 DAYS.