

2023 -- H 5129

LC000215

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

A N A C T

RELATING TO MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE -- VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Introduced By: Representatives Vella-Wilkinson, Noret, Hull, Corvese, J Lombardi,
Diaz, Azzinaro, Casimiro, Kazarian, and Solomon

Date Introduced: January 12, 2023

Referred To: House Veterans` Affairs

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 30-17.1 of the General Laws entitled "Veterans' Affairs" is hereby
2 amended by adding thereto the following sections:

3 **30-17.1-14. Municipal veterans' service officer – Establishment.**

4 (a) Every city and town shall maintain a municipal veterans' service officer ("MVSO").
5 The designated MVSO shall be a military veteran or may be a collateral duty assigned to a military
6 veteran already on staff.

7 (b) The MVSO shall serve as a keystone for veterans and military families regarding local
8 veterans' programs and benefits. This person shall also work with the state office of veterans'
9 affairs to apply for state grants to be used for outreach to municipal residents from the veteran
10 community.

11 **30-17.1-15. Appropriation to office of veterans' affairs to fund grand awards to**
12 **municipalities to assist veterans.**

13 (a) Appropriation. There shall be appropriated in the state budget for the fiscal year
14 commencing July 1, 2024, out of any monies not otherwise appropriated, the sum of one hundred
15 thousand dollars (\$100,000) to the office of veterans' affairs ("OVA") for outreach and support to
16 municipal residents from the veterans' community, as provided for in subsection (b) of this section.

17 (b) Grant awards. (1) The OVA shall take the most recently-available data from the U.S.
18 Census Bureau - American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, and break down and disaggregate
19 the number of veterans living in each city and town in the state.

1 (2) The OVA shall disaggregate and divide the one hundred thousand dollar (\$100,000)
2 appropriation among the thirty-nine (39) cities and towns, based on the veteran population living
3 in each municipality;

4 (3) The OVA shall send by both electronic mail and regular U.S. postal mail, a grant award
5 letter to the mayor, town manager, or town administrator of each municipality in the state, and shall
6 send a copy of the letter to the corresponding city or town council, as well as to the municipal
7 veterans' service officer, if one has been appointed. This letter shall indicate that the municipality
8 may apply for the matching grant, and describe how the grant dollars shall be used based on a list
9 of approved services which align with OVA services. These shall include outreach and support to
10 veterans living within the municipality. A municipality may propose to expend the funds through
11 the municipality, an instrumentality of the municipality, or through a local agency or entity
12 servicing veterans in the community, or through any combination thereof. A municipality shall be
13 required to apply to receive the grant on or before June 30, 2024. Applications shall be reviewed
14 by the OVA on a rolling basis as they are received.

15 (4) Once the application process is completed, and the OVA is satisfied with the
16 application, the grant funds shall be issued.

17 (5) Any municipality receiving a grant under this section shall report on activities, the
18 number of clients serviced, and such other matters as the OVA requires as a condition of receiving
19 the grant.

20 (6) The grant application and reports shall be listed on the state transparency portal.

21 (7) The OVA shall periodically publish a suggested list of approved grant-funded activities
22 with the request for proposals (RFP) announcement and due dates. Furthermore, the OVA shall
23 conduct periodic training and networking opportunities for all MVSOs to share "lessons learned"
24 and relevant legislative updates.

25 (8) If a municipality does not apply for a grant on or before June 30, 2024, the money so
26 appropriated shall be returned to the general fund.

27 (9) The OVA shall provide a statewide status report of the MVSO program to the governor,
28 the speaker of the house, and the president of the senate, on or before August 31, 2024, and annually
29 on or before August 31 thereafter.

30 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T
RELATING TO MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE -- VETERANS' AFFAIRS

- 1 This act would provide that every city and town must maintain a municipal veterans'
2 service officer. The act would also authorize a one hundred thousand dollar (\$100,000)
3 appropriation to be used for support and outreach for veterans.
4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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