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## Senate of Pennsylvania

VETERANS AFFAIRS & EMERGENCY  
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AGING & YOUTH  
APPROPRIATIONS  
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES &  
ENERGY  
PUBLIC HEALTH & WELFARE

January 11, 2011

### MEMORANDUM

TO: All Senators

FROM:  Senator Lisa Baker

SUBJECT: State Standards and Uniformity on County Veterans Affairs Offices

Please join me in co-sponsoring legislation to amend The County Code to provide further standards and uniformity across the Commonwealth in the position of Director of Veterans Affairs in each county.

This bill will be similar to SB 1393 introduced last session. Previous co-sponsors were Senators Robbins, Farnese, Mensch, Pippy, Alloway, Browne, Costa, Ferlo, Rafferty, Ward, D. White, Yaw and Tomlinson.

The Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee held a public hearing in 2010 to review veteran services in the Commonwealth. One of the issues that resulted from this hearing was a consensus of the importance of an effective Director of Veterans Affairs in each county and the need for stronger uniformity and minimum standardization for this position across all counties. This need was elevated as a result of the Commonwealth's recent closing of the "Governors Veterans Outreach Assistance Centers" across Pennsylvania. The closure of these centers has placed greater demand on our counties' Directors of Veterans Affairs to assist the veterans of all generations.

My office subsequently worked with the PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) and the Pennsylvania State Association of County Directors of Veterans Affairs (PSACDVA) to draft language to strengthen county veterans affairs offices. The legislation to be introduced was previously agreed-to by both DMVA and the PSACDVA.

My bill will propose the following changes:

- 1) All county directors must be accredited veteran service officers by a national or state accrediting body.
- 2) County commissioners will have the authority to appoint a Director of Veterans Affairs, approve compensation for the position as set by the county's salary board, and provide the necessary office resources at the courthouse or other centrally accessible location.
- 3) The bill will codify in statute the functions and services that many county directors already do in practice.
  - a. Serve as a local contact between the DMVA and the Commonwealth's veterans and active military personnel.
  - b. Advise veterans, active personnel or their dependents on federal, state and local benefits.
  - c. Assist veterans, active personnel or their dependents in completing government forms and other paperwork.
  - d. Work under the direct supervision of their respective county commissioners and within the guidelines of the DMVA and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
  - e. County directors will be required to participate in training provided by the DMVA.
  - f. A five year recertification of accreditation will be required of all county directors.
- 4) The DMVA shall establish a training program for Directors of Veterans Affairs.

If you wish to co-sponsor this proposal, please contact Liz Clancy at [LClancy@pasen.gov](mailto:LClancy@pasen.gov) or by phone at 787-7428. If you or your staff has any questions on the legislation, please contact Aaron Shenck at [ashenck@pasen.gov](mailto:ashenck@pasen.gov) or by phone.

Thank you.

LB/ams