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PART I
GENERAL PROVISIONS
(Reserved)

Enactment. Part I (Reserved) was added November 17, 2021, P.L.435, No.87, effective immediately.

PART II
SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

Chapter

- 11. Preliminary Provisions (Reserved)
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Enactment. Part II was added November 17, 2021, P.L.435, No.87, effective immediately.

CHAPTER 11
PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS
(Reserved)

Enactment. Chapter 11 (Reserved) was added November 17, 2021, P.L.435, No.87, effective immediately.

CHAPTER 13
VETERAN RECOGNITION

Sec.

- 1301. Scope of chapter.

1302. Persian Gulf War Veterans Day.
1303. Global War on Terrorism Veterans Day.
1304. Women Veterans Day.
1305. Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day.

Enactment. Chapter 13 was added November 17, 2021, P.L.435, No.87, effective immediately, unless otherwise noted.

§ 1301. Scope of chapter.

This chapter recognizes the contributions of veterans of the United States Armed Forces from this Commonwealth in major conflicts since the Vietnam War.

§ 1302. Persian Gulf War Veterans Day.

(a) Legislative findings and declarations.--The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

(1) On August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein ordered Iraqi troops to invade and occupy the sovereign nation of Kuwait.

(2) The United States led an international coalition demanding Saddam Hussein to withdraw Iraqi forces from Kuwait by January 15, 1991.

(3) After Iraq failed to meet the deadline passed by the United Nations Security Council, President George H. W. Bush on January 16, 1991, ordered United States Armed Forces to begin Operation Desert Storm.

(4) On January 17, 1991, 750,000 coalition forces from 36 nations, including 540,000 United States Armed Forces, began the battle to liberate Kuwait from occupation.

(5) After an intensive air campaign, coalition forces liberated Kuwait City on February 28, 1991.

(6) On March 6, 1991, after negotiating a cease-fire, President Bush announced the end of combat operations.

(7) By the end of the conflict, 200 United States Armed Forces members were killed, including 29 from this Commonwealth.

(8) The bravery of United States Armed Forces and their allies should be recognized for the liberation of Kuwait and restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty as an independent nation.

(b) Designation.--March 6 of each year is designated as Persian Gulf War Veterans Day.

(c) Proclamation.--The Governor shall issue annually a proclamation encouraging all public schools and educational institutions to observe Persian Gulf War Veterans Day and to conduct exercises recognizing the contributions of all those involved in the Persian Gulf War and remembering the sacrifices they made for their country. The proclamation may not mandate a public school or educational institution to participate in the observance.

§ 1303. Global War on Terrorism Veterans Day.

(a) Legislative findings and declarations.--The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

(1) America's conflict in Afghanistan began in 2001 and became our country's longest military conflict.

(2) Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States demanded that the Taliban regime stop harboring Al Qaeda, the terrorist organization responsible for the 9/11 attacks, and hand over the Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

(3) President George W. Bush ordered United States Armed Forces to begin Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) to combat terrorism in Afghanistan and confront Al Qaeda.

(4) United States Armed Forces first entered Afghanistan and began combat operations on October 7, 2001.

(5) On May 2, 2011, Osama bin Laden was killed during the fighting after President Barack Obama ordered Navy SEALs to raid Osama bin Laden's compound.

(6) On December 31, 2014, the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) combat operations in Afghanistan officially ended.

(7) Since the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom, over 830,000 Americans, including 18,000 from this Commonwealth, have served in Afghanistan.

(8) More than 2,000 members of the United States Armed Forces, including 98 from this Commonwealth, were killed in action in Afghanistan since combat began.

(9) More than 19,000 members of the United States Armed Forces were wounded in service to their country during Operation Enduring Freedom.

(10) When Operation Enduring Freedom ended, the United States began a new phase of the campaign, named Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS).

(11) United States Armed Forces remain in the country to participate in a coalition mission to train, advise and assist Afghan National Defense and Security Forces and to conduct counterterrorism operations against the remnants of Al Qaeda.

(12) During Operation Freedom's Sentinel more than 70 Americans have lost their lives and another 453 have been wounded in action.

(13) On March 19, 2003, President George W. Bush announced the beginning of combat operations in Iraq after Saddam Hussein failed to meet the demands of the United States.

(14) Operation Iraqi Freedom lasted for more than seven years, reducing the influence of insurgents, stopping sectarian violence, assisting in training the Iraq Security Forces and promoting the development of Iraq's constitution and elections.

(15) Major United States combat operations ended on September 1, 2010. American troops remained in the country to advise Iraqi Security Forces as part of Operation New Dawn until the withdrawal on December 15, 2011.

(16) More than 4,000 members of the United States Armed Forces lost their lives during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn, including 197 from this Commonwealth, and more than 32,000 were wounded.

(17) With the rise of the terrorist group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the United States created a new combined joint task force in 2014, dubbed Operation Inherent Resolve.

(18) March 23, 2019, marked the end of ISIS controlling any physical territory in Syria and Iraq.

(19) United States Armed Forces under Operation Inherent Resolve continue to work by, with and through local partners to defeat the final ISIS force and stabilize the region.

(20) The fight against ISIS under Operation Inherent Resolve has claimed more than 80 American lives, with another 80 wounded in action.

(21) United States military personnel have served domestically securing key infrastructure and supporting overseas operations.

(22) Since September 11, 2001, members of the United States military have served on nearly every continent fighting international terrorism.

(b) Designation.--October 7 of each year is designated as Global War on Terrorism Veterans Day.

(c) Proclamation.--The Governor shall issue annually a proclamation encouraging all public schools and educational institutions to observe Global War on Terrorism Veterans Day and to conduct exercises recognizing the contributions of all those involved in the Global War on Terrorism and remembering the sacrifices they made for their country. The proclamation may not mandate a public school or educational institution to participate in the observance.

§ 1304. Women Veterans Day.

(a) Legislative findings and declarations.--The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

(1) While women have served in the American military since before we became a nation, they were not officially recognized as military members or veterans until 1948.

(2) Women were originally relegated to serving in the civilian fields of nursing, laundering, mending clothing and cooking.

(3) Despite this segregation, many women served in war zones alongside their male compatriots, including some women who dressed as men during the Civil War to fight on the front lines.

(4) The first woman to enlist in the United States Armed Forces was Loretta Walsh, who enlisted in the Navy in 1917.

(5) During World War I, approximately 35,000 women in the United States officially served as nurses and support staff.

(6) During World War II, approximately 400,000 women in the United States served in support positions, including 140,000 women who served in the Women's Army Corps performing critical jobs, such as military intelligence, cryptography and parachute rigging.

(7) Nearly 500 women were killed by enemy fire during World War II.

(8) The first Women Veterans Day was held on June 12, 2018, marking the 70th anniversary of the groundbreaking Women's Armed Services Integration Act (Public Law 80-625, 62 Stat. 356), signed into law by President Harry S. Truman on June 12, 1948.

(9) That Federal law enabled women to serve as permanent, regular members of the United States Army, Marine Corps, Navy and the recently formed Air Force.

(10) Throughout the years, the role of women continues to grow in all branches and phases of operations of the United States Armed Forces.

(11) Currently, women serve freely alongside men in any branch or role they desire and comprise a substantial portion of new recruits, active duty members and reserve components of the United States Armed Forces.

(12) Women Veterans Day is not considered a separate day for only women veterans, but a tribute to a groundbreaking day when women were acknowledged as essential to the war effort and could serve as permanent, regular members of the United States Armed Forces.

(b) Designation.--June 12 of each year is designated as Women Veterans Day in this Commonwealth.

(c) Proclamation.--The Governor shall issue annually a proclamation encouraging residents of this Commonwealth to observe Women Veterans Day and recognize the contributions of all women veterans and the sacrifices they made.

(Nov. 3, 2022, P.L.1944, No.129, eff. imd.)

2022 Amendment. Act 129 added section 1304.

§ 1305. Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day.

(a) Legislative findings and declarations.--The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

(1) During World War I, African Americans were prohibited from serving as military pilots in the United States Armed Forces due to their race.

(2) In response to advocacy by civil rights leaders and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Congress of the United States approved funding designated for the training of African-American military pilots in 1939.

(3) On March 22, 1941, the United States Army Air Corps 99th Pursuit Squadron was activated to become the first African-American fighter squadron.

(4) The members of the 99th Pursuit Squadron were the first to be known as Tuskegee Airmen because they had received their initial flight training at Moton Field, a segregated air base in Tuskegee, Alabama.

(5) Other Tuskegee Airmen would later form the famous 332nd Fighter Group, also known as the "Red Tails" due to the distinctive red marking on the tail of their aircraft.

(6) Between 1941 and 1946, nearly 1,000 African-American military pilots were trained in Tuskegee, Alabama.

(7) During World War II, the Tuskegee Airmen flew more than 15,000 sorties and lost only 66 men in the line of duty, one of the lowest loss records of any escort fighter group.

(8) The courage, dedication and service of the men and women of the Tuskegee Airmen continues to inspire both military personnel and civilians of all backgrounds throughout this country.

(b) Designation.--March 29 of each year is designated as Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day.

(c) Proclamation.--The Governor shall issue annually a proclamation encouraging all public schools and educational institutions to observe Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day and to conduct exercises recognizing the contributions of the Tuskegee Airmen and remembering the sacrifices they made for their country. The proclamation may not mandate a public school or educational institution to participate in the observance. (Nov. 3, 2022, P.L.1994, No.138, eff. 60 days)

2022 Amendment. Act 138 added section 1305.

CHAPTER 15

FIRST RESPONDERS RECOGNITION

Sec.

1501. Definitions (Reserved).

1502. First Responders Day.

Enactment. Chapter 15 was added November 17, 2021, P.L.435, No.87, effective immediately.

§ 1501. Definitions (Reserved).

§ 1502. First Responders Day.

(a) Legislative findings and declarations.--The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

(1) Our first responders, who are police, fire, emergency medical services (EMS) and public health personnel, work selflessly on behalf of the people of this Commonwealth,

regardless of the risk or hazard, and truly are citizens serving the community.

(2) Most Pennsylvanians have benefited in some way from the courageous service of first responders across this Commonwealth.

(3) First responders carry out the critical role of protecting and ensuring public safety in emergency situations.

(4) The men and women who bravely serve as first responders have found themselves on the front lines of homeland defense in the war against terrorism.

(5) First responders are called upon in the event of natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding and pandemics.

(6) More than 100,000 first responders perform these crucial services in this Commonwealth.

(7) Approximately 30,000 sworn police officers from State, city and county law enforcement agencies protect lives and property, detect and prevent crimes, uphold the law and ensure justice.

(8) Tens of thousands of firefighters, including approximately 50,000 volunteers and 10,000 career firefighters, provide fire suppression, EMS, search and rescue, hazardous materials response, terrorism response and critical fire prevention and safety education.

(9) Approximately 60,000 emergency services professionals in this Commonwealth respond to and treat a variety of life-threatening emergencies, from cardiac and respiratory arrest to traumatic injuries.

(10) First responders make personal sacrifices to protect our communities, as witnessed in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and of the natural destruction caused by Hurricanes Katrina, Irene and Sandy. They are called every day to protect individuals and property in cities and towns across this Commonwealth.

(11) Many law enforcement officers die in the line of duty in the United States each year, including nine killed in 2020 in Pennsylvania alone.

(12) More than 100 firefighters are killed in the line of duty across the United States each year and thousands more are injured.

(13) EMS answers more than 20 million patient calls every year, and many medics are injured on the job, have been assaulted by patients or have been exposed to infectious diseases.

(14) EMS personnel in the United States have a fatality rate of more than twice the national average for all other workers.

(15) Thousands of first responders have made the ultimate sacrifice.

(16) These men and women, by their dedicated professionalism, have earned our gratitude and respect.

(b) First Responders Day.--The following apply:

(1) September 27 of each year is designated as First Responders Day.

(2) The Governor shall issue annually a proclamation calling upon all public schools and educational institutions to observe First Responders Day and to conduct exercises recognizing the contributions and remembering the sacrifices that first responders have made.

(3) First Responders Day may not be a paid holiday or a day that school districts close.