

## THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

**SENATE BILL****No. 915** Session of  
2007

INTRODUCED BY BAKER, SCARNATI, PILEGGI, ARMSTRONG, ROBBINS,  
TOMLINSON, PUNT, WAUGH, MELLOW, DINNIMAN, KITCHEN,  
WASHINGTON, STACK, PIPPY, D. WHITE, BOSCOLA, COSTA,  
GREENLEAF, MUSTO, RHOADES, TARTAGLIONE, BROWNE, ERICKSON,  
FONTANA, KASUNIC, LOGAN, O'PAKE, WONDERLING, FERLO, ORIE,  
RAFFERTY, BRUBAKER, CORMAN, EARLL, MADIGAN, McILHINNEY,  
REGOLA, VANCE, M. WHITE, GORDNER, HUGHES, LAVALLE,  
C. WILLIAMS, WOZNIAK, FUMO, PICCOLA, STOUT, EICHELBERGER,  
FOLMER AND A. WILLIAMS, JUNE 30, 2007

AS AMENDED ON SECOND CONSIDERATION, OCTOBER 2, 2007

## AN ACT

1 Amending Title 51 (Military Affairs) of the Pennsylvania  
2 Consolidated Statutes, providing for the establishment of a  
3 grant program for designated accredited veterans' service  
4 organizations, ~~for the establishment of the Veterans' Service~~ ←  
5 ~~Officer Grant Account~~, for defraying the costs for wages,  
6 benefits, training and equipment and for improving outreach  
7 and delivery of services to Pennsylvania's veterans.

8 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
9 hereby enacts as follows:

10 Section 1. Title 51 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated  
11 Statutes is amended by adding a section to read:

12 § 9304. Grants to veterans' service officer programs.

13 (a) Award allocations.--From funds specifically appropriated  
14 for this purpose, the department shall award grants to  
15 designated veterans' service organizations to support veterans'  
16 service officer programs. Grants awarded under this section  
17 shall be used solely to support accredited veterans' service

1 officers and the associated costs, including:

2 (1) Wages, benefits, other compensation and related  
3 personnel costs.

4 (2) Training provided by accredited veterans' service  
5 advocacy staff.

6 (3) Equipment to be used by accredited veterans' service  
7 officer staff.

8 (b) Program goals.--The goals of the program shall include:

9 (1) improvement of the coordination and distribution of  
10 veterans' benefits;

11 (2) maximization of the effective and efficient use of  
12 taxpayer dollars; and

13 (3) increasing veterans' participation in available  
14 benefits programs.

15 (c) Use of grants.--A designated veterans' service  
16 organization shall use grants received under this section to  
17 improve the administration and delivery of services to  
18 Pennsylvania's veterans and meet the goals set forth in

19 ~~paragraph (6)~~ SUBSECTION (B) by:

20 (1) Increasing interaction ~~with~~ BETWEEN the veterans' ←  
21 service organizations and the United States Department of ←  
22 Veterans Affairs in order to enhance the delivery of services  
23 to Pennsylvania veterans.

24 (2) Increasing the number of initial claims filed with  
25 the United States Department of Veterans Affairs on behalf of  
26 Pennsylvania veterans for service-related disabilities or  
27 pension benefits.

28 (3) Developing methods to increase rates of recovery  
29 paid by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to  
30 Pennsylvania veterans.

1           (4) Expanding training opportunities for designated  
2 veterans' service organizations and veterans' service  
3 officers.

4           (5) Increasing either the number or percentage of  
5 Pennsylvania veterans enrolled in the Department of Veterans  
6 Affairs health care system.

7           (6) Improving coordination among the veterans' service  
8 organizations and with the department to assure an integrated  
9 approach to claims processing.

10           (7) Improving outreach services to veterans throughout  
11 Pennsylvania and ~~its~~ 67 EACH OF ITS counties.           <—

12           (d) Eligibility.--The following veterans' service  
13 organizations are designated to receive grants under this  
14 program:

15           (1) The American Legion.

16           (2) AMVETS.

17           (3) Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

18           (4) Disabled American Veterans.

19           (5) The department may designate additional Pennsylvania  
20 veterans' service organizations to receive grants under the  
21 program when:

22           (i) The veterans' service organization is a member  
23 of the State Veterans' Commission as listed in section  
24 1702(b).

25           (ii) The veterans' service organization ~~services~~           <—  
26 SERVES as an active participant in the State Veterans'           <—  
27 Commission abiding by the statutory rules and guidelines.

28           (e) Application for allocations.--Veterans' service  
29 organizations eligible for funding under subsection (c) shall  
30 submit an annual spending plan to the department in order to be

1 eligible to receive a grant under this section consistent with  
2 the ~~goals set forth in~~ PROVISIONS OF subsections (b) and (c). ←

3 (f) Amount of grants.--The department shall determine the  
4 annual allocation to each of the designated veterans service  
5 organizations based on the spending plan submitted under  
6 subsection (e) for the upcoming fiscal year and on actual  
7 recoveries from the previous fiscal year. If the total  
8 appropriation totals less than the collective spending plans,  
9 the department shall prorate the allocations among eligible  
10 organizations based on the spending plan and past performance.

11 (g) Procedures, policies and guidelines.--The department  
12 shall establish procedures, policies, guidelines, forms and  
13 reporting requirements necessary to carry out the purposes of  
14 this program within 45 days of the effective date of this  
15 section. Procedures, policies, guidelines, forms and reporting  
16 requirements established under this section shall be submitted  
17 to the Veterans' Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee of  
18 the Senate and the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness  
19 Committee of the House of Representatives for their review and  
20 comment.

21 (h) Reporting requirements.--On or before October 1 of each  
22 year, designated veterans service organizations participating in  
23 the program established by this section shall file a written  
24 report with the Adjutant General and the Deputy Adjutant General  
25 for Veterans' Affairs and send copies to the chairman and  
26 minority chairman of the Veterans' Affairs and Emergency  
27 Preparedness Committee of the Senate and the chairman and  
28 minority chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Emergency  
29 Preparedness Committee of the House of Representatives and State  
30 Veterans' Commission. The report shall contain the following

1 information:

2 (1) A description of all veterans service officer  
3 activities, an accounting of recoveries and a listing of  
4 volunteer hours for the preceding Commonwealth fiscal year.

5 (2) A proposed budget and spending plan for the  
6 Commonwealth fiscal year beginning on July 1 of the year  
7 following the filing of the report.

8 (3) An accounting of its expenditures from grants  
9 awarded under this program, audited by a certified public  
10 accountant for the preceding Commonwealth fiscal year.

11 (i) Review of reports.--The Veterans' Affairs and Emergency  
12 Preparedness Committee of the Senate and the Veterans Affairs  
13 and Emergency Preparedness Committee of the House of  
14 Representatives shall review the reports filed by the  
15 participating veterans service organizations.

16 (j) Audits.--The department or the Auditor General may  
17 conduct such audits and reviews of the grant program hereby  
18 established as the department or the Auditor General determines  
19 to be necessary or appropriate. Copies of all audit reports or  
20 reviews conducted by the department or the Auditor General shall  
21 be made available to the chairman and minority chairman of the  
22 Veterans' Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee of the  
23 Senate and the chairman and minority chairman of the Veterans  
24 Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee of the House of  
25 Representatives.

26 Section 2. This act shall apply to fiscal years beginning on  
27 and after July 1, 2007, when and if funds are specifically  
28 appropriated to support the grant program established by this  
29 act. THE APPROPRIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND  
30 VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR VETERANS OUTREACH SERVICES IN SECTION 218

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1 OF THE ACT OF JULY 17, 2007 (P.L. , NO.8A), KNOWN AS THE  
2 GENERAL APPROPRIATION ACT OF 2007, SHALL BE DISBURSED  
3 CONSISTENTLY WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT.

4 Section 3. This act shall take effect immediately.