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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 5

Session of  
2017

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INTRODUCED BY BOSCOLA, VULAKOVICH, COSTA, HUGHES, FONTANA,  
FARNESE, BLAKE, SCHWANK, BREWSTER, TARTAGLIONE, YUDICHAK AND  
RAFFERTY, JANUARY 20, 2017

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REFERRED TO VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS,  
JANUARY 20, 2017

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A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 Establishing the Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care.

2 WHEREAS, According to the United States Department of  
3 Veterans Affairs, the projected veteran population nationwide is  
4 approximately 23 million, with women making up an estimated 10%  
5 of that population; and

6 WHEREAS, The United States Department of Veterans Affairs  
7 estimates the percentage of women veterans between 2010 and 2040  
8 will increase from approximately 9% in 2010 to approximately 18%  
9 in 2040; and

10 WHEREAS, According to the United States Department of  
11 Veterans Affairs, as of September 2012, this Commonwealth was  
12 home to approximately 981,000 veterans, including 719,000  
13 wartime veterans from World War II through the Gulf War; and

14 WHEREAS, Women comprise approximately 80,000 of the wartime  
15 veterans from this Commonwealth; and

16 WHEREAS, The number of women veterans will increase with the

1 end of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom;  
2 and

3 WHEREAS, Women veterans often face unique challenges in  
4 transitioning from active duty to civilian life; and

5 WHEREAS, The challenging needs facing women veterans can  
6 often be overlooked in providing services to such a large  
7 veteran population; and

8 WHEREAS, Ensuring the availability of specialized services  
9 for physical and mental health, including treatment of post-  
10 traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, military  
11 sexual trauma and alcohol and substance abuse tailored to the  
12 specific needs of women veterans is essential if the  
13 Commonwealth wants to ensure that our returning veterans receive  
14 proper care; and

15 WHEREAS, Establishing a task force to study the issues facing  
16 women veterans and to make recommendations to the Governor and  
17 the General Assembly will provide much needed information and  
18 insight from those who address the issues on a daily basis;  
19 therefore be it

20 RESOLVED (the House of Representatives concurring), That the  
21 Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care be established; and be  
22 it further

23 RESOLVED, That the Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care  
24 consist of 17 members who shall be appointed as follows within  
25 25 days after the adoption of this resolution by both chambers:

26 (1) Two members of the Senate, one appointed by the  
27 President pro tempore and one appointed by the Minority  
28 Leader of the Senate.

29 (2) Two members of the House of Representatives, one  
30 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and

1 one appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of  
2 Representatives.

3 (3) Thirteen members appointed by the Governor as  
4 follows:

5 (i) the Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs  
6 of the Pennsylvania National Guard;

7 (ii) the Secretary of Health;

8 (iii) the Secretary of Human Services;

9 (iv) the Secretary of Drug and Alcohol Programs;

10 (v) four women veterans who are residents of this  
11 Commonwealth;

12 (vi) a representative from the health care provider  
13 community in this Commonwealth who has experience in  
14 providing health care to returning women veterans;

15 (vii) a representative from this Commonwealth's  
16 mental health care provider community with experience in  
17 providing mental health care treatment to returning women  
18 veterans;

19 (viii) a representative from this Commonwealth's  
20 substance abuse and addiction treatment provider  
21 community with experience in providing substance abuse  
22 and addiction treatment to returning women veterans;

23 (ix) a representative from a Commonwealth advocacy  
24 group that represents the interests of sexual assault  
25 victims with experience in providing services to women  
26 veterans who have suffered military sexual trauma,  
27 including harassment or abuse; and

28 (x) the chairman of the State Veterans' Commission;

29 and be it further

30 RESOLVED, That the Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care

1 study the health care needs of women veterans, including, but  
2 not limited to:

3 (1) quality of and access to mental health services,  
4 including services and treatment for post-traumatic stress  
5 disorder and traumatic brain injury;

6 (2) in-patient treatment availability;

7 (3) adequacy and availability of appropriate women  
8 veterans' health care within the Federal health care system  
9 and this Commonwealth; and

10 (4) adequacy, quality of and access to services  
11 providing for the identification and treatment of military  
12 sexual trauma, including sexual harassment or abuse;

13 and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That the Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care  
15 identify other needs relating to the provisions of women  
16 veterans' health care services and make recommendations to the  
17 General Assembly and the Governor to address those needs; and be  
18 it further

19 RESOLVED, That the Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care  
20 consult with Federal, State and local entities in completing its  
21 study, including:

22 (1) The Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation.

23 (2) The United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

24 (3) The County Commissioners Association of  
25 Pennsylvania.

26 (4) The Pennsylvania League of Cities and  
27 Municipalities.

28 (5) The Pennsylvania Medical Society.

29 (6) The Hospital Association of Pennsylvania.

30 (7) Veterans organizations or other organizations or

1 associations that advocate for women veterans;

2 and be it further

3 RESOLVED, That the Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care

4 elect one of its members to serve as chairperson; and be it

5 further

6 RESOLVED, That the Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care

7 conduct its business as follows:

8 (1) The physical presence of nine members constitutes a  
9 quorum of the task force.

10 (2) Action of the task force shall be authorized or  
11 ratified by a majority vote of its members.

12 (3) A member not physically present may participate by  
13 teleconference or video conference.

14 (4) The following shall apply:

15 (i) The task force shall meet as necessary, but no  
16 fewer than five times prior to November 30, 2018.  
17 Additional meetings may be called by the chairperson as  
18 necessary.

19 (ii) The chairperson shall schedule a meeting upon  
20 written request of eight members of the task force.

21 (iii) The first meeting shall be convened within 45  
22 days of the adoption of this resolution by both chambers  
23 at a time and place established by the Governor.

24 (iv) The task force shall hold public hearings as  
25 necessary to obtain the information required to conduct  
26 its review.

27 (v) Members may not receive compensation but shall  
28 be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses  
29 incurred in service of the task force;

30 and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That the Department of Health and the Department of  
2 Military and Veterans Affairs provide staff support to the task  
3 force; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That, upon request of the Task Force on Women  
5 Veterans' Health Care, a State agency assist the task force in  
6 the completion of its duties, including, to the extent permitted  
7 by law relating to confidentiality, to furnish information and  
8 advice to members of the task force necessary to perform their  
9 duties; and be it further

10 RESOLVED, That the Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care  
11 have the following powers:

12 (1) To examine and analyze the current delivery of  
13 health care services to women veterans at the Federal and  
14 State level.

15 (2) To review and analyze law, procedures, practices and  
16 rules relating to delivery of health care services to women  
17 veterans.

18 (3) To hold public hearings to take testimony and  
19 request documents.

20 (4) To administer oaths and affirmations to witnesses  
21 appearing before the task force at the request of the  
22 chairperson;

23 and be it further

24 RESOLVED, That the Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care  
25 have the following duties:

26 (1) To accept and review written comments from  
27 individuals and organizations.

28 (2) To make, by November 30, 2018, a final report to the  
29 Governor, the Senate and the House of Representatives.

30 (3) To include in the report under paragraph (2)

1 recommendations based on its review:

2 (i) To improve the delivery of health care services  
3 to women veterans.

4 (ii) To implement any necessary changes in State  
5 statutes and practices, policies and procedures relating  
6 to the delivery of health care services to women  
7 veterans.

8 (4) To make reports as follows:

9 (i) The task force may file status reports and  
10 updates with the Governor, the Senate and the House of  
11 Representatives as it deems appropriate.

12 (ii) A report under this paragraph shall be adopted  
13 at a public meeting.

14 (iii) A report under this paragraph shall be a  
15 public record under the act of February 14, 2008 (P.L.6,  
16 No.3), known as the Right-to-Know Law;

17 and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care  
19 expire December 31, 2018.