

JAN 26 2009

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO VETERAN SERVICES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. Since 2001, an extensive number of military
2 troops stationed in Hawai'i have been deployed to fight and
3 protect our country on foreign soil. On any given day, the
4 number of Hawai'i-based marines and sailors deployed to Iraq and
5 Afghanistan can exceed 1,500, with over 2,000 members of the
6 Hawai'i national guard serving in both Kuwait and Iraq.
7 Unfortunately, upon their return to Hawai'i a large number of
8 these deployed troops have difficulties reintegrating with
9 family, work, and their community, and suffer from severe
10 emotional problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder.
11 Post-traumatic stress disorder can have an extremely detrimental
12 impact on an individual's daily life and on the lives of family
13 members and friends that surround them. Recent studies and
14 surveys have concluded that suicides and mental health issues
15 have increased among veterans who deploy often and for extended
16 periods of time. Research also suggests that the stress levels
17 on children in military families increase with each deployment



1 and can be difficult to manage for both the child and the
2 child's caregivers. A large number of soldiers based in Hawai'i
3 are on their third or fourth deployment.

4 The purpose of this Act is to establish a veterans'
5 services task force to address the many challenges veterans and
6 their families encounter upon the veteran's return home from
7 deployment.

8 The State of Oregon established a similar task force in
9 2008 that focused on reintegration services, post-separation
10 access to services, and retirement or senior care. The task
11 force established by this Act would address similar issues, but
12 would also be tasked with following up and addressing issues
13 identified in the report requested by the legislature in 2007,
14 calling for a comprehensive assessment of the adequacy of mental
15 health services, medical and rehabilitative services, job
16 training, and employment services for veterans deployed to Iraq
17 and Afghanistan. In addition, the task force will also identify
18 potential funding sources from the federal government and the
19 private sector to help fund the services identified and
20 recommended by the veterans' services task force.



1 SECTION 2. Chapter 363, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
2 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
3 and to read as follows:

4 "§363- Veterans' services task force; established. (a)
5 There shall be established a veterans' services task force that
6 is administratively attached to the department of defense.

7 (b) The duties and responsibilities of the veterans'
8 services task force are to:

9 (1) Improve access to mental healthcare, educational, and
10 reintegration services for veterans, with an emphasis
11 on improving access to these services on the neighbor
12 islands;

13 (2) Follow up on the findings in a report requested by the
14 legislature in 2007, calling for a comprehensive
15 assessment of the adequacy of mental health services,
16 medical and rehabilitative services, job training, and
17 employment services for veterans deployed to Iraq and
18 Afghanistan;

19 (3) Provide veterans with access to the services
20 identified in this section after serving their tour of
21 duty;



- 1 (4) Evaluate the best approach to treating cases of
2 post-traumatic stress disorder and be prepared for
3 treating the occurrence at any point in the soldier's
4 lifetime;
- 5 (5) Incorporate a holistic approach to treating mental
6 health issues by focusing on treating the entire
7 family as a unit, and not just the soldier; and
- 8 (6) Pursue additional funding sources, such as the federal
9 government and private sector, to fund the services
10 identified and recommended by the task force.
- 11 (c) The members of the task force shall be comprised of
12 representatives from the following organizations or entities:
- 13 (1) Office of veterans' services;
14 (2) Department of human services;
15 (3) Department of health;
16 (4) Department of labor and industrial relations;
17 (5) University of Hawaii;
18 (6) Department of education;
19 (7) Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii;
20 (8) Hawaii Business Roundtable;
21 (9) Office of the governor of the State of Hawaii;
22 (10) Hawaii state senate;



- 1 (11) Hawaii house of representatives;
- 2 (12) Mayor of the county of Honolulu;
- 3 (13) Mayor of the county of Hawaii;
- 4 (14) Mayor of the county of Maui; and
- 5 (15) Mayor of the county of Kauai.

6 The members of the task force shall not be compensated but
7 shall be reimbursed for expenses, including travel expenses,
8 necessary for the performance of their duties."

9 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
10 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
11 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2009-2010 and
12 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
13 year 2010-2011 for the veterans' services task force to address
14 the many challenges veterans and their families encounter upon
15 return from deployment.

16 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
17 of defense for the purposes of this Act.

18 SECTION 4. The veterans' services task force shall report
19 back to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the
20 convening of the 2010 regular session, and every regular session
21 thereafter.

22 SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.



1 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect upon its approval;
2 provided that section 3 shall take effect on July 1, 2009.
3

INTRODUCED BY:

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Report Title:

Appropriation; Veteran Services; Task Force; Established

Description:

Establishes a veterans' services task force to address the many challenges veterans and their families encounter upon return from deployment. Makes an appropriation.

