



102ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2021 and 2022

HB2628

Introduced 2/19/2021, by Rep. Stephanie A. Kifowit

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act

Creates the Veterans Suicide Prevention Commission Act. Creates the Veterans Suicide Prevention Commission. Provides that the Commission's purpose is to: (i) drive the State's strategic vision for assessing and achieving the successful transition, adjustment, and reintegration of service members of the armed forces, veterans, and their families through the coordination of the collective efforts of public and private organizations throughout the State; (ii) facilitate, collaborate, and coordinate the efforts of these organizations to effectively and responsively meet the needs of the military community; (iii) conduct planning, research, education, training, and evaluation activities to improve the operations and coordination of the systems of care and support; and (iv) coordinate its activities with those of Illinois Joining Forces and other advocacy organizations for service members of the armed forces, veterans, and their families. Contains provisions concerning the Commission's composition; term appointments; meetings; and other matters. Provides that the duties of the Commission are to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of those State programs and services related to the military community; promote coordination and efficiency among State, county, and local units of government and municipalities; issue periodic reports on its performance and progress in meeting its goals; monitor the progress of the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan on Homelessness developed by specified federal agencies and other organizations; and other matters. Provides that the Commission is subject to the Freedom of Information Act and the Open Meetings Act.

LRB102 14022 KTG 19374 b

FISCAL NOTE ACT
MAY APPLY

A BILL FOR

1 AN ACT concerning veterans.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the
5 Veterans Suicide Prevention Commission Act.

6 Section 5. Findings. The General Assembly finds the
7 following:

8 (1) One of the highest priorities and moral duties
9 Illinoisans can undertake is to support those Illinois
10 citizens who have served or are serving our country and
11 State in the United States Armed Forces. Their military
12 service is recognized whether they served on active duty,
13 in the reserves, or as a member of the Illinois National
14 Guard, or have retired. The families of service members
15 are equally recognized.

16 (2) The General Assembly is committed to the members
17 of our military community, and to strengthening their
18 systems of care and supports in a manner that is
19 responsive to their needs by building upon existing
20 collaborations and resources.

21 (3) There are more than 2,000,000 members of the
22 Illinois military community representing about 16% of the
23 Illinois population.

1 (4) Illinois ranks high among the states in the nation
2 with over 40,000 military personnel deployed to support
3 the recent conflicts and overseas contingency operations.

4 (5) 261 Illinois service members have given the full
5 measure with the loss of their lives while serving their
6 country and State since September 11, 2001.

7 (6) Over 1,800 Illinois service members have received
8 hostile wounds serving their country and State since
9 September 11, 2001.

10 (7) Unprecedented numbers of Illinois' service members
11 have and are experiencing multiple deployments to the
12 active theaters of war, separating them from family,
13 community, and traditional supports for extended periods
14 of time.

15 (8) The adjustment of returning service members and
16 their families to the service members' physical and
17 psychological disabilities, including post-traumatic
18 stress and traumatic brain injuries, and other
19 debilitating health conditions pose long-standing
20 challenging implications for our State.

21 (9) State and local elected officials, including State
22 agency heads, State legislators, and representatives of
23 federal agencies, have a shared responsibility for
24 providing services and support to our military community.

25 (10) Meeting the needs of the military community is
26 not the sole responsibility of one agency or entity, but a

1 collective responsibility of the entire State that
2 requires a high level of collaboration and cooperation
3 between key stakeholders.

4 (11) Other non-government members of our State are
5 integral to the systems of care and supports for the
6 military community, including military and veterans
7 service and advocacy organizations that strive to address
8 the unique challenges faced by this population such as
9 behavioral health issues of mental illness and substance
10 use disorders, serious physical injury, employment,
11 education, and housing.

12 (12) A unified, seamless, and systematic method of
13 accessing services for those who have served our country
14 and our State is needed, particularly in the areas of
15 behavioral health issues of mental illness and substance
16 use disorders, serious physical injury, employment,
17 education, homelessness and housing, and legal assistance.

18 (13) The Illinois Joining Forces Foundation was
19 created by Public Act 98-986 to serve and ensure the
20 long-term sustainability of Illinois Joining Forces, a
21 public-private network of military and veteran-serving
22 organizations critically important for the support of the
23 State's military community.

24 (14) A Veterans Suicide Prevention Commission to plan
25 and coordinate the work of State agencies is needed to
26 develop systems of services and supports that reflect a

1 coordinated collective community approach to serve our
2 military community.

3 Section 10. Commission; purpose. The Veterans Suicide
4 Prevention Commission is created. The Commission shall drive
5 the State's strategic vision for assessing and achieving the
6 successful transition, adjustment, and reintegration of
7 service members of the armed forces, veterans, and their
8 families through the coordination of the collective efforts of
9 public and private organizations throughout the State. The
10 Commission shall facilitate, collaborate, and coordinate the
11 efforts of these organizations to effectively and responsively
12 meet the needs of the military community. In performing these
13 responsibilities, the Commission shall conduct planning,
14 research, education, training, and evaluation activities to
15 improve the operations and coordination of the systems of care
16 and supports. The Commission shall coordinate its activities
17 with those of Illinois Joining Forces and other advocacy
18 organizations for service members of the armed forces,
19 veterans, and their families.

20 Section 15. Composition.

21 (a) The Commission shall consist of the following members:

22 (1) The Governor or his or her designee, who shall
23 serve as Chairperson.

24 (2) The Directors of Military Affairs and Veterans'

1 Affairs or their designees, who shall serve as co-chairs.

2 (3) The Lieutenant Governor or his or her designee.

3 (4) The Deputy Governor of Health and Human Services
4 or his or her designee.

5 (5) One member appointed by the President of the
6 Senate.

7 (6) One member appointed by the Minority Leader of the
8 Senate.

9 (7) One member appointed by the Speaker of the House
10 of Representatives.

11 (8) One member appointed by the Minority Leader of the
12 House of Representatives.

13 (9) The Secretary of State or his or her designee.

14 (10) The Attorney General or his or her designee.

15 (11) The Treasurer or his or her designee.

16 (12) The Comptroller or his or her designee.

17 (13) The State Superintendent of Education or his or
18 her designee.

19 (14) The Executive Director of the Illinois Board of
20 Higher Education or his or her designee.

21 (15) The Chief Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court
22 or his or her designee.

23 (16) The Director of Aging or his or her designee.

24 (17) The Director of Agriculture or his or her
25 designee.

26 (18) The Director of Central Management Services or

1 his or her designee.

2 (19) The Director of Children and Family Services or
3 his or her designee.

4 (20) The Director of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
5 or his or her designee.

6 (21) The Director of Corrections or his or her
7 designee.

8 (22) The Director of the Illinois Emergency Management
9 Agency or his or her designee.

10 (23) The Director of Employment Security or his or her
11 designee.

12 (24) The Director of the Environmental Protection
13 Agency or his or her designee.

14 (25) The Secretary of Financial and Professional
15 Regulation or his or her designee.

16 (26) The Director of Healthcare and Family Services or
17 his or her designee.

18 (27) The Director of Human Rights or his or her
19 designee.

20 (28) The Secretary of Human Services or his or her
21 designee.

22 (29) The Secretary of Innovation and Technology or his
23 or her designee.

24 (30) The Director of Insurance or his or her designee.

25 (31) The Director of Labor or his or her designee.

26 (32) The Director of the Lottery or his or her

1 designee.

2 (33) The Director of Natural Resources or his or her
3 designee.

4 (34) The Director of Public Health or his or her
5 designee.

6 (35) The Director of Revenue or his or her designee.

7 (36) The State Fire Marshal or his or her designee.

8 (37) The Director of State Police or his or her
9 designee.

10 (38) The Secretary of Transportation or his or her
11 designee.

12 (39) The Chairperson of the Illinois Joining Forces
13 Board or his or her designee.

14 (b) As necessary, the Commission may appoint individuals
15 representing the following:

16 (1) The Illinois Army National Guard.

17 (2) The Illinois Air National Guard.

18 (3) The United States Army or United States Army
19 Reserve.

20 (4) The United States Air Force or United States Air
21 Force Reserve.

22 (5) The United States Navy or United States Navy
23 Reserve.

24 (6) The United States Marine Corps or United States
25 Marine Corps Reserve.

26 (7) The United States Coast Guard or United States

1 Coast Guard Reserve.

2 (8) Military spouses.

3 (9) The brain injury services community.

4 (10) The substance abuse services community.

5 (11) The community-based mental health counseling
6 service community.

7 (12) Military and community advocacy networks.

8 (13) Practicing behavioral healthcare specialists.

9 (14) Community faith-based and spiritual leaders.

10 (c) The Commission may invite federal agencies such as the
11 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Department of
12 Labor, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development,
13 and military services agencies to participate on the
14 Commission.

15 (d) The Departments of Military Affairs and Veterans'
16 Affairs shall provide administrative support to the
17 Commission. The Governor's Office shall provide additional
18 support with respect to compliance with State ethics laws, the
19 Open Meetings Act, and the Freedom of Information Act.

20 (e) A simple majority of the members of the Commission
21 shall constitute a quorum.

22 (f) All recommendations made by the Commission shall
23 require approval of a majority of the total membership of the
24 Commission.

25 (g) The Commission shall hold at least 4 meetings each
26 year, but otherwise shall meet at the call of the Chairperson

1 or co-chairs. Meetings of the Commission may be conducted in
2 person or via telephone or video conference and shall be open
3 to the public.

4 (h) The Commission may adopt policies, procedures, and
5 whatever additional rules for an organizational structure, and
6 policies and procedures for the Commission's internal
7 operations as are necessary to carry out its function and
8 responsibilities.

9 (i) Members of the Commission shall be appointed for a
10 term of 4 years. Upon expiration of the initial terms, each
11 member shall be reappointed for a term of 4 additional years
12 whereupon their terms will expire requiring the appointment of
13 new members. Members shall serve at the pleasure of the
14 Governor. Vacancies resulting for reasons other than the
15 expiration of a term shall be filled by the Governor for the
16 remainder of the term.

17 (j) Members shall receive no compensation for their
18 services.

19 (k) All departments, agencies, boards, and commissions of
20 the executive branch shall fully cooperate with the Commission
21 in carrying out the purposes of this Act and shall provide
22 staff support and other assistance as requested.

23 Section 20. Duties.

24 (a) The primary focus of the Commission shall be on
25 improving the efficiency and effectiveness of those State

1 programs and services related to the military community. The
2 Commission shall review the activities related to the military
3 community of each State agency to ensure there is efficient
4 and effective coordination and alignment with the needs of the
5 military community. Accountability shall be promoted by
6 tracking the progress of initiatives and programs and
7 services; developing strategic collaboration among public and
8 private partners (primarily Illinois Joining Forces); and
9 increasing public awareness of the issues relating to the
10 services and support of the military community.

11 (b) The Commission shall promote coordination and
12 efficiency among State, county, and local units of government
13 and municipalities through knowledge sharing, mobilization of
14 resources, and an aligned approach to serving the military
15 community.

16 (c) The Commission shall issue periodic reports on,
17 without limitation, its establishment of strategic goals, its
18 public research agenda, and its performance and progress in
19 meeting its goals.

20 (d) The Commission shall monitor the progress of the
21 implementation of the Strategic Action Plan on Homelessness
22 developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,
23 the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
24 Administration's (SAMHSA) Service Members, Veterans, and their
25 Families Technical Assistance Center, SAMHSA's Policy
26 Academies, and SAMHSA's Implementation Academies.

1 (e) Each member agency on the Commission must designate a
2 member of its management staff as its Ombudsman for the
3 military community. The Ombudsman shall be that agency's
4 primary point of contact for military community issues. Each
5 member agency shall also designate one full-time employee to
6 provide staff assistance to the Commission.

7 Section 25. Transparency. In addition to whatever policies
8 or procedures it may adopt, the Commission shall be subject to
9 the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and the Open
10 Meetings Act.

11 Section 30. Severability. The provisions of this Act are
12 severable under Section 1.31 of the Statute on Statutes.