



General Assembly

Amendment

February Session, 2022

LCO No. 6470



Offered by:

SEN. CICARELLA, 34th Dist.

SEN. KISSEL, 7th Dist.

REP. VAIL, 52nd Dist.

To: Subst. Senate Bill No. 338

File No. 186

Cal. No. 157

"AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF MUNICIPAL VETERANS SERVICES."

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and substitute the
2 following in lieu thereof:

3 "Section 1. Section 27-135 of the general statutes is repealed and the
4 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2022*):

5 (a) As used in this section, "veteran" has the same meaning as
6 provided in subsection (a) of section 27-103 and "chief executive officer"
7 means the officer described in subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of section
8 7-193.

9 (b) Prior to October 1, 2022:

10 (1) Any city or town, either separately or with one or more other cities
11 and towns, may, by ordinance, establish a local veterans' advisory
12 committee which shall have the responsibility of carrying out locally the

13 duties and purposes of this [section] subsection and, within their charter
14 powers and as otherwise provided by law, may make available to such
15 local committees the necessary funds to carry out their duties and
16 responsibilities. The committee may [(1)] (A) act as the coordinating
17 agency in all matters concerning veterans and their dependents,
18 coordinating the activities of public and private facilities concerned with
19 veterans' reemployment, education, rehabilitation and adjustment to
20 peacetime living; [(2)] (B) cooperate with all national, state and local
21 governmental and private agencies in securing services and benefits to
22 which a veteran or his dependents may be entitled; [(3)] (C) use the
23 services and facilities of the veterans organizations so far as possible to
24 carry out the purposes of this [section; and (4)] subsection; and (D)
25 encourage and coordinate vocational training services for veterans.

26 [(b) (1)] (2) (A) Any city or town that has not established its own local
27 veterans' advisory committee separate from one or more other cities or
28 towns pursuant to [subsection (a) of this section] subdivision (1) of this
29 subsection and does not otherwise provide funding for a veterans'
30 service officer shall designate [(A)] (i) a city or town employee, or [(B)]
31 (ii) a volunteer who is a resident of such city or town, and [(i)] (I) is a
32 veteran, [as defined in subsection (a) of section 27-103, or (ii)] or (II) has
33 practical experience handling veterans' issues, to serve as a municipal
34 [veterans'] veterans representative in such city or town. The
35 Commissioner of Veterans Affairs shall annually send to the chief
36 executive officer of any such city or town an electronic notification of
37 such chief executive officer's duty to so designate a city or town
38 employee or volunteer in accordance with this [subsection] subdivision.
39 Such chief executive officer shall, not later than thirty days after receipt
40 of such notification, submit to the Office of Advocacy and Assistance, as
41 described in subsection (b) of section 27-102l, as amended by this act,
42 the name and electronic mail address of the city or town employee or
43 volunteer so designated. [As used in this subdivision, "chief executive
44 officer" means the officer described in section 7-193.]

45 [(2)] (B) Each municipal [veterans'] veterans representative shall
46 carry out the duties described in [subsection (a) of this section]

47 subdivision (1) of this subsection and shall complete a training course
48 conducted by the Office of Advocacy and Assistance, as described in
49 subdivision (3) of subsection (b) of section 27-102l, as amended by this
50 act, or attend a training session conducted by the manager of said office,
51 as described in subparagraph (A) of subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of
52 said section. Each municipal [veterans'] veterans representative
53 designated on or after October 1, 2019, shall complete such training
54 course not later than one year after the date of such designation. Upon
55 completion of such training course, a municipal [veterans'] veterans
56 representative may thereafter receive electronically any new or updated
57 training information from the Office of Advocacy and Assistance and
58 shall not be required to complete any other such training course.

59 [(3)] (C) Any volunteer designated as a municipal [veterans'] veterans
60 representative by a city or town pursuant to [subdivision (1) of this
61 subsection shall (A)] subparagraph (A) of this subsection shall (i) be
62 available to veterans in person, by telephone or by electronic mail for
63 any minimum number of hours per week that the city or town
64 designating the volunteer may establish, and [(B)] (ii) file a performance
65 report each month with the city or town designating the volunteer that
66 includes, but is not limited to, the names of veterans assisted, services
67 or referrals provided and any other information as determined by the
68 city or town.

69 (c) On and after October 1, 2022:

70 (1) (A) Each municipality shall, for the purposes of carrying out the
71 duties and responsibilities of this subsection:

72 (i) Establish, by ordinance, a municipal veterans advisory committee.
73 Such ordinance shall set forth the number of members of such
74 committee, the method of the members' selection, the members' terms
75 of office and the manner of filling any vacancy. The municipality may
76 make available to such committee the necessary funds to carry out such
77 duties and responsibilities;

78 (ii) Appoint a director of municipal veterans services, who shall be a

79 veteran or have practical experience handling veterans' issues and be
80 compensated by such municipality; or

81 (iii) Appoint one or more municipal veterans representatives, each of
82 whom shall be a veteran or have practical experience handling veterans'
83 issues and shall be a current municipal employee or volunteer.

84 (B) (i) Two or more municipalities may jointly carry out the duties
85 and responsibilities under this subsection, provided such municipalities
86 shall enter into a memorandum of agreement or understanding for such
87 purpose, which memorandum may include terms concerning sharing of
88 expenses.

89 (ii) Any municipality that enacted an ordinance establishing a
90 committee, appointed a director or designated a representative
91 pursuant to subsection (b) of this section prior to October 1, 2022, shall
92 have satisfied the requirement under this subdivision.

93 (2) (A) Each municipal veterans advisory committee, director of
94 municipal veterans services or municipal veterans representative, as
95 applicable, shall (i) assist veterans and veterans' dependents in
96 accessing services and benefits to which such veterans or dependents
97 may be entitled; (ii) assist in coordinating the activities of public and
98 private facilities concerned with veterans' reemployment, education,
99 rehabilitation and adjustment to peacetime living; (iii) cooperate with
100 all national, state and local governmental and private providers in
101 connecting veterans and veterans' dependents with services and
102 benefits to which such veterans or dependents may be entitled; (iv)
103 encourage and coordinate vocational training services for veterans; and
104 (v) coordinate with veterans organizations, as practicable, to carry out
105 the purposes of this subsection.

106 (B) A member of such committee designated by such committee, or
107 such director or representative, as applicable, shall (i) be available to
108 veterans in person, by telephone or by electronic mail for a minimum
109 number of days or hours per week, as determined by the municipality;
110 (ii) file with the municipality each month a report that includes, but is

111 not limited to, the names of veterans and veterans' dependents who
112 were provided assistance, the services or referrals that were provided
113 and any other information required by the municipality; and (iii) not
114 later than one year after such member's, director's or representative's
115 designation or appointment, as applicable, complete a veterans benefits
116 and programs training course conducted pursuant to subdivision (3) of
117 subsection (b) of section 27-102l, as amended by this act, by the Office of
118 Advocacy and Assistance within the Department of Veterans Affairs,
119 except that any such member, director or representative who completed
120 such training course pursuant to subsection (b) of this section prior to
121 October 1, 2022, shall have satisfied the requirement under
122 subparagraph (B)(iii) of this subparagraph. After completion of such
123 training course, such member, director or representative may thereafter
124 receive electronically any new or updated training information from
125 said office and shall not be required to complete any other such training
126 course.

127 (3) The Commissioner of Veterans Affairs shall annually notify each
128 municipality's chief executive officer of the requirement under
129 subdivision (1) of this subsection. Not later than thirty days after receipt
130 of such notification, the chief executive officer shall provide to the Office
131 of Advocacy and Assistance the name and electronic mail address of
132 each member of the municipal veterans advisory committee, the
133 director of municipal veterans services or each municipal veterans
134 representative, as applicable.

135 Sec. 2. Subsection (b) of section 27-102l of the general statutes is
136 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October*
137 *1, 2022*):

138 (b) (1) The commissioner may appoint a manager to administer an
139 Office of Advocacy and Assistance for the aid and benefit of veterans
140 and their spouses, eligible dependents and family members. The office
141 shall have a staff of not less than eight men and women, including six
142 veterans' service officers, and clerical personnel. The manager and
143 veterans' service officers shall be veterans, as defined in subsection (a)

144 of section 27-103, or veterans who were awarded the armed forces
145 expeditionary medal for service by the armed forces.

146 (2) (A) The manager shall develop a training module on assisting and
147 serving women veterans with regard to state or federal services or
148 benefits and identifying and advising such veterans of community or
149 nonprofit programs focused on assisting and serving such veterans. The
150 manager shall hold and provide instruction for an annual training
151 session, in accordance with such module, to each veterans' service
152 officer and any [municipal veterans'] member of a municipal veterans
153 advisory committee, director of municipal veterans services or
154 municipal veterans representative, as described in subsection [(b)] (c) of
155 section 27-135, as amended by this act, or representative from an
156 Operation Academic Support for Incoming Service Members center at a
157 public institution of higher education in this state.

158 (B) At least one of the veterans' service officers shall be a woman
159 having a demonstrated interest in the concerns of women veterans, who
160 shall be responsible for addressing those concerns, and, effective upon
161 the next opening of a veterans' service officer position occurring on or
162 after July 1, 2010, at least two of the veterans' service officers shall be
163 individuals having bilingual proficiency in English and Spanish, within
164 existing authorized positions. Each veterans' service officer shall (i)
165 successfully complete a course in veterans' benefits not later than one
166 year after commencement of employment, (ii) attend the training
167 session described in subparagraph (A) of this subdivision, and (iii) be
168 assigned to one of the five congressional districts of the state.

169 (3) The office staff shall, at least twice annually, conduct a training
170 course for any [municipal veterans'] member of a municipal veterans
171 advisory committee, director of municipal veterans services or
172 municipal veterans representative. The office staff shall include in such
173 training course a summary of state and federal services and benefits, the
174 [duties to be carried out by each municipal veterans' representative, as
175 described in subsection (a) of] requirements under section 27-135, as
176 amended by this act, and any assistance the office staff may provide to

177 any [municipal veterans'] such member, director or representative
178 related to such [duties] requirements.

179 (4) (A) The office shall develop a written outreach plan identifying (i)
180 strategies for conducting outreach to veterans and their spouses, eligible
181 dependents and family members for purposes of providing assistance
182 in claims for veterans' services or benefits, and (ii) to the extent possible,
183 specific events and other opportunities to provide such assistance that
184 are sponsored by the office or in which the office is participating. The
185 office shall update such written outreach plan as necessary to improve
186 the efficacy of its outreach efforts.

187 (B) The manager and each veterans' service officer shall electronically
188 track information relating to outreach conducted or attended by the
189 office, including, but not limited to, the title or type of any outreach
190 event conducted or attended and the number of veterans or their
191 spouses, eligible dependents or family members to whom substantive
192 services or referrals were provided.

193 (C) The office shall utilize the notifications received from the
194 administrator of each nursing home and assisted living facility in the
195 state, pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (c) of this section, to
196 develop an annual schedule for each veterans' service officer to visit
197 nursing homes and assisted living facilities. The office shall compile any
198 information collected as a result of such visits and provide quarterly
199 reports on such information to the Board of Trustees for the Department
200 of Veterans Affairs.

201 (D) The office shall provide quarterly reports to the Board of Trustees
202 for the Department of Veterans Affairs on (i) concerns raised by veterans
203 or their spouses, eligible dependents or family members, which
204 concerns shall be summarized by type, frequency and resolution, (ii)
205 petitions filed by veterans or their spouses, eligible dependents or
206 family members received by the commissioner under section 27-102l(d)-
207 54 of the regulations of Connecticut state agencies for the four preceding
208 months, and (iii) copies of any such petitions.

209 Sec. 3. Subsection (c) of section 27-102q of the general statutes is
 210 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October*
 211 *1, 2022*):

212 (c) To the extent practicable, the Department of Veterans Affairs shall
 213 (1) provide information on its Internet web site regarding legal services
 214 organizations that assist veterans in military discharge upgrades,
 215 including, but not limited to, links to such organizations' Internet web
 216 sites, and (2) provide printed resources concerning methods for
 217 obtaining military discharge upgrades, which are created by such legal
 218 services organizations, to veterans at the department's offices and
 219 facilities and disseminate such resources to [local veterans'] municipal
 220 veterans advisory committees, directors of municipal veterans services
 221 and municipal veterans representatives, as described in section 27-135,
 222 as amended by this act."

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>October 1, 2022</i>	27-135
Sec. 2	<i>October 1, 2022</i>	27-102l(b)
Sec. 3	<i>October 1, 2022</i>	27-102q(c)