

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2015**

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**SENATE BILL 126\***

Short Title: Create Veterans Task Force/PED Report. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Pate, Clark, D. Davis (Primary Sponsors); Bingham, Bryant, Daniel, J. Jackson, B. Jackson, Krawiec, Lowe, Newton, Smith-Ingram, and Woodard.

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate.

February 27, 2015

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE TASK FORCE FOR VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES; TO DIRECT THE TASK FORCE TO IMPLEMENT A STATEWIDE STRATEGIC PLAN TO TRACK, COORDINATE, AND IMPROVE SERVICES FOR VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES; TO REQUIRE STATE AGENCIES TO COLLECT AND REPORT DATA ON SERVICES, BENEFITS, AND DISCOUNTS PROVIDED TO VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES; AND TO ESTABLISH THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE VETERANS AND MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE TO MONITOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE PROGRAM EVALUATION DIVISION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**PART I. ESTABLISHMENT OF TASK FORCE FOR VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES**

**SECTION 1.** Chapter 165 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Article to read:

"Article 9.

"Task Force on Veterans, Service Members, and Their Families.

**"§ 165-60. Creation of task force; membership; vacancies; chair; meetings; staffing.**

(a) Creation. – There is created the Task Force for Veterans, Service Members, and Their Families within the Department of Administration for budgetary purposes only.

(b) Membership. – Effective January 1, 2015, the Task Force shall consist of 27 voting members appointed as follows:

(1) Ex officio members. – By virtue of their offices, heads of the following 16 departments or agencies, or their respective designees, shall serve on the Task Force:

- a. The Department of Administration.
- b. The Department of Commerce.
- c. The Department of Health and Human Services.
- d. The North Carolina Housing Finance Agency.
- e. The North Carolina Community Colleges System.
- f. The Department of Public Instruction.
- g. The Department of Public Safety.



- 1            h.     The North Carolina National Guard.
- 2            i.     The Department of State Treasurer.
- 3            j.     The University of North Carolina.
- 4            k.     The Wildlife Resources Commission.
- 5            l.     The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
- 6            m.     The Department of Cultural Resources.
- 7            n.     The Department of Environment and Natural Resources.
- 8            o.     The Office of State Human Resources.
- 9            p.     The Department of Transportation.

10            (2)     Appointed members. – Eleven members shall be appointed as follows:

- 11            a.     The Governor shall appoint the following five members:
  - 12                1.     One member representing local government entities.
  - 13                2.     One member representing veteran services organizations.
  - 14                3.     One member representing other private and not-for-profit  
15                    organizations that assist and advocate on behalf of North  
16                    Carolina's veterans.
  - 17                4.     One member of the North Carolina Military Affairs  
18                    Commission.
  - 19                5.     One member representing the U.S. Department of Veterans  
20                    Affairs.
- 21            b.     The following three members shall be appointed by the General  
22                    Assembly upon the recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of  
23                    the Senate under G.S. 120-121:
  - 24                1.     One member representing local government entities.
  - 25                2.     One member representing veteran services organizations.
  - 26                3.     One member representing other private and not-for-profit  
27                    organizations that assist and advocate on behalf of North  
28                    Carolina's veterans.
- 29            c.     The following three members shall be appointed by the General  
30                    Assembly upon the recommendation of the Speaker of the House of  
31                    Representatives under G.S. 120-121:
  - 32                1.     One member representing local government entities.
  - 33                2.     One member representing veteran services organizations.
  - 34                3.     One member representing other private and not-for-profit  
35                    organizations that assist and advocate on behalf of North  
36                    Carolina's veterans.

37            (c)     Terms of Appointed Members; Vacancies. – Appointed members shall serve a term  
38                    of two years and shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor or the General Assembly, as  
39                    applicable. A vacancy occurring during the term of appointment shall be filled by the Governor  
40                    or the General Assembly, as applicable, for the balance of the unexpired term.

41            (d)     Chair. – The members of the Task Force shall elect a chair of the Task Force.

42            (e)     Meetings. – The Task Force shall meet at least quarterly upon the call of the Chair.

43            (f)     Staffing. – Clerical and professional staff to the Task Force shall be provided by the  
44                    Department of Administration. Task Force members shall receive no salary or per diem  
45                    expenses as a result of serving on the Task Force but shall receive necessary travel and  
46                    subsistence expenses in accordance with State law.

47            **"§ 165-61. Duties of Task Force.**

48            The Task Force shall have the following duties:

- 49                (1)     To develop and implement interagency solutions to make North Carolina a  
50                    more veteran-friendly state and to engage in strategic and long-range  
51                    planning with respect to these goals.

- 1           (2)    To make North Carolina the state of choice for veterans by facilitating a  
2           heightened level of collaboration and coordination in the provision of  
3           services that meet the needs of veterans, service members, and their families.
- 4           (3)    To raise awareness of the veterans- and service member-related efforts of all  
5           participating agencies and organizations in order to facilitate information  
6           sharing, joint planning, implementation, and evaluation of activities among  
7           federal, State, and local organizations and agencies.
- 8           (4)    To build upon the gains of previous interagency efforts by expanding efforts  
9           beyond the realm of behavioral and physical wellness into all territories in  
10           which the veteran interacts with the State and his or her community such as  
11           employment, job training, education, licensure transferability, personal  
12           finance, home ownership, legal services, and recreation.
- 13           (5)    To advise the Governor and the General Assembly on issues related to  
14           veterans, service members, and their families, in accordance with the  
15           reporting requirements set forth in G.S. 165-62.
- 16           (6)    To identify areas in which interagency and intra-agency cooperation could  
17           be enhanced and to enhance cooperation in those areas in accordance with  
18           each agency's capabilities.
- 19           (7)    To seek input from representatives of various branches and eras of the  
20           active, reserve, and guard components of the Armed Forces and their  
21           families, as well as from the organizations that serve them.
- 22           (8)    To propose legislation that would benefit veterans, service members, and  
23           their families.
- 24           (9)    To measure the effectiveness and implementation of statewide efforts to  
25           provide services, benefits, and discounts to veterans, service members, and  
26           their families.
- 27           (10)   To track federal, State, and local legislation affecting veterans, service  
28           members, and their families.
- 29           (11)   To perform any other functions the Task Force considers necessary to carry  
30           out its mandate.

31 **"§ 165-62. Reporting.**

32       The Task Force shall make the following reports:

- 33           (1)    An annual report shall be submitted to the Governor and to the General  
34           Assembly no later than November 1 of each year setting forth any Task  
35           Force recommendations for statutory, regulatory, or policy changes that  
36           would improve the provision of services to veterans, service members, and  
37           their families.
- 38           (2)    Other reports requested by the Governor or required by the General  
39           Assembly shall be submitted in accordance with the applicable request or  
40           act."

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42 **PART II. DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN FOR**  
43 **PROVISION OF SERVICES TO VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS, AND THEIR**  
44 **FAMILIES**

45       **SECTION 2.(a)** The Task Force for Veterans, Service Members, and Their  
46 Families shall create a subcommittee consisting of all of its ex officio members, which shall  
47 engage in a strategic planning process that does all of the following:

- 48           (1)    Defines North Carolina's mission and vision for veterans, service members,  
49           and their families.
- 50           (2)    Identifies critical stakeholders.

- 1 (3) Scans the internal and external environment for strengths, weaknesses,  
2 opportunities, and challenges. This component of the strategic planning  
3 process shall include a review of veterans programs in other states.
- 4 (4) Compares challenges and opportunities to the State's ability to meet  
5 challenges and seize opportunities.
- 6 (5) Identifies strategic issues based on the analyses conducted pursuant to  
7 subdivisions (3) and (4) of this section and formulates strategies for  
8 addressing these issues.
- 9 (6) Recommends ways to implement these strategies.

10 **SECTION 2.(b)** The strategic plan required by subsection (a) of this section shall  
11 define measureable outcomes and goals for veterans, service members, and their families that  
12 receive services, benefits, or discounts from State agencies. In addition, the plan should specify  
13 how the Task Force, in collaboration with State agencies, universities, and community colleges,  
14 intends to do all of the following:

- 15 (1) Coordinate the activities of existing programs and other efforts affecting  
16 veterans.
- 17 (2) Maximize the amount of federal dollars to support these efforts.
- 18 (3) Attract more veterans to the State.
- 19 (4) Track the number of veterans served and the services, benefits, and  
20 discounts provided to them.
- 21 (5) Track funding from all sources and expenditures on veteran-related  
22 activities.
- 23 (6) Ensure veterans receive the services, benefits, and discounts due to them.
- 24 (7) Establish statewide goals, objectives, and outcomes for these efforts.
- 25 (8) Monitor progress toward achieving the established goals, objectives, and  
26 outcomes.
- 27 (9) Establish time frames for achieving these goals.
- 28 (10) Recommend remedial actions to take when performance falls short.
- 29 (11) Propose legislation that would benefit veterans, service members, and their  
30 families.

31 **SECTION 2.(c)** The subcommittee shall complete the strategic plan required by  
32 subsection (a) of this section and the Task Force shall approve the final plan no later than  
33 January 15, 2016. No later than April 15, 2016, the Task Force shall report the strategic plan to  
34 the Joint Legislative Veterans and Military Service Members Oversight Committee and  
35 thereafter shall report quarterly on the progress of implementing the plan.

### 37 **PART III. REQUIRE TRACKING OF INFORMATION ON SERVICES PROVIDED** 38 **BY STATE AGENCIES TO VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS, AND THEIR** 39 **FAMILIES**

40 **SECTION 3.** Article 7 of Chapter 165 of the General Statutes is amended by  
41 adding a new section to read:

42 **"§ 165-44.02. Collection and reporting of information about services provided to**  
43 **veterans, service members, and their families.**

44 (a) Collection. – Each State agency that provides a service, benefit, or discount that is  
45 targeted or directed at veterans, service members, or their families shall do all of the following:

- 46 (1) Determine the number of veterans, service members, and their families  
47 served and the services, benefits, and discounts provided to them.
- 48 (2) Identify all sources of funding for the services, benefits, and discounts  
49 provided to veterans, service members, and their families.



1 and to improve awareness of State programs for veterans, service members, and their families.

2 The Committee may:

3 (1) Review reports prepared by the Task Force for Veterans, Service Members,  
4 and Their Families.

5 (2) Monitor and review the implementation of the statewide strategic plan for  
6 veterans, service members, and their families.

7 (3) Study any other matter the Committee believes is related to its purpose.

8 (b) The Committee shall report to the General Assembly any recommendations it has no  
9 later than December 31, 2017, and annually thereafter. The Committee shall submit a final  
10 report to the General Assembly no later than April 1, 2022. A report to the General Assembly  
11 may contain any legislation needed to implement a recommendation of the Committee.

12 **"§ 120-70.162. Organization of Committee.**

13 (a) The President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of  
14 Representatives shall each designate a cochair of the Joint Legislative Veterans and Military  
15 Service Members Oversight Committee. The Committee shall meet upon the joint call of the  
16 cochairs.

17 (b) A quorum of the Committee is nine members. Only recommendations, including  
18 proposed legislation, receiving at least eight affirmative votes may be included in a Committee  
19 report to the General Assembly. While in the discharge of its official duties, the Committee has  
20 the powers of a joint committee under G.S. 120-19 and G.S. 120-19.1 through G.S. 120-19.4.

21 (c) The cochairs of the Committee may call upon other knowledgeable persons or  
22 experts to assist the Committee in its work.

23 (d) Members of the Committee shall receive subsistence and travel expenses as  
24 provided in G.S. 120-3.1, 138-5, or 138-6, as appropriate. The Committee may contract for  
25 consultants or hire employees in accordance with G.S. 120-32.02. The Legislative Services  
26 Commission, through the Legislative Services Officer, shall assign professional staff to assist  
27 the Committee in its work. Upon the direction of the Legislative Services Commission, the  
28 Supervisors of Clerks of the Senate and of the House of Representatives shall assign clerical  
29 staff to the Committee. The expenses for clerical employees shall be borne by the Committee.

30 **"§ 120-70.163. Sunset.**

31 This Article expires July 1, 2022."

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33 **PART V. EFFECTIVE DATE**

34 **SECTION 5.** This act is effective when it becomes law.