

AN ACT concerning State government.

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

Section 5. The Department of Veterans Affairs Act is amended by changing Section 2 as follows:

(20 ILCS 2805/2) (from Ch. 126 1/2, par. 67)

Sec. 2. Powers and duties. The Department shall have the following powers and duties:

To perform such acts at the request of any veteran, or his or her spouse, surviving spouse or dependents as shall be reasonably necessary or reasonably incident to obtaining or endeavoring to obtain for the requester any advantage, benefit or emolument accruing or due to such person under any law of the United States, the State of Illinois or any other state or governmental agency by reason of the service of such veteran, and in pursuance thereof shall:

(1) ~~1.~~ Contact veterans, their survivors and dependents and advise them of the benefits of state and federal laws and assist them in obtaining such benefits;

(2) ~~2.~~ Establish field offices and direct the activities of the personnel assigned to such offices;

(3) ~~3.~~ Create a volunteer field force of accredited representatives, representing educational institutions, labor organizations, veterans organizations, employers, churches, and farm organizations;

(4) ~~4.~~ Conduct informational and training services;

(5) ~~5.~~ Conduct educational programs through newspapers, periodicals and radio for the specific purpose of disseminating information affecting veterans and their dependents;

(6) ~~6.~~ Coordinate the services and activities of all state departments having services and resources affecting

veterans and their dependents;

(7) ~~7.~~ Encourage and assist in the coordination of agencies within counties giving service to veterans and their dependents;

(8) ~~8.~~ Cooperate with veterans organizations and other governmental agencies;

(9) ~~9.~~ Make, alter, amend and promulgate reasonable rules and procedures for the administration of this Act;

(10) ~~10.~~ Make and publish annual reports to the Governor regarding the administration and general operation of the Department; ~~and~~

(11) ~~11.~~ Encourage the State to implement more programs to address the wide range of issues faced by Persian Gulf War Veterans, especially those who took part in combat, by creating an official commission to further study Persian Gulf War Diseases. The commission shall consist of 9 members appointed as follows: the Speaker and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives and the President and Minority Leader of the Senate shall each appoint one member from the General Assembly, the Governor shall appoint 4 members to represent veterans' organizations, and the Department shall appoint one member. The commission members shall serve without compensation; and ~~-~~

(12) Conduct an annual review of the benefits received by Illinois veterans that compares benefits received by Illinois veterans with the benefits received by veterans in all other states and U.S. territories. The required annual review shall include, but not be limited to, (1) the average benefit paid to individual veterans from Illinois, in direct comparison to the average benefit paid to individual veterans of each of the other states and U.S. territories; (2) the number of veterans receiving benefits in Illinois for the first time during the year compared to the number of claims filed by Illinois veterans during the year; (3) the aggregate number of Illinois veterans receiving benefits compared to the number of veterans from

each of the other states and U.S. territories receiving benefits; and (4) a categorical analysis of the types of injuries and disabilities for which benefits are being paid in Illinois and each of the other states and U.S. territories. The benefits review shall be reported to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the Illinois Congressional delegation upon the completion of the report each year.

The Department may accept and hold on behalf of the State, if for the public interest, a grant, gift, devise or bequest of money or property to the Department made for the general benefit of Illinois veterans, including the conduct of informational and training services by the Department and other authorized purposes of the Department. The Department shall cause each grant, gift, devise or bequest to be kept as a distinct fund and shall invest such funds in the manner provided by the Public Funds Investment Act, as now or hereafter amended, and shall make such reports as may be required by the Comptroller concerning what funds are so held and the manner in which such funds are invested. The Department may make grants from these funds for the general benefit of Illinois veterans. Grants from these funds, except for the funds established under Sections 2.01a and 2.03, shall be subject to appropriation.

The Department has the power to make grants, from funds appropriated from the Korean War Veterans National Museum and Library Fund, to private organizations for the benefit of the Korean War Veterans National Museum and Library.

The Department has the power to make grants, from funds appropriated from the Illinois Military Family Relief Fund, for benefits authorized under the Survivors Compensation Act.

(Source: P.A. 92-198, eff. 8-1-01; 92-651, eff. 7-11-02; 93-839, eff. 7-30-04.)

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect January 1, 2006.