



Senate Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee

Senator Lisa Baker, Chair

Diane McNaughton, Executive Director

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BILL SUMMARY

Senate Bill 1531, Printer's No. 2218

Prime Sponsor: Senator Lisa Baker

SUMMARY:

To enhance programs and benefits for Pennsylvania's one million veterans, Senate Bill 1531 creates a Pennsylvania Veterans Trust Fund (PVTF). The PVTF is to be a special non-lapsing fund managed by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to supplement state appropriations for veterans' programs and leverage partnerships with nonprofit charitable organizations and veterans' service organizations. SB 1531 also creates a check-off mechanism on driver's license renewals and vehicle registrations as a convenient way for motorists to donate to veterans; provides a "V" veteran identifier on driver's licenses; and provides for veterans' license plates, for both veterans and motorists who wish to honor veterans.

EXISTING LAW:

Senate Bill 1531 amends the Military and Veterans Code, Title 51 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, by adding a new subchapter to Chapter 17. It also has a conforming amendment to the Vehicle Code (Title 75).

ANALYSIS:

A new non-lapsing fund for veterans would be established in the state Treasury for the Pennsylvania Veterans Trust Fund. Revenues would be derived from the following sources:

- In FY 2012, \$1.7 million in proceeds from the sale of the **Scotland School for Veterans' Children** campus.
 - \$700,000 of this funding will be used for grants to veterans' service organizations
 - \$1 million would be granted to the Pennsylvania Veterans Foundation to fund grants for Pennsylvania veterans and families.

- Proceeds paid by the Department of Transportation for contributions from **drivers' licenses, registrations and special license plates.**
 - PennDOT will begin accepting contributions to help Pennsylvania veterans as part of a voluntary check-off system with license and registration renewals.
 - Projected to raise more than \$500,000 per year.
 - An "Honor our Veterans" plate is expected to raise \$200,000 per year. The plate would cost \$30 for non-veterans, with \$15 going to the PVTF. The plate costs \$15 for veterans.
- Grants, gifts and other payments and appropriations to the PVTF may be made.
- The PVTF may expend funds for grants to the Pennsylvania Veterans Foundation and other charitable foundations and veterans' service organizations, as well as to support innovative and expanded county veterans' programs. PVTF funds may also be spent to help veterans with living expenses/housing and to care for veterans' monuments.
- DMVA will develop policies and guidelines for the PVTF and will make annual reports to the House and Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committees.
- Pennsylvania veterans will, for the first time, be able to request a veterans' identifier (such as a large "V") on their drivers' license or PennDOT-issued ID for non-drivers.
- Participation is voluntary and will require veterans to provide documentation (DD Form 214, military ID, etc.) and pay a one-time fee of \$5.
- The PVTF will reimburse the Motor License Fund for PennDOT's administrative costs.
- SB 1531 charters and recognizes the Pennsylvania Veterans Foundation, with the purpose of assisting and providing benefits for Pennsylvania veterans and their families.
- The PVF is an IRS-recognized charitable organization (501(c)(3) which is already up and running and seeking to raise funds to help veterans.
- Pennsylvania will be one of the first states to forge a more effective partnership between government, charitable organizations and veterans' service organizations.

The PVTF is not intended to fund programs, such as the state veterans' homes, which are supported by existing appropriations, but to provide a funding mechanism for a partnership involving state and county governments, as well as veterans' service organizations and charitable organizations that support veterans.

The PA State Veterans Commission voted to endorse this bill at their June 1st meeting.

EFFECTIVE DATE:

Title 75 provisions take effect in 180 days. The rest of the act takes effect immediately.