

CHAPTER 197

(Senate Bill 873)

AN ACT concerning

Task Force to Study State Assistance to Veterans

FOR the purpose of altering the process for the appointment of certain members of the Task Force to Study State Assistance to Veterans; extending the date by which the members of the Task Force ~~to Study State Assistance to Veterans~~ must be appointed; extending the dates by which the Task Force must report its interim and final findings and recommendations to certain officials; extending the termination date of the Task Force; clarifying language; and generally relating to the Task Force to Study State Assistance to Veterans.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Chapter 290 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2006
Section 3 and 5

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Chapter 290 of the Acts of 2006

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

- (a) There is a Task Force to Study State Assistance to Veterans.
- (b) The Task Force consists of the following members:
 - (1) one member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of the Senate;
 - (2) one member of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
 - (3) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, or the Secretary's designee;
 - (4) the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, or the Secretary's designee;

(5) the Adjutant General of the Military, or the Adjutant General's designee; and

(6) the following seven members, ~~jointly~~ appointed by the ~~President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House~~ **GOVERNOR**:

(i) one member of the Maryland Congressional Delegation, or the member's designee;

(ii) one member of the Maryland Veterans Commission;

(iii) two veterans, one of whom is disabled and one of whom has separated from military service within the past 2 years;

(iv) one individual who is the surviving spouse or parent of a veteran;

(v) one individual with knowledge of providing health care services to veterans; and

(vi) a representative of the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

(c) The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House shall jointly designate the chairman of the Task Force.

(d) The President of the Senate ~~and~~, the Speaker of the House, **AND THE GOVERNOR** shall make all appointments on or before July 1, [2006] **2007**.

(e) The members of the Task Force shall represent geographic, ethnic, and cultural differences throughout the State.

(f) The Task Force may request assistance and information from any government unit or other expert that the Task Force considers appropriate.

(g) The Department of Legislative Services shall provide staff for the Task Force.

(h) A member of the Task Force:

(1) may not receive compensation **AS A MEMBER OF THE TASK FORCE**; but

(2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

(i) The Task Force shall study and make recommendations on veterans issues including:

(1) the efficacy of the services and benefits for veterans to determine how well the services and benefits help eligible individuals obtain benefits and whether these are being obtained in a timely manner;

(2) whether there are enough advocate offices to efficiently help all eligible individuals receive assistance;

(3) the potential impact of the increased number of veterans returning from military service in recent conflicts on services provided by the State;

(4) what services are provided to veterans, veterans' families and survivors and what services need to be provided including medical care, hospice care, and mental health services;

(5) the feasibility of establishing homes for veterans in the Crownsville Hospital Center and other regions of the State;

(6) the feasibility of establishing regional outreach and advocacy centers around the State and using existing service centers as outreach and advocacy centers;

(7) the identification of State and federal benefits and services and how to make them more comprehensive;

(8) how to improve outreach to women who are eligible to receive veteran-related benefits; and

(9) any issue regarding benefits and assistance to veterans that the Task Force determines is necessary.

(j) The Task Force shall submit an interim report to the Governor and, **IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1246 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE**, the General Assembly, on or before December 1, [2006] **2007**, and report its final findings

and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly, on or before December 1, [2007] **2008**.

SECTION 5. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June 1, 2006. Section 3 of this Act shall remain effective for a period of [1 year, 6 months and 1 day] **3 YEARS** and, at the end of [December 1, 2007] **MAY 31, 2009**, with no further action required by the General Assembly, Section 3 of this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June 1, 2007.

Approved by the Governor, April 24, 2007.