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Resolve, To Establish the Commission To Strengthen and Align the Services Provided to Maine's Veterans

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, a legislative study by a study commission needs sufficient time for the commission to properly do its work; and

Whereas, there is insufficient time after the 90-day period for a study commission to properly do its work before reporting to the Legislature; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1 Commission To Strengthen and Align the Services Provided to Maine's Veterans established. Resolved: That, notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the Commission To Strengthen and Align the Services Provided to Maine's Veterans, referred to in this resolve as "the commission," is established; and be it further

Sec. 2 Commission membership. Resolved: That the commission consists of 13 members appointed as follows:

1. One member of the Senate who sits on the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, appointed by the President of the Senate;

2. One member of the House of Representatives who sits on the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

3. The Commissioner of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management or the commissioner's designee;

4. Five members appointed by the President of the Senate as follows:

A. Three members, representing 3 different veterans' service organizations in the State; and

B. Two members with expertise in veterans' affairs policy or representing a nonprofit organization providing services to veterans that is not a veterans' service organization; and

5. Five members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives as follows:

A. Three members, representing 3 different veterans' service organizations in the State; and

B. Two members with expertise in veterans' affairs policy matters or representing a nonprofit organization providing services to veterans that is not a veterans' service organization.

Of the members appointed, at least one member must be serving or have served in the Maine Army National Guard, at least one member must be under 30 years of age, at least one member must be between 30 and 40 years of age, at least one member must be between 41 and 64 years of age, at least one member must be over 65 years of age, at least 2 members must be women and at least one member must be a combat-wounded veteran and amputee; and be it further

Sec. 3 Cooperation. Resolved: That the Information Resource of Maine shall provide information and assistance to the commission as requested by the commission for the performance of its duties; and be it further

Sec. 4 Chairs. Resolved: That the Senate member is the Senate chair and the House of Representatives member is the House chair of the commission; and be it further

Sec. 5 Appointments; convening of commission. Resolved: That all appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of this resolve. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative Council once all appointments have been completed. The first meeting date must be set within 15 days after and be held within 30 days after all appointments have been made; and be it further

Sec. 6 Duties. Resolved: That the commission shall:

1. Review the services provided by the State to veterans for gaps, duplications and inefficiencies;
2. Study improving the State's engagement and communication with veterans of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq;
3. Study how the State can provide health care and mental health services to the State's veterans when there is a clear gap in federal services;
4. Study how to better align community, state and federal services and resources for homeless veterans;
5. Study how the State can develop and implement a campaign and marketing strategy to communicate with veterans and military retirees and encourage them to attend state colleges and to live and work in the State;
6. Make recommendations to the Commissioner of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management concerning practices and rules regarding services and programs for veterans and the development of a 5-year work plan; and
7. Make recommendations to the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs concerning changes to services and programs for veterans; and be it further

Sec. 7 Staff assistance. Resolved: That the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Bureau of Maine Veterans' Services and the Office of Policy and Legal Analysis shall provide necessary staffing services to the commission; and be it further

Sec. 8 Report. Resolved: That, no later than December 2, 2015, the commission shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. The Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs may report out legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 127th Legislature based upon the report.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

SUMMARY

This resolve establishes the Commission To Strengthen and Align the Services Provided to Maine's Veterans, which must report by December 2, 2015 with its findings and recommendations and suggested legislation to the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs.