

CHAPTER 185

AN ACT establishing a task force to study the treatment of veterans diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder in judicial proceedings.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. There is established a task force to study how veterans diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are treated in judicial proceedings. The task force shall consist of 11 members: the Senate President shall appoint one member from the same party as the Senate President who serves on the Senate Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee; the Senate Minority Leader shall appoint one member from the same party as the Senate Minority Leader who serves on the Senate Judiciary Committee; the Speaker of the General Assembly shall appoint one member from the same party as the Speaker of the General Assembly who serves on the Assembly Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee; the Assembly Minority Leader shall appoint one member from the same party as the Assembly Minority Leader who serves on either the Assembly Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee or the Assembly Judiciary Committee; the Adjutant General, or a designee, from the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs; the Attorney General, or a designee, from the Office of the Attorney General; the director of the Division of Mental Health Services, or a designee, from the Department of Human Services; the Administrative Director of New Jersey Courts, or a designee from the Administrative Office of the Courts; and the Governor shall appoint three members of the public, one of whom has knowledge or experience of the New Jersey judicial system, one of whom who has knowledge or experience with PTSD or mental health, and one Statewide officer of a veterans' organization as defined in subsection b. of section 1 of P.L.2007, c.275 (C.13:1L-12.1).

2. All appointments to the task force shall be made within 30 days after the effective date of this act. Vacancies in the membership of the task force shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made. The members of the task force shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for necessary expenditures incurred in the performance of their duties as members of the task force within the limit of funds made available to the commission.

3. The task force shall organize as soon as may be practicable after the appointment of its members and shall choose a chairperson from among its members. The task force shall appoint a secretary who need not be a member of the task force.

4. The task force shall meet at the call of the chairperson. The task force shall hold at least three public hearings in different parts of the State and elicit testimony from the public at such times and places as the chair shall designate. A meeting of the task force shall be called at the request of six of the task force's members and six members of the task force shall constitute a quorum at any meeting thereof.

5. The Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs shall provide such clerical and other administrative assistants, and such professional staff, as the task force requires to carry out its work.

6. It shall be the duty of the task force to identify and review the issues and concerns facing veterans of the United States Armed Forces and the New Jersey National Guard who

have been diagnosed with PTSD and how that diagnosis has impacted their treatment in judicial proceedings. The task force shall:

- a. examine current data, research, programs, and initiatives related to the impact of PTSD upon veterans and how it has affected their treatment in judicial proceedings;
- b. identify effective strategies for the court system to adopt to effectively interact with veterans diagnosed with PTSD; and
- c. develop recommendations to implement those strategies, including legislation or court rules, if appropriate, based on their findings.

7. The task force shall issue a final report to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), containing its findings and recommendations, including any recommendations for legislation or court rules that it deems appropriate, no later than nine months after the task force organizes.

8. This act shall take effect immediately and the task force shall expire 30 days after issuance of its final report.

Approved January 17, 2012.