

CHAPTER 64

AN ACT establishing a "Veterans Higher Education Commission."

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

1. There is established a commission to be known as the "Veterans Higher Education Commission." The commission shall consist of 9 members as follows: the Secretary of Higher Education, ex officio, or a designee; the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, ex officio, or a designee; the Adjutant General of the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs, ex officio, or a designee; the Commissioner of Education, ex officio, or a designee; and 5 members to be appointed by the Governor including a representative of an institution of higher education's Student Veterans Organization, a representative of the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, a representative of the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities, a representative of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in New Jersey, and a representative of a public research university.

2. All appointments to the commission shall be made within 60 days of the effective date of this act. Vacancies in the membership of the commission shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made. Members of the commission shall serve without compensation but shall be entitled to their actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties pursuant to this act.

3. a. The commission shall organize within 30 days after the appointment of its members and shall select a chairperson and a vice-chairperson from among its members and a secretary who need not be a member of the commission.

b. Staff and related support services shall be provided to the commission by the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs. The commission shall also be entitled to call to its assistance and avail itself of the services of the employees of any State, county, or municipal department, board, bureau, commission or agency as it may require and as may be available to it for its purposes.

4. It shall be the duty of the commission to study and make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature on how to best facilitate the successful transition of veterans into the higher education community. The commission shall identify and examine:

a. policies and programs that will increase the percentage of veterans earning postsecondary certifications and degrees;

b. policies of institutions of higher education that successfully transition veterans enrolled in institutions of higher education back to civilian life, through services such as specialized counseling and career services;

c. options for educating faculty and staff on how to best educate and support veterans enrolled in institutions of higher education who have recently returned from military service; and

d. methods and strategies to increase veterans' awareness of the education and career opportunities and programs available to them through the State's public and independent institutions of higher education.

5. The commission may meet and hold hearings at the place or places it designates during the sessions or recesses of the Legislature. The commission 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), no later than one year following its organizational meeting and shall expire upon the issuance of the report.

6. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved June 13, 2013.