

CHAPTER 359

AN ACT establishing a Military and Defense Economic Ombudsman in the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs and supplementing Title 38A of the New Jersey Statutes.

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

C.38A:3-2j Short title.

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the Military and Defense Economic Ombudsman Act.

C.38A:3-2k Military and Defense Economic Ombudsman.

2. There is hereby created in the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs a Military and Defense Economic Ombudsman. The ombudsman shall be appointed by the Governor. The person appointed shall have expertise in the areas of defense, business, and governmental affairs, and shall have been a resident of this State for at least 36 consecutive months immediately preceding appointment. Once appointed, the ombudsman shall continue to maintain residency in New Jersey and shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor and shall report to the Adjutant General. The office of the Military and Defense Economic Ombudsman may request and shall avail itself and utilize the services of any officer or employee of the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs and of any other State department or agency, who shall render such assistance as the head of the principal department or agency may require without additional compensation.

C.38A:3-2l Purpose, duties of ombudsman.

3. The purpose of the Military and Defense Economic Ombudsman shall be to coordinate and implement a strategy to fortify and ensure the economic vitality of the United States military installations in this State and to improve the economic environment for the defense industry in this State, in the face of evolving defense needs, by fostering productive interactions between federal, State, and local governments and overseeing efforts to position the State's military installations as hubs of development, innovation, and economic growth. It shall be the duty of the ombudsman to:

a. identify the strengths and vulnerabilities of, and threats to, the current and future viability of the State's military installations in the context of changing defense plans and economic development needs;

b. evaluate, report on, and recommend strategies and best practices to improve economic outcomes for the State's military installations and defense industry;

c. promote and facilitate a coordinated approach to economic development related to the State's military installations and the industries that support them;

d. promote opportunities for defense industry investments, work to create defense industry clusters at each military installation, and recommend significant development projects that would support the State's defense industry;

e. develop productive relationships with the various governmental, industry, and community stakeholders involved in promoting the success of the State's military installations;

f. disseminate information on the attributes and benefits of the State's military installations which make them attractive to current and future defense planning, business investment, and economic growth; and

g. undertake any other duty consistent with the ombudsman's purpose and deemed appropriate by the Adjutant General.

C.38A:3-2m Efforts to eliminate barriers to investment, growth.

4. The Military and Defense Economic Ombudsman shall undertake specific efforts to eliminate barriers to investment and growth by businesses and the defense industry in this State. In this endeavor, the ombudsman shall:

a. act as the contact person for private businesses and industries for projects related to, supporting, and impacting the State's military installations, regardless of the size of the business or investment, during the permit approval and application process, to facilitate and advocate on behalf of the applicant with each appropriate State government department or agency, in a manner similar to the process established under P.L.2011, c.34 (C.52:14B-26 et seq.);

b. in collaboration with any governmental or non-profit entity, undertake a targeted marketing campaign highlighting the economic growth sectors in the State's defense industry, including, but not limited to, aerospace, information technology, cyber security, biotechnology, bioscience, and engineering;

c. make available information to federal contractors, improve access to that information, and foster relationships among the State, local, and federal stakeholders;

d. establish a New Jersey Procurement Partnership Program to facilitate mentorship relations between smaller and larger companies; conduct procurement seminars; identify federal resources and make them readily accessible; and take advantage of available opportunities to create industry clusters around the State's military installations;

e. promote the State's military installations by organizing Military Installation Resources for Growth events at each installation, thereby providing an opportunity for business, governmental, and community stakeholders and partners to meet and learn about current and emerging economic development and other opportunities at each installation; and

f. in collaboration with the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, foster synergies between institutions of higher education and the defense industry in this State, which may include, but shall not be limited to, developing a centralized database of higher education faculty contacts, their research areas, patented technologies, research centers and their facilities and equipment, and published academic articles, provided the database shall not include any information of a sensitive or classified nature or other information that may compromise the security of any person or institution of higher education.

C.38A:3-2n Education and outreach efforts.

5. As part of its education and outreach efforts, and its purposes of promoting the State's military installations and developing productive relationships with the various governmental, industry, and community stakeholders, the Military and Defense Economic Ombudsman shall:

a. organize an annual tour of the State's military installations for the New Jersey Congressional Delegation to inform the delegation of issues pertaining to each installation and provide them with information relevant to their work of ensuring the current and future viability of the State's military installations;

b. provide accurate, current, and factual information about the State's military installations and their attributes to federal partners, including information to dispel misconceptions in the areas of air space, encroachment, and installation infrastructure, and to highlight the benefits and the current and future potential of each installation in the context of defense planning and economic growth; and

c. establish and convene Commander Council meetings on a regular basis to meet directly with the commanding officers of each military installation and hear from them and other high-ranking officials concerning the specific operations and needs at each installation.

C.38A:3-2o Annual report; rules, regulations.

6. a. The Military and Defense Economic Ombudsman shall submit an annual report to the Adjutant General detailing the activities undertaken during the previous year.

b. The Adjutant General, pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), may adopt such rules and regulations as may be necessary to implement the provisions of this act.

7. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved January 16, 2018.