

**Second Regular Session
Seventy-first General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 18-0812.01 Richard Sweetman x4333

SENATE BILL 18-157

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Williams A., Aguilar, Court, Donovan, Fenberg, Fields, Garcia, Guzman, Jahn, Jones, Kagan, Kerr, Merrifield, Todd, Zenzinger

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

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Senate Committees

State, Veterans, & Military Affairs

House Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING THE STATE WOMEN VETERANS OFFICE.**

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)

The bill creates the state women veterans office in the governor's office to ensure that Colorado women veterans have equitable access to federal and state veterans services and benefits. The bill also establishes the state women veterans steering committee.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing statute.
Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.

1 **SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly
2 finds that:

3 (a) Since the American Revolution, women have volunteered to
4 serve in the United States military, and today women constitute
5 approximately twenty percent of new recruits, fourteen and a half percent
6 of the 1.4 million-troop active duty component, and eighteen percent of
7 the 850,000-troop reserve component;

8 (b) Since the tragedy of September 11, 2001, almost 280,000
9 women have served in Afghanistan and Iraq; and

10 (c) Although the number of male veterans is expected to decline
11 by 2020, the number of female veterans is expected to grow dramatically
12 to twenty percent of the veteran population.

13 (2) The general assembly finds further that:

14 (a) Historically, women have not enjoyed the same status as men
15 in military service, and even today women in the military and women
16 veterans face cultural barriers to full integration into military service,
17 recognition as veterans, and access to services and benefits;

18 (b) These barriers are made evident by the lack of attention to
19 adequate protective equipment designed for women, disparities in
20 promotions, and sexual harassment and assault within the federal
21 department of defense;

22 (c) Despite recent improvement efforts at the federal department
23 of veterans affairs and the federal department of defense, women still
24 encounter a system that is designed to address the needs of men;

25 (d) Military women lack consistent access to a full range of
26 gender-sensitive benefits and services, and the federal government has
27 not ensured that staff members of federal agencies are exemplifying and

1 promoting a culture that embraces its women veterans; and
2 (e) Resources for implementing and evaluating programs that
3 address this culture and climate are needed.
4 (3) The general assembly further finds that:
5 (a) Colorado's goal is to be the most veteran-friendly state in
6 America;
7 (b) Nearly 40,000 women veterans reside in Colorado; and
8 (c) Upon discharge, separation, or retirement from the military,
9 women veterans may "disappear" as they transition from the highly
10 structured military service environment to an unstructured, seemingly
11 under-resourced life in civilian society.
12 (4) Now, for the aforementioned reasons, the general assembly
13 creates the state women veterans office and the state women veterans
14 steering committee in the governor's office.

15 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** article 37.1 to
16 title 24 as follows:

17 **ARTICLE 37.1**

18 **State Women Veterans Office**

19 **24-37.1-101. State women veterans office - women veterans**
20 **steering committee - duties - report.** (1) THE STATE WOMEN VETERANS
21 OFFICE, REFERRED TO IN THIS SECTION AS THE "SWVO", IS CREATED IN
22 THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE TO ENSURE THAT COLORADO WOMEN VETERANS
23 HAVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO FEDERAL AND STATE VETERANS SERVICES
24 AND BENEFITS. THE GOVERNOR SHALL APPOINT A WOMEN VETERANS
25 SERVICE OFFICER TO ADMINISTER THE SWVO.

26 (2) THE STATE WOMEN VETERANS STEERING COMMITTEE IS
27 ESTABLISHED IN THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE TO IDENTIFY ISSUES AND

- 1 RECOMMEND ACTIONS TO THE SWVO CONCERNING:
- 2 (a) THE LOCATION OF THE SWVO; AND
- 3 (b) CRITERIA FOR HIRING THE WOMEN VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER.
- 4 (3) THE SWVO SHALL:
- 5 (a) PROVIDE SERVICES TO ENSURE THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
- 6 OF WOMEN VETERANS WHO RESIDE IN COLORADO;
- 7 (b) IDENTIFY AND DEFINE THE WOMEN VETERANS COMMUNITY
- 8 WITHIN THE STATE;
- 9 (c) UTILIZE EXISTING DATABASES TO LOCATE WOMEN VETERANS;
- 10 (d) UTILIZE THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM AND REGIONAL OFFICES OF
- 11 THE FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO LOCATE WOMEN
- 12 WHO RELOCATE TO COLORADO AFTER THEY ARE DISCHARGED FROM THE
- 13 MILITARY;
- 14 (e) REQUEST A COPY OF THE FEDERAL DD FORM 214 UPON THE
- 15 REQUEST OF ANY COLORADO WOMAN VETERAN;
- 16 (f) DEVELOP A STATE WOMEN VETERANS ASSOCIATION;
- 17 (g) ESTABLISH COMMUNICATIONS VIA MAIL, E-MAIL, OR OTHER
- 18 MEANS WITH EACH COLORADO WOMAN VETERAN WITHIN THIRTY DAYS OF
- 19 HER SEPARATION FROM THE ARMED FORCES;
- 20 (h) DEVELOP OUTREACH PROGRAMS TO HELP COLORADO WOMEN
- 21 VETERANS ACQUIRE STATE AND FEDERAL BENEFITS AND SERVICES;
- 22 (i) CONDUCT SURVEYS TO GATHER DATA CONCERNING
- 23 DEMOGRAPHICS, EMPLOYMENT, FAMILY SITUATIONS, HOUSING NEEDS, AND
- 24 WOMEN VETERANS' USE OR LACK OF USE OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT,
- 25 AND DISABILITY BENEFITS;
- 26 (j) DEVELOP PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND MEASUREMENT
- 27 PROCEDURES TO SUBSTANTIATE THE VIABILITY OF SWVO POSITIONS,

- 1 INCLUDING ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT;
- 2 (k) SOLICIT INPUT FROM VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS
3 WITHIN THE STATE;
- 4 (l) SERVE AS A LIAISON BETWEEN STATE AND FEDERAL VETERANS
5 SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES;
- 6 (m) DEVELOP A CLEARINGHOUSE OF INFORMATION AND
7 RESOURCES RELEVANT TO WOMEN VETERANS;
- 8 (n) DEVELOP POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO ADDRESS WOMEN
9 VETERANS ISSUES;
- 10 (o) DEVELOP RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO FACILITATE
11 NETWORKING WITHIN THE WOMEN VETERANS COMMUNITY;
- 12 (p) ESTABLISH A WOMEN VETERANS WEBSITE, BLOG, AND CHAT
13 ROOM FOR WOMEN VETERANS WITHIN THE WEBSITE OF THE GOVERNOR'S
14 OFFICE;
- 15 (q) CONDUCT OUTREACH ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE PUBLIC
16 RECOGNITION OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN VETERANS;
- 17 (r) FACILITATE NETWORKING BETWEEN WOMEN VETERANS,
18 VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS, LEGISLATORS, AND REGIONAL
19 OFFICES OF THE FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS WITHIN THE
20 STATE;
- 21 (s) PARTNER WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO HOLD INFORMATION
22 AND WELLNESS FAIRS;
- 23 (t) ADVOCATE FOR WOMEN VETERANS IN MATTERS PERTAINING TO
24 THE FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, THE FEDERAL
25 DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, AND STATE ENTITLEMENT ISSUES;
- 26 (u) REPRESENT WOMEN VETERANS ISSUES TO THE GENERAL
27 ASSEMBLY;

1 (v) SERVE AS A LIAISON TO THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC
2 DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE WITHIN THE GOVERNOR'S
3 OFFICE; SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS, AS DEFINED IN SECTION
4 24-48.5-121 (2)(f); PROCUREMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTERS, AS
5 DEFINED IN SECTION 24-48.5-121 (2)(d); MINORITY BUSINESS OFFICES;
6 AND OTHER STATE AGENCIES TO FOSTER WOMEN VETERAN-OWNED
7 BUSINESSES;

8 (w) PARTICIPATE IN WOMEN VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS
9 FOR WHICH THE OFFICE IS ELIGIBLE FOR PARTICIPATION;

10 (x) ENCOURAGE WOMEN TO JOIN WOMEN VETERANS SERVICE
11 ORGANIZATIONS FOR WHICH THEY ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE; AND

12 (y) FACILITATE COOPERATIVE NETWORKING BETWEEN LOCAL,
13 STATE, AND FEDERAL AGENCIES IN ALL MATTERS OF INTEREST TO WOMEN
14 VETERANS.

15 (4) THE WOMEN VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER APPOINTED
16 PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (1) OF THIS SECTION SHALL:

17 (a) ATTEND ANNUAL MEETINGS OF OTHER WOMEN VETERANS
18 AGENCIES TO LEARN ABOUT PERTINENT WOMEN VETERANS ISSUES,
19 ACTIVITIES, AND INITIATIVES IN OTHER STATES; AND

20 (b) MAINTAIN MEMBERSHIP IN ALL VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS FOR
21 WHICH HE OR SHE IS ELIGIBLE, USING THE SWVO AS THE MEMBERSHIP
22 ADDRESS. THE PURPOSE OF THIS REQUIREMENT IS TO ENSURE THE WOMEN
23 VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER REMAINS INFORMED CONCERNING VETERANS
24 ISSUES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL AS WELL AS THE STATE AND LOCAL
25 LEVELS.

26 (5) THE SWVO SHALL REPORT ANNUALLY TO THE STATE,
27 VETERANS, AND MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEES, OR ANY SUCCESSOR

1 COMMITTEES, OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE SENATE
2 CONCERNING THE SWVO'S PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES DURING THE
3 PRECEDING YEAR.

4 (6) THE SWVO MAY EXPEND MONEY FROM THE VETERANS
5 ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM CASH FUND CREATED IN SECTION 28-5-712
6 FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE SWVO.

7 **SECTION 3.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 28-5-712, **amend** (1)
8 introductory portion, (1)(d), (1)(e), (3)(b), and (3)(d); and **add** (1)(f) as
9 follows:

10 **28-5-712. Veterans assistance grant program - created - rules**
11 **- fund - repeal.** (1) There is hereby created in the division of veterans
12 affairs the veterans assistance grant program, referred to in this section as
13 the "program", to provide ~~moneys~~ MONEY to nonprofit organizations and
14 governmental agencies that provide services to ensure the health and
15 well-being of veterans of the United States armed forces who live in
16 Colorado, including but not limited to:

- 17 (d) Employment; ~~and~~
- 18 (e) Housing for homeless veterans; AND
- 19 (f) SERVICES CONSISTENT WITH THE PURPOSES OF THE STATE
20 WOMEN VETERANS OFFICE CREATED IN SECTION 24-37.1-101.

21 (3) (b) The ~~moneys~~ MONEY in the fund ~~are~~ IS subject to annual
22 appropriation to the division by the general assembly for the direct and
23 indirect costs associated with implementing the program AND THE STATE
24 WOMEN VETERANS OFFICE CREATED IN SECTION 24-37.1-101. The state
25 treasurer may invest any ~~moneys~~ MONEY in the fund not expended for the
26 purposes of this section OR SECTION 24-37.1-101 as provided by law. The
27 state treasurer shall credit any interest and income derived from the

1 deposit and investment of ~~moneys~~ MONEY in the fund to the fund. Any
2 unexpended and unencumbered ~~moneys~~ MONEY in the fund at the end of
3 a fiscal year ~~remain~~ REMAINS in the fund and shall not be credited to any
4 other fund; except that any ~~moneys~~ MONEY remaining in the fund on
5 September 1, 2024, shall be credited to the general fund.

6 (d) The division is authorized to accept gifts, grants, and
7 donations for the purposes described in this section AND SECTION
8 24-37.1-101. The division shall transfer each such gift, grant, and
9 donation to the state treasurer, who shall credit the same to the fund.

10 **SECTION 4. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act
11 takes effect September 1, 2018; except that, if a referendum petition is
12 filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the state constitution against
13 this act or an item, section, or part of this act within the ninety-day period
14 after final adjournment of the general assembly, then the act, item,
15 section, or part will not take effect unless approved by the people at the
16 general election to be held in November 2018 and, in such case, will take
17 effect on the date of the official declaration of the vote thereon by the
18 governor.