

Department of Planning and Budget 2009 Fiscal Impact Statement

1. Bill Number: HB2279

House of Origin X Introduced Substitute Engrossed

Second House In Committee Substitute Enrolled

2. Patron: Bowling

3. Committee: General Laws

4. Title: **Department of Veterans Services; Commissioner; benefit claims assistance.**

5. Summary: This bill requires the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services to ensure that benefit claims assistance is provided on a regular basis at locations other than established service offices. Current law specifies that the personnel assigned by the Commissioner to process benefit claims at locations other than the service office at least one day per week.

6. Fiscal impact estimates: Preliminary. See Item #8.

7. Budget amendment necessary: No.

8. Fiscal implications: This proposal gives the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) flexibility in determining the frequency of benefit claims assistance provided at locations other than agency service offices. Some itinerant service locations are very successful, while others are not. As a general rule, the most successful locations are those that are the furthest away from an agency service office or are in locations where large numbers of veterans may be found (veterans service organization posts, veterans treatment facilities, etc.). At these locations, a claims agent may serve as many as 20 veterans in a single day. Other itinerant service locations are less successful and a claims agent may help only one or two veterans.

DVS spends approximately \$36,000 per year in travel costs to meet the requirement that claims agents provide out-of-office service one day per week. It is anticipated that if the travel requirement is changed, travel will be reduced by approximately 20 percent, resulting in a cost avoidance of approximately \$7,000 per year. The agency can apply the savings to other benefit claims needs, such as bolstering assistance to veterans in the Shenandoah Valley region, increasing outreach efforts, or providing enhanced training for claims agents.

9. Specific agency or political subdivisions affected: Department of Veterans Services.

10. Technical amendment necessary: No.

11. Other comments: None.

Date: 1/23/09/jlv

Document: G:\08-10\09 FIS\HB2279.Doc Janet Vogelgesang

cc: Secretary of Public Safety