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**HOUSE BILL NO. 240**

Offered January 13, 2016

Prefiled December 29, 2015

*A BILL to amend and reenact § 2.2-231 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs; assistance to homeless veterans.*

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Patrons—Lingamfelter and Anderson

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Referred to Committee on General Laws**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:****1. That § 2.2-231 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 2.2-231. Powers and duties of the Secretary.**

Unless the Governor expressly reserves such power to himself, the Secretary shall:

1. Serve as the Governor's liaison for veterans affairs and provide active outreach to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the veterans service organizations, and the veterans community in Virginia to support and assist Virginia's veterans in identifying and obtaining the services, assistance, and support to which they are entitled.

2. Work with federal officials to obtain additional federal resources and coordinate veterans policy development and information exchange.

3. Work with and through appropriate members of the Governor's Cabinet to coordinate working relationships between state agencies and take all actions necessary to ensure that available federal and state resources are directed toward assisting veterans and addressing all issues of mutual concern to the Commonwealth and the armed forces of the United States, including quality of life issues unique to Virginia's active duty military personnel and their families, the quality of educational opportunities for military children, the future of federal impact aid, preparedness, public safety and security concerns, transportation needs, alcoholic beverage law enforcement, substance abuse, social service needs, possible expansion and growth of military facilities in the Commonwealth, and intergovernmental support agreements with state and local governments under the provisions of 10 U.S.C. § 2336.

4. Educate the public on veterans and defense issues in coordination with applicable state agencies.

5. Serve as chairman of the Virginia Military Advisory Council to establish a working relationship with Virginia's active duty military bases.

6. Monitor and enhance efforts to provide assistance and support for veterans living in Virginia and members of the Virginia National Guard and Virginia residents in the Armed Forces Reserves not in active federal service in the areas of (i) medical care, (ii) mental health and rehabilitative services, (iii) housing, (iv) homelessness prevention, (v) job creation, and (vi) education.

7. Seek additional federal resources to support veterans services.

8. Monitor efforts to provide services to veterans, those members of the Virginia National Guard, and Virginia residents in the Armed Forces Reserves who qualify for veteran status, and their immediate family members, including the dissemination of relevant materials and the rendering of technical or other advice.

9. Serve as the Governor's liaison and provide active outreach to localities of the Commonwealth and veterans support organizations in the development, implementation, and review of local veterans services programs as part of the state program.

10. Serve as the Governor's defense liaison and provide active outreach to the U.S. Department of Defense and the defense establishment in Virginia to support the military installations and activities in the Commonwealth to continue to enhance Virginia's current military-friendly environment, and foster and promote business, technology, transportation, education, economic development, and other efforts in support of the mission, execution, and transformation of the United States government military and national defense activities located in the Commonwealth.

11. Promote the industrial and economic development of localities included in or adjacent to United States government military and other national defense activities and those of the Commonwealth because the success of such activities depends on cooperation between the localities, the Commonwealth, and the United States military and national defense activities.

12. Provide technical assistance and coordination between the Commonwealth, its political subdivisions, and the United States government military and national defense activities located within the Commonwealth.

13. Employ, as needed, consultants, attorneys, architects, engineers, accountants, financial experts, investment bankers, superintendents, managers, and such other employees and agents as may be

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59 necessary, and to fix their compensation to be payable from funds made available for that purpose.

60 14. Receive and accept from any federal or private agency, foundation, corporation, association, or  
61 person grants, donations of money, real property, or personal property for the benefit of the  
62 Commonwealth and receive and accept from the Commonwealth or any state, any municipality, county,  
63 or other political subdivision thereof, and from any other source, aid or contributions of money,  
64 property, or other things of value, to be held, used, and applied for the purposes for which such grants  
65 and contributions may be made.

66 15. Receive and accept from any source aid, grants, and contributions of money, property, labor, or  
67 other things of value to be held, used, and applied to carry out these requirements subject to the  
68 conditions upon which the aid, grants, or contributions are made.

69 16. Make grants to local governments, state and federal agencies, and private entities with any funds  
70 of the Secretary available for such purpose.

71 17. Take any actions necessary or convenient to the exercise of the powers granted or reasonably  
72 implied to this Secretary and not otherwise inconsistent with the law of the Commonwealth.

73 18. Work with veterans services organizations and counterparts in other states to monitor and  
74 encourage the timely and accurate processing of veterans benefit requests by the U.S. Department of  
75 Veterans Affairs, including requests for services connected to health care, mental health care, and  
76 disability payments.

77 19. *Initiate, in conjunction with subdivision 6, an enhanced system to help homeless veterans obtain*  
78 *proper identification to ensure that they receive the care to which they are entitled. Such system shall*  
79 *include a formalized approach to identify communities where homelessness for veterans is prevalent and*  
80 *focus outreach efforts in such communities to properly document homeless veterans to ensure that they*  
81 *receive the federal and state services they need to get back on track financially or recover from other*  
82 *problems that have adversely affected their lives.*