

CHAPTER 24**(SB 128)**

AN ACT relating to women veterans.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

➔Section 1. KRS 40.600 is amended to read as follows:

- (1) The Kentucky Women Veterans Program is hereby created in the Kentucky Department of Veterans' Affairs and shall be attached to the office of the commissioner for administrative purposes. The commissioner shall designate a Women Veterans Coordinator for the Commonwealth. The Kentucky Women Veterans Program shall:
 - (a) Perform outreach to improve women veterans' awareness of eligibility for federal and state veterans' services and benefits;
 - (b) Assess the needs of women veterans with respect to benefits and services;
 - (c) Review programs, research projects, and other initiatives designed to address or meet the needs of Kentucky's women veterans;
 - (d) Make recommendations to the commissioner to improve benefits and services; and
 - (e) Incorporate women veterans' issues in strategic planning concerning benefits and services.
- (2) The mission of the Kentucky Women Veterans Program shall be to ensure that Kentucky women veterans have equitable access to federal and state veterans' services and benefits.
- (3) The program shall provide assistance to women who served in the United States Armed Forces or in forces incorporated as part of the United States Armed Forces, and who were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.
- (4) The primary components of the program shall be:
 - (a) Advocacy and Public Awareness. The program shall advocate for women veterans and shall work to increase public awareness about the gender specific needs of women veterans. The program shall advocate legislation and policies on the local, state, and national levels to address these issues;
 - (b) Collaboration. The program shall collaborate with federal, state, and private agencies that provide services to women veterans;
 - (c) Research and information dissemination. The program shall monitor and research issues relating to women veterans and disseminate information and opportunities throughout its network;
 - (d) Education. The program, through conferences, seminars, and training workshops with federal, state, and private agencies, shall provide guidance and direction to a woman veteran applying for grants, benefits, or services;
 - (e) Honor and Recognition. The program shall promote events and activities that recognize and honor military women; and
 - (f) Facilities. The program, through grants and other sources of funding, shall provide facilities as appropriate in support of the program.
- (5) A Women Veterans Coordinating Committee shall be established. The committee's membership shall be composed of representatives of government, public, and private agencies that provide grants, benefits, or services to women veterans. The commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Veterans' Affairs shall designate the agencies represented on the committee. However, the President of the Kentucky Senate shall appoint a Senator to the committee, and the Speaker of the Kentucky House of Representatives shall appoint a Representative. The committee shall:
 - (a) Actively pursue the mission of the Kentucky Women Veterans Program;
 - (b) Identify policies, practices, programs, and related activities that are unresponsive or insensitive to the needs of women veterans; and
 - (c) Recommend changes, revisions, and new initiatives to address identified deficiencies.

- (6) The program is authorized to accept and expend:
- (a) Moneys that may be appropriated by the General Assembly; and
 - (b) Other moneys received from any other source, including donations and grants.
- (7) *The Department of Veterans' Affairs may promulgate administrative regulations to carry out the provisions of this section.*

Signed by Governor April 1, 2016.