Chapter 43.60A RCW
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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Veterans and veterans' affairs: Title 73 RCW.

RCW 43.60A.010 Definitions. As used in this chapter the following words and phrases shall have the following meanings unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

(1) "Committee" means the veterans affairs advisory committee.

(2) "Department" means the department of veterans affairs.

(3) "Director" means the director of the department of veterans affairs.

(4) "Goods and services" includes professional services and all other goods and services.

(5) "Procurement" means the purchase, lease, or rental of any goods or services.

(6) "State agency" includes the state of Washington and all agencies, departments, offices, divisions, boards, commissions, and correctional and other types of institutions.

(7) "Veteran-owned business" means a business that is certified by the department to be at least fifty-one percent owned and controlled by:

(a) A veteran as defined in RCW 41.04.007; or

(b) An active or reserve member in any branch of the armed forces of the United States, including the national guard, coast guard, and armed forces reserves. [2010 1st sp.s. c 7 s 117; 2010 c 5 s 2; 2006 c 343 s 2; 1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 115 s 1.]

Reviser's note: (1) The definitions in this section have been alphabetized pursuant to RCW 1.08.015(2)(k).

(2) This section was amended by 2010 c 5 s 2 and by 2010 1st sp.s. c 7 s 117, each without reference to the other. Both amendments are incorporated in the publication of this section under RCW 1.12.025(2). For rule of construction, see RCW 1.12.025(1).

Effective date—2010 1st sp.s. c 26; 2010 1st sp.s. c 7: See note following RCW 43.03.027.

Purpose—2010 c 5: "The legislature recognizes the unique sacrifices made by veterans and the substantial challenges that returning veterans face after a period of military duty away from home. The legislature further recognizes that veterans who own private businesses may face particular hardships as a direct result of their military service. The purpose of this act is to mitigate economic damage to veteran-owned businesses as a result of military service, and to provide opportunities to them in recognition of the outstanding service they have given to their country." [2010 c 5 s 1.]

Construction—2010 c 5: "This act is not intended to create a cause of action or entitlement in an individual or class of individuals." [2010 c 5 s 12.]

Findings—2006 c 343: See note following RCW 43.60A.160.

RCW 43.60A.020 Department created—Powers, duties, and functions. There is hereby created a department of state government to be known as the department of veterans affairs. Powers, duties, and functions to be vested in the department shall include, but not be limited to, all those powers, duties, and functions involving cooperation with other governmental units, such as cities and counties, or with the federal government, in particular those concerned with participation in federal grants-in-aid programs relating to veterans and veteran affairs. [2017 c 185 s 1; 1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 115 s 2.]

RCW 43.60A.030 Director—Qualifications—Salary—Vacancy. The executive head and appointing authority of the department shall be the director of veterans affairs. The director shall be an honorably discharged or retired veteran of the armed forces of the United States and shall be appointed by the governor with the consent of the senate and shall serve at the pleasure of the governor. The director shall be paid a salary to be fixed by the governor in accordance with the provisions of RCW 43.03.040. If a vacancy occurs in the position of director while the senate is not in session, the governor shall make a temporary appointment until the next meeting of the senate, when the governor shall present the nomination for the office to that body. [1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 115 s 3.]

RCW 43.60A.040 General powers and duties of director. The director of the department of veterans affairs shall have the power and it shall be the director's duty:

(1) To conduct, control, and supervise the department;

(2) To appoint and employ and to determine the powers and duties together with the salaries and other expenses of such clerical and other personnel, subject to the provisions of chapter 41.06 RCW, as are necessary to carry out the duties of the department; and

(3) To perform all other matters and things, whether similar to the foregoing or not, to carry out the provisions of this chapter. [1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 115 s 4.]

RCW 43.60A.050 Deputy director—Assistant directors. The director may appoint a deputy director and assistant directors as shall be needed to administer the department, all of whom shall be veterans. The deputy shall have charge and general supervision of the department in the absence or disability of the director, and in case of a vacancy in the office of director, shall continue in charge of the department until a successor is appointed and qualified, or until the governor shall appoint an acting director. [2018 c 45 s 2; 1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 115 s 5.]

Certain personnel of department exempted from state civil service law: RCW 41.06.077.

RCW 43.60A.060 Delegation of powers and duties. The director may delegate any power or duty vested in or transferred to the director by law or executive order to a deputy director or to any other assistant or subordinate, but the director shall be responsible for the official acts of the officers and employees of the department. [1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 115 s 6.]

RCW 43.60A.070 Additional powers and duties of director. In addition to other powers and duties, the director is authorized:

(1) To cooperate with officers and agencies of the United States in all matters affecting veterans affairs;

(2) To accept grants, donations, and gifts on behalf of this state for veterans affairs from any person, corporation, government, or governmental agency, made for the benefit of a former member of the armed forces of this or any other country;

(3) To be custodian of all the records and files of the selective service system in Washington that may be turned over to this state by the United States or any department, bureau, or agency thereof; and to adopt and promulgate such rules and regulations as may be necessary for the preservation of such records and the proper use thereof in keeping with their confidential nature;

(4) To act without bond as conservator of the estate of a beneficiary of the veterans administration when the director determines no other suitable person will so act;

(5) To extend on behalf of the state of Washington such assistance as the director shall determine to be reasonably required to any veteran and to the dependents of any such veteran;

(6) To adopt rules pursuant to chapter 34.05 RCW, the Administrative Procedure Act, with respect to all matters of administration to carry into effect the purposes of this section. Such proposed rules shall be submitted by the department at the time of filing notice with the code reviser as required by RCW 34.05.320 to the respective legislative committees of the senate and of the house of representatives dealing with the subject of veteran affairs legislation through the offices of the secretary of the senate and chief clerk of the house of representatives. [1989 c 175 s 108; 1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 115 s 8.]

Effective date—1989 c 175: See note following RCW 34.05.010.

RCW 43.60A.075 Powers as to state veterans' homes. The director of the department of veterans affairs shall have full power to manage and govern the state soldiers' home and colony, the Washington veterans' home, the eastern Washington veterans' home, and the Walla Walla veterans' home. [2014 c 184 s 8; 2001 2nd sp.s. c 4 s 7; 1977 c 31 s 5.]

RCW 43.60A.080 Veterans affairs advisory committee—Created—Membership—Terms—Powers and duties. (1) There is hereby created a veterans affairs advisory committee which shall serve in an advisory capacity to the governor and the director of the department of veterans affairs. The committee shall appoint members to serve as liaisons to each of the state veterans' homes, unless the home has a representative appointed to the committee. This liaison must share information on committee meetings and business with the resident council of the state's veterans' homes, as well as bring information back for the committee's consideration to ensure veterans' home resident issues are included at regular committee meetings. The committee shall be composed of seventeen members to be appointed by the governor, and shall consist of the following:

(a) Two representatives of the state veterans' homes identified in RCW 43.60A.075. Each home's resident council may nominate up to three individuals whose names are to be forwarded by the director to the governor. In making the appointments, the governor shall consider these recommendations or request additional nominations. If there are no homes nominations, the governor may appoint a member at large in place of a home's representative.

(b) One representative each from the three congressionally chartered or nationally recognized veterans service organizations as listed in the current "Directory of Veterans Service Organizations" published by the United States department of veterans affairs with the largest number of active members in the state of Washington as determined by the director. The organizations' state commanders may each submit a list of three names to be forwarded to the governor by the director. In making the appointments, the governor shall consider these recommendations or request additional nominations.

(c) Six members shall be chosen to represent those congressionally chartered or nationally recognized veterans service organizations listed in the directory under (b) of this subsection and having at least one active chapter within the state of Washington. Up to three nominations may be forwarded from each organization to the governor by the director. In making the appointments, the governor shall consider these recommendations or request additional nominations.

(d) Six members shall be veterans at large, as well as any other at large member appointed pursuant to (a) of this subsection. Any individual or organization may nominate a veteran for an at large position. Organizational affiliation shall not be a prerequisite for nomination or appointment. All nominations for the at large positions shall be forwarded by the director to the governor.

(e) No organization shall have more than one official representative on the committee at any one time.

(f) In making appointments to the committee, care shall be taken to ensure that members represent all geographical portions of the state, minority viewpoints, military experiences, and personal

attributes, and that the issues and views of concern to women veterans are represented.

(2) All members shall have terms of four years. In the case of a vacancy, appointment shall be only for the remainder of the unexpired term for which the vacancy occurs. No member may serve more than two consecutive terms, with vacancy appointments to an unexpired term not considered as a term.

(3) The committee shall adopt an order of business for conducting its meetings.

(4) The committee shall have the following powers and duties:

(a) To serve in an advisory capacity to the governor and the director on matters pertaining to the department of veterans affairs;

(b) To acquaint themselves fully with the operations of the department and recommend such changes to the governor and the director as they deem advisable.

(5) Members of the committee shall receive no compensation for the performance of their duties but shall receive a per diem allowance and mileage expense according to the provisions of chapter 43.03 RCW. [2026 c 5 s 1; 2015 c 219 s 1; 1995 c 25 s 1; 1992 c 35 s 1; 1987 c 59 s 1; 1985 c 63 s 1; 1983 c 34 s 1; 1977 ex.s. c 285 s 1; 1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 115 s 14.]

RCW 43.60A.100 Counseling services—Veterans, including national guard and reservists. The department of veterans affairs, to the extent funds are made available, shall: (1) Contract with professional counseling specialists to provide a range of direct treatment services to state veterans, including national guard and reservists, with military-related mental health needs, and their family members; (2) provide additional treatment services to Washington state Vietnam veterans for posttraumatic stress disorder, particularly for those veterans whose posttraumatic stress disorder has intensified or initially emerged due to war or combat-related stress; (3) provide an educational program designed to train primary care professionals, such as mental health professionals, about the effects of war-related stress, trauma, and traumatic brain injury; (4) provide informational and counseling services for the purpose of establishing and fostering peer-support networks throughout the state for families of deployed members of the reserves and the Washington national guard; (5) provide for veterans' families, a referral network of community mental health providers who are skilled in treating deployment stress, combat stress, posttraumatic stress, traumatic brain injury; and (6) offer training and support for volunteers interested in providing peer-to-peer support to other veterans. [2018 c 45 s 1. Prior: 2017 c 192 s 2; 2017 c 185 s 2; 1991 c 55 s 1.]

Findings—2017 c 192: "The legislature finds that:

(1) Veterans are national heroes who have made great sacrifices in their lives for the protection of our nation;

(2) Due to the relatively high number of military installations in our state, as well as the standard of living in our state, many veterans choose to live in Washington;

(3) Many veterans have a need for support services, including peer-to-peer counseling services. Some veterans need to talk about their experiences with combat, deployment, or other situations experienced during their time in the military. Often, there is no

person better prepared to speak with a veteran about his or her experiences than another veteran;

(4) In 2009, the state of Texas created an award winning peer-to-peer counseling network, called the military veteran peer network. On a voluntary basis, veterans elect to receive specialized training about the facilitation of group counseling sessions. After receiving their training, the volunteers create peer-to-peer support groups in their local communities;

(5) Veterans living in Washington would benefit from a program that is similar to the military veteran peer network." [2017 c 192 s 1.]

Findings—2017 c 192: See note following RCW 43.41.460.

RCW 43.60A.110 Counseling—Coordination of programs. The department shall coordinate the programs contained in RCW 43.60A.100 with the services offered by the department of social and health services, local mental health organizations, and the federal department of veterans affairs to minimize duplication. [1991 c 55 s 2.]

RCW 43.60A.120 Counseling—Priority. The department of veterans affairs shall give priority in its counseling and instructional programs to treating state veterans located in rural areas of the state, especially those who are members of traditionally underserved minority groups, and women veterans. [1991 c 55 s 3.]

RCW 43.60A.130 Counseling—Posttraumatic stress disorder and combat stress program. The department of veterans affairs shall design its posttraumatic stress disorder and combat stress programs and related activities to provide veterans with as much privacy and confidentiality as possible and yet consistent with sound program management. [1991 c 55 s 4.]

RCW 43.60A.140 Veterans stewardship account. (1) The veterans stewardship account is created in the custody of the state treasurer. Disbursements of funds must be on the authorization of the director or the director's designee, and only for the purposes stated in subsection (4) of this section. In order to maintain an effective expenditure and revenue control, funds are subject in all respects to chapter 43.88 RCW, but no appropriation is required to permit expenditure of the funds.

(2) The department may request and accept nondedicated contributions, grants, or gifts in cash or otherwise, including funds generated by the issuance of the armed forces license plate collection and the United States Naval Academy license plate under chapter 46.18 RCW.

(3) All receipts from the sale of armed forces license plates, United States Naval Academy license plates, and Purple Heart license plates as required under RCW 46.68.425(2) must be deposited into the veterans stewardship account.

(4) All moneys deposited into the veterans stewardship account must be used by the department for activities that benefit veterans or their families, including but not limited to, providing programs and services for homeless veterans; establishing memorials honoring veterans; and maintaining state veterans' cemeteries. Funds from the account may not be used to supplant existing funds received by the department. [2025 c 385 s 8; 2023 c 327 s 2; 2019 c 415 s 965; 2016 c 31 s 4; 2010 c 161 s 1106; 2008 c 183 s 3; 2005 c 216 s 4.]

Effective date—2025 c 385 ss 3-24: See note following RCW 44.04.300.

Short title—2025 c 385: See note following RCW 46.18.060.

Effective date—2019 c 415: See note following RCW 28B.20.476.

Effective date—2016 c 31: See note following RCW 46.18.280.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 43.60A.150 Veterans conservation corps—Created. (1) The Washington veterans conservation corps is created. The department shall establish enrollment procedures for the program. Enrollees may choose to participate in either or both the volunteer projects list authorized in subsection (2) of this section, and the training, certification, ecotherapy, and placement program authorized in RCW 43.60A.151.

(2) The department shall create a list of veterans who are interested in working on projects that restore Washington's natural habitat. The department shall promote the opportunity to volunteer for the veterans conservation corps through its local counselors and representatives. Only veterans who grant their approval may be included on the list. The department shall consult with the salmon recovery board, the recreation and conservation funding board, the department of natural resources, the department of fish and wildlife, the department of agriculture, conservation districts, and the state parks and recreation commission to determine the most effective ways to market the veterans conservation corps to agencies and natural resource partners. [2017 c 185 s 3. Prior: 2007 c 451 s 2; 2007 c 241 s 6; 2005 c 257 s 2.]

Intent—Effective date—2007 c 241: See notes following RCW 79A.25.005.

Findings—Purpose—2005 c 257: "The legislature finds that many Washington citizens are veterans of armed forces conflicts that have important skills that may be employed in projects that help to protect and restore Washington's rivers, streams, lakes, marine waters, and open lands, and help to maintain urban and suburban wastewater and stormwater management systems. The legislature further finds that such work has demonstrated benefits for many veterans who are coping with posttraumatic stress disorder or have other mental health or substance abuse disorders related to their service in the armed forces. The

legislature further finds that these projects provide an opportunity for veterans to obtain on-the-job training, leading to certification in specific skill sets and to living wage employment in environmental restoration and stewardship. Therefore, it is the purpose of this chapter to create the veterans conservation corps program to assist veterans in obtaining training, certification, and employment in the field of environmental restoration and management, and to provide state funding assistance for projects that restore Washington's waters, forests, and habitat through the participation of veterans." [2007 c 451 s 1; 2005 c 257 s 1.]

RCW 43.60A.151 Veterans conservation corps—Employment assistance—Agreements for educational benefits—Receipt of gifts, grants, or federal moneys. (1) The department shall assist veterans enrolled in the veterans conservation corps with obtaining employment in conservation programs and projects that restore Washington's natural habitat, maintain and steward local, state, and federal forestlands and other outdoor lands, maintain and improve urban and suburban stormwater management facilities and other water management facilities, and other environmental maintenance, stewardship, and restoration projects. The department shall consult with the workforce training and education coordinating board, the state board for community and technical colleges, the employment security department, and other state agencies administering conservation corps programs, to incorporate training, education, ecotherapy, and certification in environmental restoration and management fields into the program. The department may enter into agreements with community colleges, private schools, conservation districts, state or local agencies, or other entities to provide training, internships, and educational courses as part of the enrollee benefits from the program.

(2) The department may receive gifts, grants, federal funds, or other moneys from public or private sources, for the use and benefit of the veterans conservation corps program. The funds shall be deposited to the veterans conservation corps account created in *RCW 43.60A.153. [2017 c 185 s 4; 2012 c 229 s 820; 2007 c 451 s 3.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 43.60A.153 was repealed by 2022 c 157 s 23.

Effective date—2012 c 229 ss 101, 117, 401, 402, 501 through 594, 601 through 609, 701 through 708, 801 through 821, 902, and 904: See note following RCW 28B.77.005.

RCW 43.60A.152 Collaboration with departments implementing the Washington conservation corps. The department shall collaborate with the department of ecology and the department of natural resources and any of its partnering agencies in implementing the Washington conservation corps, created in chapter 43.220 RCW, to maximize the utilization of both conservation corps programs. These agencies shall work together to identify stewardship and maintenance projects on public lands that are suitable for work by veterans conservation corps enrollees. The department may expend funds appropriated to the veterans conservation corps program to defray the costs of education, training, and certification associated with the enrollees participating in such projects. [2011 c 20 s 13; 2007 c 451 s 5.]

Findings—Intent—2011 c 20: See note following RCW 43.220.020.

Intent—Application—2011 c 20: See RCW 43.220.905.

RCW 43.60A.154 Agreements with federal entities for projects. The department shall seek to enter agreements with the bureau of land management, the national park service, the United States forest service, the United States fish and wildlife service, and other federal agencies managing lands or waterways in Washington, for the employment of veterans conservation corps enrollees in maintenance, restoration, and stewardship projects. [2017 c 185 s 5; 2007 c 451 s 7.]

RCW 43.60A.155 Cooperation with the salmon recovery funding board regarding project work. The salmon recovery funding board shall cooperate with the department of veterans affairs to inform salmon habitat project sponsors of the availability of veterans conservation corps enrollees to perform project work. From applications submitted, the board and the department shall identify projects that propose work suitable for corps enrollees and located near where enrollees are based or may be created. The department may provide the project applicants with information regarding the benefits of employing a veterans conservation corps enrollee in the project, as well as training to increase the success of hiring a veteran. [2017 c 185 s 6; 2007 c 451 s 8.]

RCW 43.60A.160 Veterans innovations program. (1) There is created in the department a veterans innovations program. The purpose of the veterans innovations program is to provide crisis and emergency relief and education, training, and employment assistance to veterans and their families in their communities.

(2) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for the specific purposes provided in this section, the department must:

(a) Establish a process to make veterans and those still serving in the national guard or armed forces reserve aware of the veterans innovations program;

(b) Develop partnerships to assist veterans, national guard, or reservists in completing the veterans innovations program application; and

(c) Provide funding to support eligible veterans, national guard members, or armed forces reserves for:

(i) Crisis and emergency relief; and

(ii) Education, training, and employment assistance. [2014 c 179 s 1; 2006 c 343 s 3.]

Findings—2006 c 343: "The legislature finds that:

(1) A significant number of Washington citizens answered the call to serve our country in recent military action leaving behind families, community, employment, and education;

(2) Many soldiers returning to their families and communities face transition problems in areas such as family reunification, employment, education, and health;

(3) While the Washington state department of veterans affairs has provided services to many returning soldiers, a significant number have returned to families and communities without continuing ties to the military department or veterans' administration, but still in need of help; and

(4) Our state needs to honor and serve those who have protected our security and safety." [2006 c 343 s 1.]

RCW 43.60A.175 Receipt of gifts, grants, or endowments—Rule-making authority. (1) The department may receive gifts, grants, or endowments from public or private sources that are made from time to time, in trust or otherwise, for the use and benefit of the purposes of the veterans innovations program and spend gifts, grants, or endowments or income from the public or private sources according to their terms, unless the receipt of the gifts, grants, or endowments violates RCW 29B.45.020.

(2) The department may adopt rules under chapter 34.05 RCW as necessary to carry out the purposes of RCW 43.60A.160 through 43.60A.185.

(3) The department may perform all acts and functions as necessary or convenient to carry out the powers expressly granted or implied under chapter 343, Laws of 2006. [2024 c 164 s 524; 2014 c 179 s 2; 2011 c 60 s 37; 2006 c 343 s 6.]

Intent—Construction—Rules remain valid—Effective date—2024 c 164: See notes following RCW 29B.10.010.

Effective date—2011 c 60: See note following RCW 29B.20.030.

Findings—2006 c 343: See note following RCW 43.60A.160.

RCW 43.60A.185 Veterans innovations program account. The veterans innovations program account is created in the state treasury. Moneys in the account may be spent only after appropriation. Expenditures from the account may be used only for purposes of the veterans innovations program. [2014 c 179 s 3; 2010 1st sp.s. c 37 s 924; 2006 c 343 s 8.]

Effective date—2010 1st sp.s. c 37: See note following RCW 13.06.050.

Findings—2006 c 343: See note following RCW 43.60A.160.

RCW 43.60A.190 Certified veteran-owned businesses. (1) The department shall:

(a) Maintain a current list of certified veteran-owned businesses; and

(b) Make the list of certified veteran-owned businesses available on the department's public website.

(2) To qualify as a certified veteran-owned business, the business must:

(a) Be at least fifty-one percent owned and controlled by:

(i) A person who at the time he or she seeks certification is a veteran as defined in RCW 41.04.007;

(ii) A person who is in receipt of disability compensation or pension from the department of veterans affairs; or

(iii) An active or reserve member in any branch of the armed forces of the United States, including the national guard, coast guard, and armed forces reserves; and

(b) Be either an enterprise which is incorporated in the state of Washington as a Washington domestic corporation, or an enterprise whose principal place of business is located within the state of Washington for enterprises which are not incorporated.

(3) To participate in the linked deposit program under chapter 43.86A RCW, a veteran-owned business qualified under this section must be certified by the department as a business:

(a) In which the veteran owner possesses and exercises sufficient expertise specifically in the business's field of operation to make decisions governing the long-term direction and the day-to-day operations of the business;

(b) That is organized for profit and performing a commercially useful function; and

(c) That meets the criteria for a small business concern as established under chapter 39.19 RCW.

(4) The department shall create a logo for the purpose of identifying veteran-owned businesses to the public. The department shall put the logo on an adhesive sticker or decal suitable for display in a business window and distribute the stickers or decals to veteran-owned businesses listed with the department.

(5)(a) Businesses may submit an application on a form prescribed by the department to apply for certification under this section.

(b) The department must notify the state treasurer of veteran-owned businesses who have participated in the linked deposit program and are no longer certified under this section. The written notification to the state treasurer must contain information regarding the reasons for the decertification and information on financing provided to the veteran-owned business under RCW 43.86A.060.

(6) The department may adopt rules necessary to implement this section. [2024 c 146 s 22; 2017 c 185 s 7; 2014 c 182 s 1; 2008 c 187 s 1; 2007 c 11 s 1.]

Intent—2024 c 146: See note following RCW 73.04.005.

RCW 43.60A.195 Veteran-owned business certification—Rules—Outreach. (1) The department shall develop a procedure for certifying veteran-owned businesses and maintain a list of veteran-owned businesses on the department's public website.

(2) The department shall adopt rules necessary to implement chapter 5, Laws of 2010. The department shall consult agencies to determine what specific information they must report to the department.

(3) The department shall collaborate with and may assist agencies in implementing outreach to veteran-owned businesses. [2010 c 5 s 3.]

Purpose—Construction—2010 c 5: See notes following RCW 43.60A.010.

RCW 43.60A.200 Awards of procurement contracts by state agencies to veteran-owned businesses. (1) State agencies are encouraged to award three percent of all procurement contracts that are exempt from competitive bidding requirements under *RCW 43.19.1906(2) to veteran-owned businesses certified by the department under RCW 43.60A.195.

(2) State agencies shall:

(a) Perform outreach to veteran-owned businesses in collaboration with the department to increase opportunities for veteran-owned businesses to sell goods and services to the state; and

(b) Work to match agency procurement records with the department's database of certified veteran-owned businesses to establish how many procurement contracts are being awarded to those businesses. [2010 c 5 s 4.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 43.19.1906 was repealed by 2012 c 224 s 29, effective January 1, 2013.

Purpose—Construction—2010 c 5: See notes following RCW 43.60A.010.

RCW 43.60A.210 Donations to disabled veterans assistance account. Any retailer in the state may provide an opportunity for patrons to make voluntary donations to the disabled veterans assistance account created in RCW 43.60A.215 on Veterans Day and any additional days the retailer decides would be appropriate. [2010 c 90 s 1.]

RCW 43.60A.215 Disabled veterans assistance account. (1) The disabled veterans assistance account is created in the custody of the state treasurer. Disbursements of funds must be on the authorization of the director or the director's designee, and only for the purposes stated in subsection (4) of this section. In order to maintain an effective expenditure and revenue control, funds are subject in all respects to chapter 43.88 RCW, but an appropriation is not required to permit the expenditure of the funds.

(2) The department may request and accept nondedicated contributions, grants, or gifts in cash or otherwise, including funds generated by voluntary donations under RCW 43.60A.210.

(3) All receipts from voluntary donations under RCW 43.60A.210 must be deposited into the account.

(4) All moneys deposited into the account must be used by the department for activities that benefit veterans including, but not limited to, providing programs and services that assist veterans with the procurement of durable medical equipment, mobility enhancing equipment, emergency home or vehicle repair, emergency food or emergency shelter, or service animals. The first priority for assistance provided through the account must be given to veterans who are experiencing a financial hardship and do not qualify for other federal or state veterans programs and services. Funds from the account may not be used to supplant existing funds received by the department.

(5) For the purposes of this section, "veteran" has the same meaning as in RCW 41.04.005 and 41.04.007, and also means an actively serving member of the national guard or reserves, or is active duty military personnel. [2010 c 90 s 2.]

RCW 43.60A.220 Helmets to hardhats program. The coordinator for the helmets to hardhats program is created in the department of veterans affairs, subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose. The department shall establish procedures for coordinating with the national helmets to hardhats program and other opportunities for veterans to obtain skilled training and employment in the construction industry. [2015 c 216 s 1.]

RCW 43.60A.225 Provision of information about benefits and services—Reports. ***(Effective July 1, 2028.)*** The department must support veterans by providing information regarding available veterans services. Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for the specific purposes provided in this section, the department must:

(1) Contact veterans within 90 days of receipt of a discharge notice from the department of defense and provide information about veterans benefits and services; and

(2) Beginning December 1, 2028, and every two years thereafter, report to the governor and the appropriate standing committees of the legislature regarding veterans services. The report must include, at a minimum:

(a) The number of veterans residing in each county;

(b) The number and type of veterans services available in each county;

(c) The number of veterans served in the reporting period by the department, veterans service officer program, and counties contracting with the department for veterans services, including the number of veterans served who reside in an adjacent county;

(d) The number of claims filed in the reporting period by veterans service organizations contracting with the department;

(e) The percentage of veterans served in the reporting period who received service-related disability and nonservice-connected veterans' pensions; and

(f) Identification of:

(i) Each county where the percentage of the veteran population receiving service-related disability and nonservice-connected veterans' pensions is below the national average; and

(ii) Each county that does not provide access to a veterans service officer through the veterans' assistance program defined in RCW 73.08.005, through a contract with the department, through the veterans service officer program described in RCW 43.60A.230, or directly through the department. [2025 c 294 s 2.]

Findings—Intent—2025 c 294: "The legislature finds that veterans are eligible for state and federal benefits, but may be unaware of those benefits or the process to apply for them. Veterans service officers serve a critical role in assisting veterans and their families with identifying and applying for federal benefits, including health care, service-connected disability, nonservice-connected pension, employment, education, housing, burial, and survival benefits. The federal department of veterans affairs provides over $6.5 billion per year in benefits to veterans in Washington. The average veteran receiving service-connected disability compensation benefits receives over $1,700 per month.

The legislature further finds that nationwide, approximately 32 percent of veterans receive federal disability compensation.

Washington currently has approximately 530,000 resident veterans, but only 158,000 veterans are receiving federal benefits. Currently, veterans in 15 Washington counties receive benefits at or above the national average, 21 counties are within 10 percent of the national average, and three counties are more than 10 percent below the national average.

Therefore, the legislature intends to expand the veterans service officer program started in 2019 to increase the number of veterans applying for and receiving federal benefits. The program's first veterans service officer assisting veterans in the identification of benefits and filing of claims increased the number of veterans applying for benefits from 13 in the first year to 323 in the third year, and from no annual disability payments to $2,696,524 in federal benefits each year. The Washington state department of veterans affairs' September 30, 2024, veterans service officer program report estimates the cost to expand the program is $160,000 per year for each additional county. The legislature intends to expand the program by one to two veterans service officers per biennium beginning with the counties with the lowest percentage of benefits received, until all counties are at or above the national average." [2025 c 294 s 1.]

Effective date—2025 c 294: "This act takes effect July 1, 2028." [2025 c 294 s 4.]

RCW 43.60A.230 Veterans service officer program. ***(Effective until July 1, 2028.)*** (1) There is created in the department the veterans service officer program. The purpose of the veterans service officer program is to provide funding to underserved eligible counties to establish and maintain a veterans service officer within the county. "Eligible counties," for the purposes of this section, means counties with a population of one hundred thousand or less.

(2) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated in the veterans service officer fund under RCW 43.60A.235 for the specific purposes provided in this section, the department must:

(a) Establish a process to educate local governments, veterans, and those still serving in the national guard or armed forces reserve of the veterans service officer program;

(b) Develop partnerships with local governments to assist in establishing and maintaining local veterans service officers in eligible counties who elect to have a veterans service officer; and

(c) Provide funding to support eligible counties in establishing and maintaining local accredited veterans service officers. Funding is provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Funding may only be provided to support the equivalent of one full-time veterans service officer per eligible county.

(3) The application process for the veterans service officer program must be prescribed as to manner and form by the department. [2019 c 223 s 1.]

RCW 43.60A.230 Veterans service officer program. ***(Effective July 1, 2028.)*** (1) There is created in the department the veterans service officer program. The purpose of the veterans service officer program is to provide funding to underserved eligible counties to establish and maintain a veterans service officer within the county. "Eligible

counties," for the purposes of this section, means counties where the percentage of the veteran population receiving federal disability or pension compensation is below the national average.

(2) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for the specific purposes provided in this section, the department must:

(a) Establish a process to educate local governments, veterans, and those still serving in the national guard or armed forces reserve of the veterans service officer program;

(b) Develop partnerships with local governments to assist in establishing and maintaining local veterans service officers in eligible counties who elect to have a veterans service officer; and

(c) Provide funding to support eligible counties in establishing and maintaining local accredited veterans service officers. The department shall prioritize additional funding to eligible counties with the lowest percentage of the veteran population receiving federal disability or pension compensation, and then to eligible counties without a veterans service officer.

(3) The application process for the veterans service officer program must be prescribed as to manner and form by the department.

(4) The department may adopt rules necessary to implement this section. The department shall include a requirement that any county that participates in the veterans service officer program must allow any veteran residing in an adjacent county access to the county's veterans service officer. [2025 c 294 s 3; 2019 c 223 s 1.]

Findings—Intent—Effective date—2025 c 294: See notes following RCW 43.60A.225.

RCW 43.60A.235 Veterans service officer fund. (1) There is created in the custody of the state treasurer an account to be known as the veterans service officer fund. Revenues to the fund consist of appropriations by the legislature, private contributions, and all other sources deposited in the fund.

(2) Expenditures from the fund may only be used for the purposes of the veterans service officer program under RCW 43.60A.230, including administrative expenses. Only the director, or the director's designee, may authorize expenditures. The account is subject to allotment procedures under chapter 43.88 RCW, but an appropriation is not required for expenditures. [2019 c 223 s 2.]

RCW 43.60A.237 Veterans service officer and peer mentoring programs—Grants. It is the intent of the legislature to increase state appropriations for veterans service officer and peer mentoring programs with chapter 224, Laws of 2023. As a result, and subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department shall provide grants to counties of the state in order to develop or expand veterans service officer programs, peer-to-peer support programs, and other services and programs to assist veterans in areas where these programs and services are needed. In distributing these grants, the department must prioritize counties with smaller populations and counties that are below the national average in the percentage of veterans receiving federal disability or pension compensation. [2023 c 224 s 4.]

Finding—Intent—2023 c 224: "The legislature finds that it is vital for veterans in their return to our communities to have adequate community supports. Local programs that connect veterans with their federal benefits and with other veterans for peer support are crucial components of that structure. It is the intent of the legislature through this act to enhance state funding of these programs to ensure they are robust and widely available throughout the state." [2023 c 224 s 1.]

RCW 43.60A.240 Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer coordinator—Created—Duties—Report. (1) The position of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer coordinator is created within the department.

(2) The duties of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer coordinator include, but are not limited to:

(a) Conducting outreach to, and providing assistance designed for the unique needs of, veterans who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, and to the spouses and dependents of such veterans;

(b) Providing assistance to veterans who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer in applying for an upgrade to the character of a discharge from service or a change in the narrative reason for a discharge from service;

(c) Providing assistance in applying for and obtaining veterans' benefits and benefits available through other programs that provide services and resources to veterans who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, and to the spouses and dependents of such veterans;

(d) Providing assistance to veterans who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer in applying for, and in appealing any denial of, federal and state veterans' benefits and aid that such veterans, and the spouses and dependents of such veterans, may be entitled to; and

(e) Developing and distributing informational materials to veterans who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, and to the spouses and dependents of such veterans, regarding veterans' benefits and other benefit programs that provide services and resources to veterans who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, and to the spouses and dependents of such veterans.

(3) No later than December 15, 2021, the department must prepare and submit a report to the governor, the joint committee on veterans' and military affairs, and the appropriate standing committees of the legislature regarding the implementation and status of the position of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer coordinator created under subsection (1) of this section. The report must include, at a minimum, information regarding the following:

(a) The number of veterans served;

(b) The type of assistance provided;

(c) Recommendations for the improvement and expansion of the services provided by the coordinator; and

(d) Recommendations for legislative changes. [2020 c 56 s 2.]

Legislative declaration—2020 c 56: "The legislature declares that veterans must be able to access and receive the benefits and services they have earned in service to our country without regard to

sexual orientation or gender identity. The legislature further declares that connecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer veterans to their earned and related benefits and services, and to programs, resources, and information about such benefits and services, promotes the economic security and financial stability of veterans, and their spouses and dependents." [2020 c 56 s 1.]

RCW 43.60A.245 Military spouse liaison—Created—Duties. (1) The position of military spouse liaison is created within the department.

(2) The duties of the military spouse liaison include, but are not limited to:

(a) Conducting outreach to and advocating on behalf of military spouses in Washington;

(b) Providing assistance and information to military spouses seeking professional licenses and credentials or other employment in Washington;

(c) Coordinating research on issues facing military spouses and creating informational materials to assist military spouses and their families;

(d) Examining barriers and providing recommendations to assist spouses in accessing high quality child care and developing resources in coordination with military installations and the department of children, youth, and families to increase access to high quality child care for military families; and

(e) Developing, in coordination with the employment security department and employers, a common form for military spouses to complete highlighting specific skills, education, and training to help spouses quickly find meaningful employment in relevant economic sectors.

(3) The military spouse liaison is encouraged to periodically report on the work of the liaison to the relevant standing committees of the legislature and the joint committee on veterans' and military affairs and participate in policy development relating to military spouses. [2020 c 328 s 1.]

RCW 43.60A.247 Demonstration campaign to increase military spouse employment. (1) The department, the employment security department, and the department of commerce shall consult local chambers of commerce, associate development organizations, and businesses to initiate a demonstration campaign to increase military spouse employment. This campaign may include partnerships with chambers of commerce that result in business owners sharing, with the local chamber of commerce, information on the number of military spouses employed and the local chambers of commerce providing this information to the department.

(2) Participants in the campaign are encouraged to work with the Washington state military transition council and county veterans' advisory boards under RCW 73.08.035.

(3) Funding for the campaign shall be established from existing resources.

(4) For the purposes of this section, "military spouse" means any person married or previously married to a military service member, irrespective of the length of the marriage, during the military service member's service in any branch of the United States armed

forces as an active duty service member, reservist, or national guard member. [2023 c 165 s 8.]

Short title—Finding—Intent—2023 c 165: See notes following RCW 18.340.020.

RCW 43.60A.250 Purple heart state—Signage—Account. (1) The department is authorized to erect signs recognizing that Washington state is a purple heart state as designated in RCW 1.20.190. The department is authorized to accept gifts or donations to assist efforts related to Washington state being a purple heart state.

(2) The department of veterans affairs purple heart state account is created in the custody of the state treasurer. All receipts from gifts and donations received pursuant to this section must be deposited into the account. Expenditures from the account may only be used to erect signs or other activities that assist efforts related to Washington state being a purple heart state, as authorized under this section. Only the director of the department of veterans affairs or the director's designee may authorize expenditures from the account. The account is subject to allotment procedures under chapter 43.88 RCW, but an appropriation is not required for expenditures. [2021 c 213 s 4.]

Findings—2021 c 213: See note following RCW 1.20.190.

RCW 43.60A.260 Suicide prevention community-based services grant program. (1) There is created in the department a suicide prevention community-based services grant program. The purpose of the grant program is to provide suicide prevention, peer support, and other assistance to at-risk and transitioning veterans and military members and their families in their communities.

(2) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for the specific purposes provided in this section and amounts disbursed from the veterans and military members suicide prevention account created in RCW 43.60A.270, the department, in consultation with the forefront suicide prevention center, must establish a process to receive, review, process, and award grants to organizations, including nonprofit and peer support community programs, that address veterans, military members, and their families who may be at risk of suicide and other mental health crises. Priority should be given to organizations using peer support models that use evidence-based, research-based, or promising practices.

(3) The department shall report to the legislature annually beginning July 1, 2023, on grant recipients, number of veterans and military members served, and the types of services offered by grant recipients.

(4) The forefront suicide prevention center shall evaluate the effectiveness of each grant program recipient providing suicide prevention and peer support services to veterans, military members, and their families who may be at risk of suicide and other mental health crises.

(5) For the purposes of this section, "forefront suicide prevention center" means the University of Washington's forefront suicide prevention center of excellence. [2022 c 191 s 2.]

Findings—Intent—2022 c 191: "(1) Suicide is a public health issue that affects many Washington families and communities daily. Over the last 10 years, Washington state has been at the forefront of suicide prevention, investing more in upstream suicide prevention strategies and supports with the goal of a noteworthy reduction in suicide by 2025.

(2) At the request of the governor, in 2020 Washington stakeholders engaged in a national and statewide initiative to end veteran and military member suicide. This initiative culminated in a new state plan to educate providers and help them address the unique needs of veterans and military members, particularly those in transition to civilian life; and to provide resources and supports including improved lethal means safety training. The purpose of this act is to support the implementation of that plan.

(3) Service members, veterans, and their families are at a higher risk of being affected by suicide as experiences prior to enlistment, during service, and transition from service can contribute to suicidal thoughts and behaviors. A report on post-9/11 era military deaths by the United States department of veterans affairs found that service members are four times more likely to die by suicide than in military operations. Over 7,000 service members died in combat during the global war on terror, while more than 30,000 active duty members and veterans died by suicide. For veterans of all United States military operations, there is an average of 22 suicide deaths per day across the country, with one occurring every 65 minutes.

(4) Washington is home to 544,290 veterans, 60,699 active duty service members, 17,941 guard and reserve service members, and 2,000,000 military and veteran family members. Although veterans themselves make up only seven percent of the Washington population, they account for 19 percent of total suicides in the state. Nearly 1,000 veterans have died by suicide in Washington state over the last five years. More than two-thirds of veterans who died by suicide in Washington used a firearm.

(5) Family members of veterans who die by suicide are at higher risk for future suicide due to the exposure of experiencing suicide loss. Research shows for every suicide that occurs, 135 people suffer from the effects either directly or indirectly, meaning veteran suicides impact a community of 2,600,000 people.

(6) There is no one path to suicide, but life experiences, moral injury, trauma, culture, and health can play a major role in suicidal behavior. Military and veteran culture in particular includes stigma around mental wellness and help-seeking behavior, emphasizes reliability on group cohesion, and facilitates access, comfortability, and familiarity with lethal means such as firearms. Additionally, a significant number of veterans do not seek care within the veterans administration system.

(7) The legislature intends to address the tragedy of suicide amongst veterans, military members, and their families through support of professionals and community and peer organizations serving veterans, cultural changes that support help-seeking behaviors, and investments in education, training, prevention, and care." [2022 c 191 s 1.]

RCW 43.60A.270 Veterans and military members suicide prevention account. (1) The veterans and military members suicide prevention

account is created in the custody of the state treasurer. The account shall consist of funds appropriated by the legislature, revenues received from the prevent veteran suicide emblem under RCW 46.18.300, and all receipts from gifts, grants, bequests, devises, or other donations from public and private sources to support veterans and military members suicide prevention measures. Expenditures from the account may be used only for the purposes provided in subsection (3) of this section. Only the director or the director's designee may authorize expenditures from the account. The account is subject to allotment procedures under chapter 43.88 RCW, but an appropriation is not required for expenditures.

(2)(a) The department may request and accept nondedicated contributions, grants, or gifts in cash or otherwise, and voluntary donations for deposit into the account, including funds generated by voluntary donations under (b) of this subsection.

(b) The department may accept, for deposit into the account, voluntary donations from persons who are: (i) Applying for a concealed pistol license or renewal of a concealed pistol license; or (ii) undergoing a background check under chapter 9.41 RCW in connection with the purchase of a firearm from a firearms dealer. The department shall coordinate with local law enforcement agencies, the department of licensing, and firearms dealers licensed under chapter 9.41 RCW to develop a form and process for publicizing and collecting voluntary donations under this subsection. The department and the department of licensing shall post educational information regarding the voluntary donation provisions of this section on their websites.

(3) All moneys deposited into the account must be used for activities that are dedicated to the benefit of veteran and military member suicide education and prevention including, but not limited to: (a) Expanding the department's peer corps program; and (b) providing programs, peer support, and services that assist veterans and military members in addressing mental health and wellness impacts of military service, trauma, moral injury, and transition to civilian life. Funds may also be used for the suicide prevention community-based services grant program established in RCW 43.60A.260. Funds from the account may not be used to supplant existing funds received by the department nor shall grant recipients use the funds to supplant existing funding.

(4) For the purposes of this section the following definitions apply:

(a) "Veteran" has the same meaning as provided in RCW 41.04.005 and 41.04.007.

(b) "Military members" means actively serving members of the national guard or reserves, or active duty military personnel.

(c) "Account" means the veterans and military members suicide prevention account. [2022 c 191 s 3.]

Findings—Intent—2022 c 191: See note following RCW 43.60A.260.

RCW 43.60A.275 Governor's challenge team and service members, veterans, and their families suicide prevention advisory committee—Biannual report on plan implementation. Beginning December 2022, subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the governor's challenge team and service members, veterans, and their families suicide prevention advisory committee shall report

to the legislature on a biannual basis regarding implementation of the plan developed by the committee. [2022 c 191 s 4.]

Findings—Intent—2022 c 191: See note following RCW 43.60A.260.

RCW 43.60A.280 Mental health, well-being, and suicide prevention resources. Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department shall:

(1) Create and maintain a database of information on nonprofit, for-profit, city, county, state, and federal organizations, providers, and resources that address the mental health, well-being, and suicide prevention of veterans, military members, and their families. The department shall establish criteria for inclusion in the database by July 1, 2022. The department must make the database accessible on its website to veterans, military members, and their families by July 1, 2023;

(2) Provide suicide prevention education training and information for veterans, military members, and their families that is accessible through the internet; and

(3) By December 1, 2023, create, in consultation with the suicide-safer homes task force, a web-based application to be shared by state agencies and primary care providers with veterans, military members, and their families to provide applicable information and resources including but not limited to benefits, mental health resources, and lethal means safety information. [2022 c 191 s 5.]

Findings—Intent—2022 c 191: See note following RCW 43.60A.260.

RCW 43.60A.290 Discharge and separation documents—Confidential. (1) For the protection of applicants and clients, the department and its respective officers and employees are prohibited, except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, from disclosing veteran discharge or separation documents, such as DD Form 214 or NGB Form 22. Such records shall be confidential and not subject to disclosure except as provided in subsection (2) of this section.

(2) The provisions of this section do not apply to:

(a) A veteran requesting the veteran's own discharge or separation documents;

(b) A veteran's next of kin;

(c) A deceased veteran's properly appointed personal representative or executor;

(d) A person holding a veteran's general power of attorney;

(e) Duly designated representatives of accredited veterans service organizations; or

(f) Sharing agreements among other government entities.

(3) For purposes of this section, "next of kin" means any of the following: An unremarried widow or widower, son, daughter, father, mother, brother, or sister of a deceased veteran. [2023 c 327 s 5.]

RCW 43.60A.800 Outreach program—Change in veteran definitions—2024 c 146. The department shall develop and implement an outreach program to ensure that veterans as defined in RCW 41.04.005 and 41.04.007 are aware of state veterans' benefits and programs. Outreach

information shall explain, in an easy to understand format, changes in the law made by chapter 146, Laws of 2024, unchanged eligibility requirements for current benefits, and how to find more information about benefits from the department and other state agencies. The outreach program must begin on June 6, 2024. [2024 c 146 s 5.]

Intent—2024 c 146: See note following RCW 73.04.005.

RCW 43.60A.900 Transfer of personnel of department of social and health services engaged in veterans' services—Rights preserved. All employees and personnel of the department of social and health services directly engaged in services to veterans shall, on June 25, 1976, be transferred to the jurisdiction of the department of veterans affairs. All employees classified under chapter 41.06 RCW, the state civil service law, shall be assigned to the department to perform their usual duties upon the same terms as formerly, without any loss of rights, subject to any action that may be appropriate thereafter in accordance with the laws and rules governing the state civil service law. [1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 115 s 9.]

RCW 43.60A.903 Certification when apportionments of budgeted funds required because of transfers. If apportionments of budgeted funds are required because of the transfers authorized by this chapter, the director of financial management shall certify such apportionments to the agencies affected, the state auditor, and the state treasurer. Each of these shall make the appropriate transfer and adjustments in funds and appropriation accounts and equipment records in accordance with such certification. [1979 c 151 s 126; 1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 115 s 12.]

RCW 43.60A.904 Federal programs—Rules and regulations—Internal reorganization to meet federal requirements—Construction to comply with federal law—Conflicting parts inoperative. In furtherance of the policy of the state to cooperate with the federal government in all of the programs included in this chapter, such rules and regulations as may become necessary to entitle the state to participate in federal funds may be adopted, unless the same be expressly prohibited by law. Any internal reorganization carried out under the terms of this chapter shall meet federal requirements which are a necessary condition to state receipt of federal funds. Any section or provision of this chapter which may be susceptible to more than one construction shall be interpreted in favor of the construction most likely to comply with federal laws entitling this state to receive federal funds for the various programs of the department. If any part of this chapter is ruled to be in conflict with federal requirements which are a prescribed condition of the allocation of federal funds to the state, or to any departments or agencies thereof, such conflicting part of this chapter is declared to be inoperative solely to the extent of the conflict. [1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 115 s 13.]

RCW 43.60A.906 Collective bargaining units or agreements not altered. Nothing contained in this chapter shall be construed to alter any existing collective bargaining unit or the provisions of any existing collective bargaining agreement until any such agreement has expired or until any such bargaining unit has been modified by action of the Washington personnel resources board as provided by law. [1993 c 281 s 52; 1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 115 s 16.]

Effective date—1993 c 281: See note following RCW 41.06.022.

RCW 43.60A.907 Liberal construction—1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 115. The rule of strict construction shall have no application to this chapter and it shall be liberally construed in order to carry out the objective for which it is designed, in accordance with the legislative intent to give the director the maximum possible freedom in carrying the provisions of this chapter into effect. [1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 115 s 17.]