

The Military - Veterans Coalition Of Indiana 2017 Legislative GOALS V4

1. The Indiana Veteran Recovery Program (IVRP) IC 10-17-14; IC 27-1-43; IC 34-13-3-2. Synopsis: Indiana Veteran Recovery Program and fund. Establishes, for five years, the Indiana Veteran Recovery Program (an evidence based clinical trial) and fund to provide treatment and funding for veterans and first responders with traumatic brain injury or posttraumatic stress disorder, and to obtain reimbursement from third parties (federal government) Hospitals and service organizations do not have status with the federal government, states do. The state may be required to sue for reimbursement and status is required to do so. Requires coordination with various state agencies. Establishes an oversight entity requirement for the program. Requires annual reporting. Fund would accept donations. Requires an appropriation.

Rationale: *One of the most important missions facing all of us at this time in history is caring for our combat wounded returning home from their deployments, and fighting another battle, the battle to regain their quality of life sacrificed in service to our country. This battle is the support and resources to treat the Iraq and Afghan Signature Wound—Traumatic Brain Injury / Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, also known as the silent wound of the War on Terror. The Oklahoma model for providing Hyperbaric Oxygen Treatment (focusing on TBI), and reimbursing for the costs for treatment is calculated to save ONE BILLION DOLLARS a year! Cost of treatment at MEDICARE rates is about \$17,000 one time. Per studies by Rand Corporation and validated by a study done by Ball State University the cost to state and federal government of not treating (or ineffective treatment) is estimated at between \$36K and \$60K per year. 35% of Vietnam Veterans and 30% of Gulf War Veterans suffer from TBI, PTSD, or both per the Rand Corporation Study of 2008. The Veterans Administration indicates that there are 166K Vietnam vets and 126K Gulf War vets for a total of 292K vets. Using 30% of 292,000 veterans reveals to total veteran population suffering from TBI-PTSD of 87K. Using a cost factor of \$36K; the annual cost is \$3.15BILLION ANNUALLY. The Military Coalition thinks that state resources exist, and know that the patriotic commitment exist to see it through to completion. The most important outcome will be our Guardians of Freedom will get their lives back, and their families will get them back. See original SB180 from 2014 General Assembly.
<http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2014/bills/senate/180/#>*

2. Securing full State Income tax exempt status for all military income, current or retired. IC 6-3-2-4. Synopsis: Military Service deduction; retirement income or survivors benefits; age limit of 60. Provides a deduction from adjusted gross income (AGI) of military income.

Rationale: *Military service members are a major economic force bringing to the State over one billion dollars per year in disposable income. Today, per the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs, Indiana veterans received \$2, 787,066,000.00 in 2015. Details of this can be found at <http://www.va.gov/VETDATA/docs/GDX>. This \$2.8 BILLION is paid to 130,705 of the 469,210 Hoosier Veterans (only 27.86% of state veterans). The Federal Veterans Affairs Administration, in 2008, established 36% as the target of the veteran population that should be receiving earned benefits. This translates to Indiana being short by 38,211 veterans who are NOT receiving these earned benefits; or an additional \$998,290,136 NOT coming to Indiana!*

Every effort should be made, and incentives developed to attract military personnel to Indiana upon completion of their active duty commitments or upon their retirement from military service, and to retain those already here. Indiana continues to lose qualified veterans because of the greatly enhanced benefits (such as free hunting and fishing license, state bonuses for serving in combat in the Gulf Wars, having military income not taxed as part of income taxes) available in adjacent and other states. Indiana ranks in the bottom 10% is support of military service members. This rating is determined by studies done by WalletHub in 2015 which

rates Indiana last in the nation as a place where retirees should live. It is also determined by a WalletHub study of the largest 100 cities in the nation identifying the best and worst places for veterans to live. Indianapolis and Fort Wayne rank 92 and 95 respectfully. MOAA in 2015 also list Indiana in the bottom 10% as a veteran friendly state. The Department of Veterans Affairs of the federal government annually publishes statistics revealing how much money is distributed to veterans by county-by state. This file is called the **Geographic Distribution of the Department of Veterans Affairs Expenditures(GDX)** and is prepared each fiscal year by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Policy, Planning and Preparedness. The GDX Report presents the estimated dollar expenditures for major VA Programs by county and Congressional Districts within each state. Expenditure data is grouped by the following categories: Compensation and Pension (C&P); Education and Vocational Rehabilitation; Insurance and Indemnities; Construction (CNSTR); General Operating Expenses (GOE); and Medical Care. The GDX Report also includes veteran population estimates by county and Congressional District within each state and the number of unique patients who used VA health care services (http://www.va.gov/VETDATA/docs/GDX/GDX_Readme.pdf). Analysis of this file places Indiana 47th out of 50 states.

Indiana commissions an average of 42 ROTC AC officers and 40 ROTC RC Officers annually. The Military Service Academies commission about 60 AC officers a year. The Military Entrance Processing Station for Indiana enlists about 5,200 Hoosiers annually. 5,302 Hoosiers join our active military service annually. Additionally, the Indiana National Guard and federal Reserve adds about 5,225 members annually. Yet the end strength of the RC remains at 20,000. The AC continues to decrease in size and the current number of Hoosiers on active duty is 17,000. Per the Indiana Department of Health about 14,000 Hoosier Veterans die annually. Therefore, in 2014-2015 we added about 10,500 new citizens to the military; we reduce the number by 14,000 veteran deaths. This should translate to a net loss of 3,500, yet we lost 7,073 Indiana residents during this period. One must conclude that 3,573 Indiana residents left Indiana; and many of them took their wife and family with them when they left.

The WalletHub studies also indicate the average age of officers retiring is 47.1 years old; enlisted retirement age is even lower at 43.2 years old. The National Active Retirement Association reports “a retiree couple is the equivalent to 3.7 manufacturing jobs... They generally have higher disposable incomes, better educations and put much less a burden on the streets, infrastructure or schools. They are active volunteers in schools and in civic, cultural and religious organizations. Because they have higher wealth, on average, they pay higher taxes on purchases and property.” Therefore, we should do everything to keep and even grow this cohort.

According to American Community Survey 2014, “the median household income among veterans in the US is \$56,89.” “ Male veterans working full time earn about \$6,000 more than similar non-Veterans” and Female veterans who worked year-round ad full-time earned about \$7,000 more than similar non-veterans” according to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Policy and Planning, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics in their June 2016 report. Getting and keeping veterans is a very positive economic advantage for a state.

States are generally free from federal control in deciding how to tax pensions, but some limits apply. State tax policy cannot discriminate against federal civil service pensions, according to the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Davis v. Michigan* (1989), which ended the once common practice of more favorable state tax treatment for state pensions than for federal civil service pensions. In 1992 the U.S. Supreme Court further ruled, in *Barker v. Kansas*, that states cannot tax U.S. military pensions if they exempt state pensions from taxation. Over time these rulings have produced substantial conformity in the way each state taxes the three kinds of pensions, although differential treatment persists in **Indiana** and New Jersey.

Of the 50 states, seven – Alaska, Florida, Nevada, South Dakota, Texas, Washington and Wyoming – do

not levy a personal income tax. New Hampshire and Tennessee collect income tax only on interest and dividend income. The District of Columbia and 41 states levy a broad-based personal income tax. Among the 41 states with a broad-based income tax, 37 offer exclusions for some amount of specifically identified type of state or federal pension income or both, a broad income exclusion or a tax credit targeted at the elderly. The District of Columbia provides a public pension exclusion. The four states that do not do so are California, **Indiana**, Rhode Island and Vermont. Some of those four states partially or fully exclude Social Security income from state taxation, and **no state collects income taxes on Railroad Retirement income.** (Source: NCSL Ronald Snell and Bert Waisanen article Jul 07)

Looking at the economics surrounding this proposed amendment also support this change. When you consider the military retirees who will potentially stay in Indiana as a result of such a change, plus those additional military retirees attracted to the state by no or significantly reduced military retirement income, the forecast loss in income tax revenue on the military retirement pay is less than the gain from other taxes like income tax on civilian employment earnings, sales, gasoline, car plates, property, and other taxes and fees the state would collect.. Overall it is estimated that tax revenue grows substantially in this scenario. We think that between 500 and 1000 people would be added to the tax rolls annually.

Additionally, this will help the brain drain in Indiana. How so? The Military Services graduate 40 officers annually. These are ALL Hoosiers and ALL recommended by Indiana's federal congressional delegation. Additionally, Indiana, Purdue, IUPUI, Ball State, Notre Dame, Indiana State, and other universities graduate 82 officers annually from their ROTC programs. Federal Recruiters from all services recruit an average of 5200 Service members annually all of which are high school graduates and meet the military standards set by the services. These enlisted men and women continue their education while serving in the armed forces as commanders encourage such actions and DOD funds much of this education. The Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Policy and Planning, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics in their June 2016 report indicated 69% of current veterans have some college and 35.5% who are at least 25 years old have a bachelor's degree or higher. Additionally all these officers and enlisted service members bring years of career experience, management and leadership to the civilian workforce. However, the military in IN is not growing—it is shrinking as explained above—this is real brain drain!

Recruiting or retaining veterans in Indiana will stimulate growth in business, services, and industry as these new residents and current residents will spend the Indiana income tax savings in Indiana. This is a win – win opportunity!

Veterans in Indiana cost the state less than non-veterans! The Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Policy and Planning, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics in their June 2016 report indicated “a lower percentage of both male and female Veterans lived below 100 percent of poverty compared to their non-Veteran counterparts.”

Lastly, and certainly most importantly, Indiana residents enjoy the many blessings being part of this great republic thanks to Hoosiers who will serve, are serving, and have served in the military. For this, state representatives of your districts in Indiana should support the wishes of your citizens as amended by this proposal.

ALT 2. IC 6-3-2-4. Synopsis: Remove age limit on military service tax deduction. Eliminates the age requirement for deducting the first \$5,000 of military service income received by an individual for a retirement or survivor's benefits. Further increases the deduction to be equal to the annual military pay of E7.

ALT 3. IC 6-3-2-4. Synopsis: Provide **Military service tax deduction for retired pay.** Military service income received by an individual for a retirement or survivor's benefits would be exempt from Indiana Income Tax.

ALT 4. IC 6-3-2-4. Synopsis: Provide **Military service tax deduction for Active Duty pay.** Military service income received by an individual for active duty service would be exempt from Indiana Income Tax.

3. Keeping and growing veteran population in Indiana.

SECTION 1. IC x-x-x. Synopsis: Create a group within LT Governor's office to recruit service members coming off active duty at their active duty discharge locations 6 months prior to their expiration of service. Team with economic development commission and private enterprises to develop marketing package and financial incentives to lure skills desired for employment in Indiana. Provide loans for home purchase, salary while training for job, relocation expenses, property tax abatement for up to 10 years, and Indiana Income Tax credits. Program should be modeled after "Regional Cities" projects where private industry joins with local government and state government to build a "regional" marketing package to be used as a major tool in winning new veterans coming to Indiana. The idea is building a template for communities to use to get and keep veterans and execute on a community level with coordination by STATE level. One possible example would be to assist with use of GI bill education benefits for training in area where families will be moving to Indiana. (IE. A welder moves to Ft Wayne and needs some specialized training; coordinate to have available in Ft Wayne area. Insure private business have sponsors and mentors to insure assimilation into the community and business.)

Rationale: *To encourage Indiana businesses to hire skilled service members leaving active duty via this program. These individuals have great soft skills, many technical skills, and bring their families with them. They bring veterans benefit, retirement benefits, low likelihood of financial dependence on government, low likelihood of public safety issues, and are likely to volunteer in their community.*

SECTION 2. IC 6-3.1-34. Synopsis: **INDIANA Tax credit for hiring veterans.** VOW to Hire Heroes by providing the INDIANA Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) for hiring certain qualified veterans. Through IWOTC, for-profit employers may receive tax credits as high as \$9,600 per qualified veteran or up to \$6,240 for qualified non-profit organizations. The IWOTC program enables the targeted employees to gradually move from economic dependency into self-sufficiency as they earn a steady income, while participating employers are able to reduce their federal AND STATE income tax liability. The amount of the credit will depend on a number of factors, such as:

- The length of the veteran's unemployment before hire
- The number of hours the Veteran works
- The veteran's first year of wages

Work One Regions are to train businesses on how to apply for the Federal and State WOTC to encourage use and success of this program.

For additional information go to: www.doleta.gov/wotc
<https://www.employflorida.com/portals/veteran/default.asp?pg=employers>

Instituting a Private Enterprise Indiana Tax Credit for each documented veteran hired as a fulltime employee during their tax year

Rationale: *To encourage Indiana businesses to hire Veterans, this credit will be an incentive to put veterans to work in the State. The Federal Government currently offers a \$9600 Federal Tax Credit for this action through the UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR Employment and Training Administration. Indiana should*

provide training to businesses in the 12 Work One Regions on how to apply for the Federal and State WOTC and most corporations do NOT apply and ignore the program. Training them will help encourage receipt of the credit and success of the program.

4. 21st Century Veterans Support.

SECTION 1. IC 10-17. Synopsis: Expand IDVA. Provides establishing six regional offices throughout the state and staff every location with 4 employees (2 Veterans Service Officers, and 2 assistants). Add staff as grant support, and outreach to prisoners, veteran organizations and county veteran service officers.

Rationale: *IDVA has remained the same since created in 1943! Compared to top veterans' agencies in other states, Indiana is grossly under serving our military and veterans. If you look at Oklahoma for example they have fewer veterans, and are staffed over 4 times that of Indiana. Ohio has 25 full time employees plus 4 approving authority staff. Ohio funds all 88 counties based upon property tax revenue. See Ohio Title 59 and Ohio Title 55 for tax formula. Ohio County Veterans' Service Officers are required to transport veterans to medical facilities if needed and assist in claims and benefits, Indiana CVSO do not have this requirement.*

Creating 6 additional districts outside Marion County and staffing them with 6 personnel would move our state support closer to the counties, and facilitates marketing to veterans in their geographic area of responsibility for programs such as veterans administration benefits, state veteran benefits, and support to veterans' treatment courts. Coupled with the driver's license initiative identified elsewhere in this document, Indiana would be able to identify veterans and where they live so that they can be "marketed to" and educated/ assisted with receiving the benefits they earned through their service.

With limited IDVA staff support, Indiana misses out on grants and endowments that would be helpful to veterans and veteran programs in the state such as federal funding for veterans treatment courts, drug abuse and veterans jobs assistance. A support staff person should be focused on these areas and coordinate with other agencies to insure Indiana does everything possible to support our military and veterans.

Sadly, many veterans are imprisoned and Indiana should have a specialist who can work with these veterans and the corrections department to help veterans as they proceed toward post-imprisonment life. Most veterans don't know what help is available and end up committing crimes again unless mentors, veterans service organizations, and government agencies get involved.

Some veterans have legal problems, both civil and criminal. A specialist to identify these issues, develop programs and processes is needed to address trends and evolving directions regarding veterans.

SECTION 2. IC 10-17. Synopsis: Fund County Veteran Service Officers. Provides adequate staffing hours (1000 per year) in almost every county. Provides funding from IDVA operating budget or establish a separate appropriation from the general fund for all Veteran Service Officers. Modify requirement for all 92 counties to have an accredited CVSO by pairing select adjacent counties with small veteran populations together. Additionally, require counties with large veteran populations to have more than one accredited CVSO.

Rationale: TBD from summer study activities. *Today 20 counties do not comply with Indiana code requiring them to have at least one county veteran serve officer trained and accredited by the federal Department of Veterans Affairs. These CVSOs develop and assist veterans who are filing a disability compensation claim. In 2011, \$180,000 was spent to train and equip all CVSOs with computers and software to accomplish this. The return on this investment as of September 30, 2014 is \$660 MILLION this would not have happened without CVSO assistance which was only possible because of their accreditation training. This is a 3000 to 1 ROI! Indiana ranks 46th in the nation and is over 46,000 veterans short of meeting the federal goal of 36% of all*

veterans receiving benefits. We believe that the lack of accredited CVSOs contributes to the exodus of veterans from Indiana. It also costs the state MILLIONS of dollars in state funds that could be covered using federal veterans benefits that these veterans have earned, but did not receive. Included in these costs are disability compensation, education, housing, medical care, long term care, and others earned VA benefits. Some of these veterans also receive Mental Health and substance abuse assistance, SNAP, TANF, and low income financial assistance for the state. These are drains on the state! A 2015 study done by the Public Consulting Group for the State of Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs indicated several recommendations that Indiana does not take advantage of in this area.

SECTION 3. IC 6-3.6-9-12, Requires a portion of local income taxes to be withheld from cities and counties that fail to enforce accreditation and reaccreditation requirements for city and county service officers.

(text from HB1089 of 2016) Sec. 12. (a) Except as provided in subsection (b), one-twelfth (1/12) of each adopting county's certified distribution for a calendar year shall be distributed from its trust account established under this chapter to the appropriate county treasurer on the first regular business day of each month of that calendar year. (b) If the Indiana veterans' affairs commission has certified to the auditor of state and the budget agency that a county or city is not in compliance with the requirements of IC 10-17-1, one-fourth (1/4) of the part of the certified distribution that would be distributed to the county civil taxing unit shall be withheld by the auditor of state until the city or county has complied with IC 10-17-1. 15 (c) If a part of a distribution is withheld under subsection (b) and the city or county subsequently complies with IC 10-17-1, the auditor of state shall distribute to the county civil taxing unit the amount of the distribution that was previously withheld, without interest for the period during which the distribution was withheld. (d) A withholding made under subsection (b) shall not affect a distribution to any unit other than the county civil taxing unit.

Rationale: *Today 20 counties do not comply with Indiana code requiring them to have at least one county veteran serve officer trained and accredited by the federal Department of Veterans Affairs. These CVSOs develop and assist veterans who are filing a disability compensation claim. In 2011, \$180,000 was spent to train and equip all CVSOs with computers and software to accomplish this. The return on this investment as of September 30, 2014 is \$660 MILLION. This is a 3000 to 1 ROI! Indiana ranks 46th in the nation and needs over 46,000 veterans to meet the federal goal of 36% of all veterans receiving benefits. Lack of accredited CVSOs encourages veterans to move from Indiana due to lack of trained, knowledgeable support. It also costs Indiana MILLIONS of dollars paying from state funds to help these disabled veterans. It also costs the state MILLIONS of dollars in state funds that could be covered using federal veterans benefits that these veterans have earned. Included in these costs are disability compensation, education, housing, medical care, long term care, and others earned VA benefits.*

SECTION 4. IC 10-17-1-6 Synopsis: Expands duties of the IDVA director to include notification to county/city leadership, governor, of non-compliance to IC 10-17-1-9 **County service officer, city service officer, and assistants within 60 days of date the vacancy occurs.** (Note is SECTION 2 of this bill is passed this provision will need to be adjusted to account for “county groups”).

Rationale: *Several County / City service officers do Not become accredited or retire and must be replaced. Initial training and getting replacements up to speed is crucial to the success and support of veterans who need assistance.*

SECTION 5. IC10-17-1-9. Synopsis: County service officers, city service officers, and assistants' requirements. Requires the designation and duties of county service officers to serve for 4 years. Poor performance could be considered to remove service officer sooner.

Rationale: IC10-17-1-9. County service officers, city service officers, and assistants today can be appointed for 4 years. We propose removing the appointment of up to 4 years and requiring the designation and duties of county service officers. Some counties have county service officers in name only, and their duties vary dramatically with other counties. In some instances counties have not gotten their service officers trained or accredited, there needs to be consequences of not doing so.

SECTION 6. IC10-17-12. Synopsis: **Funding Service Officer training and renewal.** Directs annual appropriation from General Fund in amount of up to \$200,000 per biannual budget.

Rationale: IC 10-17-12. In the final version of the bill, House Enrolled Act 1387, there is an appropriation of \$180,000 from the Veterans' Affairs Trust Fund to the Military Family Relief Fund for the purpose of providing grants to veteran service officers and local governments to provide financial assistance for veteran service officer accreditation.

SECTION 7. IC 10-17-12.5. Appropriates **money in the veteran's disability clinic fund** to provide \$125,000 funding for grants to each Indiana law school that establishes or maintains a clinical program that provides law students the opportunity to represent veterans in claims for veteran's disability compensation per year.

Rationale: In 2014 the legislature established the Veterans Disability Clinic Fund as part of establishing Veterans Disability Law Clinics at four universities who have law schools in Indiana (IU-Bloomington, IUPUI, Notre Dame, and Valparaiso [Indiana Tech is developing a new program and not yet completed]). Funds from the General assembly should be appropriated to support this establishment and ongoing

5. Expand Veterans Treatment Courts and create a military support unit within Attorney General.

SECTION 1. IC33-23-16-10. Veterans Court Organization and funding. Provides direction to establish at least one veterans court within all Judicial Districts. Provides Board of Directors of the Indiana Judicial Conference to develop by rule governance, rules, and provisions for inter-county court operation. Provides funding for establishment of these courts to include training and state certification. Directs Indiana Justice Center in coordination with Criminal Justice Institute, and other agencies as appropriate to seek federal grants from Department of Justice, Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Health and Human services. Appropriates \$1 MILLION annually. Puts requirements on counties to provide bus service, a mentor coordinator, and use mentors.

Rationale: About 20 Counties have established these Courts and the results are positive. Further funding and staffing is needed to expand this Court system across county boundaries throughout the state. Many of our military personnel seem fine when they come back, but there are scars that are hidden. The reason for limiting PTSD to combat-related veterans was a fear that if the category was widened, there may be a wide range of individuals claiming to have PTSD, but do not. PTSD and other traumatic brain injuries are not a mental disease or defect, which is already covered by statute as a mitigating factor. Military personnel don't see PTSD as a disease or a defect. They don't want to be labeled as having a mental defect. Many counties will never establish Veterans Treatment Courts because the county veterans census does not warrant such action. All veterans deserve the same treatment. To accomplish this multiple counties will need to join together to support this effort. Funding becomes complicated; membership on the VTC team becomes cumbersome and difficult especially when counties are short funding for other priorities. The state must step in and organize counties and direct/assist the grouped counties to be successful.

SECTION 2. IC 4-6-15. Pro bono representation of veterans. Creates the military legal assistance unit (unit) within the office of the Supreme Court or Attorney General. Requires the unit to facilitate the delivery of legal assistance programs, pro bono services, and self help services to those currently serving, have served, surviving

spouses, and their families via a “pro bono services system”. Specifies the topics and areas of law with which the unit may provide assistance. The “unit” is to partner with the Bar association and other third parties and stakeholders in the development and promotion of this system and the services provided. Prohibits the unit from providing court representation to servicemembers. Prohibits the unit from providing legal advice or legal assistance to servicemembers being criminally prosecuted in a civilian or military court of law. Allows the Supreme Court or Attorney General to accept: (1) grants; (2) gifts; (3) donations; (4) bequests; and (5) devises; on behalf of the unit. Requires all funds collected by the unit to be used for the unit's purposes. (See SB 296 from 2016) This is an OSD initiative.

6. IC 4-30-3-20.5. Synopsis: Lottery games to benefit veterans. Requires the state lottery commission to adopt rules to establish a scratch-off game to benefit Indiana veterans. Deposits revenue from sales of tickets for the scratch-off game into the veteran's trust fund. 10% of funds generated can be used to administer the fund. All such dedicated funding, raised through the veterans scratch off card, will be non-reverting and shall be appropriated for its intended purpose. *(We would also consider pull tab machines in public places which is an item mentioned by other lobbyists.)*

Rationale: *Revenues from the sale of Veteran lottery tickets could be used to fund many veteran programs identified in this document. Included could be funding for Veterans Disability Clinics, Veteran pro-bono program and system, funding for veteran service officers and their training, woman's conferences, homeless veterans, and many more.*

7. IC21-14-4 Synopsis: Tuition and fee exemption for children of disabled veterans. Provides dependents of all service connected disabled veterans full remission of fees at any State supported post secondary school or university in the State of Indiana. Funds are only available if all GI Bill benefits available to the individual are first exhausted. Provides a requirement to maintain a “C” GPA to continue to receive remission. Provides remission of accrued debt to the VA disability decision start date. Limit duration of remission to 4 years.

Rationale: Repeal IC21-14-4-2.5 *Return to pre-2011 criteria when dependents of all service connected disabled veterans received full remission of fees at any State supported post secondary school or university in the State of Indiana. Present remission is based upon the percentage of disability, thus creating two “classes” of Hoosier Veterans. This treatment of those who served since July 2011 is discriminatory and devalues those who serve today and in the future. Currently there are no requirements for course completion or minimum acceptable standards for payment of the supplement or continuation in the program. Currently the VA medical claims processing system does not provide timely decisions for veteran's disability claims. Dependents of these disabled veterans continue to accrue thousands of dollars in higher education debt. Funds are only available if all GI Bill benefits are exhausted.*

State College professors' kids get free tuition—they deserve it more than veterans. (We need to find state code or reference to make this claim.)

8. Ending Veteran Homelessness. Provide a Veteran Homelessness Task Force to design, coordinate, and execute plans to manage the entire state problem—working with federal, state, county and other entities. Also provide property tax credits for Landlord/Property Owners/Managers who house Veterans that are connected to the VA or Veteran Organization.

Rationale: *The goal is to end Veteran homelessness in the State of Indiana. Many organizations operate in the state and within various agencies of state government, county government yet there is no coherent plan to reach the goal. Other states have been successful and Indiana is among the worse in the nation by WalletHub analysis rating of the 100 largest cities in America.*

Additionally, one of the difficulties in reaching this goal is the lack of safe and affordable housing for Veterans experiencing barriers such as history of eviction, felonies, low-income, etc... Some of these barriers are the results of the Veteran's difficulty in transitioning to civilian life.

Housing is a basic human need. One cannot hold a job; provide for their family; be healthy both physically and mentally; recover from trauma; and to simply survive.

This proposal is to incentivize landlords/property Owners/managers to collaborate with the VA to end Veteran homelessness. The VA already fund programs to house homeless veterans and support them while working toward being a stable member of society such as the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), the Gran Per Diem (GPD), and HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH). Unfortunately, the funds from these programs do no good if landlords/property managers won't take a chance on our Veterans.

If this legislature passes, it can lead to ending homelessness; reduce the unemployment rate; boost the local economy; lower crime rates; lower the use of emergency services; and set the precedence for the country to follow suit.

9. IC 9-24, 9-29 new sections. Synopsis: Veterans Driver's License, Honorary Surviving Spouse of Veterans Driver's License, or Veteran ID Cards. Requires Bureau of Motor Vehicles to issue **without charge a standard drivers license or Veteran ID Card.**

Individual will be required to consent to use data for state purposes ONLY!

Rationale: *Today we don't know who are Indiana Veterans and where they live. Providing driver's license without charge provides an incentive for individuals to identify themselves as veterans, and for the state to capture data on where they live. Driver's licenses are renewed every six (6) years and are suppose to be changed whenever the individual changes residence. Capture of address (and email, phone number) will enable state agencies to communicate proactively to this group to "market" federal and state benefit programs and other matters as needed. Indiana ranks near the bottom on VA benefit revenue currently and billions of dollars are lost annually.*

Driver's license issued without charge to: (1) Veterans who were residents of Indiana at the time of enlistment or commissioning and are residents at time of application for the license or who have been resident of Indiana for at least two years immediately preceding the date of application for the license. Individuals must have served on active duty in the armed Forces of the United States or on active duty in a reserve component, including the National Guard, during wartime or any conflict when personnel were committed by the President, except for periodic transfer from reserve status to active duty status for training purposes, and who were discharged or separated under honorable conditions. The individual need not have been assigned to a unit or division which directly participated in such war or conflict. (2) any member or former member of the national Guard or Reserve Forces who has served 20 or more years creditable service.

Issues without charge to: (1) any Indiana resident who is the surviving spouse of a Veteran who was eligible for a Veteran's License, so long as the surviving spouse does not remarry: or (2) any resident of Indiana who is the spouse of a Veteran who qualify for a Veteran's license were to not for the Veteran's permanent disabilities which preclude the operation of a motor vehicle.

Personal identification cards are available to Veterans who do not have a motor vehicle driver's license and who would otherwise, be entitled to issuance of a Veteran's driver's license.

10. GUARD AND RESERVE TRAINING MATTERS

SECTION 1. IC 21-13-4. Synopsis: **Expand National Guard Tuition Supplement Program to include Indiana Reservists.** Also require service members receiving these funds to maintain a “C” average. Also require state universities to consider state benefits for all veterans seeking financial assistance. Add eligibility restrictions to make funds available only after all GI Bill benefits are exhausted if member is a veteran.

Rationale: *IC21-13-4. The State of Indiana has a generous Tuition Supplement Program for our Indiana National Guard members, but that system is subject to abuse. Currently there are no requirements for course completion or minimum acceptable standards for payment of the supplement or continuation in the program. We propose a fix to the State Program to mirror Federal requirements for qualification / reimbursement of State dollars in support of the State program. Inequity exists between Indiana National Guard members and other Reservists from Indiana. The Army Reserve has reduced its presence in Indiana from over 7,000 in 1990 to just 3,569 as of July 2014. The Army Reserve will close three more Reserve Centers in 2015(7 in the last 16 years). Similar losses have occurred in the Navy/Marine Reserve and the Air Force Reserve. These losses have had a measurable financial impact on Indiana. The main reason for the reduction of units from the Army Reserve is unit strength. Today the Army Reserve is at 23 facilities throughout the state, 111 Army Reserve Units/ Detachments, 122 Army reserve civilians, and authorized 3,529 Army Reserve Positions. **The total economic impact of the Army Reserve is \$139,968,868 annually.** Non-DOD Wages are \$40,245,380; Total military payroll is \$64,180,518 annually and civilian payroll is \$12,694,479. The Army Reserve provides 1,465 non-DOD jobs in Indiana.*

*State Universities do **NOT** currently consider other state benefits that help National Guard members who are veterans and therefore could be receiving state and federal financial support for the same thing. Funds should only be available if all federal benefits are exhausted.*

SECTION 2. IC xx. Synopsis: **Enact academic protections for mobilized Guard and Reserve students** including: refund guarantees; and, exemption of Federal student loan payments during activation.

Rationale: *Hoosier members of the Indiana Reserve Components are subject to activation for state and federal duty. Some of these service members are enrolled in Indiana schools of higher education. When mobilized these individuals do not have the opportunity to complete the course of instruction and could result in loss of funds for the costs of this instruction. This is unfair as the service member is obligated to serve. Therefore, these service members should be refunded the cost of the course or allowed to re-enroll into the course at the next opportunity without additional costs. If the course is being paid for via a state provided scholarship or aid then refund as an option is denied.*

SECTION 3. IC 22-4.1-4-3 Synopsis: **Employment and training priority for all military and their spouse.** A member of the armed forces of the United States, Reserves, or National Guard priority for placement in any federal or state employment or training program administered by the department (Current law provides that this priority be given only to members of the National Guard or their spouses.).

Rationale: *Active Duty and Reservists have sacrificed by serving in our military and deserve special consideration when state government seeks to fill vacancies. See Georgia law.*

*<https://www.careers.ga.gov/careersVeterans.asp> Extract of GA law--- **Veteran's Preference** Some veterans may be eligible to receive either 5 or 10 points added to their passing score on a pre-employment. Below are the types of veteran's preference granted by the State of Georgia. In order to receive credit for Veteran's Preference, you must submit copies of the appropriate documentation to the appropriate Hiring Agency HR Department. **Please note:** Veteran's Preference cannot be awarded until copies of the appropriate documentation have been received. Also, copies of documentation may not be returned.*

SECTION 4. IC xx. Synopsis: **Employer tax credits** as a means to help offset costs associated with employees' **Guard or Reserve activities** and reinforce employer support.

Rationale: *The intent is the same but instead of hiring unemployed veterans substitute "employed National Guard and Reservist who are state residents". Employers have NG and Reservists called to duty and they must be gone from work for days or even up to years. The law requires them to re-employ the service members when they return from duty. The employer needs a temporary replacement or must have other employees work overtime to "cover the lost hours"-- this can be an additional cost. The goal is to encourage employers to hire and retain Guardsmen and Reservists as the nation and Indiana needs them; yet "compensate" in a small way, the business for the additional costs associated with having these Hoosiers employed. The tax credit calculation could be based upon documented additional expenses of a business or a formula such as: 50% of hourly rate of absent NG / Reservists for the hours the NG / Reservists is away from work under normal work hours. An example: SGT Jones (a Guardsman) works at Business Furniture as an installer. He is ordered to duty at Camp Atterbury for 2 weeks. His hourly rate is \$20 per hour. Business Furniture could get a tax credit of $\$20 \times 80 \text{ hours} \times 50\% = \800 dollars. The logic is that they will have to pay time and a half to other employees to "cover the hours" while SGT Jones is gone. Note: If SGT Jones uses PTO or vacation then Business Furniture would NOT be entitled as they did NOT experience a loss of labor that they would have had Jones been sick or on vacation. One might ask-- why would SGT Jones take PTO or vacation-- the answer is because he wants to be paid by Business Furniture while off. If he goes to duty per the orders he receives he is NOT entitled to his hourly wages. It is also noteworthy, that some businesses make up the difference in pay when NG or Reservists go on duty. This is voluntary and should not be considered in determining a tax credit.*

SECTION 5. IC xx. Synopsis: Exempt GI Bill, disability compensation, and vocational rehabilitation funds from being considered income in any need based **financial aid calculations**.

Rationale: *Veterans use of GI Bill and vocational rehabilitation funds is for education to improve their opportunity of future employment and not funds to live on. Disability compensation is funds to offset your ability to earn funds based upon your disability. Therefore, this income should NOT be used in any need based financial aid calculation.*

11. Renter Credit for Disabled Veteran

A renter credit for a disabled veteran who would qualify for the property tax credit for disabled veterans except for the fact that the disabled veteran rents living quarters. (Something done in North Dakota)

12. IC 10-16-7-19 Replace SECTION 19 (b). A member of the Armed Forces of the United States who is a current resident of Indiana who dies while in a military duty status shall receive the **member's reasonable funeral expenses**, not exceeding eight thousand eight hundred dollars (\$8,800), shall be paid by the state in the manner as the governor directs.

Rationale: *Those serving on active duty, in the Reserves, and in the National Guard should have an additional incentive for maintaining their Hoosier residence status. This will enhance the possibility that those serving in our armed forces will retain their state residence. Could help stem the tide of veteran losses to Indiana. Should demonstrate further that Indiana appreciates the sacrifices those serving in the armed forces and their families.*

13. IC 10-17 new code. Synopsis: Provides a **state Service Bonus for duty in a combat zone during the Gulf Wars** of up to \$1,000 for military members who are residents of Indiana.

Rationale: *Indiana service members deserve recognition and compensation for their personal sacrifice and economic hardships caused by unit activation and family separation. This would be a continuation of the recognition granted by the State for previous wars. Similar recognition was provided to combat*

veterans of the Vietnam conflict, Korea, and WWII. **See Ohio Law.**

https://veteransbonus.ohio.gov/odvs_web/Bonus_Facts.aspx

Per the federal VA there are 125,804 Gulf War Era Veterans as of Sep 2012; not all would get the maximum proposed bonus as most Desert Storm Veterans served less than 1 year.