

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 12-0038R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Middleton, Henry, Branch, Cole, Holton, Clarke, Mosby, Scott,
Reisinger, Stokes, President Young, Councilmembers Kraft, Welch, Curran

Introduced and read first time: March 26, 2012

Assigned to: Urban Affairs and Aging Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Baltimore City Veterans Commission

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Benefits for Returning Service Members**

3 FOR the purpose of inviting the Secretary, Maryland Department of Veteran Affairs and the
4 Director, Central Regional Resource Coordinator to share information regarding the services
5 and opportunities available to returning Baltimore City veterans; to describe the outreach
6 efforts to deliver the information to returning service men and women, and; to detail the
7 number and percentage of our veterans that are accessing services offered by private entities
8 and local, state and federal governments.

9 **Recitals**

10 The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs was created by the state legislature in 1999 as
11 an executive agency with the mission of assisting veterans, active duty service members, their
12 families, and their dependents in securing benefits earned through military service. The
13 department's service mission includes providing representation to the U.S. Department of
14 Veteran Affairs and other federal, state, and local government agencies for benefits which may be
15 available to eligible individuals.

16 In June 2006, the Department's Outreach and Advocacy program was authorized by the
17 General Assembly. The Program ensures that veterans know what services, benefits, and
18 assistance the federal and State governments provide for them. Outreach and Advocacy informs
19 and educates veterans and their eligible dependents of business, tax, health care, disability,
20 pension and education benefits to which they might be entitled. The Program also keeps the
21 Governor and General Assembly informed on issues important to veterans that may require
22 gubernatorial or legislative action.

23 The Veterans Service and Benefits Program assists eligible veterans in applying for veteran
24 benefits. These benefits include education, home loans, insurance, pensions, and compensation
25 for service-related disabilities, as well as benefits for health care, burial, and surviving family
26 members. Through the Program, the Department's Service and Benefits Officers advise, assist
27 and represent Maryland veterans and their families seeking benefits. Veterans Benefits
28 Specialists help veterans develop, prepare, and submit claims for benefits. To achieve these
29 purposes, the Department operates service and benefits offices at various locations throughout
30 the State.

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

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1 The welcome to *Maryland's Commitment to Veterans* states that the outreach and referral
2 initiative is designed to serve those who have served our country by connecting veterans to
3 behavioral health services in a timely manner: "America could not succeed without the
4 dedication and sacrifice of our military professionals; however when they return from combat,
5 too many veterans are discovering an unfortunate reality. It is nearly impossible to see clearly
6 through complicated paperwork and an overburdened USVA [U. S. Department of Veterans
7 Affairs] system, let alone find medical services necessary to begin a new chapter of life outside
8 the armed forces."

9 The Baltimore Regional Office of the USVA serves 484,013 veterans living in the State of
10 Maryland, 2% of the national veteran population. The Regional Office's jurisdiction includes all
11 counties in the State, provides services at the VA Medical Center in Baltimore, Transition
12 Assistance throughout the State, and participates in a homeless veterans outreach program based
13 at the Maryland Center for Veterans Education and Training.

14 Four years ago, the *Task Force to Study State Assistance to Veterans* found that
15 approximately 1.6 million United States troops have served in Iraq and Afghanistan in the prior
16 five years. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene estimated that at the time there were
17 approximately 15,000 OEF/OIF (Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom)veterans
18 residing in the State. While the number of returning OEF/OIF veterans is small in comparison to
19 the overall numbers of veterans in the State, a large portion of these returning veterans are facing
20 significant challenges in successfully reintegrating into their communities.

21 Testimony presented before the federal Senate Veterans Affairs Committee on July 27, 2011,
22 *Insights from Early RAND Research on Deployment: Effects on U.S. Service Members and Their*
23 *Families*, shows that the problem continues to grow: "September 11, 2011 will mark ten years
24 since the terrorist attacks that precipitated the war on terrorism and the military operations in Iraq
25 and Afghanistan that continue today. During these ten years more than 2.2 million service
26 members from the active and reserve components have deployed for active duty...apart from
27 battlefield and diplomatic realities, another unique feature has been the public recognition of the
28 stresses borne by service members and their families in wartime and, equally important, the
29 recognition of invisible wounds that can haunt our service members who have deployed that can
30 follow them after they leave the military."

31 Women Veterans of America reports that women are the fastest growing segment of people
32 serving in the military. As their influence grows, so does the recognition of the special health
33 needs of women vets and those in active service. In response to the gender-specific needs of
34 women, the VA established medical and psychological services especially for women beginning
35 in 1988, and the VA's Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group has grown
36 continually since then.

37 Women have sexual health and reproductive needs that can be more complicated and
38 sensitive than men's – some women who served in Vietnam learned only later that their close
39 proximity to the chemical Agent Orange was most likely responsible for their child's birth
40 defects. In addition to special case scenarios, women still have concerns about health issues that
41 all women face such as getting regular gynecological care and addressing susceptibility to
42 osteoporosis as they age.

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1 Women are not only serving in the military in clerical and administrative capacities. More
2 and more they are seeing areas torn by war. This means that women veterans are developing
3 more and more mental illness symptoms that were previously only associated with male veterans.
4 Women who have been exposed to war zones may develop post-traumatic stress disorder
5 (PTSD). Women who have been the victim of sexual assault or rape may also develop PTSD.
6 The VA hospital system has developed counseling and therapy programs designed specifically
7 for the needs of women veterans who find themselves in the grip of mental illness.

8 We in Baltimore City honor our returning men and women veterans and their families, deeply
9 appreciate the sacrifices they have made in wartime, and pledge to assist them in securing the
10 health, psychological, educational, and employment services they require to successfully return to
11 civilian life in our communities.

12 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
13 Secretary, Maryland Department of Veteran Affairs and the Director, Central Regional Resource
14 Coordinator are invited to share information regarding the services and opportunities available to
15 returning Baltimore City veterans; to describe the outreach efforts to deliver the information to
16 returning service men and women, and; to detail the number and percentage of our veterans that
17 are accessing services offered by private entities and local, state and federal governments.

18 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
19 Secretary, Maryland Department of Veteran Affairs and the Director, Central Regional Resource
20 Coordinator, the Lieutenant Governor, the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegation to the
21 Maryland General Assembly, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.