

1 **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - FLOOR VERSION**

2 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

3 2nd Session of the 56th Legislature (2018)

4 ENGROSSED SENATE
5 BILL NO. 922

 By: Simpson and Pittman of the
 Senate

6 and

7 Hardin of the House

8
9
10 An Act relating to soldiers and sailors; defining
11 terms; establishing the Oklahoma Women Veterans
12 Program within the Oklahoma Department of Veterans
13 Affairs; establishing program duties; establishing
14 requirements for certain advocacy; establishing
15 requirement for dissemination of certain information;
16 establishing requirement for production of certain
17 report; authorizing promulgation of rules; providing
18 for codification; and providing an effective date.

19 BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

20 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
21 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 422 of Title 72, unless there is
22 created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

23 A. In this article, unless the context otherwise requires:

24 1. "Department" means the Oklahoma Department of Veterans
 Affairs;

1 2. "Executive Director" means the Executive Director of the
2 Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs;

3 3. "Program" means the Oklahoma Women Veterans Program; and

4 4. "Woman veteran" means a woman who served on active duty in
5 the armed forces of the United States or in the Oklahoma National
6 Guard on federal active duty under Title 10 U.S.C., and was
7 discharged or released from that service under conditions other than
8 dishonorable.

9 B. The Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs shall establish
10 the Oklahoma Women Veterans Program. The program shall be housed
11 within the office of the executive director. The mission of the
12 program shall be to ensure that women veterans in the State of
13 Oklahoma have equitable access to federal and state veterans'
14 benefits and services. The Executive Director shall designate a
15 women veterans coordinator for the State of Oklahoma.

16 1. The program shall:

17 a. provide assistance to the women veterans of the state
18 as provided by this section,

19 b. perform outreach functions to improve the awareness of
20 women veterans regarding eligibility for federal and
21 state veterans' benefits and services,

22 c. assess the needs of women veterans with respect to
23 benefits and services,
24

- d. review programs, research projects, and other initiatives designed to address the needs of the women veterans of the state,
- e. make recommendations to the Executive Director regarding the improvement of benefits and services to women veterans, and
- f. incorporate issues concerning women veterans in Department planning regarding veterans' benefits and services.

2. The program shall advocate for women veterans and work to increase public awareness about the gender-specific needs of women veterans. The program shall recommend legislative initiatives and the development of policies on the local, state and national levels to address the issues affecting women veterans. The program shall collaborate with federal, state, county and municipal governments and with private organizations that provide services to women veterans.

The program shall monitor and research issues relating to women veterans. The program shall disseminate information regarding opportunities for women veterans throughout the network of entities with which the program collaborates.

Through conferences, seminars and training workshops with federal, state, county and municipal governments and with private organizations, the program shall provide guidance and direction to

1 women veterans who are applying for grants, benefits or services.
2 The program shall provide facilities and staff as appropriate in
3 support of the program.

4 C. On behalf of the program, the Department may:

5 1. Accept and spend funds:

6 a. appropriated to the Department for the operation of
7 the program, and

8 b. received from other sources, including donations and
9 grants; and

10 2. Provide matching grants to assist in the implementation of
11 the program's goals and objectives.

12 D. Not later than November 1 of each even-numbered year, the
13 Department shall submit to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor,
14 Oklahoma Veterans Commission and the Legislature a report on women
15 veterans in this state.

16 The report may be delivered electronically, and shall:

17 1. Estimate the number of women veterans in this state;

18 2. Report the number of women veterans who contact the
19 Department for assistance;

20 3. Identify the unique problems faced by women veterans; and

21 4. Recommend policy proposals, initiatives and funding levels
22 to address the problems identified.

23 E. The Oklahoma Veterans Commission is authorized to promulgate
24 rules to implement the provisions of this section.

SECTION 2. This act shall become effective November 1, 2018.

COMMITTEE REPORT BY: COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS,
dated 04/10/2018 - DO PASS, As Coauthored.