

# SENATE . . . . . No. 2509

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Senate, May 3, 2018, – Text of the Senate Bill relative to veterans' benefits, rights, appreciation, validation and enforcement (being the text of Senate document number 2454, printed as amended)

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## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninetieth General Court  
(2017-2018)

An Act relative to veterans' benefits, rights, appreciation, validation and enforcement.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 6 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section  
2 15GGGGGG the following 2 sections:-

3 Section 15HHHHHH. The governor shall annually issue a proclamation setting apart the  
4 fifth day of April as Gold Star Wives Day and recommending that the day be observed in an  
5 appropriate manner by the people, including prominent display of the Gold Star Flag on the  
6 property of the State House.

7 Section 15IIIIII. The governor shall annually issue a proclamation setting apart the last  
8 Sunday in September as Gold Star Mothers and Families Day and recommending that the day be  
9 observed in an appropriate manner by the people, including prominent display of the Gold Star  
10 Flag on the property of the State House.

11 SECTION 2. Chapter 29 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after  
12 section 2YYYYY the following section:-

13           Section 2ZZZZ. (a) There shall be established and set up on the books of the  
14    commonwealth a separate fund to be known as the Massachusetts Veterans and Warriors to  
15    Agriculture Program Fund, in this section referred to as the fund. The fund shall be administered  
16    by the department of agricultural resources. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the  
17    contrary, there shall be credited to the fund any revenue from appropriations or other money  
18    authorized by the general court and specifically designated to be credited to the fund and any  
19    gifts, grants, private contributions or investment income earned on the fund's assets and all other  
20    sources. Money deposited in the fund that is unexpended at the end of the fiscal year shall not  
21    revert to the General Fund and shall be available for expenditure in the subsequent year and shall  
22    not be subject to section 5C.

23           (b) The public purpose of the fund shall be to enhance the education, training,  
24    employment, income, productivity and retention of veterans currently working or aspiring to  
25    work in the field of agriculture in the commonwealth. The department of agricultural resources,  
26    in consultation with the department of veteran services, shall establish, develop and implement  
27    the Massachusetts Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture Program in furtherance of this purpose.  
28    Amounts credited to the fund shall be used, without further appropriation, for the costs  
29    associated with administering and implementing the program and may also be used to provide  
30    grants or loans on a competitive basis to public, private and charitable entities to finance projects  
31    in furtherance of this public purpose. Expenditures from the fund for such purpose shall  
32    complement and not replace existing local, state, private or federal funding for related training  
33    and educational programs.

34           SECTION 3. The third paragraph of section 26 of chapter 31 of the General Laws, as  
35    appearing in the 2016 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the last sentence and

36 inserting in place thereof the following 2 sentences:- Notwithstanding the administrator's right to  
37 require a physician's certificate in the case of a disabled veteran, an appointing authority shall  
38 not require, request or accept an individual's military medical record or military personnel  
39 service record for the purpose of employment; provided, however, that an appointing authority  
40 may require, request or accept the individual's DD-214 form. An appointing authority shall not  
41 impose a term or condition on an individual as a condition of obtaining or retaining employment  
42 if compliance with the term or condition would require the individual to present the individual's  
43 military medical record or military personnel service record as set forth in this paragraph;  
44 provided, however, that an appointing authority may impose a term or condition requiring the  
45 individual to present the individual's DD-214 form.

46 SECTION 4. Subdivision (1) of section 4 of chapter 32 of the General Laws, as so  
47 appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after paragraph (r) the following paragraph:-

48 (r<sup>1/2</sup>) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, a member in service  
49 who: (i) served in the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps or the National  
50 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps; (ii) has completed not  
51 less than 4 years of membership service; and (iii) has retired or will retire on or after January 1,  
52 1975 shall receive full credit for the period of such service; provided, however, that such a  
53 member shall receive credit for not more than 4 years of that service. Eligibility for the creditable  
54 service of members in service shall be conditioned upon payment into the annuity savings fund  
55 of the applicable retirement system, in 1 sum or in installments upon such terms as the applicable  
56 retirement board may provide, of an amount equal to the contributions that a member would have  
57 otherwise paid into the retirement system plus buyback interest thereon for the period of

58 commissioned corps service based upon the annual salary the member received in the first year  
59 of membership service after the member's commissioned corps service.

60 SECTION 5. Section 59 of chapter 33 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
61 amended by striking out, in lines 6 and 7, the words “34 days in any state fiscal year and not  
62 exceeding 17” and inserting in place thereof the following figure:- 40.

63 SECTION 6. Subsection (a) of said section 59 of said chapter 33, as so appearing, is  
64 hereby amended by adding the following sentence:- For the purposes of this subsection, “day”  
65 shall mean any 24-hour period regardless of calendar day.

66 SECTION 7. Said section 59 of said chapter 33, as so appearing, is hereby further  
67 amended by adding the following subsection:-

68 (f) For the purposes of this section, “base pay for military service” shall not include any  
69 housing, incentive, bonus, skills pay, allowance or other stipend or benefit paid to the employee  
70 for the employee’s military service.

71 SECTION 8. Chapter 40 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after  
72 section 22A½ the following section:-

73 Section 22¾. (a) A municipality may designate a parking space at the city or town hall  
74 for the parking of a veteran in a motor vehicle that is owned and operated by the veteran and that  
75 displays a veteran registration plate issued pursuant to section 2 of chapter 90. The parking space  
76 shall be available during the normal business hours of the city or town hall for use by such  
77 veteran without charge. The municipality shall erect and maintain a sign designating such a  
78 parking space that shall bear the words “Veteran Parking Only – this space is reserved for those

79 who have served. Unauthorized Vehicles May Be Removed At The Vehicle Owner's Expense".  
80 The parking space shall only be used by a veteran that meets the requirements of this subsection.

81 (b) A violation of subsection (a) shall be punished by a fine of \$100 and the city or town  
82 may provide for the removal of a vehicle in the manner provided in section 22D. The penalty  
83 shall not be a surchargeable offense under section 113B of chapter 175.

84 SECTION 9. Section 5 of chapter 59 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2016  
85 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 595, 651, 676, 725, 770 and 842, the  
86 word "five" and inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following figure:- 2.

87 SECTION 10. Said section 5 of said chapter 59, as so appearing, is hereby further  
88 amended by striking out, in lines 817 and 881, the figure "5" and inserting in place thereof, in  
89 each instance, the following figure:- 2.

90 SECTION 11. Said section 5 of said chapter 59, as so appearing, is hereby further  
91 amended by striking out clause Twenty-second G and inserting in place thereof the following  
92 clause:-

93 Twenty-second G. In any city or town that accepts this clause, real estate that is the  
94 domicile of a person but is owned by a trustee, conservator or other fiduciary for the person's  
95 benefit if the real estate would be eligible for exemption under clause Twenty-second, Twenty-  
96 second A, Twenty-second B, Twenty-second C, Twenty-second D, Twenty-second E or Twenty-  
97 second F if the person were the owner of the real estate.

98 SECTION 12. Section 5N of said chapter 59, as so appearing, is hereby amended by  
99 striking out, in lines 15 and 16, the words “; and provided further, that the reduction of the real  
100 property tax bill shall not exceed \$1,000 in a given tax year”.

101 SECTION 13. Said section 5N of said chapter 59, as so appearing, is hereby further  
102 amended by striking out the third paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following  
103 paragraph:-

104 A city or town, by vote of its legislative body and subject to its charter, may adjust the  
105 exemption in this section by allowing an approved representative for persons physically unable  
106 to provide such services to the city or town. The maximum reduction of the real property tax bill  
107 shall be 175 volunteer hours in a given tax year; provided, however, that a city or town may limit  
108 the number of hours for which a person may receive a reduction to fewer than 175 hours in a  
109 given tax year.

110 SECTION 14. Section 1 of chapter 60A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
111 amended by inserting after the word “guard”, in line 137, the following words:- or reserves.

112 SECTION 15. Section 2 of chapter 90 of the General Laws is hereby amended by  
113 inserting after the word “vehicle”, in line 507, as so appearing, the following words:- or to the  
114 registrant of a motor vehicle that is owned by a partnership, trust or corporation if the motor  
115 vehicle otherwise meets the criteria of a private passenger vehicle and there is no distinctive  
116 promotional or advertisement marking visible on the motor vehicle.

117 SECTION 16. Said section 2 of said chapter 90 is hereby further amended by inserting  
118 after the word “person”, in line 512, as so appearing, the following words:- or for 1 motor  
119 vehicle that is owned by a partnership, trust or corporation if the motor vehicle otherwise meets

120 the criteria of a private passenger vehicle, there is no distinctive promotional or advertisement  
121 marking visible on the motor vehicle and the motor vehicle is principally used by that person.

122 SECTION 17. Said section 2 of said chapter 90 is hereby further amended by inserting  
123 after the word “person”, in line 517, as so appearing, the following words:- or for 1 motor  
124 vehicle that is owned by a partnership, trust or corporation if the motor vehicle otherwise meets  
125 the criteria of a private passenger vehicle, there is no distinctive promotional or advertisement  
126 marking visible on the motor vehicle and the motor vehicle is principally used by that person.

127 SECTION 18. Said section 2 of said chapter 90 is hereby further amended by inserting  
128 after the word “vehicle”, in line 521, as so appearing, the following words:- or a motor vehicle  
129 that is owned by a partnership, trust or corporation if the motor vehicle otherwise meets the  
130 criteria of a private passenger vehicle and there is no distinctive promotional or advertisement  
131 marking visible on the motor vehicle.

132 SECTION 19. Section 6 of chapter 115 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
133 amended by adding the following sentence:-

134 The commonwealth shall make payments to cities and towns equal to 100 per cent of the  
135 amount of benefits paid by cities and towns to or on behalf of recipients living in permanent  
136 housing located on real property owned by the federal government or living in institutions or  
137 transitional housing, as defined in 108 CMR 2.02, if such housing is located on real property  
138 owned by the federal government; provided, however, that such payments shall be made to the  
139 city or town in which the recipient resides only for 48 months of residence; and provided further,  
140 that such payments shall not be made for a recipient who has resided elsewhere in the city or

141 town for the 6 consecutive months immediately preceding the recipient's move into such  
142 housing.

143 SECTION 20. Section 6B of chapter 115 of the General Laws, as amended by section 51  
144 of chapter 47 of the acts of 2017, is hereby amended by adding the following paragraph:-

145 Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, an annuity payment made to a  
146 recipient pursuant to this section shall not constitute income in an application or formula utilized  
147 by the commonwealth or a political subdivision to determine eligibility for a program or service  
148 funded or provided by the commonwealth. Notwithstanding the forgoing, such an annuity  
149 payment may constitute income if not doing so would, under federal law, prohibit eligibility or  
150 otherwise negatively impact the recipient's benefits under the program or service; provided,  
151 however, that the commonwealth or a political subdivision shall seek a waiver from any federal  
152 law with such an eligibility requirement.

153 SECTION 21. Section 8 of said chapter 115, as appearing in the 2016 Official Edition, is  
154 hereby amended by striking out the first sentence and inserting in place thereof the following  
155 sentence:- If a deceased person's estate has insufficient resources to pay for the cost of the  
156 funeral and burial of a deceased person covered by this chapter, the burial agent under section 7  
157 shall expend not more than \$4,000 for the funeral and burial; provided, however, that the cost of  
158 the funeral and burial shall be not more than \$5,000.

159 SECTION 22. The first paragraph of section 25 of chapter 118E of the General Laws, as  
160 so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after clause (4) the following clause:-

161 (4½) the entire amount of a monthly payment to a veteran or a widowed spouse of a  
162 veteran, including pension, aid and attendance and housebound benefits, from the United States



163 Department of Veterans Affairs if the veteran or widowed spouse would not have received such  
164 a payment from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs but for unreimbursed medical  
165 expense; and.

166 SECTION 23. Chapter 149 is hereby amended by striking out section 52A½, as so  
167 appearing, and inserting in place thereof the following section:-

168 Section 52A½. An employee who is a veteran or a member of a department of war  
169 veterans listed in section 17 of chapter 8 and who desires to participate in a Memorial Day  
170 exercise, parade or service in the employee's community of residence shall be allowed and  
171 granted a leave of absence of sufficient time to participate in such an exercise, parade or service  
172 in the employee's community of residence. The leave of absence shall be with or without pay, at  
173 the discretion of the employee's employer.

174 An employee who is a veteran or is a member of a department of war veterans listed in  
175 said section 17 of said chapter 8 shall be granted time off to observe Veterans Day. The time off  
176 shall be with or without pay, at the discretion of the employee's employer.

177 This section shall not apply to employees whose services are essential and critical to the  
178 public health or safety and determined to be essential to the safety and security of such an  
179 employee's employer or the property of the employer.

180 SECTION 24. Sections 10 and 11 of Chapter 276A of the General Laws are hereby  
181 repealed.

182 SECTION 25. The General Laws are hereby amended by inserting after chapter 276B the  
183 following chapter:-

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CHAPTER 276C.

DIVERSION FOR VETERANS.

Section 1. (a) The district courts and, in the city of Boston, the municipal court of the city of Boston, shall have jurisdiction to: (i) if the district attorney or attorney general consents, divert prior to arraignment; or (ii) if the district attorney or attorney general does not consent, place on pre-trial probation after arraignment, a veteran who: (1) is on active service in the armed forces of the United States or has a history of military service in the armed forces of the United States; and (2) is charged with an offense against the commonwealth for which a term of imprisonment may be imposed, to place the veteran into an individualized treatment plan. The diversion or placement on pre-trial probation shall be done without regard for the veteran's age.

Such a veteran shall be eligible for diversion or pre-trial probation under this section if the veteran: (i) has not been previously convicted of a violation of a law of the commonwealth, another state or of the United States in any criminal court proceeding after having reached the age of 18 years, except for traffic violations for which no term of imprisonment may have been imposed; (ii) does not have an outstanding warrant, continuance, appeal or criminal case pending before a court of the commonwealth, another state or the United States; and (iii) has a written report pursuant to subsection (d) of section 2 determining that the veteran would benefit from participation in an individualized treatment plan.

(b) A defendant who previously was placed on pre-trial probation pursuant to this chapter shall not be eligible to have a subsequent criminal matter placed on pre-trial probation pursuant to this chapter.

205           Section 2. (a) A probation officer of a district court or, in the city of Boston, the  
206 municipal court of the city of Boston, when gathering information in accordance with section 85  
207 of chapter 276, shall, prior to arraignment of a defendant on a criminal complaint, inquire of the  
208 defendant if the defendant is a veteran and use best efforts to establish the defendant's status as a  
209 veteran eligible for diversion or pre-trial probation under section 1. If a probation officer or the  
210 court reasonably believes that the defendant is a veteran or the defendant self-identifies as a  
211 veteran, the probation officer shall inform the defendant of the diversion program for veterans  
212 under this chapter.

213           (b) If, on the scheduled date for the arraignment of a defendant on a criminal complaint,  
214 the probation officer or the court reasonably believes that the defendant is a veteran eligible for  
215 diversion or pre-trial probation under section 1, the court may offer to continue the case for 30  
216 days for the defendant to be assessed pursuant to subsection (d).

217           If the defendant accepts the offer of a continuance, the defendant shall notify the court of  
218 the acceptance on the scheduled date for arraignment. The court may continue the case for the  
219 assessment prior to arraignment with the consent of the district attorney or attorney general. If  
220 the district attorney or attorney general moves to arraign the case, the court shall arraign the  
221 defendant before continuing the case for assessment.

222           The court shall not offer to continue the case under this subsection if: (i) the defendant  
223 has been charged with an offense pursuant to section 24G, section 24L, section 24V of chapter  
224 90 or section 8A or section 8B of chapter 90B or a second or subsequent offense pursuant to  
225 section 24 of chapter 90 or section 8 of chapter 90B or (ii) the court or the commonwealth

226 intends to move, based on dangerousness, for an order of pretrial detention or release on  
227 conditions pursuant to section 58A of chapter 276.

228 (c) During a 30-day continuance under subsection (b), the probation department shall  
229 provide the defendant's information to the United States Department of Veteran Affairs for  
230 verification of veteran status and determination of eligibility for veteran's benefits.

231 (d) During the 30-day continuance under subsection (b) and if the defendant's veteran  
232 status is confirmed, the defendant shall be assessed by an independent licensed clinician of the  
233 United States Department of Veterans Affairs or an independent licensed clinician of another  
234 state or federal agency who has suitable knowledge of and experience with veterans' affairs. If  
235 the independent licensed clinician determines that the defendant has demonstrated  
236 symptomatology that is connected to the criminal complaint for which the defendant has been  
237 charged and could benefit from participation in an individualized treatment plan designed and  
238 approved by the clinician, the clinician shall provide a written report to the court that shall  
239 include such determination and recommendations for an individualized treatment plan.

240 (e) The court may extend a continuance under this section for an additional 30 days upon  
241 a showing of good cause.

242 Section 3. (a) If, after a continuance pursuant to section 2, the court determines that the  
243 defendant is not a veteran eligible for diversion or pre-trial probation under section 1, the  
244 defendant's case shall proceed on the original charges as provided by law.

245 (b) If, after a continuance under section 2, the court determines that the defendant: (i) is a  
246 veteran eligible for diversion or pre-trial probation under section 1 and (ii) would benefit from  
247 participation in an individualized treatment plan recommended pursuant to subsection (d) of

248 section 2, the court may place the defendant on pre-trial probation for not more than 1 year and  
249 order that the defendant participate in the recommended individualized treatment plan.

250 (c) Unless otherwise ordered by the court, the independent clinician providing treatment  
251 to the defendant shall submit to the court a report concerning the defendant's participation in the  
252 individualized treatment plan every 90 days during the period in which the defendant's case is  
253 continued pre-arraignment or the defendant is placed on pre-trial probation under subsection (b).  
254 If the independent clinician providing treatment has reason to believe that the defendant is non-  
255 compliant with the individualized treatment plan, the independent clinician shall promptly report  
256 such belief to the court.

257 (d) If, at the conclusion of the period set for pre-trial probation under subsection (b), the  
258 court determines that an additional period of pre-trial probation is necessary, it may extend and  
259 amend any terms of the defendant's pre-trial probation; provided, however, that the total amount  
260 of time of the pre-trial probation does not exceed 18 months.

261 If, at the conclusion of the period set for pre-trial probation under said subsection (b), the  
262 court determines, based on representations from the independent clinician providing treatment,  
263 that the defendant has successfully completed the individualized treatment plan, the court shall  
264 dismiss the original charges pending against the defendant; provided, however, that the court  
265 shall not so determine until after argument from counsel for both parties and the opportunity for  
266 any victim to address the court.

267 (e) The court shall not place a defendant on pre-trial probation under subsection (b)  
268 unless the defendant consents in writing to the terms and conditions of the pre-trial probation and  
269 knowingly executes a waiver of the right to a speedy trial.

270 (f) If a defendant is charged with a subsequent criminal offense in any jurisdiction during  
271 pre-trial probation under this section, the court shall issue whatever process is necessary to bring  
272 the defendant before the court and the district attorney or attorney general may proceed on the  
273 original charges as provided by law.

274 (g) If there is reason to believe the defendant has failed to comply with or complete any  
275 part of the individualized treatment plan during the pre-trial probation, the court shall, on its own  
276 or at the request of the district attorney or attorney general, issue such process as is necessary to  
277 bring the defendant before the court. If, after inquiry, the court finds that the defendant has failed  
278 to comply with or complete the individualized treatment plan, the court may terminate the pre-  
279 trial probation and the district attorney or attorney general may proceed on the original charges  
280 as provided by law or the court may refer the veteran to a special session of the court working  
281 with veterans.

282 Section 4. Nothing in this chapter shall limit the availability of diversion to a defendant  
283 pursuant to chapter 276A nor limit the eligibility of a defendant to participate in a community-  
284 based restorative justice program pursuant to chapter 276B.

285 SECTION 26. Section 16 of chapter 130 of the acts of 2005 is hereby amended by  
286 striking out subsection (d), as appearing in section 4 of chapter 167 of the acts of 2005, and  
287 inserting in place thereof following subsection:-

288 (d) If a person died while in active service, a sum of \$1,000 shall be paid in the manner  
289 provided by subsection (c) in addition to any unpaid amount the person would have been eligible  
290 to receive pursuant to subsection (a).

291 SECTION 27. The executive office of health and human services, in conjunction with the  
292 department of veterans' services and the center for health information and analysis, shall conduct  
293 a study on the transportation of veterans in emergency medical situations to facilities that are not  
294 facilities of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. For the purposes of this section,  
295 "veteran" shall mean a veteran who is receives benefits under the TRICARE program, as defined  
296 in 10 U.S.C. 1072(7).

297 The study shall: (i) identify, after seeking consultation with the United States Department  
298 of Veterans Affairs, reimbursement guidelines for ambulance services for transportation of  
299 veterans to facilities that are not facilities of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs in  
300 emergency medical situations; (ii) identify gaps in reimbursement payments where the  
301 commonwealth may be eligible for payments to health care facilities or for ambulance services;  
302 (iii) determine the associated costs and the reimbursements that are available to veterans when  
303 transported to facilities that are not facilities of the United States Department of Veterans  
304 Affairs; and (iv) recommend potential notification procedures by medical facilities to advise  
305 veterans regarding the process of seeking state or federal medical reimbursements; and (v)  
306 recommend any gaps to insure proper continuity of care. The office shall submit a report on the  
307 study to the clerks of the senate and house, the chairs of the joint committee on veterans and  
308 federal affairs, the chairs of the joint committee on health care financing and the senate and  
309 house committees on ways and means not later than March 1, 2019.

310 SECTION 28. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the department  
311 of veterans' services, in consultation with the public employee retirement administration  
312 commission, shall conduct a study on the feasibility and cost to the commonwealth of allowing a  
313 member of a retirement system who: (i) is a veteran, as defined under section 7 of chapter 4 of

314 the General Laws; and (ii) served in the armed forces of the United States, to receive credit for  
315 active service in the armed services of the United States; provided, however, that such creditable  
316 service shall not include service for more than 4 years; provided further, that such creditable  
317 service shall not be allowed for any period of active service for which the veteran has received  
318 credit pursuant to paragraph (h) of subdivision (1) of section 4 of chapter 32 of the General  
319 Laws; and provided further, that the amount shall not exceed the 80 per cent allowed to retire.  
320 Creditable service time, both enlisted and commissioned, may be applied toward retirement on a  
321 ratio of 5 years guard service or 5 years active reserve service substitutable for each year of  
322 active service.

323 The department shall also examine the feasibility of including members of the nurse  
324 cadet core in the definition of “veteran” under said section 7 of said chapter 4.

325 The study, along with any recommendations, shall be submitted to the clerks of the house  
326 and senate, the joint committee on public service, the joint committee on veterans and federal  
327 affairs and the house and senate committees on ways and means by December 31, 2018.

328 SECTION 29. The executive office of health and human services, in conjunction with the  
329 department of veterans’ services, shall conduct a study on access to benefits of the United States  
330 Department of Veterans Affairs for military veterans who may be in state or county correctional  
331 custody in the commonwealth.

332 The study shall investigate any impediments through state, county or federal policy,  
333 logistical challenges, or otherwise, that veterans in custody may face when seeking to apply for  
334 benefits under a federal or state program or seeking to access medical evaluations for the purpose  
335 of completing, revising or renewing such a benefit’s application.



336           The office shall submit a report on the study to the clerks of the senate and house, the  
337 joint committee on veterans and federal affairs and the senate and house committees on ways and  
338 means not later than March 1, 2019.

339           SECTION 30. The department of veterans' services, in coordination with the executive  
340 office for administration and finance and the military division of the executive office of public  
341 safety and security, shall study the feasibility and costs associated with designating members of  
342 the Massachusetts national guard and the reserve forces of the United States with status as  
343 veterans under clause Forty-third of section 7 of chapter 4 of the General Laws.

344           The departments shall report its findings to the clerks of the house of representatives and  
345 senate and the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs not later than September 1, 2019.

346           SECTION 31. The department of higher education, in coordination with the department  
347 of veterans' services, shall conduct a study on the cost and feasibility of exempting veterans of  
348 the commonwealth from tuition, fees and associated costs of attending public colleges and  
349 universities in the commonwealth resulting from changes in federal veteran services and benefits  
350 related to higher education. The study shall include, but not be limited to: (i) an evaluation of the  
351 cost of exempting veterans from paying tuition, fees and associated costs at public colleges and  
352 universities in the commonwealth; (ii) current residency requirements for in-state tuition  
353 eligibility in the commonwealth and in other states; (iii) the societal impact of an exemption for  
354 veterans and their families; and (iv) the effect of such a policy on the finances of the  
355 commonwealth. The department shall submit a report on the study to the clerks of the senate and  
356 house, the chairs of the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs and the chairs of the joint  
357 committee on higher education not later than December 31, 2019.