

SENATE No. 2916

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts



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KARYN POLITO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

September 24, 2020

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives,

I am filing for your consideration a bill entitled “An Act Relative to Establishing the Massachusetts Medal of Fidelity.” This legislation would authorize the Massachusetts National Guard to award the Medal of Fidelity to the next-of-kin of Massachusetts service members who die as the result of service-connected illnesses, conditions or injuries that are related either to exposure to harmful toxins, herbicides, agents, and materials or to combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder.

The Medal of Fidelity will complement the existing Medal of Liberty, which is presented to the families of Massachusetts veterans who die of combat-related physical injuries. While similar to the Medal of Liberty, the Medal of Fidelity will instead recognize service-connected injuries related to exposure to harmful substances like Agent Orange and conditions like Gulf War Syndrome, in addition to combat-related mental illness. The bill authorizes a commission, composed of the Adjutant General of the Massachusetts National Guard and two field grade officers, to make Medal of Fidelity award recommendations to the Governor.

The creation of a Medal of Fidelity will allow the Commonwealth to recognize the enormous toll that illnesses and injuries outside of combat can take, not only on service members but also on their families and loved ones. This is the first medal of its kind given by the Commonwealth to recognize veterans who have lost their lives as the result of service-connected illness and injuries such as those described above. The Medal of Fidelity represents our commitment to supporting our service members before, during and after their military service

and to honoring the sacrifices they and their families make in service to the United States. I urge the swift enactment of this legislation.

Respectfully submitted, Charles D. Baker

Charles D. Baker,
Governor

SENATE No. 2916

Senate, September 28, 2020 -- Message from His Excellency the Governor recommending legislation relative to establishing the Massachusetts Medal of Fidelity

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-First General Court
(2019-2020)

An Act relative to establishing the Massachusetts Medal of Fidelity.

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 33 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018 Official Edition,
2 is hereby amended by inserting after section 67A the following section:-

3 Section 67B. There shall be a Massachusetts medal of fidelity to be presented to the next
4 of kin of a service member or veteran who died as the result of either combat-related post-
5 traumatic stress disorder or a service-connected disease, condition or injury related to the
6 exposure to harmful toxins, herbicides, agents or materials, where the exposure occurred while
7 serving in the armed forces of the United States, active or reserve components, or the
8 Massachusetts National Guard. A service member must have entered military service or state
9 active duty from the commonwealth, have been a resident of the commonwealth at the time of
10 death or have been a member of the Massachusetts national guard at the time of death. To be
11 eligible, a service member or veteran must have served after December 6, 1941. The adjutant
12 general or designee and 2 field grade officers of the armed forces of the commonwealth detailed

13 by the commander-in-chief shall constitute a commission to make recommendations to the
14 commander-in-chief for the awarding of the Massachusetts medal of fidelity.

15 SECTION 2. Section 1 shall take effect on October 11, 2020.