

SENATE No. 2462

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts



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KARYN POLITO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

May 28, 2021

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives,

As we approach the Memorial Day, a date dedicated to honoring and mourning service members who have died in the performance of their duties, I am re-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 service-related post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury. This legislation was previously filed, but given the demands and constraints facing us all during the pandemic, the session ended before it could be passed into law.

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 like 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,
Governor

SENATE No. 2462

Senate, June 1, 2021 -- Message from His Excellency the Governor recommending legislation to establish the Massachusetts Medal of Fidelity

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Second General Court
(2021-2022)

An Act relative to establishing the Massachusetts Medal of Fidelity.

Whereas, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to establish forthwith a medal of fidelity, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience.

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: (i) service-connected post-
5 traumatic stress disorder; (ii) a condition resulting from a service-connected traumatic brain
6 injury; or (iii) a service-connected disease, condition or injury related to the exposure to harmful
7 toxins, herbicides, agents or materials, where the exposure occurred while serving in the armed
8 forces of the United States, active or reserve components, or the Massachusetts National Guard.

9 A service member must have entered military service or state active duty from the
10 commonwealth, have been a resident of the commonwealth at the time of death or have been a
11 member of the Massachusetts national guard at the time of death. To be eligible, a service

12 member or veteran must have served after December 6, 1941. The adjutant general or designee
13 and 2 field grade officers of the armed forces of the commonwealth detailed by the commander-
14 in-chief shall constitute a commission to make recommendations to the commander-in-chief for
15 the awarding of the Massachusetts medal of fidelity.