State of New York

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Department of State
Secretary of State

State of New York

Executive Chamber

No. 34

EXECUTIVE ORDER

CONTINUING THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON RETURNING VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

WHEREAS, thousands of New York State residents are veterans who have served in armed conflicts over the last several decades, including Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq; and

WHEREAS, many currently deployed military personnel, including National Guard and Reserve members, have returned and will return from ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq; and

WHEREAS, a significant number of veterans who served on active duty in armed hostilities are at risk to return home with – or later develop – physical disabilities, medical conditions, mental illnesses and/or substance abuse disorders, including but not limited to traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder, impacting not only those veterans but their families as well; and

WHEREAS, the prolonged nature of the economic recession on the national and state level has had a detrimental impact on the employment opportunities available to returning veterans; and

WHEREAS, it is important to assure that all available resources are marshaled to help returning veterans and their families in addressing these challenges; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to ensure that federal, state and other funding and service resources which are or become available to help veterans and their families, especially those experiencing multiple challenges, are coordinated as well as possible and used in the most effective and efficient manner; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that veterans and their families are aware of and have access to such resources and services; and

WHEREAS, increased public awareness of the sacrifices and needs of returning veterans and their families is essential to help returning veterans transition back into their home communities and workplaces; and

WHEREAS, it is crucial to recognize that veterans returning from active duty bring with them skills, training and experience which could be used in a variety of job settings, and that any barriers to the application of such skills, training and experience where appropriate should be identified and eliminated; and

WHEREAS, the New York State Council on Returning Veterans and Their Families was established by Executive Order 12 issued by Governor David Paterson on November 11, 2008 to address a number of the issues set forth above; and

WHEREAS, the extended duration of the ongoing military conflicts and the consequential increase in the number of veterans returning therefrom makes it important to continue such Council but with a reinvigorated membership and updated mission, and to take prompt action to identify ways in which veterans can obtain credit for the skills, training and experience they acquired while in military service for purposes of securing employment with state or local governments; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ANDREW M. CUOMO, Governor of the State of New York, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and Laws of the State of New York do hereby order as follows:

1. The New York State Council on Returning Veterans and Their Families (the Council) is hereby continued, and its membership and mission are broadened as set forth below.

2. The members of the Council shall consist of the Director of the Division of Veterans' Affairs, the Commissioner of the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, the Commissioner of the Office of Mental Health, the Adjutant General of the Division of Military and Naval Affairs, the Commissioner of the Department of Labor, the Commissioner of Homes and Community Renewal, the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Economic Development, the Commissioner of the State Education Department, the President of the Higher Education Services Corporation, and the Director of the Office for the Aging, or their designees, and additional members appointed by the Governor, including one representative of local government, one or more veterans or family members of veterans, one representative of an organization that provides behavioral health services to veterans, one representative of an organization that provides substance abuse services to veterans, and an individual with academic expertise in veterans' affairs. The Director of the Division of Veterans' Affairs or a designee thereof shall serve as the Chair of the Council.

3. A majority of the members of the Council shall constitute a quorum and all recommendations of the Council shall require approval of a majority of the total members of the Council.

4. No member of the Council shall be disqualified from holding any public office or employment, nor shall he or she forfeit any such office or employment by virtue of his or her appointment hereunder. Members of the Council shall receive no compensation for their services but shall be allowed their actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their functions hereunder. All members of the Council shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor and vacancies shall be filled by the Governor. The Governor may appoint additional voting and non-voting members to the Council as necessary.

5. The Council is charged with making recommendations to assist in the coordination of State strategy to accomplish the following:

a. Increase public awareness of the needs of returning veterans and their families and the value that veterans offer to communities as a result of their service;

b. Conduct education and outreach to ensure that veterans and their families are aware of available resources and services to help them address physical health and mental health and substance abuse problems resulting from active duty;

c. Properly identify veterans and their families and ensure that they are aware of and have access to available benefits and services;

d. Identify and eliminate barriers to the prompt and accurate diagnosis of physical disabilities, medical conditions, mental illnesses and/or substance abuse disorders affecting returning veterans and their families;

e. Identify and eliminate barriers to service so that veterans, particularly those with more than one disability or condition, have sufficient access to needed resources and services;

f. Encourage the development of a viable referral network, including peer-to-peer systems;

g. Maximize the resources available to help returning veterans and their families address physical disabilities, medical conditions, mental illnesses and/or substance abuse disorders arising from active service, including funding and services available through federal, state and non-governmental sources;

h. Coordinate resources and services available for returning veterans and their families that address physical disabilities, medical conditions, mental illnesses and/or substance abuse disorders resulting from active duty to maximize efficiency and effectiveness;

i. Provide returning veterans with assistance in locating appropriate housing as needed and resolving housing-related difficulties;

j. Assist with the credentialing of military specialties into civilian occupations, so that the skills, education, training, experience, and credentials acquired by veterans during their military service can be used to expand their employment opportunities;

k. Provide returning veterans with information and assistance in meeting their academic goals, including information and assistance regarding scholarship opportunities and higher education loans; and

l. Any additional matters as directed by the Chair of the Council or the Governor or his designee.

6. The Chair shall continue the advisory body comprised of various stakeholders representing a broad range of interests related to the well-being of veterans and their families, who can call upon their experience and expertise to assist the Council in its work. Membership on such advisory body should reflect the diversity of veterans and their families in New York State so as to be culturally competent.

7. The Council shall issue reports to the Governor of its activities, findings and recommendations in furtherance of the purposes of this Order from time to time as directed by the Governor or the Governor's designee.

8. Every agency and authority of this State shall cooperate with the Council and furnish such information and assistance as the Council determines is reasonably necessary to fulfill the purposes of this Executive Order.

9. Every agency and authority of this State is hereby directed to review paths into the civilian workforce and identify ways the State can better recognize the skills, education, training, experience, and credentials acquired by veterans while in military service, including by reviewing licensure and educational credit programs to identify ways qualifying military training and experience can be counted.

10. This Executive Order revokes and supersedes Executive Order 12, issued by Governor Paterson on November 11, 2008.

GIVEN under my hand and the Privy Seal of the State in the City of Albany this tenth day of November in the year two thousand eleven.

BY THE GOVERNOR

Secretary to the Governor