

SCS HCS HB 1524 & 2260 -- VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY

This bill changes the laws regarding veterans and members of the military and establishes the Missouri Youth Challenge Academy. In its main provisions, the bill:

- (1) Requires all state agencies and political subdivisions of this state to give a three-point bonus preference to a service-disabled veteran business operating as a Missouri business when letting a contract for the performance of any job or service. Currently, they must give preference to a disabled veteran business when the quality of performance is equal or better and the price quoted is the same or less. If there is an insufficient number of veteran businesses or none that submits a bid or proposal for a contract, the provision requiring the Commissioner of the Office of Administration to have a goal of 3% of all contracts to be let to service-disabled veteran businesses will not apply (Section 34.074, RSMo);
- (2) Specifies that the State of Missouri recognizes the designations of Prisoner of War (POW) and Missing in Action (MIA) as valid descriptions of casualty status and category classification for military personnel (Section 41.025);
- (3) Defines "primary next of kin" as, in order of precedence, a surviving spouse, eldest child, father or mother, eldest brother or sister, or eldest grandchild as it relates to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (Section 41.030);
- (4) Allows the Adjutant General to establish the Missouri Youth Challenge Academy to provide positive interventions for at-risk high school age youth. The academy will utilize residential military-based training and supervised work experience to build life skills of high school dropouts and training in responsible citizenship, life-coping and academic skills, and other personal development skills. The Missouri Youth Challenge Foundation Fund is created consisting of gifts, donations, appropriations, transfers, and bequests. The Adjutant General is authorized to make grants from the fund to support the academy (Sections 41.206 and 41.207);
- (5) Allows a sergeant major from the Missouri National Guard and a reserve unit to serve on the panel of the Missouri Military Family Relief Fund. Currently, only a command sergeants major of the guard and a command sergeants major of a reserve unit can be members of the panel (Sections 41.216 and 143.1004);
- (6) Authorizes the Governor, upon the recommendation of the Adjutant General, to present:

(a) A Legion of Merit Medal to individuals who have exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding military service and achievement reflecting honorably and creditably upon the state (Section 41.572);

(b) A campaign ribbon to individuals who have served in direct support of several military campaigns. The ribbons include a Missouri Iraq Campaign Ribbon, a Missouri Afghanistan Campaign Ribbon, a Missouri Kosovo Campaign Ribbon, and a Missouri Vietnam Campaign Ribbon (Sections 41.582, 41.584, 41.586, and 41.588); and

(c) The Governor's Unit Citation to a unit, team, or task force of the Missouri National Guard which served after September 11, 2001, during state emergency duty or a federal deployment with outstanding honor and distinction (Section 2);

(7) Authorizes the Adjutant General to present:

(a) A Missouri Adjutant General Staff Identification Badge to an individual based on demonstrated outstanding performance of duty (Section 41.578); and

(b) The Missouri National Guard First Sergeant Ribbon to an individual who has been a first sergeant for three years and has been recommended by his or her squadron or company commander for having demonstrated exceptional and honorable leadership qualities and dedication as a first sergeant (Section 1);

(8) Requires the Secretary of State to establish procedures for absent uniformed services and overseas voters to request voter registration applications and absentee ballot applications. At least one form of electronic communication for use by absent uniformed services and overseas voters must be designated for requesting and sending voter registration applications and absentee ballots. These voters may request and designate a preferred method of electronic transmission of these applications and ballots or request receipt by mail. The Secretary of State must also develop, in coordination with local election authorities, a free access system by which these voters may determine whether an absentee ballot has been received by the appropriate election authority. A sufficient quantity of paper ballots for each federal election must be printed and available for these voters within 45 days prior to the election, and the election authority must begin transmitting the ballots to these voters who have submitted an absentee ballot application. Registration applications and paper ballots cannot be rejected by an election authority because of any restriction on the paper or envelope type. Missouri is required to use the special write-in absentee ballot provided in Section 115.292 for all elections for

federal office as authorized by federal law (Sections 115.156 - 115.292);

(9) Adds a dependent of a retired military member who relocates to Missouri within one year of the date of his or her parent's retirement from active duty to those individuals who are exempt from the requirement that a student must have attended a state high school for at least three years prior to graduation in order to be eligible for a grant under the A+ Schools Program (Section 160.545);

(10) Adds a person designated by an active-duty military member on the United States Department of Defense Form 93, Record of Emergency Data, to the term next-of-kin as it relates to the common law right of sepulcher in choosing and controlling the final disposition of a person who died while on active duty (Section 194.119);

(11) Allows for a special license plate designated "LEGION OF MERIT" bearing an image of the Legion of Merit Medal for any person who has been awarded this military service award. To obtain this plate, a person must make application, furnish proof as a recipient of the Legion of Merit Medal, and pay a fee equal to the fee charged for personalized license plates to the Department of Revenue in addition to the registration fee and any other documents required by law (Section 301.3158); and

(12) Requires the State Treasurer upon receiving a military medal as abandoned personal property to hold and maintain it until the original owner or his or her heirs or beneficiaries can be found. The State Treasurer may designate a veteran's organization or other appropriate organization as custodian of a medal until the owner or his or her heirs or beneficiaries are located (Sections 447.503 and 447.559).

The bill contains an emergency clause for the provisions regarding the Missouri Youth Challenge Academy.