

# House File 817 - Introduced

HOUSE FILE \_\_\_\_\_  
BY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

(SUCCESSOR TO HSB 233)

Passed House, Date \_\_\_\_\_ Passed Senate, Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Vote: Ayes \_\_\_\_\_ Nays \_\_\_\_\_ Vote: Ayes \_\_\_\_\_ Nays \_\_\_\_\_  
Approved \_\_\_\_\_

## A BILL FOR

1 An Act concerning veterans by providing for a study of regional  
2 veterans affairs offices, providing for the duties of the  
3 department of veterans affairs and the commission on veterans  
4 affairs, and establishing a counseling program for veterans.  
5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:  
6 TLSB 2111HV 82  
7 ec/je/5

PAG LIN

1 1 Section 1. NEW SECTION. 35.12 VETERANS COUNSELING  
1 2 PROGRAM.  
1 3 1. The department shall establish and administer a  
1 4 counseling program for veterans. The program shall provide  
1 5 assistance to veterans and their families to reduce the  
1 6 incidence of alcohol and chemical dependency and suicide among  
1 7 veterans and to make mental health counseling available to  
1 8 at-risk veterans. The department shall coordinate with United  
1 9 States veterans administration hospitals, health care  
1 10 facilities, and clinics in this state and the department of  
1 11 public health in developing the program.  
1 12 2. The program established by the department shall include  
1 13 but not be limited to the following:  
1 14 a. Public education and awareness programs for veterans,  
1 15 health care professionals, and the public, relative to  
1 16 recognizing and responding to at-risk veterans.  
1 17 b. Referral services to identify appropriate counseling  
1 18 and treatment programs for at-risk veterans.  
1 19 Sec. 2. Section 35A.2, subsection 1, Code 2007, is amended  
1 20 to read as follows:  
1 21 1. A commission of veterans affairs is created consisting  
1 22 of nine persons who shall be appointed by the governor,  
1 23 subject to confirmation by the senate. Members shall be  
1 24 appointed to staggered terms of four years beginning and  
1 25 ending as provided in section 69.19. The governor shall fill  
1 26 a vacancy for the unexpired portion of the term. In addition  
1 27 to the members appointed by the governor, the director of the  
1 28 department and the commandant of the Iowa veterans home shall  
1 29 serve as nonvoting, ex officio members of the commission.  
1 30 Sec. 3. Section 35A.3, subsections 2 and 3, Code 2007, are  
1 31 amended by striking the subsections and inserting in lieu  
1 32 thereof the following:  
1 33 2. Advise and make recommendations to the department, the  
1 34 general assembly, and the governor, concerning issues  
1 35 involving and impacting veterans in this state.  
2 1 Sec. 4. Section 35A.5, Code 2007, is amended by adding the  
2 2 following new subsections:  
2 3 NEW SUBSECTION. 0A. Maintain and disseminate information  
2 4 to veterans and the public regarding facilities, benefits, and  
2 5 services available to veterans and their families and assist  
2 6 veterans and their families in obtaining such benefits and  
2 7 services.  
2 8 NEW SUBSECTION. 12. Adopt rules pursuant to chapter 17A  
2 9 and establish policy for the management and operation of the  
2 10 department.  
2 11 Sec. 5. Section 35A.5, subsection 8, Code 2007, is amended  
2 12 to read as follows:  
2 13 8. Provide training to executive directors of county  
2 14 commissions of veteran affairs pursuant to section 35B.6. The  
2 15 ~~commission department~~ may adopt rules in accordance with  
2 16 chapter 17A to provide for training of county veteran affairs

2 17 executive directors.  
2 18 Sec. 6. Section 35A.8, subsection 4, paragraph a, Code  
2 19 2007, is amended to read as follows:  
2 20 a. The executive director shall provide for the  
2 21 administration of the bonus authorized in this subsection.  
2 22 The ~~commission~~ department shall adopt rules, pursuant to  
2 23 chapter 17A, as necessary to administer this subsection  
2 24 including, but not limited to, application procedures,  
2 25 investigation, approval or disapproval, and payment of claims.  
2 26 Sec. 7. Section 35A.13, subsection 6, Code 2007, is  
2 27 amended to read as follows:  
2 28 6. It is the intent of the general assembly that beginning  
2 29 with the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2007, appropriations be  
2 30 made annually to the veterans trust fund. Prior to any  
2 31 additional appropriations to this fund, the ~~commission~~  
2 32 department shall provide the general assembly with information  
2 33 identifying immediate and long-term veteran services  
2 34 throughout the state and a plan for delivering those services.  
2 35 Sec. 8. Section 36.1, subsection 3, Code 2007, is amended  
3 1 by striking the subsection.  
3 2 Sec. 9. Section 36.8, Code 2007, is amended to read as  
3 3 follows:  
3 4 36.8 RULES.  
3 5 The ~~commission~~ department shall adopt rules pursuant to  
3 6 chapter 17A to implement this chapter.  
3 7 Sec. 10. Section 36.9, Code 2007, is amended to read as  
3 8 follows:  
3 9 36.9 APPROPRIATIONS.  
3 10 This chapter shall be implemented by the ~~commission~~  
3 11 department each fiscal year that appropriations are made to  
3 12 the ~~commission~~ department for the implementation.  
3 13 Sec. 11. Section 135.20, subsection 2, unnumbered  
3 14 paragraph 1, Code 2007, is amended to read as follows:  
3 15 The information to be distributed shall be determined by  
3 16 the department by rule, in consultation with the ~~commission~~  
3 17 department of veterans affairs. The information shall, at a  
3 18 minimum, contain statements indicating that:  
3 19 Sec. 12. Section 135.20, subsection 2, unnumbered  
3 20 paragraph 2, Code 2007, is amended to read as follows:  
3 21 The information shall also present treatment options and  
3 22 shall specify a procedure to be followed for veterans desiring  
3 23 a medical consultation for screening and treatment purposes.  
3 24 The department shall cooperate with the ~~state commission~~  
3 25 department of veterans affairs regarding distribution of the  
3 26 information to the veterans home, the county commissions of  
3 27 veteran affairs, veterans hospitals, and other appropriate  
3 28 points of distribution.  
3 29 Sec. 13. VETERANS COUNSELING PROGRAM REPORT. The director  
3 30 of the department of veterans affairs shall submit a report to  
3 31 the members of the general assembly by January 15, 2008,  
3 32 regarding the development and implementation of the veterans  
3 33 counseling program established pursuant to section 35.12, as  
3 34 enacted by this Act.  
3 35 Sec. 14. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS == REGIONAL  
4 1 VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICES STUDY. The department of veterans  
4 2 affairs shall conduct a study and develop a plan, in  
4 3 collaboration with the department of workforce development, to  
4 4 provide regional coverage for veterans affairs services. The  
4 5 plan shall provide for the colocation of department of  
4 6 veterans affairs staff in each of the fifteen workforce  
4 7 development regional offices to provide direct services to  
4 8 veterans in those regions. The plan shall foster the  
4 9 development of the county veteran affairs offices, yet ensure  
4 10 that the state provides coverage where county services are not  
4 11 readily available. The department of veterans affairs and the  
4 12 department of workforce development shall evaluate the  
4 13 personnel needs to serve veterans within the regions, and  
4 14 identify the most efficient use of state, local, and federal  
4 15 resources to serve the most veterans in each region. The plan  
4 16 shall also consider strategies to request a waiver on the use  
4 17 of federal workforce development funds to increase state  
4 18 flexibility to utilize the funds in the most efficient ways to  
4 19 serve veterans. The department of veterans affairs shall  
4 20 submit to the general assembly by January 1, 2008, the results  
4 21 of its study, including its recommended plan to provide  
4 22 improved regional coverage for veterans services.  
4 23 EXPLANATION  
4 24 This bill makes several changes relative to veterans  
4 25 affairs.  
4 26 New Code section 35.12 requires the department of veterans  
4 27 affairs to establish a veterans counseling program. The bill

4 28 provides that the program shall focus on reducing alcohol and  
4 29 chemical dependency and suicide and providing mental health  
4 30 counseling for veterans. The bill provides that the  
4 31 department shall coordinate with U.S. veterans administration  
4 32 hospitals, health care facilities, and clinics in this state  
4 33 and the department of public health in establishing the  
4 34 program. The bill provides that the program shall include  
4 35 public education and awareness programs and referral services  
5 1 to appropriate counseling and treatment relative to at-risk  
5 2 veterans. The bill requires the department of veterans  
5 3 affairs to submit a report to the general assembly by January  
5 4 15, 2008, concerning the development and implementation of the  
5 5 program.

5 6 The bill also makes changes relative to the duties and  
5 7 responsibilities of the department of veterans affairs and the  
5 8 commission.

5 9 Code section 35A.2 is amended to provide that the executive  
5 10 director of the department of veterans affairs and the  
5 11 commandant of the Iowa veterans home are nonvoting, ex officio  
5 12 members of the commission of veterans affairs.

5 13 Code section 35A.3, concerning the duties of the  
5 14 commission, is amended by striking the provision that the  
5 15 commission is responsible for adopting rules and establishing  
5 16 policy for the management and operation of the department and  
5 17 the requirement that the commission prescribe the duties of an  
5 18 executive director and other employees of the department. The  
5 19 Code section is further amended to provide that a duty of the  
5 20 commission is to advise and make recommendations to the  
5 21 department, governor, and the general assembly on issues  
5 22 involving veterans. The commission's current responsibility  
5 23 relative to the Iowa veterans home is unchanged by the bill.

5 24 Code section 35A.5, concerning the duties of the department  
5 25 of veterans affairs, is amended to require the department to  
5 26 provide information to and assist veterans and their families  
5 27 in receiving veterans benefits. In addition, the Code section  
5 28 is amended to require that the department adopt rules for the  
5 29 management of the department.

5 30 The bill also provides that the department, and not the  
5 31 commission, has primary responsibility for programs relative  
5 32 to exposure to chemicals by veterans under Code chapter 36,  
5 33 and the hepatitis C awareness program for veterans created  
5 34 under Code section 135.20.

5 35 The bill also requires the department of veterans affairs,  
6 1 in collaboration with the Iowa department of workforce  
6 2 development, to conduct a study and develop a plan to provide  
6 3 regional coverage for veterans affairs services. The bill  
6 4 requires the department to submit the results of the study,  
6 5 and recommended plan, to the general assembly by January 1,  
6 6 2008.

6 7 LSB 2111HV 82

6 8 ec:nh/je/5