



**Office of
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For Immediate Release

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May 29, 2018

Representative Kane supports bill to enhance veterans' benefits in Massachusetts

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane, R-Shrewsbury, is backing legislation to enhance veterans' benefits in Massachusetts.

House Bill 4525, An Act relative to veterans' benefits, rights, appreciation, validation and enforcement, also known as the BRAVE Act, passed the House of Representatives on a unanimous vote of 150-0 on May 23.

In addition to doubling state funding assistance for indigent veterans' burial costs from \$2,000 to \$4,000, the bill provides for an increase in the property tax exemption available to veterans who perform volunteer work for their home community, raising the cap from \$1,000 to \$1,500. The bill also adjusts the residency requirement for veterans and surviving spouses to qualify for real estate tax exemptions, reducing the amount of time these individuals must reside in Massachusetts from five consecutive years to two consecutive years.

"I am proud and honored to join my House colleagues in passing the BRAVE Act," stated Representative Kane. "It is our moral duty to always seek new and continued opportunities to support our veterans. Improving veterans' benefits and rights is but one way to express our deepest appreciation for our veteran's service, while also enhancing our servicemen and women's quality of life here in the Commonwealth."

An additional provision contained in the BRAVE Act gives cities and towns the option to adjust veterans' property tax abatements on an annual basis. The amount of the increase would not be able to exceed the cost of living increase for that year, as calculated by the Consumer Price Index.

The BRAVE Act also:

- updates the current military campaign eligibility for the Welcome Home Bonus, and authorizes the family of a deceased service member to receive the \$1,000 stipend;
- adds Prisoners of War (POWs) to the list of veterans eligible for a property tax abatement;
- allows municipalities to designate a spot for veterans parking at their city or town hall during normal business hours;

- requires employers to provide employees who are veterans with time off, with or without pay, to observe Veterans Day;
- establishes a special commission to study the cost and feasibility of exempting veterans from tuition and fees when attending a public university, with a report due by December 31, 2018;
- allows combat medics to use their military training and experience to receive EMT certification in the Commonwealth without having to repeat duplicative classes;
- requires the Department of Veterans Services to maintain and publish a list of law firms and organizations that provide pro bono legal representation for veterans;
- allows parents or surviving guardians of veterans who died in service to the country to receive a real estate credit on their property beginning on January 1, 2019;
- authorizes recipients of the Bronze Star to be eligible for Bronze Star License Plates through the Registry of Motor Vehicles; and
- allows qualifying individuals whose vehicles are owned by trusts, partnerships, or corporations to be eligible for Gold Star Family license plates.

The Senate previously approved its own version of the BRAVE Act on May 3. The House and Senate will now attempt to reconcile the differences between the two bills and reach agreement on a final bill that will be sent to Governor Charlie Baker for his signature.

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