

SESSION OF 2007

**CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT BRIEF
SENATE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 2923**

As Agreed to April 3, 2008

Brief*

Senate Sub. for HB 2923 would make multiple changes to provisions having to do with active-duty military personnel and with veterans.

The bill would:

- Appropriate \$60,000 from the State General Fund in FY 2009 to the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs (KCVA) to fund a new position under the Administration Program.
- Increase the one-time activation payment of \$1,000 made to those Kansas employees currently on or called to full-time military duty to \$1,500, as well as raise the wage differential payment from an amount not to exceed \$500 gross payment per pay period to \$1,000 gross payment per pay period.
- Allow a full-time military service member who has been, or will be, deployed outside the United States to defer all or part of the real property tax owed for the person's principal place of residence in Kansas for up to two years while serving on active duty.
- Provide annual hunting and fishing licenses at no cost to honorably discharged veterans with certified service-related disabilities of 30.0 percent or more, and would appropriate

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\$75,392 from the State General Fund during FY 2009 to the Department of Wildlife and Parks to reimburse the Wildlife Fee Fund for the licenses.

- Amend existing law to make military persons currently on active duty eligible for distinctive vehicle license plates.
- Amend existing law to allow the Kansas Lottery to sell Veterans Benefit Game lottery tickets year-round and to change the distribution of net profits for the Veterans Benefit Game. The bill would require 40.0 percent of the net profits to be used for Kansas National Guard scholarships and 30.0 percent to benefit the Kansas Veterans Home, the Kansas Soldiers Home, and the Veterans Cemetery System. For FY 2009 and FY 2010, the bill would direct 30.0 percent to the Museum of the Kansas National Guard for the expansion of its facility, to include a 35th Infantry Division Museum and Education Center. In FY 2011, the 30.0 percent would be redirected from the Museum to a veterans enhanced service delivery program.

Conference Committee Action

The Conference Committee agreed to amend the bill as passed by the Senate to include the \$60,000 appropriation to the KCVA to fund a new position under the Administration Program and to change the distribution of the net profits from the Veterans Benefit Game lottery tickets, to direct 30.0 percent of the proceeds to a veterans enhanced service delivery program beginning in FY 2011.

Background

The original HB 2923 would have established the Veterans Enhanced Service Delivery Program within the Veterans Claims Assistance Program to provide services to veterans and their family members who do not have access to current Veterans Claims Assistance Program offices in U.S. Department of

Veterans Affairs medical centers. It would have included mobile offices for outreach, an annual study by the Legislative Budget Committee, and audits by the Legislative Division of Post Audit. Testifying as proponents of the bill were Wayne Bollig, Director of Veterans' Services at the KCVA; Darrell Bencken, Veterans of Foreign Wars; and Jack Fowler, Chairman of the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs. There was no testimony in opposition to the bill.

The Senate Committee on Ways and Means adopted a substitute for HB 2923 which deleted all the provisions HB 2923, as passed by the House, and inserted some provisions from two separate bills: SB 533 and SB 680.

Regarding SB 533, the Committee heard testimony from the following proponents: a representative from the KCVA; a representative from the American Legion; and a representative from the Veterans of Foreign Wars. All proponents supported the bill. A representative from the Kansas Department of Revenue testified as a neutral party. No opponents testified against the bill at the hearing.

Regarding SB 680, the Committee heard testimony from these proponents: a representative of the KCVA and a representative from the Museum of the Kansas National Guard. No opponents testified against the bill at the hearing.

The fiscal note prepared by the Division of the Budget for the original version of HB 2923, establishing an Veterans Enhanced Service Delivery Program, shows estimated spending increases of \$625,950 in FY 2008 and \$815,500 in FY 2009, all from the State General Fund. Those estimates assume 5.0 FTE positions would be filled in FY08 and 14.0 in FY 2009. The positions are currently authorized but vacant. The estimate for FY 2008 also included \$285,000 for purchase of three vehicles, which the KCVA representative said would be equipped as offices and accessible to those with mobility impairments and would be used to take services closer to where veterans live. The Conference Committee stated its expectation that the person hired for the position to be funded

in this version of HB 2923 (\$60,000) would work to educate veterans about available services and lay groundwork for the enhanced service delivery program.

The fiscal note prepared by the Division of the Budget for the original version of SB 533 estimates reimbursement of \$75,392 from the State General Fund to Wildlife and Parks to provide hunting and fishing licenses to disabled veterans.

The Division of the Budget fiscal note indicates that SB 680, if enacted, would increase by \$540,000 the amount of State General Fund revenue in FY 2009 that is dedicated for statutory purposes, and thus not available for other appropriations.

Under current law, the Kansas Lottery conducts a Veterans Benefit Game, selling lottery tickets from May 1 to November 30 each calendar year. After computing the net profits in mid-June, a transfer to the State Gaming Revenues Fund is certified for the purpose of National Guard Educational Assistance and assistance for veterans programs. Those funds are subsequently transferred to the State General Fund at the end of a fiscal year, and would be available for appropriation by the Legislature in the following fiscal year after July 1. The fiscal note indicates the proposed year-round schedule of games would yield \$1.5 million in FY 2009 net profits, compared with \$960,000 estimated in FY 2009 for the current six-month schedule of games. The distribution of the annual net profits would be as follows:

	Current Law FY 2009	HB 2923 FY 2009 - FY 2010	HB 2923 FY 2011 and forward
National Guard, family benefits	\$ 480,000	\$ 600,000	\$ 600,000
Veterans homes and cemetery system	480,000	450,000	450,000
National Guard museum	0	450,000	0
KCVA, for position	0	0	450,000
	\$ 960,000	\$ 1,500,000	\$1,500,000

There is no fiscal note for the amended version of the bill.

veterans; lottery; property tax; hunting license; military