CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT

MR. SPEAKER and MR. PRESIDENT: Your committee on conference on Senate amendments to **HB 2626** submits the following report:

The House accedes to all Senate amendments to the bill, and your committee on conference further agrees to amend the bill as printed with Senate Committee amendments, as follows:

On page 1, following line 6, by inserting:

"New Section 1. (a) The capitol preservation committee shall approve plans to place a permanent registry kiosk within the state capitol of Kansas military forces killed in action or who died of wounds incurred during active duty pursuant to K.S.A. 75-2269, and amendments thereto.

(b) The secretary of administration is hereby authorized to receive moneys from any grants, gifts, contributions or bequests made for the purpose of financing the creation and construction of the registry kiosk and to expend such moneys received for such purpose. The secretary of administration shall remit all moneys so received to the state treasurer in accordance with the provisions of K.S.A. 75-4215, and amendments thereto. Upon receipt of each such remittance, the state treasurer shall deposit the entire amount in the state treasury to the credit of the Kansas military forces registry kiosk fund. No public funds shall be expended for the purpose of financing the creation or construction of the registry kiosk.

(c) There is hereby established in the state treasury the Kansas military forces registry kiosk fund. Expenditures from the fund may be made for the purposes of creating and constructing the registry kiosk and for such other purposes as may be specified with regard to any grant, gift, contribution or bequest. All such expenditures shall be made upon warrants of the director of accounts and reports issued pursuant to vouchers approved by the secretary of administration or the secretary's designee.

New Sec. 2. (a) This act shall be known and may be cited as the safeguarding American veteran empowerment (SAVE) act.

(b) As used in this section:

(1) "Compensation" means a payment of any moneys, a thing of value or financial benefit conferred on or received by any person in return for services rendered or to be rendered.

(2) "Veterans benefits matter" means the preparation, presentation or prosecution of any claim affecting any person who has filed or expressed an intent to file a claim for any benefit, program, service, commodity, function, status or entitlement that veterans, their dependents, their survivors or any other person who is eligible under the laws and regulations administered by the United States department of veterans affairs or the Kansas office of veterans services.

(3) "Person" means any natural person, corporation, trust, partnership, incorporated or unincorporated association, or any other legal entity.

(c) (1) No person may receive compensation for:

(A) Referring any veteran to another person for advice or assistance in such veteran's benefits matter; or

(B) any services rendered in connection with any claim filed within the one-year presumptive period of active-duty release, unless the veteran acknowledges by signing a waiver that such veteran's active-duty release is within the one-year period but is choosing to deny the free services available to such veteran.

(2) A person seeking to receive compensation for advising, assisting or consulting with any veterans benefits matter shall, before rendering any services, memorialize the specific terms that specify the amount to be paid will be determined in a written agreement signed by both parties. Compensation shall be contingent upon an increase in the awarded benefits and, if

successful, such compensation is capped at a one-time fee that shall not exceed five times the amount of the monthly increase in benefits awarded based on the claim or $12,500, whichever is less. No initial or nonrefundable fee may be charged by a person advising, assisting or consulting an individual on a veterans benefits matter.

(3) No person shall guarantee, either directly or by implication, a successful outcome or that any person is certain to receive specific veterans benefits or a specific level, percentage or amount of veterans benefits.

(4) (A) Any person advising, assisting or consulting on veterans benefits matters for compensation shall provide the following disclosure at the outset of the business relationship: "This business is not sponsored by or affiliated with the United States department of veterans affairs or the Kansas office of veterans services, or any other federally chartered veterans service organization. Other organizations, including, but not limited to, the Kansas office of veterans services, a local veterans service organization and other federally chartered veterans service organizations may be able to provide you with this service free of charge. Products or services offered by this business are not necessarily endorsed by any of these organizations. You may qualify for other veterans benefits beyond the benefits for which you are receiving services here."

(B) The written disclosure shall appear in at least 12-point font in an easily identifiable place in the person's agreement with the individual seeking services. The person shall sign the document in which the written disclosure appears to represent understanding of these provisions. The person offering services shall retain a copy of the written disclosure while providing veterans benefits services for compensation and for at least one year after the date on which the service relations terminate.

(5) Businesses advising, assisting or consulting on veterans' benefits matters for a fee shall:

(A) Not utilize international call centers or data centers for processing veterans' personal information;

(B) not use a veteran's personal login, username or password information to access such veteran's medical, financial or government benefits information; and

(C) ensure that any person who has access to veterans' medical or financial information undergoes a criminal history record check prior to having access to that information. The criminal history record check shall be conducted by a reputable source and include identity verification and a criminal records check.

(d) (1) A violation of this section constitutes an unfair, false, misleading or deceptive act or practice in the conduct of trade or commerce under K.S.A. 50-623 et seq., and amendments thereto.

(2) Civil penalties shall be in an amount ordered by the district court in an action brought by the attorney general.

(3) Each day that a violation continues is a separate violation.

(4) Nothing in this section is to be construed as applying to or limiting or expanding the requirements imposed on agents, attorneys or other representatives accredited by the United States department of veterans affairs and regulated by such agency.

(e) Nothing in this section shall preclude claims or causes of action available to individuals under Kansas law.

New Sec. 3. (a) There is hereby established the Kansas military affairs commission. Such commission shall be advisory to the governor and shall be within and a part of the office of

the governor.

(b) The governor's military council shall be and is hereby officially designated as the Kansas military affairs commission.

(1) On and after July 1, 2026, whenever the governor's military council or words of like effect is referred to or designated by statute, contract or other document, such reference or designation shall mean and apply to the Kansas military affairs commission.

(2) The Kansas military affairs commission shall be a continuation of the governor's military council.

(c) The Kansas military affairs commission shall consist of 16 voting members, except as may be adjusted pursuant to paragraph (9). The membership of the commission shall be composed of:

(1) The governor, who shall serve as chair of the commission, or the governor's designee;

(2) the adjutant general of the state of Kansas;

(3) the president of the senate or the president's designee;

(4) the speaker of the house of representatives or the speaker's designee;

(5) the minority leader of the senate or the minority leader's designee;

(6) the minority leader of the house of representatives or the minority leader's designee;

(7) the Kansas secretary of commerce;

(8) the executive director of the Kansas office of veterans services;

(9) one representative each from: (A) Leavenworth county; (B) Sedgwick county; (C) Shawnee county; and (D) Riley or Geary county, so long as such counties continue to have active military installations, as appointed by the governor;

(10) one active duty military spouse, either from the army or the air force, as appointed by the governor; and

(11) three qualified individuals with extensive military experience or expertise, as appointed by the governor.

(d) If an appointment cannot be made within 60 days after a seat becomes vacant, the governor may appoint any qualified person.

(e) Members appointed to the military affairs commission shall serve at the pleasure of the governor. Any vacancy in the appointed membership of the commission shall be filled in accordance with subsection (c).

(f) The commission shall also have 11 non-voting ex officio members appointed by the following:

(1) One member from each of the military installations in Kansas, including Fort Leavenworth, McConnell air force base, Fort Riley and the United States coast guard pay and personnel center;

(2) one member from each state educational institution, as defined in K.S.A. 76-711, and amendments thereto; and

(3) one member from the Kansas fusion center.

(e) The Kansas military affairs commission shall meet quarterly and may meet on a day and time determined by the chair.

(1) A majority of voting members of the commission constitutes a quorum for the purposes of conducting business and exercising the powers of the commission.

(2) Members of the commission shall be paid amounts pursuant to K.S.A. 75-3223(e), and amendments thereto.

(g) The governor shall appoint an executive director of the Kansas military affairs commission, and such commission shall designate the duties of the executive director. The executive director shall be the administrative officer of the commission and shall serve the commission by fostering cooperation between the installations and private and public sectors, forwarding proposals and evaluations to the governor, the legislature and various state agencies, pursuing initiatives to enhance the quality of life for all military personnel, both active and retired, and performing other duties necessary for the proper operation of the commission.

(h) The commission shall have the following functions, powers and duties:

(1) Provide advice, counsel and actionable recommendations on military-affiliated issues and economic and industrial development related to the military to the governor, state and federal agencies, the legislature, communities and the state's congressional delegation;

(2) provide sound, accurate and viable recommendations to expand and grow the current presence of the armed forces in the state, including expanded missions and infrastructure;

(3) plan and support state infrastructure needed to support military objectives;

(4) recommend methods to improve private and public employment opportunities and quality of life for the families of current and former members of the military that reside in Kansas;

(5) provide assistance to enable enhanced design and execution of community programs that strengthen relations between communities and the military installations to include defense-related business;

(6) serve as an advocate for the state of Kansas in matters related to United States department of defense expansion decisions;

(7) build community support for the armed services and prepare and maintain a

strategic action plan that protects existing military missions in Kansas and positions the state to be competitive for new and increasing military missions; and

(8) promote the long-term viability and prosperity of the military and defense-related industries in Kansas and protect against all current and anticipated realignments and closures proposed by the United States department of defense that affects Kansas.";

On page 4, following line 40, by inserting:

"Sec. 5. K.S.A. 73-231 is hereby amended to read as follows: 73-231. (a) As used in this section~~,~~:

(1) "Eligible spouse" means an individual who is married to servicemember or an active duty member of the military service of the United States who resides in and is stationed in Kansas.

(2) "Servicemember" means an individual who resides in and is stationed in Kansas and is:

(A) A current member in good standing of the United States army or air national guard; or

(B) a current member of a unit of the reserve forces of the United States military.

(3) "Veteran" ~~shall have the meaning ascribed to it~~ means the same as defined in K.S.A. 73-201, and amendments thereto.

(b) There is hereby established a permissive preference in private employment for veterans, servicemembers and eligible spouses.

(c) A private employer may adopt an employment policy that gives preference in hiring to a veteran, servicemember or eligible spouse provided that the veteran, servicemember or eligible spouse meets the requirements of the vacant position.

(d) Such employment policy shall be:

(1) In writing; and

(2) applied consistently to all decisions regarding initial employment.

(e) ~~The~~A veteran shall submit proof of such veteran's military service and honorable discharge or general discharge under honorable conditions to a private employer with such veterans preference employment policy to establish eligibility for the preference. A servicemember shall submit evidence of current military membership in good standing and duty station in Kansas. An eligible spouse shall submit proof of marriage to an eligible servicemember, proof of living in Kansas and official documentation verifying the servicemember's current military status, including military orders reflecting such servicemember's assignment or a current leave and earnings statement.";

Also on page 4, in line 41, before "K.S.A" by inserting "K.S.A. 73-231 and"; also in line 41, after "is" by inserting "are";

And by renumbering sections accordingly;

On page 1, in the title, in line 1, by striking all after the semicolon; in line 2, by striking all before the semicolon and inserting "directing the capitol preservation committee to develop and approve plans for a registry kiosk of Kansas military forces killed in action or who died of wounds sustained during active duty to be placed within the state capitol; relating to veterans benefits; enacting the safeguarding American veteran empowerment (SAVE) act to limit compensation for assisting in veterans benefits matters; establishing the Kansas military affairs commission; prescribing the powers and duties thereof"; also in line 2, by striking "such" and inserting "government employment veteran"; in line 3, after the semicolon, by inserting "expanding permissive preference in private employment to include servicemembers and such

members' eligible spouses;"; in line 4, after "amending" by inserting "K.S.A. 73-231 and"; also in line 4, by striking "section" and inserting "sections";

And your committee on conference recommends the adoption of this report.

_____

_____

_____

Conferees on part of Senate

_____

_____

_____

Conferees on part of House