

1 SENATE BILL NO. 924

2 AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

3 (Proposed by the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations

4 on January 25, 2023)

5 (Patron Prior to Substitute--Senator DeSteph)

6 A BILL to amend and reenact § 2.2-2001 of the Code of Virginia, relating to burial fees for military
7 spouses.

8 **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

9 **1. That § 2.2-2001 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

10 **§ 2.2-2001. Administrative responsibilities of the Department; annual report.**

11 A. The Department shall be responsible to the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs on behalf
12 of the Governor for the establishment, operation, administration, and maintenance of offices and programs
13 related to services for Virginia-domiciled veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States and their
14 eligible spouses, orphans, and dependents. Such services shall include, but not be limited to, benefits
15 claims processing and all medical care centers and cemeteries for veterans owned and operated by the
16 Commonwealth.

17 Subject to the availability of sufficient nongeneral fund revenues, including, but not limited to,
18 private donations and federal funds, the Department shall work in concert with applicable state and federal
19 agencies to develop and deploy an automated system for the electronic preparation of veterans' disability
20 claims that ensures the collection of the necessary information to expedite processing of Virginia veterans'
21 disability claims. The Department's development and deployment work shall be appropriately phased to
22 minimize risk and shall include an initial replacement of the Department's existing case management
23 technology, which replacement is required to support highly sophisticated electronic claims preparation.
24 The Commissioner shall ensure that the system is efficient and statutorily compliant.

25 B. 1. From such funds as may be appropriated or otherwise received for such purpose, the
26 Department shall provide burial vaults at cost to eligible veterans and their family members interred at
27 state-operated veterans cemeteries.

28 2. From such funds as may be appropriated or otherwise received for such purpose, the
29 Commonwealth shall pay any burial fee charged for the burial of a deceased spouse of a member or veteran
30 of the United States Armed Forces, regardless of whether such spouse's death precedes or succeeds the
31 death of the member or veteran, at a state-operated veterans cemetery. The Department shall develop
32 guidelines concerning the administration of this subsection.

33 C. The Department shall establish guidelines for the determination of eligibility for Virginia-
34 domiciled veterans and their spouses, orphans, and dependents for participation in programs and benefits
35 administered by the Department. Such guidelines shall meet the intent of the federal statutes and
36 regulations pertaining to the administration of federal programs supporting U.S. Armed Forces veterans
37 and their spouses, orphans, and dependents.

38 D. The Department shall adopt reasonable regulations to implement a program to certify, upon
39 request of the small business owner, that he holds a "service disabled veteran" status.

40 E. The Department shall submit an annual report through the Secretary of Veterans and Defense
41 Affairs to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before December 1 of each year and other reports
42 to the Secretary as required by the Secretary. The annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly
43 shall be submitted for publication as a report document as provided in the procedures of the Division of
44 Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted
45 on the General Assembly's website.

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