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<th>BILL NO.</th>
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<td>227-36 (COR)</td>
<td>Amanda L. Sheltton, Telena Cruz Nelson, Joe S. San Agustin, Joe &quot;Pedo&quot; Terlaje, James C. Moylan, V. Anthony Ada, Tina Rose Mulla Barnes</td>
<td>AN ACT TO ADD A NEW ARTICLE 1 TO DIVISION 3 OF CHAPTER 67, TITLE 10, GUAM CODE ANNOTATED, RELATIVE TO ESTABLISHING THE VETERANS BILL OF RIGHTS ACT IN HELPING VETERANS ACCESS HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT, HIGHER EDUCATION, AND HEALTHCARE THROUGH VARIOUS LOCAL AND FEDERAL PROGRAMS; TO APPROPRIATE FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS ($500,000) FROM THE 2021 EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT REIMBURSEMENT TO THE GUAM VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE TO IMPLEMENT THE SAME; AND TO CITE THIS ACT AS THE &quot;SECURING AND ENSURING THE RIGHTS VETERANS EARNED (SERVE) ACT.&quot;</td>
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DATE INTRODUCED: 11/30/21
DATE REFERRED: 6:13 p.m.
AN ACT TO ADD A NEW ARTICLE 1 TO DIVISION 3 OF CHAPTER 67, TITLE 10, GUAM CODE ANNOTATED, RELATIVE TO ESTABLISHING THE VETERANS BILL OF RIGHTS ACT IN HELPING VETERANS ACCESS HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT, HIGHER EDUCATION, AND HEALTHCARE, THROUGH VARIOUS LOCAL AND FEDERAL PROGRAMS; TO APPROPRIATE FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS ($500,000) FROM THE 2021 EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT REIMBURSEMENT TO THE GUAM VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE TO IMPLEMENT THE SAME; AND TO CITE THIS ACT AS THE “SECURING AND ENSURING THE RIGHTS VETERANS EARNED (SERVE) ACT.”

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF GUAM:

Section 1. Legislative Finding and Intent. I Liheslaturan Guåhan acknowledges the sacrifices that our men and women have made during their military service to protect the Nation and territories, when government services to Veterans are available. However, these services are not widely known throughout
the Guåhan community. Furthermore, the landscape of Veteran Services is ambiguous and exhaustive for stakeholders to navigate.

_I Liheslatura_ further finds that the availability and government assistance for Veterans to avail in government programs is unreasonably delayed and rigorous. _I Liheslaturan Guåhan_ finds that the men and women who dutifully served in the arms services are entitled to local and federal benefits as Veterans.

_I Liheslatura_ further finds that Veteran rights and benefits must be acted on in a timely manner by the government agencies who facilitate and administer these programs.

Therefore, it is the intent if _I Liheslaturan Guåhan_ to establish a Veterans Bill of Rights in Guam law to advance the livelihoods of veterans in Guam and increase their access to critical services for housing, employment, education and healthcare.

**Section 2.** A new Article 1 is hereby added to Division 3 of Chapter 67 of Title 10, Guam Coded Annotated, to read:

“ARTICLE 1
SECURING AND ENSURING THE RIGHTS VETERANS EARNED (SERVE) ACT

§ 6701. Short Title.

§ 6702. Guam Veterans Office as Lead Agency.

§ 6703. Veterans Bill of Rights.

§ 6704. Short Title.

This Act shall be cited as the “Securing and Ensuring the Rights Veterans Earned (SERVE) Act.”

§ 6705. Guam Veterans Affairs Office as Lead Agency.

All references to “Office” in this Act shall mean the Guam Office of Veterans Affairs, established under 10 GCA Chapter 67, which shall be the
agency responsible for implementing the provisions of this Act. In the
development of programs and services under this Act, the Office shall
consider the input of the Veterans Affairs Commission.

The Office may apply for, receive, and administer grants, subgrants or
enter into intra-governmental and inter-governmental agreements to provide
services to veterans, as defined pursuant to local or federal laws, regulations,
or guidelines. The Office is authorized to comply with the requirements of
federal grants, subgrants, and intra-governmental and inter-governmental
agreements, to include the provision of services to individuals who may
qualify for such services pursuant to the terms of federal grants, subgrants,
and intra-governmental and inter-governmental agreements.

§ 6703. Veterans Bill of Rights.

(a) Housing Assistance.

(1) Increase veterans’ access to housing assistance by
streamlining processes through inter-governmental and intra-
governmental partnerships.

(A) The Office is hereby directed to target housing
programs and streamline federal and local processes to expedite
and reward applicants through interagency Memoranda of
Understanding or Memoranda of Agreement.

(b) Employment Support.

(1) Increase veterans’ access to jobs by applying smart data to
direct veterans in-demand fields.

(A) The Office is hereby directed to create and produce
electronic reports of workforce need projections, by industry, job
type, geography, and needed credentials; including to compare
workforce needs with existing and projected workforce and
credential availability; and highlight top in-demand industries, job types, and credentials.

(B) The Office shall include in this report a pathway of which in-demand job titles and credentials would leverage skills, experience and credentials possessed by veterans; and forward the underlying data report and that additional information monthly to appropriate military outplacement offices, education centers, non-profit programs, and Government agencies working to connect veterans with jobs.

(c) Higher Learning Opportunities.

(1) Award college credit from military training and experiences

(A) Every veteran who enrolls as a student in good standing at any institution with the local university system and community college system, shall upon application be granted academic credits without limitation towards his or her degree for completion of courses that were part of such veteran’s military training or service if the completed courses meet the standards of the American Council on Education or its equivalent for the awarding of academic credits. No fee, tuition, or other charge shall be assessed against a veteran who qualifies for such credit pursuant to this section.

(B) The Office shall adopt such procedures as necessary to fully implement the provisions in this section.

(2) Increase flexibility in course registration to reflect returning veterans’ needs.
(A) At institutions within the local university system and community college system:

(i) Institutions that offer an early course registration period for any segment of the student population shall have a process in place to offer early course registration to students who are veterans or national guard members.

(ii) A student who is called to active duty in the armed forces of the United States after having regularly attended a course for thirteen (13) or more weeks or having completed eighty-five percent (85%) of the course’s work for the term through acceleration shall be given full credit for each course in which he or she has a grade of C or better.

(iii) Students called to active duty who does not meet attendance requirements sufficient to earn a grade shall be entitled to a one hundred (100%) refund of tuition and fees.

(iv) Veterans with no previous college experience shall be permitted to file applications up to the end of registration and allowed to begin classes pending completion of their application and provision of supporting documents.

(v) Upon their return from active-duty veterans may register even after normal registration periods end, without late fees or other penalties.
(3) Leverage veterans’ experiences and expand proven cost-effective training programs.

(A) The Office shall annually review apprentice, training, and other vocational programs focused on providing job training and placement to returning military servicemembers and veterans. Such annual review shall evaluate the costs and results recommend programs for expansion with state funding, including to estimate future returns to the state of improved outcomes from program expansion.

(B) The Office shall provide an annual report to the legislature and Governor on January 1 of each year for five (5) years after the passage of this Act, to be used to inform annual budget decisions.

(d) Access to Healthcare.

(1) Increase veterans’ access to healthcare through healthcare coverage and treatment they are eligible for based on their service.

(A) The Office is hereby directed to develop and operate veteran health navigator services to increase access to healthcare coverage and services.

(i) The Office shall identify, train, and deploy veteran health navigators who have direct knowledge of the veteran communities they serve.

(ii) Veteran health navigators shall help identify all federal and other health benefits, coverage, and services available to veterans and their families.

(iii) Veteran health navigators shall coordinate with relevant departments, healthcare providers, and
health insurance programs to help veterans and their beneficiaries apply for coverage under such programs, including helping veterans overcome barriers within the health care system to ensure enrollment in health plans and effective delivery and coordination of health services.

(2) Prevent veteran suicide and increase veterans’ access to mental health services.

(A) Ensure veterans and their families have access to mental health treatment, including for post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, suicide, and suicidal ideation.

(i) Ensure access to mental health coverage, services, and treatment is included as holistic approach of the veteran health navigator program described in § 6703(d)(1)(A) as a source of information about the unique needs, coverage, and treatment gaps faced by veterans and their families, the Office shall examine all existing programs designed to increase access to affordable quality healthcare, to evaluate whether the needs of veterans and their families are met by those programs designed to increase access to affordable quality healthcare, to evaluate whether the needs of veterans and their families are by those programs or whether further coordination with the veteran health navigators or the steps would better meet the needs of veterans and their families.

(ii) The Office shall execute any steps identified in (i) above and produce a report of its findings, recommendations and any additional legislative or budget
action it recommends; and shall deliver that report to the legislature and Governor and release it to the news media.

(iii) The Office shall prepare a report showing the impacts of Medicaid expansion have had to date for the community of veterans and their families and shall include any recommendations for better including or serving veterans and their families; and shall deliver a report to the Legislature and Governor and release it to the news media.”

Section 3. Appropriation. The sum of Five Hundred Thousand Dollars ($500,000) from the revenues received from the earned income tax credit reimbursement for calendar year 2021 pursuant to Section 7530(b) of U.S. Public Law 117-2, under the American Rescue Plan Act, is hereby appropriated to the Guam Veterans Affairs Office for its operations and implementation of programs and services under this Act, for Fiscal Year 2022. This appropriation shall be available until fully expended.

Section 4. Implementation. The Guam Office of Veterans Affairs shall have one (1) year from the effective date of this Act to implement programs and services, and any other mandates under the Veterans Bill of Rights as established by this Act.

Section 5. Severability. If any provision of this Act or its application to any person or circumstance is found to be invalid or contrary to law, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of this Act that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this Act are severable.

Section 6. Effective Date. This Act shall become effective upon enactment.