

SESSION OF 2006

**SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON HOUSE SUBSTITUTE
FOR SENATE BILL NO. 396**

As Recommended by House Select Committee
on Veterans' Affairs

Brief*

House Sub. for SB 396 directs the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs to establish and administer a veterans claims assistance program to be implemented through annual grant agreements with veterans service organizations. The program would be established and operations would commence on or before August 1, 2006. The grants would be subject to appropriation by the Legislature. The bill would direct the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs to appoint a director of the veterans claims assistance program.

Additionally, the program would be structured to: improve the coordination of veterans benefits counseling in the state; maximize the effective and efficient use of taxpayer dollars in this goal; and ensure that every veteran is served and receives claims counseling and assistance.

The bill would direct the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs to adopt rules and regulations to implement and administer the service grant program. The rules and regulations shall include:

- Detailed requirements of the veterans claims assistance program and grant agreements;
- Responsibilities of all parties to the grant agreements;
- Duration of the grants;
- Any insurance or bonding requirements;
- Format and frequency of progress and final reports;
- Initial and continuing training requirements for veterans claims assistance representatives;
- Provisions of the quality assurance program and services performed by the veterans service organization receiving the grants; and

*Supplemental notes are prepared by the Legislative Research Department and do not express legislative intent. The supplemental note and fiscal note for this bill may be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.kslegislature.org>

- Any other information or requirements deemed necessary.

The bill would indicate that money appropriated to veterans service organizations shall be used only for salaries, wages, related personnel costs, training, and equipment for veteran service representatives and necessary support and managerial staff. Additionally, the bill would provide that training would be the responsibility of the applicable veterans service organization.

The bill would direct that in order to be eligible to receive a grant a veterans service organization would need to meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Be congressionally chartered by the United State Congress;
- Agree to cross-accredit employees of the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs, and representatives of other veteran service organizations which are participating in the grant program;
- Agree to participate in one-stop centers at each of the federal veterans administration medical centers in Kansas;
- Demonstrate the receipt of monetary or service support from its own organization;
- Demonstrate the ability to comply with requirements for accounting, service work activity, and with other satisfactory performance requirements and measures.

In addition, the bill would require that each veterans service organization receiving a service grant from the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs file with the Commission a certified accounting of the expenditures of grant funds prepared by a certified public accountant within 90 days after the veterans service organization's fiscal year end. Additionally, the bill would require each veterans service organization demonstrate satisfactory performance based on completion of minimum requirements and certify that all veterans service representative positions funded with grant funds meet minimum training requirements to provide for core competencies.

The bill directs the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs to develop and maintain a central database registry regarding claims outcome data received from veteran claims assistance representatives under the grants.

Further, the bill would establish a veterans claims assistance advisory board to advise the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs

on the implementation and administration of the veterans claims assistance program. The advisory board would consist of six members: the director of the veterans claims assistance program; three members representing veterans service organizations, nominated by the state level organization and chosen by the governor; and two legislative member, representing the House and Senate as well as the Democratic and Republican parties.

The bill indicated that the grant program would be studied annually and reviewed by the Legislative Budget Committee; and would require an annual report regarding activities and expenditures from both the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs and all veterans service organizations which receive grants.

Background

House Sub. for SB 396 was introduced as HB 3015. Representatives from the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs, the American Legion and the Veterans' of Foreign Wars spoke in support of the bill. A representative from the Disabled American Veterans spoke in opposition to the bill.

The House Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs amended the bill to include a provision directing the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs to appoint a director of the veterans claims assistance program and to include a veterans claims assistance advisory board. Other amendments were technical in nature.

At the time of the hearing there was not a fiscal note available from the Division of the Budget.