

Governor Signs Bills to Support Delaware Veterans

Legislation Establishes Veterans Trust Fund

Dover – Joined by representatives from various veterans organizations, state officials and members of the Delaware General Assembly, Governor Markell signed [House Bill 85](#) and [House Bill 140](#) today, establishing the Delaware Veterans Trust Fund and adding it to the list of programs that may receive contributions from personal income tax filings. The fund will provide financial assistance or grants to honorably discharged veterans by covering costs associated with medical/dental needs and transportation, home repairs and safety modifications, household utilities, homelessness support and educational programs.

“We have an obligation to ensure Veterans receive the support, services and respect they rightly deserve,” said Governor Markell. “This legislation underscores our commitment to the men and women who bravely serve in our armed forces.”

Established with a one-time appropriation of \$25,000 from the state, the fund will be administered by the [Commission of Veterans Affairs](#) as a 501(c)(3), with grants awarded to pay vendors directly for utilities or other needs. The Commission has established an application process whereby a Veterans Services Officer will assist a veteran with the application and make recommendations to the Commission Health and Human Services Committee for approval.

House Veterans Affairs Committee chair Rep. Earl Jaques, who served as prime sponsor for HB 85, said the Commission of Veterans Affairs approached officials about the possibility of the fund, which he said would give veterans in need a vital helping hand when they need it.

“With this fund, Delaware will be able to be more responsive to its veterans who have served their state and their country,” said Rep. Jaques, D-Glasgow, a retired Delaware National Guard general. “Through the fund, the commission will be able to help a lot of veterans, especially homeless ones. They will provide more immediate assistance to a veteran rather than having to wait 30 days for federal assistance. Veterans who need disaster relief will be able to receive help quicker.”

Its companion bill, HB 140, adds the Delaware Veterans Trust Fund to the list of programs that may receive contributions from personal income tax filings. The fund will rely upon the generous support of donors to continue providing its intended services to Delaware veterans, making this piece of  legislation an important component of the overall effort.

“Having House Bill 140 as my first bill to pass the General Assembly is quite an honor,” said State Representative Jeff Spiegelman, R-Clayton. “It made sense to offer HB 140 as a companion bill to Rep. Jaques’ legislation creating the Delaware Veterans Trust Fund. It is my hope that, together with House Bill 85, Delaware’s veterans will have even greater access to the important services many of them need.”

Several organizations were in attendance to make formal donations to the fund, including: Delaware Veterans Post 2, Military Officer’s Association of America, Disabled Veterans of America, and the Military Order of the Purple Heart. Combined, the organizations presented over \$4,000.

“The State of Delaware recognizes the importance of supporting our veterans, who have each made personal sacrifices in service to our nation,” said Secretary of State Jeffrey Bullock. “The generous donations offered today in support of the fund attest to our collective commitment to these valuable citizens and will, hopefully, inspire generosity in others as well.”

“The Veterans Trust Fund will provide our veterans with financial assistance in a time of need,” added John Knotts, director of the Commission of Veterans Affairs. “It provides a hand up, not a hand out. For returning veterans, it can help with reintegration or bridge the gap while waiting for VA benefits.”

The fund complements other efforts by the state that aim to support Delaware’s veterans, including the [Veterans Opportunity Tax Credit](#), which gives companies a \$1,500 annual tax credit for each recent veteran they hire; and the [Delaware Veterans Service Directory](#), which [launched earlier this year](#) and serves as a state-wide, online listing of public and private organizations offering services to Delaware veterans and their families.