

Governor Quinn Takes Action to Protect Veterans and Support Military Families

Written by Katelyn Tye

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Three New Laws Support Servicemembers and Their Families

SPRINGFIELD – August 21, 2011. As part of his ongoing commitment to servicemembers and their families, Governor Pat Quinn today signed three laws that will protect Veterans and support military families.

“Our servicemembers are the heart and soul of Illinois,” Governor Quinn said. “Whether they are returning home from service or defending our country overseas, we want them to feel confident that they and their families are taken care of back home.”

Sponsored by Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia (D-Aurora) and Sen. David Koehler (D-Pekin), House Bill 2870 will provide schools with another way to identify students with active duty parents and provide much-needed counseling and support. The new law requires K-12 public and private schools to allow students to voluntarily identify themselves as having parents actively serving in the armed forces. This allows the school to provide counseling and support for students whose parents are currently or will soon be deployed.

“Governor Quinn stands with Veterans and their families on military issues, and we will continue to fight together to improve life for our Veterans,” Rep. Chapa LaVia said. “This new law will help make sure that we are giving the children of servicemembers the support they need.”

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House Bill 3255 allows Illinois State Police troopers, Illinois National Guard members and volunteer nonprofits serving small populations to apply to a fee waiver for Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training. Sponsored by Rep. Donald Moffitt (R-Galesburg) and Sen. Carole Pankau (R-Bloomington), this bill will encourage more first responders, including state troopers and members of the National Guard, to complete additional emergency medical training and become certified EMTs, which will also improve unit safety when servicemembers are deployed.

“Many times, troopers, volunteer ambulance members, volunteer firefighters or members of the National Guard are the first to reach a victim of an accident, disaster or other situation involving life-threatening injuries.” Rep. Moffitt said “The more emergency medical training they have, the better they will be able to help until paramedics or doctors can take over.”

Sponsored by Sen. Kwame Raoul (D-Chicago) and Rep. Kevin McCarthy (D-Orland Park), Senate Bill 1672 requires all pension funds and retirement systems to comply with the federal Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act of 2008 (HEART ACT). This law ensures that additional tax and pension benefits are granted to Illinois servicemembers who are absent from work due to duty in uniformed military service.

The new laws all take effect immediately.

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