**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, SO AS TO ENACT THE “MILITARY SERVICE OCCUPATION, EDUCATION, AND CREDENTIALING ACT”; BY ADDING SECTION 59‑101‑400 SO AS TO PROVIDE A PUBLIC, POST‑SECONDARY INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THIS STATE MAY AWARD EDUCATIONAL CREDIT TO AN HONORABLY DISCHARGED MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES FOR A COURSE THAT IS PART OF HIS MILITARY TRAINING OR SERVICE, SUBJECT TO CERTAIN CONDITIONS, AND TO REQUIRE THE INSTITUTION TO IMPLEMENT RELATED POLICIES AND REGULATIONS WITHIN A SPECIFIED TIME FRAME; BY ADDING ARTICLE 3 TO CHAPTER 1, TITLE 40 SO AS TO PROVIDE MISCELLANEOUS LICENSURE PROVISIONS FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL, TO PROVIDE A PERSON LICENSED BY BOARD OR COMMISSION UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING AND REGULATION IS EXEMPT FROM CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS AND FEE ASSESSMENTS DURING ACTIVE DUTY IN THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES, TO PROVIDE A BOARD OR COMMISSION MAY ISSUE A TEMPORARY PROFESSIONAL LICENSE TO THE SPOUSE OF AN ACTIVE DUTY MEMBER OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, AND TO PROVIDE A BOARD OR COMMISSION SHALL ACCEPT CERTAIN COURSEWORK OR EXPERIENCE OBTAINED DURING THE COURSE OF MILITARY SERVICE TO SATISFY RELATED PROFESSIONAL OR OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION OR TRAINING LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS; AND TO REPEAL SECTIONS 40‑1‑75 RELATING TO EXEMPTING ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY PERSONNEL FROM CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS, AND 40‑1‑77 RELATING TO TEMPORARY PROFESSIONAL OR OCCUPATIONAL LICENSES FOR MILITARY SPOUSES, THE SUBSTANCE OF WHICH ARE INCORPORATED INTO THE NEW ARTICLE ADDED BY THIS ACT.

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly finds that military service members after separating from military service are frequently delayed in getting post‑military employment even though the service member may have applicable military education, training, and experience which could qualify for an occupational license or certification, or which could provide academic credit toward college, university, or technical degree requirements; and

Whereas, the General Assembly finds it is advantageous to the State to create occupational and educational opportunities for post‑military service members who are honorably discharged and spouses of active‑duty service members who must leave work in another state to accompany their service member on transfer and assignment for military duty in this State; and

Whereas, the General Assembly finds that the spouse of an active‑duty service member assigned for duty in this State who possesses a valid professional license or certification with current experience in another state should be allowed to apply for the same professional license or certification in this State and such application should be expedited for better employment opportunities and based upon the person having substantially equivalent education, training and experience for licensure in this State. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. This act is known and may be cited as the “Military Service Occupation, Education, and Credentialing Act”.

SECTION 2. Article 1, Chapter 101, Title 59 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 59‑101‑400. (A) A state‑supported‑post‑secondary educational institution governed by this title, including a technical and comprehensive educational institution, may award educational credit to a student honorably discharged from the Armed Forces of the United States for a course that is part of the military training or service of the student, provided:

(1) the award must be made within three years after the enrollment of the student at the institution;

(2) the course meets the standards of the American Council of Education or equivalent standards for awarding academic credit; and

(3) the award is based upon the admissions standards, role, scope, and mission of the institution.

(B) An institution authorized to award education credit under subsection (A) shall:

(1) develop a policy concerning the provisions of subsection (A) before January 1, 2014; and

(2) adopt rules and procedures to implement the provisions of this section to become effective on the beginning of the 2013‑2014 academic year of the institution.”

SECTION 3. Chapter 1, Title 40 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Article 3

Miscellaneous Licensure Provisions for Military Personnel

Section 40‑1‑610. A person whose profession or occupation is regulated by this title is exempt from completing continuing education requirements for his profession or occupation while serving on active military duty.

Section 40‑1‑620. A person whose profession or occupation is regulated by this title may not be assessed, and is exempt from being required to pay, a license fee for his profession or occupation for a calendar year in which he serves any period of active military duty.

Section 40‑1‑630. (A) A board or commission that regulates the licensure of a profession or occupation under Title 40 may issue a temporary professional license for a profession or occupation it regulates to the spouse of an active duty member of the United States Armed Forces if the member is assigned to a duty station in this State pursuant to the official active duty military orders of the member.

(B)(1) A person seeking a temporary professional license under subsection (A) shall submit an application to the board or commission from which it is seeking the temporary license on forms the board or commission shall create and provide. In addition to general personal information about the applicant, the application must include proof that the:

(a) applicant is married to a member of the United States Armed Forces who is on active duty;

(b) applicant holds a valid license issued by another state, the District of Columbia, a possession or territory of the United States, or a foreign jurisdiction for the profession for which temporary licensure is sought;

(c) applicant holds the license in subitem (b) in ‘good standing’ as evidenced by a certificate of good standing from the state, possession or territory of the United States, or foreign jurisdiction that issued the license;

(d)(i) applicant submitted at his expense to a fingerprint‑based background check conducted by the State Law Enforcement Division to determine if the applicant has a criminal history in this State and a fingerprint‑based background check conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to determine if the person has other criminal history, and the official results of these checks must be provided to the board or commission to which application for temporary licensure is made; and

(ii) the provisions of this subitem only apply if a similar background check is required to obtain ordinary licensure in the profession or occupation for which temporary licensure is sought by the applicant; and

(e) spouse of the applicant is assigned to a duty station in this State pursuant to the official active duty military orders of the member.

(C) A temporary license issued under this section expires one year from the date of issue and may not be renewed.

Section 40‑1‑640. (A) A professional or occupational board or commission governed by this title shall accept the education, training, and experience completed by an individual as a member of the Armed Forces or Reserves of the United States, National Guard of any state, the Military Reserves of any state, or the Naval Militias of any state and apply this education, training, and experience in the manner most favorable toward satisfying the qualifications for issuance of the requested license or certification or approval for license examination in this State, subject to the receipt of evidence considered satisfactory by the board or commission.

(B) Nothing in this section may be construed to require the issuance of a license or certificate to an applicant who does not otherwise meet the stated eligibility standards, criteria, qualifications or requirements for licensure or certification, nor may the provisions be construed to automatically allow issuance of any license or certificate without testing or examination, without proper consideration by the licensing and examination board, or without proper verification that the applicant is not subject to pending criminal charges or disciplinary actions, has not been convicted of any offense prohibiting licensure or certification, and has no other impairment that would prohibit licensure or certification in this State.”

SECTION 4. Sections 40‑1‑75 and 40‑1‑77 of the 1976 Code are repealed.

SECTION 5. This act takes effect upon approval of the Governor.

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