**A** **BILL**

TO ESTABLISH THE FAIRFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, TO DEFINE THE BOARD’S TERMS, POWERS, DUTIES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES, AND TO PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE METHOD OF APPOINTING AND REMOVING THE FAIRFIELD COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICER.

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

SECTION 1. (A) Notwithstanding another provision of law, there is established a Fairfield County Board of Veterans Affairs, to be composed of five members appointed by a majority of the senators representing the county. Members shall serve without pay and are not entitled to mileage or per diem. Three of the members appointed must be active members of a Veterans Service Organization recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for the purpose of preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims under laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs, as provided in 38 U.S.C. 5902, formerly 3402, and 38 C.F.R. 14.628(a) and (c). Two of the members appointed shall represent the general public.

(B) Two of the initial appointees shall serve two‑year terms, and three of the initial appointees shall serve four‑year terms. Upon expiration of the terms of those members initially appointed, the term of office for the members of the board is four years, and until their successors are appointed and qualify. Members may succeed themselves.

(C) In the case of a vacancy on the board, the vacancy must be filled in the manner of the original appointment for the unexpired term.

(D) A majority of the Fairfield County Board of Veterans Affairs shall appoint the board’s chairman. The chairman shall serve a term of four years and may be reappointed to that office for any number of successive terms without limitation. The board also may choose to elect a vice chair, a secretary, and other officers the board considers appropriate.

(E) A board member who misses three consecutive meetings of the board is considered to have resigned his office, and a vacancy on the board exists, which must be filled in the manner of the original appointment. This subsection does not apply to a member who presents a verifiable doctor’s certificate that illness prevented his attendance at a meeting.

(F) Upon the appointment of the Fairfield County Board of Veterans Affairs, a vacancy in the office of the Fairfield County Veterans Affairs Officer is deemed to exist; however, the incumbent officer may continue to serve until he is either reappointed or a successor is appointed and qualifies pursuant to this act.

(G) A majority of the Fairfield County Board of Veterans Affairs shall recommend to the Director of the Division of Veterans Affairs an individual to be appointed as the Fairfield County Veterans Affairs Officer. The individual recommended for appointment pursuant to this subsection shall meet the criteria for appointment set forth in Section 25‑11‑40(B) and (C) of the 1976 Code and shall possess and execute the same powers, duties, and responsibilities as county veterans affairs officers appointed pursuant to the provisions of Article 1, Chapter 11, Title 25. The Fairfield County Veterans Affairs Officer appointed pursuant to this subsection is subject to removal for cause at any time by a majority of the Fairfield County Board of Veterans Affairs.

(H) In addition to recommending the individual to be appointed as the Fairfield County Veterans Affairs Officer, the Fairfield County Board of Veterans Affairs shall:

(1) research, analyze, assemble, and disseminate information and educational materials relating to activities and programs that benefit Fairfield County veterans and their families;

(2) institute and conduct educational and other programs, meetings, and conferences to promote the rights and opportunities for Fairfield County veterans; and

(3) advise and inform the Fairfield County legislative delegation, appropriate Fairfield County officials, and local businesses regarding the specific issues and needs of Fairfield County veterans and their families to ensure Fairfield County veterans are adequately considered for employment, education, training and other public programs.

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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