

1.1 **Senator Marty from the Committee on Finance, to which was re-referred**

1.2 **S.F. No. 1959:** A bill for an act relating to state government; establishing a budget for
1.3 the Department of Military Affairs and the Department of Veterans Affairs; modifying
1.4 accreditation and disclosure requirements for providers of veterans benefits services to
1.5 veterans and veterans' families; modifying veterans services and benefits provisions; requiring
1.6 the commissioner of administration to place a memorial plaque honoring Gold Star and
1.7 Blue Star families on State Capitol grounds; requiring reports; appropriating money;
1.8 amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 13.461, subdivision 27; 193.143; 197.065;
1.9 197.236, subdivisions 8, 9; 197.608, subdivision 6; 197.6091; 197.75, subdivision 1; 197.791,
1.10 subdivision 4.

1.11 Reports the same back with the recommendation that the bill be amended as follows:

1.12 Page 11, after line 29, insert:

1.13 **"Sec. 6. [197.448] VETERAN OF THE SECRET WAR IN LAOS.**

1.14 **Subdivision 1. Definition.** As used in this section, the term "veteran of the secret war
1.15 in Laos" means a person who resides in this state and who:

1.16 (1) was naturalized as provided in section 2(1) of the federal Hmong Veterans'
1.17 Naturalization Act of 2000, Public Law 106-207, or received a Medal of Honor, Purple
1.18 Heart, or other military award for service in support of the armed forces of the United States
1.19 in Laos; or

1.20 (2) is a person who the commissioner of veterans affairs determines served honorably
1.21 with a special guerrilla unit or with irregular forces that operated from a base in Laos in
1.22 support of the armed forces of the United States at any time during the period beginning
1.23 February 28, 1961, and ending May 14, 1975, and is a citizen of the United States or an
1.24 alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States.

1.25 **Subd. 2. Eligibility for benefits and privileges.** (a) A veteran of the secret war in Laos,
1.26 as defined in subdivision 1, clause (1), is entitled to the benefits and privileges listed in
1.27 paragraph (c) the day following the effective date of this act.

1.28 (b) A veteran of the secret war in Laos, as defined in subdivision 1, clause (2), is entitled
1.29 to the benefits and privileges listed in paragraph (c) after the commissioner verifies the
1.30 person's veteran status. By March 30, 2026, the commissioner must:

1.31 (1) adopt criteria and a protocol to determine eligibility under subdivision 1, clause (2),
1.32 based upon the recommendations of the Veterans of Secret Guerilla Units and Irregular
1.33 Forces in Laos Advisory Task Force; and

1.34 (2) begin accepting applications for verification.

(c) The following statutory benefits and privileges available to a veteran, as defined in section 197.447, are also available to a veteran of the secret war in Laos: section 171.07, subdivision 15 (veteran designation on drivers' licenses and state identification cards); section 197.23 (purchase of grave markers); section 197.231 (honor guards); section 197.236 (state veterans cemeteries); section 197.455 (veterans preference); section 197.4551 (permissive preference for veterans in private employment); section 197.55 (quarters for meetings of veterans organizations); section 197.56 (use of quarters); 197.63 (vital records, certified copies); section 197.65 (renewal of professional license, motor vehicle registration, and driver's license); and section 197.987 (honor and remember flag).

Sec. 7. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 197.603, subdivision 1, is amended to read:

Subdivision 1. **Veterans benefits and assistance.** (a) It shall be the duty of the county veterans service officer to aid all residents of the governmental subdivision by which the officer is employed in securing benefits provided by law on account of the service of any person in the armed forces of the United States, from which the person has a discharge other than dishonorable. The county veterans service officer shall aid all veterans who are residents of the governmental subdivision by which the officer is employed, regardless of the nature of discharge, in securing counseling or treatment concerning substance use disorder and substance abuse.

(b) Notwithstanding paragraph (a), if a veteran cannot secure an appointment to receive aid from a county veterans service officer in the governmental subdivision where the veteran resides, the veteran may request aid from any county veterans service officer in the state, and it shall be the duty of the county veterans service officer to aid the veteran regardless of whether the veteran resides in the governmental subdivision by which the officer is employed."

Page 19, after line 16, insert:

"Sec. 12. **ADVISORY TASK FORCE ESTABLISHED; VETERANS OF SECRET GUERRILLA UNITS AND IRREGULAR FORCES IN LAOS.**

Subdivision 1. **Establishment; membership.** (a) The commissioner of veterans affairs shall establish a Veterans of Secret Guerilla Units and Irregular Forces in Laos Advisory Task Force.

(b) The advisory task force shall consist of the commissioner, or a designee, and the following additional nine members appointed by the commissioner, except as otherwise provided:

(1) a representative of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, appointed by the United States Commissioner of Veterans Affairs;

(2) a representative of the Minnesota Commanders Task Force designated by the Commanders Task Force;

(3) a representative of the Disabled American Veterans of Minnesota;

(4) a United States armed forces veteran who served on active duty in Vietnam during the Vietnam War;

(5) a Hmong American Minnesota resident who served in the United States armed forces;

(6) two veterans of a secret guerilla unit or irregular forces in Laos;

(7) a historian knowledgeable about the secret guerilla units and irregular forces in Laos; and

(8) a representative of the Minnesota Military Museum who has knowledge of the Vietnam War designated by the museum's director.

Subd. 2. **Duties; report.** (a) The task force must establish criteria for determining which Minnesotans served in the secret guerrilla units or with irregular forces in Laos.

(b) By February 15, 2026, the task force must deliver a report to the commissioner that includes the findings, criteria, protocol, and recommendations required under paragraph (a).

Subd. 3. **Administration; terms of membership.** The commissioner shall convene the first meeting of the advisory task force by August 15, 2025, and provide staff support to the advisory task force. The provisions of Minnesota Statutes, section 15.059, subdivision 6, shall govern the terms and removal of members of the advisory task force. Members of the task force serve without compensation or per diem.

Subd. 4. **Expiration.** The task force expires on February 15, 2026."

Renumber the sections in sequence

Amend the title as follows:

Page 1, line 7, after the first semicolon, insert "providing benefits to veterans of the secret war in Laos; requiring county veteran services officers to aid certain additional veterans; establishing a task force;"

Amend the title numbers accordingly

And when so amended the bill do pass. Amendments adopted. Report adopted.

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(Committee Chair)

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April 10, 2025.....
(Date of Committee recommendation)