

CHAPTER 184

GOVERNMENT - STATE

SENATE BILL 15-205

BY SENATOR(S) Roberts and Garcia, Aguilar, Carroll, Cooke, Crowder, Donovan, Grantham, Guzman, Heath, Jahn, Johnston, Jones, Kefalas, Kerr, Lambert, Merrifield, Newell, Scheffel, Todd, Cadman;
also REPRESENTATIVE(S) Keyser and Hamner, Conti, Esgar, Fields, Garnett, Ginal, Klingenschmitt, Kraft-Tharp, Lawrence, Lebsock, Lee, Melton, Mitsch Bush, Moreno, Nordberg, Pabon, Pettersen, Rankin, Rosenthal, Ryden, Salazar, Tate, Williams, Windholz, Young, Hullinghorst.

AN ACT**CONCERNING THE UTILIZATION OF VETERANS' FIRE CORPS PROGRAMS BY THE DIVISION OF FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY.**

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

SECTION 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Veterans Fire Corps Act".

SECTION 2. Legislative declaration. (1) The general assembly hereby finds, determines, and declares that:

(a) The threat of wildfire is a matter of serious concern to Colorado residents, especially to those living in the wildland-urban interface;

(b) In the last decade, the average number of acres burned annually by wildfires in Colorado has more than tripled, and Colorado has experienced some of its worst fires on record;

(c) Several of these fires have occurred outside of the traditional wildland fire season, during what is known as the "shoulder season" when state and federal hand firefighting crews are virtually non-existent;

(d) Since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, approximately two million eight hundred thousand men and women have served in the United States armed forces;

Capital letters indicate new material added to existing statutes; dashes through words indicate deletions from existing statutes and such material not part of act.

(e) Colorado is home to more than four hundred sixteen thousand veterans, of which more than forty-five thousand are post-9/11 era veterans, and in spite of their military training and experience, a significant number of these veterans are unemployed or underemployed; and

(f) Veterans' fire corps programs provide training and on-the-job experience for post-9/11 era veterans interested in entering into careers and gaining experience in natural resource management and wildland fire control.

(2) Therefore, the general assembly:

(a) Finds that it is in the public interest to help returning veterans find employment;

(b) Determines that the purpose of this act is to help ensure the year-round availability of qualified hand crews, while providing training and employment opportunities for veterans of the post-9/11 era; and

(c) Declares that the division of fire prevention and control, to the extent practicable, should train, equip, and supervise hand crews employed by veterans' fire corps programs in Colorado for wildland fire mitigation and suppression.

SECTION 3. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 24-33.5-1202, **add** (8.2) and (14.3) as follows:

24-33.5-1202. Definitions. As used in this part 12, unless the context otherwise requires:

(8.2) "POST-9/11 ERA VETERAN" MEANS A VETERAN WHO SERVED ON ACTIVE DUTY DURING THE MILITARY CAMPAIGN PERIOD THAT STARTED AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, TERRORIST ATTACKS ON THE UNITED STATES, AND CONTINUING UNTIL THE DATE OF THE END OF HOSTILITIES AS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES, AND WHO HAS RECEIVED AN HONORABLE DISCHARGE, A GENERAL DISCHARGE UNDER HONORABLE CONDITIONS, OR A GENERAL DISCHARGE.

(14.3) "VETERANS' FIRE CORPS PROGRAM" MEANS A PROGRAM THAT IS ORGANIZED BY A CONSERVATION CORPS OR YOUTH CORPS ACCREDITED BY THE COLORADO YOUTH CORPS ASSOCIATION AND THAT PROVIDES TRAINING AND ON-THE-JOB EXPERIENCE FOR POST-9/11 ERA VETERANS INTERESTED IN ENTERING INTO CAREERS AND GAINING EXPERIENCE IN NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND WILDLAND FIRE CONTROL.

SECTION 4. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 24-33.5-1227, **add** (1) (c) (III) as follows:

24-33.5-1227. Wildfire preparedness fund - creation - gifts, grants, and donations authorized - wildfire preparedness plan - report. (1) (c) (III) THE DIVISION MAY USE MONEYS IN THE WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS FUND FOR THE PURPOSE OF TRAINING, EQUIPPING, OR SUPERVISING ONE OR MORE HAND CREWS EMPLOYED BY VETERANS' FIRE CORPS PROGRAMS IN COLORADO FOR WILDLAND FIRE MITIGATION

AND SUPPRESSION.

SECTION 5. Safety clause. The general assembly hereby finds, determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, and safety.

Approved: May 12, 2015