

CHAPTER 434

GOVERNMENT - STATE

HOUSE BILL 24-1236

BY REPRESENTATIVE(S) Holtorf, Bird, Brown, Duran, Frizell, Hamrick, Herod, Joseph, Ortiz, Pugliese, Rutinel, Titone, Valdez, Weissman, Wilson, Winter T., McCluskie;
also SENATOR(S) Pelton B. and Kirkmeyer, Bridges, Buckner, Cutter, Exum, Ginal, Gonzales, Hansen, Hinrichsen, Jaquez Lewis, Michaelson Jenet, Mullica, Priola, Sullivan, Winter F., Zenzinger.

AN ACT**CONCERNING THE CREATION OF "WOMEN VETERANS APPRECIATION DAY".**

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

SECTION 1. In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add 24-11-117** as follows:

24-11-117. Women Veterans Appreciation Day - legislative declaration.

(1) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS AND DECLARES THAT:

(a) THROUGHOUT OUR NATION'S HISTORY, OVER THREE MILLION WOMEN HAVE VOLUNTEERED TO SERVE OUR COUNTRY BY PROVIDING MILITARY SERVICE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. WOMEN HAVE COURAGEOUSLY SERVED AND HISTORICALLY TRAILBLAZED THROUGHOUT THE YEARS, INCLUDING DISGUIISING THEMSELVES AS MALE SOLDIERS DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND CIVIL WAR; SERVING IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY NURSE CORPS, SIGNAL CORPS, AND IN CLERICAL POSITIONS DURING WORLD WAR I WHEN WOMEN DID NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE; AND SERVING AS MECHANICS, CLERICAL WORKERS, TRUCK DRIVERS, FERRY AND SHUTTLE PILOTS, AND IN AIR COMBAT TACTICS DURING WORLD WAR II.

(b) THERE ARE CURRENTLY OVER EIGHT THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED COLORADO WOMEN SERVING IN THE SIX BRANCHES OF THE ARMED FORCES AND OVER FORTY-SEVEN THOUSAND COLORADO WOMEN VETERANS. ON MARCH 1, 2013, THE FIRST FEMALE MAJOR GENERAL WAS CHOSEN TO BE THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY, AND IN 2016, THE UNITED STATES ARMY ENLISTED A COLORADO FEMALE INTO THE INFANTRY FOR THE FIRST TIME. IN 2020, GOVERNOR JARED POLIS APPOINTED THE FIRST FEMALE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF COLORADO.

Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material added to existing law; dashes through words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law and such material is not part of the act.

(c) THERE ARE CURRENTLY TWENTY-ONE STATES AND UNITED STATES TERRITORIES THAT RECOGNIZE JUNE 12 AS A DAY TO RECOGNIZE WOMEN VETERANS, INCLUDING ALASKA, CALIFORNIA, FLORIDA, HAWAII, ILLINOIS, INDIANA, KENTUCKY, MARYLAND, MASSACHUSETTS, MICHIGAN, MISSISSIPPI, NEBRASKA, NEW JERSEY, NEW YORK, OHIO, OREGON, RHODE ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA, THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS, UTAH, AND WISCONSIN;

(d) WOMEN VETERANS HAVE LONG FOUGHT FOR EQUAL RECOGNITION OF THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF OUR NATION;

(e) AFTER SERVICE, WOMEN VETERANS FACE HIGHER RATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND HOMELESSNESS THAN THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS;

(f) WOMEN VETERANS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN, FACE HIGHER RATES OF POVERTY THAN THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS;

(g) WOMEN VETERANS FACE RATES OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS AS MUCH AS THREE TIMES HIGHER THAN THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS;

(h) AS MANY AS ONE IN TWELVE WOMEN ARE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED WHILE ON ACTIVE DUTY;

(i) WOMEN VETERANS DIE BY SUICIDE AT SIX TIMES THE RATE OF THEIR CIVILIAN COUNTERPARTS;

(j) DESPITE THE DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACTS THAT MILITARY SERVICE HAS HAD ON THE WOMEN WHO SERVED, THEIR NEEDS HAVE YET TO BE FULLY RECOGNIZED BY NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS;

(k) WOMEN VETERANS CONTINUE TO BE DENIED ACCESS TO SERVICES OTHERWISE AVAILABLE TO THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS, INCLUDING ACCESS TO SHELTERS THAT ACCOMMODATE WOMEN OR THEIR DEPENDENT CHILDREN, REPRODUCTIVE AND OTHER HEALTH CARE SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES SPECIALIZING IN SEXUAL TRAUMA, AND OTHER RESOURCES THAT RECOGNIZE THE CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN VETERANS;

(l) DESPITE THESE SOMETIMES OVERWHELMING CHALLENGES, WOMEN CONTINUE TO VOLUNTEER TO SERVE AND ARE THE FASTEST GROWING SEGMENT OF UNITED STATES MILITARY AND VETERAN POPULATIONS; AND

(m) IN ORDER TO HONOR THE COURAGE AND SACRIFICE OF WOMEN VETERANS, BRING ATTENTION TO THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES THEY FACE, AND AFFIRM THE STATE OF COLORADO'S COMMITMENT TO MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR WOMEN VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS IT NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH A WOMEN VETERANS APPRECIATION DAY, AND THIS DAY SHALL BE USED NOT ONLY AS AN OCCASION TO HONOR THEIR SERVICE, BUT AS AN ANNUAL CALL TO VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS STATEWIDE TO REVIEW THEIR PROGRAMS AND WORK TOWARDS IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR WOMEN VETERANS.

(2) THE TWELFTH DAY OF JUNE IN EACH YEAR IS KNOWN AS "WOMEN VETERANS

APPRECIATION DAY", AND APPROPRIATE OBSERVANCE MAY BE HELD BY THE PUBLIC AND IN ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE STATE IN TRIBUTE TO THE SERVICE AND SACRIFICE OF WOMEN VETERANS.

SECTION 2. Act subject to petition - effective date. This act takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in November 2024 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.

Approved: June 5, 2024