

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE -- RHODE ISLAND VETERANS
HOME STAFFING SUPPORT ACT OF 2026

Introduced By: Senators Ujifusa, DiPalma, Felag, Euer, Kallman, Appollonio, E Morgan,
Murray, Zurier, and Britto

Date Introduced: February 27, 2026

Referred To: Senate Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Rhode Island Veterans’
2 Home Staffing Support Act of 2026.”

3 SECTION 2. Legislative Findings.

4 The General Assembly finds and declares that:

5 (1) The Rhode Island veterans home (“veterans home”) in Bristol is a state-operated long-
6 term care facility providing skilled nursing, domiciliary care, and related services to Rhode Island
7 veterans.

8 (2) The veterans home is licensed as a nursing facility regulated by the Rhode Island
9 department of health pursuant to state and federal standards.

10 (3) Current operational capacity is below licensed capacity due to workforce shortages
11 affecting nurses, certified nursing assistants, and essential support staff.

12 (4) Workforce shortages are influenced by:

13 (i) Regional wage competition documented by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics;

14 (ii) Long commute distances for many staff who reside outside Bristol County; and

15 (iii) Insufficient affordable housing options near the veterans’ home campus.

16 (5) Operating below licensed capacity reduces the federal per diem reimbursement
17 available to the state for each occupied bed and increases the state’s per-resident cost by spreading
18 fixed overhead across fewer residents.

1 (6) Other states, including Connecticut, Minnesota, and Maine, have enacted laws to ensure
2 their state veterans homes can safely operate at or near licensed capacity.

3 (7) Timely analysis and coordinated corrective action to address staffing challenges at the
4 veterans home are necessary to ensure safe operations and appropriate support for Rhode Island
5 veterans.

6 SECTION 3. Title 30 of the General Laws entitled "MILITARY AFFAIRS AND
7 DEFENSE" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

8 CHAPTER 34

9 THE RHODE ISLAND VETERANS HOME STAFFING SUPPORT ACT OF 2026

10 **30-34-1. Workforce analysis and corrective action plan.**

11 (a) Workforce analysis.

12 (1) The department of administration acting as the coordinating agency, shall conduct a
13 comprehensive workforce analysis of the veterans home in consultation with the department of
14 health, the office of veterans services, and the administrator of the Rhode Island veterans home.
15 The workforce analysis shall be completed no later than sixty (60) days after the effective date of
16 this act.

17 (2) The analysis shall address:

18 (i) Wage competitiveness for all classifications relative to comparable long-term care
19 facilities statewide and in neighboring states;

20 (ii) Shift differentials, recruitment incentives, retention patterns, vacancy rates, and related
21 workforce indicators;

22 (iii) Transportation, commute, and housing barriers affecting recruitment and retention;

23 (iv) Scheduling flexibility, career-advancement pathways, and professional-development
24 supports;

25 (v) Licensed bed capacity; operational bed capacity during the reporting year; staffing
26 levels required to safely open additional beds; documented reasons for continued bed closures; and
27 the resulting impact on access, waitlists, and per-resident cost.

28 (vi) Relevant personnel and regulatory standards, including:

29 (A) Applicable state personnel benchmarks under title 36 ("public officers and
30 employees"); and

31 (B) Federal and state nursing-facility staffing assessment and sufficiency requirements
32 including, but not limited to, the provisions of 42 C.F.R. §§ 483.30 and 483.70(e).

33 (b) Corrective action plan.

34 (1) Within forty-five (45) days of completing the workforce analysis, the department of

1 administration shall submit a corrective action plan, developed in consultation with the agencies
2 listed in subsection (a) of this section, identifying:

3 (i) Required wage or benefit adjustments, hiring incentives, or recruitment and retention
4 strategies;

5 (ii) Recommended job classification or pay grade changes for formal submission pursuant
6 to § 30-34-2 of this chapter;

7 (iii) A proposed timeline for implementation, identifying any recommendations requiring
8 legislative appropriation or collective-bargaining action;

9 (iv) A recommendation, made in consultation with the department of health, identifying
10 which closed beds may be safely reopened consistent with licensure and staffing requirements,
11 together with a proposed schedule for reopening such beds, subject to available appropriations; and

12 (v) Any additional administrative or regulatory actions necessary for the department of
13 administration to carry out the job classification updates required under the provisions of this
14 chapter.

15 (c) The department of administration may extend the deadline for submission of the
16 corrective action plan only to the extent reasonably necessary to ensure accuracy and completeness;
17 provided, however, that any such extension shall not delay or modify the deadlines set forth in §
18 30-34-2 unless expressly authorized by the general assembly.

19 **30-34-2. Job classification review and updates.**

20 (a) Authority.

21 Consistent with its authority under the provisions of chapter 4 of title 36 (“merit system”),
22 the department of administration shall review and update job classifications and pay grades for
23 applicable veterans home positions to support achieving full operational capacity.

24 (b) Integration with corrective action plan.

25 The review and updates required under this section shall be informed by the corrective
26 action plan submitted pursuant to the provisions of § 30-34-1.

27 (c) Timeline.

28 The department of administration shall complete the classification and pay grade review
29 and publish updated classifications no later than November 15, 2026, for consideration in the
30 governor’s fiscal year 2027 budget proposal.

31 (d) Legislative submission.

32 Updated classifications and any associated fiscal implications shall be transmitted to the
33 senate finance committee, the house finance committee, and relevant policy committees no later
34 than November 25, 2026.

1 (e) Scope and statewide classification neutrality.
2 Nothing in this section shall be construed to require automatic or across-the-board wage,
3 benefit, or classification adjustments for state employees outside the Rhode Island veterans home.
4 Any broader statewide classification or compensation changes resulting from comparable duties,
5 equity considerations, or collective bargaining shall be considered separately pursuant to applicable
6 law, budgetary processes, and negotiated agreements.

7 (f) Collective bargaining.
8 Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit or override collective-bargaining rights
9 under title 28.

10 **30-34-3. Reporting and fiscal implementation.**

11 (a) Public reporting.
12 The workforce analysis and corrective action plan required under the provisions of this
13 chapter shall be made publicly available upon submission and transmitted to the auditor general.

14 (b) Fiscal implementation.
15 Implementation of any recommendation requiring an appropriation or expenditure of state
16 funds shall be subject to legislative approval through the annual budget or other applicable
17 appropriations process.

18 SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE -- RHODE ISLAND VETERANS
HOME STAFFING SUPPORT ACT OF 2026

1 This act would create The Rhode Island Veterans Home Staffing Support Act of 2026. This
2 act would direct the department of administration to conduct a comprehensive workforce analysis
3 of the veterans home in consultation with the department of health, the office of veterans services,
4 and the administrator of the Rhode Island veterans home.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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