SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1425 FILED ON: 1/18/2013

SENATE . . . . . No. 1747

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Michael F. Rush

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying:

An Act relative to the certification of veterans service officers and agents.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Michael F. Rush	*Norfolk and Suffolk*
Linda Campbell	*15th Essex*
Angelo J. Puppolo, Jr.	*12th Hampden*
Robert M. Koczera	*11th Bristol*
Peter V. Kocot	*1st Hampshire*
Michael J. Finn	*6th Hampden*
James J. Dwyer	*30th Middlesex*
Randy Hunt	*5th Barnstable*
Christopher G. Fallon	*33rd Middlesex*
Thomas J. Calter	*12th Plymouth*
F. Jay Barrows	*1st Bristol*
Denise Andrews	*2nd Franklin*
Chris Walsh	*6th Middlesex*
Carolyn C. Dykema	*8th Middlesex*
Bruce E. Tarr	*First Essex and Middlesex*
Kate Hogan	*3rd Middlesex*

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By Mr. Rush, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1747) of Michael F. Rush, Linda Campbell, Angelo J. Puppolo, Jr., Robert M. Koczera and other members of the General Court for legislation relative to the certification of veterans service officers and agents. Veterans and Federal Affairs.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

An Act relative to the certification of veterans service officers and agents.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 115 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2010 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting the following after Section 3A:—

Section 3B. A person who receives an appointment as a veterans' agent or as an assistant veterans' agent on a full-time or permanent part-time basis in a city or town shall satisfactorily complete an annual prescribed course of study for veterans' agents which shall be approved by the secretary of the department of veterans' services and offered at a time to be determined by the secretary. Upon petition to the secretary by the appointing authority, a person appointed as a veterans' agent or as an assistant veterans' agent, on a full-time or permanent part-time basis, in a city or town, may be exempted by the secretary from the requirements of this section before exercising veterans' agent duties while that person is awaiting training as prescribed in this paragraph.

The secretary shall establish standards for the training and support of veteran service officers and agents consistent with the requirements of this paragraph. During the period of employment, a person holding a veterans service officer or agent certificate pursuant to this section shall be under the direct supervision of the mayor, town manager, board of selectmen, or regional district board or others who shall regularly observe and evaluate the performance of assigned duties by veterans service officer or agent.

The secretary shall promulgate regulations to ensure local veteran service officers and agents, appointed under section 3 of this chapter, are trained and certified. Veteran service officers and agents shall be trained and certified within twelve (12) months of appointment pursuant to section 3 of this chapter. Veterans service officers and agents currently appointed pursuant to section 3 of this chapter shall be shall be certified within (12) months of the date said

23 regulations are promulgated. Certification must be renewed every year. To be eligible for
24 certification as a veterans service officer or agent, the candidate shall (1) be appointed locally
25 pursuant to MGL chapter 115, section 3; (2) attend a mandatory annual training as formulated by
26 the secretary and approved by the Massachusetts veterans' service officers association and
27 Massachusetts municipal association. The secretary shall make testing available at the mandatory
28 annual training and shall provide a reasonable schedule of make-up training and testing; (3) pass
29 a test every three (3) years established by the secretary in conjunction with the Massachusetts
30 veterans' service officers association, which shall demonstrate the core knowledge to effectively
31 represent veterans which shall include, but not be limited to the following areas of knowledge:
32 the chapter 115 program, federal and local benefits, including employment, education, health
33 care, retirement and other veterans' benefits; and alternative resources, including those which are
34 partially or wholly subsidized by the federal government, such as Medicaid, supplemental
35 security income and social security disability benefits, as well as federal pension and
36 compensation entitlements; The commonwealth of Massachusetts shall consider those who
37 complete the requirements in this paragraph a certified veteran service officer or agent.
38 Certification shall be mandatory for employment.

39 At the request of any municipality or district, the secretary shall offer such training and
40 testing to any person who works directly for a certified veterans service officer or agent.

41 Failure of a person to comply with this section within six (6) months of being appointed
42 as a veterans' agent or as an assistant veterans' agent shall result in the removal by the
43 appointing authority. Failure of an appointed authority to remove the veterans' agent and comply
44 with this section shall result in the reduction percentage of the allowance of seventy-five per cent
45 to fifty per cent paid by the commonwealth as described in M.G.L. c 115, section 6.

46 SECTION 2: The secretary shall adopt all necessary rules, regulations, and procedures in
47 conjunction with the commission established by section 19 of chapter 108 of the acts of 2012 to
48 implement this act no later than 180 days following the passage of this act. To defray the costs of
49 administering this Act, funds shall be appropriated to the department of veterans services, and
50 shall be expended under the direction of the secretary.