



## **“THE WELCOME HOME BILL”**

### **Chapter 130 of the Acts of 2005**

#### ***A comprehensive bill for Massachusetts Veterans, Service members & their Families***

- Increases the death benefit for the families of deceased Massachusetts National Guard members from \$5,000 to \$100,000.
- Provides all members of the Massachusetts National Guard with education and fee waivers at all state and community colleges. The Commonwealth, not the schools, will bear the cost of such waivers.
- Establishes an 11-member commission to study tuition and fee waiver programs for veterans and make a report on their findings to the legislature by April 1, 2006.
- Establishes The Military Family Relief Fund for members of the Massachusetts National Guard, Armed Forces and Reserves.
- Provides a tax-free “Welcome Home Bonus” for eligible Massachusetts service members who were called up to active duty since September 11, 2001, of up to \$1,000.
- Operation Recognition - Awards high school diplomas to World War II, Korean and Vietnam veterans.
- Increases annual annuity payment for blind, paraplegic and disabled veterans to \$2,000.
- Increases annual annuity payment for Gold Star Mothers (parents) to \$2,000.
- Provides Gold Star Wives (spouses) with \$2,000 annual annuity payment.
- Allows Massachusetts public employees who are members of a neighboring state’s National Guard unit to apply their creditable service towards pension credits.
- Increases daily pay for Massachusetts National Guard members from \$75 to \$100.
- Provides 50 percent coverage of monthly SGLI (federal program) life insurance premiums for policies worth up to \$400,000 – or an equivalent group life insurance program of the service member’s choosing, provided that the reimbursement shall not exceed the monthly premium of the cost of SGLI – for members of the Massachusetts National Guard.
- Expands the definition of a World War II veteran, making the Massachusetts definition consistent with the federal definition.

\* This is a summary of “The Welcome Home Bill” as signed by Governor Romney on 11/11/2005. This document was compiled by The Joint Committee on Veterans & Federal Affairs. For further information, please contact The Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs, State House Room 174, Boston, MA 02135, 617-722-2877.