

# SENATE MILITARY AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO **SENATE, No. 3484**

with committee amendments

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 30, 2023

The Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 3484 with committee amendments.

According to qualified veterans organizations, cremains of veterans have been abandoned on average 28 years, some as long as 50 years and others as long as 66 years. Currently, funeral directors make a diligent effort to identify, locate and notify a relative or friend of the deceased, but sometimes the remains go unclaimed. Oftentimes this causes funeral directors to continuously store remains until they are claimed and given a proper burial. Under a 2009 law, funeral directors were given permission to grant veteran organizations and Veteran Service Organizations the right to receive cremains of veterans that have been unclaimed for a year.

As amended, under this bill, funeral directors will continue to make diligent efforts to find a relative or loved one of the deceased. Any cremains that remain one year after the date of cremation and the funeral directors diligent efforts, will be recorded and the funeral directors will notify the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs by written or electronic communication that they are in possession of unclaimed cremains of veterans. The bill also requires the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to create and maintain an Internet-based central reporting system of the location and identity of unclaimed cremains of veterans.

Some veteran organizations and Veterans Service Organizations currently spend an inordinate amount of volunteer time attempting to locate the cremains of veterans. The central reporting system at the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs will assist and facilitate these organizations to locate unclaimed cremains of veterans. This legislation will provide for the veterans to be laid to rest in a more timely manner with the honor and respect that they deserve.

As amended, the bill also provides that if the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs has not implemented the provisions of the bill within one year of the effective date, the Adjutant General is required to appear before certain legislative committees to explain why

the provisions of the bill have not been implemented and provide a plan for implementing the provisions.

#### COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

The committee amended the bill. Under the amendment, if the department has not implemented the provisions of the bill within one year of the effective date, the Adjutant General is required to appear before certain legislative committees to explain why the provisions of the bill have not been implemented and provide a plan for implementing the provisions.

There is also an amendment to change “due diligence” to “a diligent effort,” to better align with the current statutory language, and an amendment to correct a grammatical oversight.