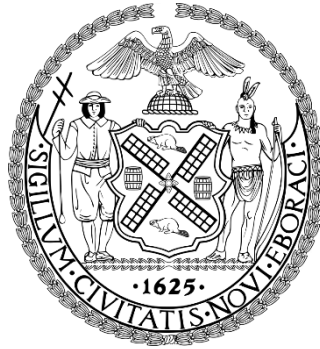


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THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Briefing Paper of the Legislative Division

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COMMITTEE ON VETERANS
Hon. Robert Holden, *Chair*

September 22, 2025

Oversight: Implementing Recommendations from the Veterans Advisory Board

INTRODUCTION

On Monday, September 22, 2025, the Committee on Veterans, chaired by Council Member Robert Holden, will conduct an oversight hearing on *Implementing Recommendations from the Veterans Advisory Board*. Witnesses invited to testify include representatives from the New York City (NYC) Department of Veterans' Services (DVS), NYC Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) members, representatives of Veterans service organizations (VSOs) in NYC, and other interested stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

In 2015, the New York City Council (“City Council”) passed Local Law 113, which required the creation of the VAB,¹ and the VAB was accordingly established pursuant to Chapter 75, Section 3103 of the City Charter.² The VAB’s role is to advise the DVS Commissioner on issues concerning Veterans—as well as Active Duty, Reserve, and Guard servicemembers in NYC—and to connect the Mayor’s administration, DVS, the City Council, and the Veterans community.³

The 13 members of the VAB are appointed to three-year terms; 11 members must be Veterans, and two members must be “immediate family members, spouses or domestic partners, survivors, or caregivers” of Veterans.⁴ Seven members are appointed by the Mayor, and six are appointed by the Speaker of the City Council.⁵ Annually, five public sessions (one in each

¹ N.Y.C. Local Law No. 113 (2015).

² N.Y.C. Charter ch.75, § 3103.

³ *New York City Veterans Advisory Board By-Laws*, DVS website, at <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/veterans/downloads/pdf/Charter.pdf>.

⁴ N.Y.C. Charter ch. 75, *supra*.

⁵ *Id.*

borough) are required to be held by the VAB in order to collect public input on issues of importance and/or concern to the Veterans community.⁶

The VAB is also required to submit an annual report to the Mayor and the City Council by December 31 each year to report on its activities and to provide policy and legislative recommendations to DVS and to the City Council.⁷ In its *2024 Annual Report*, submitted on June 4, 2025, the VAB recounted its activities in 2024 and objectives for 2025, progress on its prior recommendations (including updates on proposed legislation), and new recommendations to the Mayor and the City Council as well as to DVS on policy, programming, and legislation.⁸

In the section of the *2024 Annual Report* entitled “Recommendations to the Mayor and City Council,” the VAB made the following recommendations for 2025:⁹

- “Processing of PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans’ Support Program Grants”—Calling for reviewing NYC agencies’ practices in processing and distributing these New York State (NYS) funds, which are allocated to help Veterans cope with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI), so that funds can be distributed in a more timely manner¹⁰
- “Appointment Terms to the Veterans Advisory Board”—Calling for the appointment of all new members to full three-year terms, including those who are filling out the unexpired terms of members who left the VAB; for the review of member candidates’ backgrounds to ensure “accurate representation” of each of NYC’s five boroughs; and for a requirement for members to attend, remotely or in

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ VAB, *2024 Annual Report*, available at [NYC VAB 2024 End of Year Report.pdf](#).

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

person, at least three of the five meetings each year, including mandatory in-person attendance at the meeting in the borough the member represents¹¹

- “Invest in Resources to Encourage and Support Veteran Engagement in the Political Process”—Calling for City Council members and other officials to assist in the recruiting of Veterans to serve on local community boards and to participate more broadly in the political process, while noting that there had been an improvement in communications about the hearings of the City Council’s Committee on Veterans¹²
- “Increased Funding for DVS”—Calling for additional funding for DVS, the smallest NYC agency, to support DVS’s work to develop long-term goals; to provide some direct services to Veterans rather than simply referring Veterans to other providers; to offer non-digital support services, such as radio ads, print communications, and newsletters, which would be especially helpful in reaching out to Veterans over 64 years of age; to document DVS’s work by supporting data collection and analysis in order to help DVS make a better case for more NYS and federal funding as well as to improve transparency with the public; and to track Veterans’ requests for assistance and their resolutions, including through the newly implemented version of the VetConnect platform¹³
- “Increase Veteran Vendors’ Inclusion on the Street Vendor Advisory Board”—Calling for a way for Veteran street vendors to voice their vendor-related

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

concerns, including by having a designated Veteran member of the Street Vendor Advisory Board¹⁴

- “Funding and Resources for Student Veterans”—Calling for an “equal level of support across the CUNY system” for student Veterans, with John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Queens College, Lehman College, and the College of Staten Island programming used as a model; and calling for “innovative housing solutions” for student Veterans at CUNY, where housing is not typically provided, to help student Veterans handle the high cost of housing in NYC¹⁵
- “Veteran Treatment Courts” (VTCs)—Calling for all VTCs, which are now established in each of the five NYC boroughs, to serve all Veterans, regardless of their discharge status; for consistency across the five boroughs of all VTC policies and operations, which are now at the discretion of each borough’s own Judge and own District Attorney; and for training individuals working in VTCs so that they are “culturally competent” to deal with Veterans and more aware of resources available to Veterans¹⁶

In the section of the *2024 Annual Report* entitled “Recommendations to DVS,” the VAB made the following recommendations for 2025:

- “Codify the [R]esponsibilities of DVS and VAB”—Calling for the codification of responsibilities of both entities to ensure that both are “more cognizant of expectations going forward” and suggesting a revision of the VAB’s By-Laws to include at least these topics:

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

- The approval, terms, and assignments of new board members
- The timely updating of the DVS website
- The location and technology requirements of public meetings
- The establishment of the VAB as the NYC Community Veteran

Engagement Board (CVEB)¹⁷

- “Providing Personnel Support for the VAB”—Calling for legislation to “ensure continuity of support and communication with DVS”—beyond just a United States (U.S.) Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) work study intern—and to support the management of the technology needed for conducting and recording VAB meetings¹⁸
- “Documented Tracking on Progress from Previous Recommendations”—Calling for “detailed metrics regarding the number of [VA claims] submissions, approvals, and financial impact” on NYC to be tracked; and for a review of the process that DVS has used since 2023 to approve discretionary contracts of \$20,000 or less to ensure that recipient organizations are able to receive funding in a timely manner and to assess “the value gained from the service provided” under the contract¹⁹

CONCLUSION

The Committee seeks an understanding of DVS’s response to the VAB’s recommendations to DVS regarding DVS’s operations and is interested in learning about DVS’s

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

plans to implement or not implement those recommendations. The Committee is further interested in DVS's reactions to the recommendations that the VAB has made to the City Council and the Mayor.