

[Third Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 1131

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2024 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman CAROL A. MURPHY

District 7 (Burlington)

Assemblywoman MICHELE MATSIKOUDIS

District 21 (Middlesex, Morris, Somerset and Union)

Senator ROBERT W. SINGER

District 30 (Monmouth and Ocean)

Senator CARMEN F. AMATO, JR.

District 9 (Ocean)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman Dunn, Assemblymen Sauickie, Danielsen,

Assemblywomen Flynn, Fantasia, Assemblyman Freiman,

Assemblywoman Lampitt, Senators Cruz-Perez and Diegnan

SYNOPSIS

Requires Department of Veterans Affairs to verify unclaimed cremains of veterans, spouses, and dependents; requires funeral director to report to Department of Veterans Affairs possession of unclaimed veteran, spouse, and dependent cremains.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As amended on January 12, 2026 by the General Assembly pursuant to the Governor's recommendations.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 12/18/2025)

1 AN ACT concerning unclaimed cremains of veterans ¹, eligible
2 spouses of veterans, and eligible dependents of veterans¹ and
3 amending P.L.1983, c.385, ²P.L.2003, c.221,² P.L.2009, c.14,
4 and ²**[N.J.S.38A:3-6]** N.J.S.38A:21-5².

5
6 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
7 *of New Jersey:*

8
9 ¹**[**1. Section 2 of P.L.1983, c.385 (C.26:7-18.2) is amended to
10 read as follows:

11 2. a. Except as provided by subsection b. of this section, a
12 person may dispose of the cremains of a dead human body which
13 have not been claimed by a relative or friend of the deceased within
14 one year from the date of cremation upon certification, to the
15 commissioner's satisfaction, that a diligent effort has been made to
16 identify, locate and notify a relative or friend of the deceased within
17 that one-year period. A diligent effort shall include a certified
18 letter, return receipt requested, mailed to the person who authorized
19 the cremation.

20 A funeral director, licensed pursuant to P.L.1952, c.340 (C.45:7-
21 32 et seq.), who, after due diligence to find a relative or friend of
22 the deceased, is knowingly in possession of the unclaimed cremains
23 of a veteran, as defined by section 1 of P.L.1989, c.162 (C.38A:3-
24 6.3), shall notify the New Jersey Department of Military and
25 Veterans Affairs, by written or electronic communication, of the
26 location and identity of such cremains one year after the date of
27 cremation.

28 As used in this section, "cremains" means that substance which
29 remains after the cremation of a dead human body.

30 b. A funeral director**[**, licensed pursuant to P.L.1952, c.340
31 (C.45:7-32 et seq.),**]** shall grant a qualified veterans' organization
32 the right to receive the cremains of a veteran which have not been
33 claimed by a relative or friend of the deceased within one year after
34 cremation upon certification, to the commissioner's satisfaction, that
35 a diligent effort, as defined in subsection a. of this section, has been
36 made to identify, locate and notify a relative or friend of the
37 deceased within that one-year period.

38 A qualified veterans' organization which takes possession of
39 cremains pursuant to this section shall dispose of the cremains by
40 scattering them at sea or by interring them on land in a dignified
41 manner at the State-operated, Brigadier General William C. Doyle

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Assembly AMV committee amendments adopted June 6, 2024.

²Senate SMV committee amendments adopted December 1, 2025.

³Assembly amendments adopted in accordance with Governor's
recommendations January 12, 2026.

1 Memorial Cemetery, if the individual is eligible for interment at
2 that facility.

3 As used in this section, "qualified veterans' organization" means
4 a veterans' organization that qualifies as a section 501(c)(3) or
5 501(c)(19) tax exempt organization under the Internal Revenue
6 Code, or a federally chartered Veterans' Service Organization.

7 c. A funeral home or mortuary, or an agent of the funeral home
8 or mortuary, or a funeral director, or qualified veterans'
9 organization, shall not be liable for damages in any civil action
10 arising out of the disposal of cremains pursuant to this section
11 unless the damages are the result of gross negligence or willful
12 misconduct.
13 (cf: P.L.2009, c.14, s.1)]¹.

14
15 ¹[2. Section 2 of P.L.2009, c.14 (C.38A:3-2b4) is amended to
16 read as follows:

17 2. a. A funeral director, licensed pursuant to P.L.1952, c.340
18 (C.45:7-32 et seq.), shall grant a qualified veterans' organization, as
19 defined in subsection b. of section 2 of P.L.1983, c.385 (C.26:7-
20 18.2), the right to receive the cremains of a veteran which have not
21 been claimed by a relative or friend of the deceased within one year
22 after cremation upon certification, to the satisfaction of the
23 Commissioner of Health and Senior Services, that a diligent effort,
24 as defined in subsection a. of section 2 of P.L.1983, c.385 (C.26:7-
25 18.2), has been made to identify, locate and notify a relative or
26 friend of the deceased within that one-year period, as provided
27 under section 2 of P.L.1983, c.385 (C.26:7-18.2).

28 A funeral director, licensed pursuant to P.L.1952, c.340 (C.45:7-
29 32 et seq.), who, after due diligence to find a relative or friend of
30 the deceased, is knowingly in possession of the unclaimed cremains
31 of a veteran, as defined by section 1 of P.L.1989, c.162 (C.38A:3-
32 6.3), shall notify the New Jersey Department of Military and
33 Veterans Affairs, by written or electronic communication, of the
34 location and identity of such cremains one year after the date of
35 cremation.

36 A qualified veterans' organization which takes possession of
37 cremains pursuant to this section shall dispose of the cremains by
38 scattering them at sea or by interring them on land in a dignified
39 manner at the State-operated, Brigadier General William C. Doyle
40 Memorial Cemetery, if the individual is eligible for interment at
41 that facility.

42 b. A funeral home or mortuary, or an agent of the funeral home
43 or mortuary, or a funeral director, or qualified veterans'
44 organization, shall not be liable for damages in any civil action
45 arising out of the disposal of cremains pursuant to this section
46 unless the damages are the result of gross negligence or willful
47 misconduct.

48 (cf: P.L.2009, c.14, s.2)]¹

1 ¹1. Section 2 of P.L.1983, c.385 (C.26:7-18.2) is amended to
2 read as follows:

3 2. a. Except as provided by subsection b. of this section, a person
4 may dispose of the cremains of a dead human body which have not
5 been claimed by a relative or friend of the deceased within one year
6 from the date of cremation upon certification, to the commissioner's
7 satisfaction, that a diligent effort has been made to identify, locate
8 and notify a relative or friend of the deceased within that one-year
9 period. A diligent effort shall include a certified letter, return
10 receipt requested, mailed to the person who authorized the
11 cremation.

12 ²[A funeral director, licensed pursuant to P.L.1952, c.340
13 (C.45:7-32 et seq.), who, after due diligence to find a relative or
14 friend of the deceased, is knowingly in possession of the unclaimed
15 cremains of a veteran, as defined by section 1 of P.L.1989, c.162
16 (C.38A:3-6.3) N.J.S.38A:21-3, or the cremains of an eligible
17 spouse or eligible dependent of a veteran, shall notify the New
18 Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, by written or
19 electronic communication, of the location and identity of such
20 cremains one year after the date of cremation.]²

21 As used in this section, "cremains" means that substance which
22 remains after the cremation of a dead human body.

23 b. ²(1)² A funeral director, licensed pursuant to P.L.1952,
24 c.340 (C.45:7-32 et seq.), shall grant a qualified veterans'
25 organization the right to receive the cremains of a veteran, or the
26 cremains of an eligible spouse or eligible dependent of a veteran,
27 which have not been claimed by a relative or friend of the deceased
28 within one year after cremation upon certification, to the
29 commissioner's satisfaction, that a diligent effort, as defined in
30 subsection a. of this section, has been made to identify, locate and
31 notify a relative or friend of the deceased within that one-year
32 period.

33 A qualified veterans' organization which takes possession of
34 cremains pursuant to this section shall dispose of the cremains by
35 scattering them at sea or by interring them on land in a dignified
36 manner at the State-operated, Brigadier General William C. Doyle
37 Veterans' Memorial Cemetery, a State-operated veterans' memorial
38 cemetery, a national veterans' memorial cemetery, or a local
39 veterans' memorial cemetery, if the individual is eligible for
40 interment at those facilities.

41 As used in this section, "qualified veterans' organization" means
42 a veterans' organization that qualifies as a section 501(c)(3) or
43 501(c)(19) tax exempt organization under the Internal Revenue
44 Code, or a federally chartered Veterans' Service Organization.

45 ²(2) Each funeral director shall promptly respond to a request
46 from the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Affairs³],
47 made pursuant to subsection (s) of N.J.S.38A:21-5,]³ for

1 information as to whether the cremains of a veteran, or the cremains
2 of an eligible spouse or eligible dependent of a veteran, have been
3 claimed.²

4 c. A funeral home or mortuary, or an agent of the funeral home
5 or mortuary, or a funeral director, or qualified veterans'
6 organization, shall not be liable for damages in any civil action
7 arising out of the disposal of cremains pursuant to this section
8 unless the damages are the result of gross negligence or willful
9 misconduct.¹

10 (cf: P.L.2021, c.37, s.1)

11
12 ²2. Section 16 of P.L.2003, c.221 (C.26:8-24.1) is amended to
13 read as follows:

14 16. a. The State registrar shall establish and maintain the New
15 Jersey Electronic Death Registration System or NJ-EDRS.

16 (1) The system shall be fully implemented no later than 18
17 months after the date of enactment of P.L.2003, c.221, and shall be
18 the required means of death registration and certification for any
19 death or fetal death occurring in this State, subject to any exception
20 that may be approved by the State registrar in the case of a specific
21 death or fetal death. All participants in the death registration
22 process, including, but not limited to, the State registrar, local
23 registrars, deputy registrars, alternate deputy registrars,
24 subregistrars, the Chief State Medical Examiner, Deputy Chief State
25 Medical Examiner, county or intercounty medical examiners,
26 assistant county or intercounty medical examiners, funeral
27 directors, attending physicians and resident physicians, licensed
28 health care facilities, and other public or private institutions
29 providing medical care, treatment or confinement to persons, shall
30 be required to utilize the NJ-EDRS to provide the information that
31 is required of them by statute or regulation.

32 (2) The State registrar may provide for a phased implementation
33 of the system, beginning seven months after the date of enactment
34 of P.L.2003, c.221, by requiring certain users, who are designated
35 by the State registrar on a geographic or other basis for this
36 purpose, to commence utilization of the system.

37 (3) Beginning no later than six months after the date of
38 enactment of P.L.2003, c.221, the State registrar shall authorize and
39 provide material support, in the form of system access, curriculum
40 guidelines and user registration capability and authority, to the
41 principal trade associations or professional organizations
42 representing persons affected by implementation of the NJ-EDRS,
43 for the purposes of providing training and education with regard to
44 the NJ-EDRS. The State registrar may conduct such education and
45 training, or authorize other entities to do so on his behalf; however,
46 these activities shall not be construed as restricting the training and
47 education activities of any affected trade association or professional

1 organization, including the location, manner, fees, or other means
2 of conducting those activities on the part of the association or
3 organization.

4 b. The NJ-EDRS shall, at a minimum, provide for:

5 (1) the direct transmission of burial permit documentation to the
6 originating funeral home in an electronic form capable of output to
7 a local printer;

8 (2) an overnight mail system for the delivery of NJ-EDRS-
9 generated death certificates by the State registrar and local
10 registrars, the cost of which shall be chargeable to the funeral
11 director of record;

12 (3) an automated notification system to alert other responsible
13 parties to pending cases, including notification to or from alternate
14 local registrars;

15 (4) a systematic electronic payment method by which all fees are
16 taken from accounts for which funeral homes are financially
17 responsible and distributed, as appropriate, to the State registrar or
18 local registrars as payment for the issuance of permits, the
19 recording of records, the making of certified copies of death
20 certificates, or for other charges that may be incurred;

21 (5) a legally binding system of digital authentication in lieu of
22 signatures for the responsible parties and a means of assuring
23 database security that permits users to enter the system from
24 multiple sites and includes contemporaneous and remote data
25 security methods to protect the system from catastrophic loss or
26 intrusions, as well as a method of data encryption for transmission;

27 (6) the capacity for authorized users to retrieve data comprising
28 the death certification record;

29 (7) the capacity to electronically amend and correct death
30 records;

31 (8) electronic notification, upon completion of the death record
32 and issuance of a burial permit, of the decedent's name, Social
33 Security number, and last known address and the informant to: the
34 federal Social Security Administration, the U.S. Citizenship and
35 Immigration Services, the Division of Medical Assistance and
36 Health Services in the Department of Human Services, the
37 Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and such other
38 governmental agencies as the State registrar determines will
39 substantially contribute to safeguarding public benefit programs and
40 diminish the criminal use of a decedent's name and other identifying
41 information; and the New Jersey State Funeral Directors
42 Association, in the case of a decedent participating in one of its
43 funeral expense payment programs, in such a manner as to enable it
44 to fulfill its fiduciary obligations for the payment of the decedent's
45 final funeral and burial expenses;

46 (9) sufficient data documentation to meet contemporary and
47 emerging standards and expectations of vital record archiving;

48 **[and]**

(10) continuous 24-hour-a-day technical support for all authorized users of the system; and

(11) ³in the case of when information submitted to the NJ-EDRS identifies a decedent as³ a veteran, or an eligible spouse or eligible dependent of a veteran, whose remains are cremated, electronic notification to the Department of Veterans Affairs, upon completion of the death record and issuance of the cremation permit, which electronic notification shall include ³, to the extent available,³ the decedent's: name; last known address; dates of service, including active duty, reservist, and national guard dates of service, as appropriate; date of death; and date on which the cremation permit was issued.

c. A provider of information that is required to complete a death certificate, or who is subject to the provisions of law governing the NJ-EDRS, shall not be deemed to be acting as a local registrar, deputy registrar, alternate deputy registrar, or subregistrar solely by virtue of permitting other providers of information to gain access to the NJ-EDRS by using those other providers' identifying information.²

(cf: P.L.2018, c.62, s.31)

²[12.] 3.2 Section 2 of P.L.2009, c.14 (C.38A:3-2b4) is amended to read as follows:

2. a. ²(1)² A funeral director, licensed pursuant to P.L.1952, c.340 (C.45:7-32 et seq.), shall grant a qualified veterans' organization, as defined in subsection b. of section 2 of P.L.1983, c.385 (C.26:7-18.2), the right to receive the cremains of a veteran, or the cremains of an eligible spouse or eligible dependent of a veteran, which have not been claimed by a relative or friend of the deceased within one year after cremation upon certification, to the satisfaction of the Commissioner of Health, that a diligent effort, as defined in subsection a. of section 2 of P.L.1983, c.385 (C.26:7-18.2), has been made to identify, locate and notify a relative or friend of the deceased within that one-year period, as provided under section 2 of P.L.1983, c.385 (C.26:7-18.2).

²[A funeral director, licensed pursuant to P.L.1952, c.340 (C.45:7-32 et seq.), who, after due diligence to find a relative or friend of the deceased, is knowingly in possession of the unclaimed cremains of a veteran, as defined by section 1 of P.L.1989, c.162 (C.38A:3-6.3), or the cremains of an eligible spouse or eligible dependent of a veteran, shall notify the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, by written or electronic communication, of the location and identity of such cremains one year after the date of cremation.]²

A qualified veterans' organization which takes possession of cremains pursuant to this section shall dispose of the cremains by scattering them at sea or by interring them on land in a dignified

1 manner at the State-operated, Brigadier General William C. Doyle
2 Veterans' Memorial Cemetery, a State-operated veterans' memorial
3 cemetery, a national veterans' memorial cemetery, or a local
4 veterans memorial cemetery, if the individual is eligible for
5 interment at those facilities.

6 ²(2) Each funeral director shall promptly respond to a request
7 from the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Affairs³ [
8 made pursuant to subsection (2) of N.J.S.38A:21-5,]³ for
9 information as to whether the cremains of a veteran, or the cremains
10 of an eligible spouse or eligible dependent of a veteran, have been
11 claimed.²

12 b. A funeral home or mortuary, or an agent of the funeral home
13 or mortuary, or a funeral director, or qualified veterans'
14 organization, shall not be liable for damages in any civil action
15 arising out of the disposal of cremains pursuant to this section
16 unless the damages are the result of gross negligence or willful
17 misconduct.¹

18 (cf: P.L.2021, c.37, s.4)

19
20 ²[3. N.J.S.38A:3-6 is amended to read as follows:

21 38A:3-6. Under the direction of the Governor, the Adjutant
22 General shall:

23 (a) Exercise control over the affairs of the Department of
24 Military and Veterans' Affairs and in connection therewith make
25 and issue such regulations governing the work of the Department of
26 Military and Veterans' Affairs and the conduct of its employees as
27 may, in his judgment, be necessary or desirable.

28 (b) Be the request officer of the Department of Military and
29 Veterans' Affairs within the meaning of such term as defined in
30 section 1 of P.L.1944, c.112 (C.52:27B-1).

31 (c) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.1988, c.138.)

32 (d) Command the organized militia of the State, with
33 responsibility for recruiting, mobilization, administration, training,
34 discipline, equipping, supply and general efficiency thereof. He
35 may issue such regulations and delegate such command functions as
36 he shall deem necessary. The regulations so issued shall, insofar as
37 possible, conform to the federal laws and regulations concerning the
38 same.

39 (e) Maintain the archives and be the custodian of the records and
40 papers required, by laws or regulations, to be filed with the
41 Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs.

42 (f) Supervise, administer and coordinate those activities of the
43 selective service system for which the Governor is responsible.

44 (g) Acquire by gift, grant, purchase, exchange, eminent domain,
45 or in any other lawful manner, in the name of and for the use of the
46 State of New Jersey, all those parcels of land as shall be necessary
47 for armories and other militia facilities, and supervise the design,
48 construction, alteration, maintenance and repair of said property.

1 (h) Establish and maintain such headquarters as may be required
2 for the militia.

3 (i) Exercise the powers vested in him and perform such other
4 duties and functions as required of him by the Governor and by
5 federal and State laws and regulations.

6 (j) Exercise all of the functions, powers and duties heretofore
7 vested in the Director of the Division on Veterans' Programs and
8 Special Services.

9 (k) Appoint and remove officers and other personnel employed
10 within the department, subject to the provisions of N.J.S.38A:3-8
11 and Title 11A of the New Jersey Statutes and other applicable
12 statutes, except as herein otherwise specifically provided.

13 (l) Have authority to organize and maintain an administrative
14 division and to assign to employment therein secretarial, clerical
15 and other assistants in the department or the Adjutant General's
16 Office for the purpose of providing centralized support to all
17 segments of the department, including budgeting, personnel
18 administration and oversight of equal opportunity programs.

19 (m) Perform, exercise and discharge the functions, powers and
20 duties of the department through such divisions as may be
21 established by this act or otherwise by law.

22 (n) Organize the work of the department in divisions not
23 inconsistent with the provisions of this act and in bureaus and other
24 organizational units as the Adjutant General may determine to be
25 necessary for efficient and effective operation.

26 (o) Adopt, issue and promulgate, in the name of the department,
27 pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410
28 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), such rules and regulations as may be
29 authorized by law.

30 (p) Institute, or cause to be instituted, legal proceedings or
31 processes as necessary to properly enforce and give effect to any of
32 the Adjutant General's powers or duties.

33 (q) Make an annual report to the Governor and to the Legislature
34 of the department's operations, and render other reports as the
35 Governor shall from time to time request or as may be required by
36 law.

37 (r) Coordinate the activities of the department, and the several
38 divisions and other agencies therein, in a manner designed to
39 eliminate overlapping and duplicative functions.

40 (s) Integrate within the department, so far as practicable, all staff
41 services of the department and of several divisions and other
42 agencies therein.

43 (t) Request access to all relevant files and records of other State
44 agencies, which may be made available to the Adjutant General by
45 the head of a State agency, and request, subject to the permission of
46 the head of the State agency, any officer or employee therein to
47 provide information as necessary to assist in the performance of the
48 functions of the department.

- 1 (u) Supervise and operate the New Jersey Veterans' Memorial
2 Home-Menlo Park, the New Jersey Veterans' Memorial Home-
3 Vineland, the New Jersey Veterans' Memorial Home-Paramus and
4 the New Jersey Veterans' Memorial Cemetery-Arneystown.
- 5 (v) Supervise and operate the liaison office and the field offices
6 which serve the federal Veterans' Affairs Medical Centers.
- 7 (w) Make application for federal grants and programs, other
8 than education grants or funds.
- 9 (x) Administer the federally-funded training and rehabilitation
10 programs, except for the administration of federally-funded
11 education and training programs set forth in 38 U.S.C. s.36 et seq.
- 12 (y) Provide current information to the general public on State
13 and federal veterans' programs and benefits; create a comprehensive
14 public webpage for women veterans that includes, but is not limited
15 to, the following information: veterans' legal rights, benefits,
16 medical and insurance issues, education, the transition from active
17 service to civilian life, and other resources available to veterans.
- 18 (z) Develop and administer the New Jersey Homeless Veterans
19 Grant Program established pursuant to section 3 of P.L.2013, c.239
20 (C.38A:3-6.2b).
- 21 (aa) Encourage and facilitate the registration of each service
22 member residing in New Jersey with the United States Department
23 of Veterans Affairs, or its successor agency. Registration shall take
24 place, as appropriate, when the service member returns from
25 deployment on federal active duty or is discharged or as soon as
26 possible thereafter. The term "service member" shall mean
27 members of the New Jersey National Guard and members of the
28 United States Armed Forces, or a Reserve component thereof, when
29 the information on each member is made available to the
30 department.
- 31 (bb) Develop and coordinate a volunteer-based program
32 comprised of former servicemembers to assist and mentor veterans
33 who become involved with the criminal justice system, while
34 criminal proceedings are pending and afterward, in accessing
35 assistance to resolve the underlying problems that led or contributed
36 to the veteran's involvement with the criminal justice system
37 including, but not limited to, offering support and guidance,
38 securing housing, employment linkages, job training, education,
39 transportation, disability compensation claims, discharge status,
40 health care and other linkages available at the local, State and
41 federal level that can ease the challenge of reentry into civilian life.
42 In addition, the Adjutant General shall develop a registry of
43 volunteer mentors and make the registry available pursuant to
44 P.L.2017, c.42 (C.2C:43-23 et al.).
- 45 (cc) Prepare and disseminate a directory of Veterans Diversion
46 Resource Program entities currently available within New Jersey
47 pursuant to P.L.2017, c.42 (C.2C:43-23 et al.).

(dd) Create a comprehensive public webpage for Gold Star family members that includes, but is not limited to, the following information: State benefits; State and county liaisons; a list of service members from New Jersey killed in action; links to other Gold Star family organizations; and such other information and resources as the Adjutant General deems necessary and beneficial to a Gold Star family member. A "Gold Star family member" means the spouse, domestic partner, partner in a civil union, parent, brother, sister, child, legal guardian, or other legal custodian, whether of the whole or half blood, or by adoption.

(ee) Identify each New Jersey resident who enrolls in the United States Military Academy, United States Naval Academy, United States Coast Guard Academy, United States Merchant Marine Academy, or United States Air Force Academy, and issue a New Jersey State flag to that individual.

(ff) Develop and maintain an Internet-based central reporting system to provide the location and identity of unclaimed cremains of veterans, ¹eligible spouses of veterans, or eligible dependents of veterans¹ as provided to the department by funeral directors ¹[.]¹ licensed pursuant to P.L.1952, c.340 (C.45:7-32 et seq.).

(cf: P.L.2019, c.283, s.1)²

²4. N.J.S.38A:21-5 is amended to read as follows:

38A:21-5. The commissioner, as head of the department, shall have all of the functions, powers, and duties heretofore vested in the Administrator of Veterans Affairs of the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs, previously designated in N.J.S.38A:3-2, and shall, in addition to the functions, powers, and duties vested in the commissioner by this act, N.J.S.38A:21-1 et al., or by any other law, which are as follows:

a. Administer the work of the department;

b. Appoint and remove officers and other personnel employed within the department, subject to the provisions of Title 11A of the New Jersey Statutes and other applicable statutes, except as herein otherwise specifically provided;

c. Have authority to organize and maintain an administrative division and to assign to employment therein secretarial, clerical, and other assistants in the department's or the commissioner's office as the internal operations of the department may require, in accordance with Title 11A of the New Jersey Statutes;

d. Perform, exercise, and discharge the functions, powers, and duties of the department through such divisions as may be established by this act or otherwise by law;

e. Organize the work of the department in divisions, not inconsistent with the provisions of this act, and in bureaus and other organizational units as the commissioner may determine to be necessary for efficient and effective operation;

- 1 f. Adopt, issue, and promulgate, in the name of the department,
2 pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410
3 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), such rules and regulations as may be
4 necessary to implement this act or as may be authorized by law;
- 5 g. Formulate and adopt rules and regulations for the efficient
6 conduct of the work and general administration of the department,
7 its officers, and its employees;
- 8 h. Institute, or cause to be instituted, legal proceedings or
9 processes as may be necessary to properly enforce and give effect to
10 any of the commissioner's powers or duties;
- 11 i. Coordinate the activities of the department, and the other
12 divisions and agencies therein, in a manner designed to eliminate
13 overlapping and duplicative functions;
- 14 j. Integrate within the department, so far as practicable, all staff
15 services of the department and of the other divisions and agencies
16 therein;
- 17 k. Have access to all relevant files and records of other State
18 agencies and require any officer or employee therein to provide
19 information as necessary to assist in performing the functions of the
20 department, subject to any privacy laws;
- 21 l. Maintain suitable headquarters for the department and such
22 other quarters as the commissioner shall deem necessary to the
23 proper functioning of the department;
- 24 m. Encourage and facilitate the registration of each service
25 member residing in New Jersey with the United States Department
26 of Veterans Affairs or its successor agency. Registration shall take
27 place, as appropriate, when the service member returns from
28 deployment on federal active duty, or is discharged, or as soon as
29 possible thereafter. The term "service member" shall mean
30 members of the New Jersey National Guard and members of the
31 United States Armed Forces, or a Reserve component thereof, when
32 the information on each member is made available to the
33 department;
- 34 n. Develop and coordinate a volunteer-based program comprised
35 of former service members to assist and mentor veterans who
36 become involved with the criminal justice system, while criminal
37 proceedings are pending and afterward, with accessing assistance to
38 resolve the underlying problems that led or contributed to the
39 veteran's involvement with the criminal justice system including,
40 but not limited to, offering support and guidance, securing housing,
41 employment linkages, job training, education, transportation,
42 disability compensation claims, discharge status, health care, and
43 other linkages available at the local, State, and federal level that can
44 ease the challenge of reentry into civilian life. In addition, the
45 commissioner shall develop a registry of volunteer mentors and
46 make the registry available pursuant to P.L.2017, c.42 (C.2C:43-23
47 et al.);

1 o. Prepare and disseminate a directory of Veterans Diversion
2 Resource Program entities currently available within New Jersey
3 pursuant to P.L.2017, c.42 (C.2C:43-23 et al.);

4 p. Create a comprehensive public webpage for Gold Star family
5 members that includes, but is not limited to, the following
6 information: State benefits, State and county liaisons, a list of
7 service members from New Jersey killed in action, links to other
8 Gold Star family organizations, and such other information and
9 resources as the commissioner deems necessary and beneficial to a
10 Gold Star family member. A "Gold Star family member" means the
11 spouse, domestic partner, partner in a civil union, parent, brother,
12 sister, child, legal guardian, or other legal custodian, whether of the
13 whole or half blood, or by adoption, of a member of the Armed
14 Forces of the United States or the National Guard who died while
15 on active duty for the United States;

16 q. Maintain a regional network of Veteran Service Offices to
17 assist veterans and their dependents with information and guidance
18 in filing claims and to assist with employment, education, burial,
19 counseling, housing, social and medical services, and other areas of
20 concern to veterans and their families, as well as provide advice and
21 support to veterans re-entering civilian life; **[and]**

22 r. Perform such other functions as may be prescribed in this act
23 or by any other law ; and

24 s. Use the electronic notification provided pursuant to paragraph
25 (11) of subsection b. of section 16 of P.L.2003, c.221 (C.26:8-24.1)
26 to³ [identify funeral homes at which the remains of a veteran, or the
27 remains of an eligible spouse or eligible dependent of a veteran,
28 were cremated and, on the first day of the thirteenth month after the
29 date the cremation permit was issued,] transmit information to a
30 qualified veterans' organization, as defined in subsection b. of
31 section 2 of P.L.1983, c.385 (C.26:7-18.2), who may in turn³
32 contact the funeral home to request information as to whether those
33 cremains have been claimed. In the event a funeral home advises
34 that the cremains of a veteran, or the cremains of an eligible spouse
35 or eligible dependent of a veteran, have not been claimed, the
36 ³[Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Affairs may assist
37 the]³ funeral home ³[in contacting a qualified veterans'
38 organization, as defined in subsection b. of section 2 of P.L.1983,
39 c.385 (C.26:7-18.2), to coordinate the] may³ release ³[of]³ the
40 remains to the qualified veterans' organization consistent with the
41 requirements of subsection b. of section 2 of P.L.1983, c.385
42 (C.26:7-18.2) and section 2 of P.L.2009, c.14 (C.38A:3-2b4).²
43 (cf: N.J.S.38A:21-5)

44
45 ³[²5. (New section) In the event that the New Jersey Electronic
46 Death Registration System (NJ-EDRS) has not been adapted to
47 provide the electronic notifications required under paragraph (11) of

subsection b. of section 16 of P.L.2003, c.221 (C.26:8-24.1) on the
 first day of the seventh month next following the effective date of
 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill), the
 Commissioner of Health shall appear before the Assembly Military
 and Veterans Affairs Committee, the Senate Military and Veterans
 Affairs Committee, the Assembly Oversight, Reform, and Federal
 Relations Committee, or the Senate Legislative Oversight Committee,
 at the direction of the President of the Senate or the Speaker of the
 General Assembly, as applicable, to explain why the NJ-EDRS has not
 been adapted to provide the notifications and the steps the department
 is taking to adapt the NJ-EDRS to provide the notifications. In the
 event that the Department of Veterans Affairs has not, as of the first
 day of the seventh month next following the date of enactment of
 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill),
 commenced using notifications from the NJ-EDRS provided pursuant
 to paragraph (11) of subsection b. of section 16 of P.L.2003, c.221
 (C.26:8-24.1) to identify funeral homes at which the remains of a
 veteran, or the remains of an eligible spouse or eligible dependent of a
 veteran, were cremated and contact those funeral homes to request
 information as to whether those cremains have been claimed, the
 Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall appear
 before the Assembly Military and Veterans Affairs Committee, the
 Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Committee, the Assembly
 Oversight, Reform, and Federal Relations Committee, or the Senate
 Legislative Oversight Committee, at the direction of the President of
 the Senate or the Speaker of the General Assembly, as applicable, to
 explain why the commissioner has not commenced with the
 implementation of this act and the steps the department is taking to
 ensure implementation.²³

³[²6.] ⁵.³ (New section) The Commissioner of Health and the
 Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Affairs ³[shall] may³
 each adopt rules and regulations, pursuant to the “Administrative
 Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), as shall be
 necessary to implement the provisions of this act.²

²[⁴.] ³[⁷.²] ⁶.³ This act shall take effect immediately ², but
 shall remain inoperative until the first day of the seventh month next
 following enactment. The Commissioner of Health and the
 Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Affairs may each take
 any anticipatory administrative action in advance as shall be necessary
 to implement the provisions of this act².