

SENATE, No. 4695

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
222nd LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 1, 2026

Sponsored by:
Senator LATHAM TIVER
District 8 (Atlantic and Burlington)

SYNOPSIS
“Veterans in Agriculture Act.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.



1 AN ACT concerning veterans' involvement in agriculture and
2 supplementing Title 4 of the Revised Statutes.

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

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7 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Veterans in
8 Agriculture Act."

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10 2. As used in this act:

11 "Department" means the Department of Agriculture.

12 "Farm operator" means any individual, family member,
13 corporation, partnership, joint venture, firm, company, other legal
14 entity, or any officers or agents thereof, in immediate possession of
15 any farm as owner or lessee, and, as such, responsible for its
16 management and condition.

17 "Farming" means the cultivation of land for the production of
18 agricultural crops, the raising of poultry, the production of eggs, the
19 production of milk, the production of fruit or other horticultural
20 crops, grazing, the production of livestock, aquaculture,
21 hydroponics, the production of forest products, or other activities
22 designated by the department pursuant to rules and regulations.

23 "Farming operations" mean any activities connected to the
24 commercial growing, harvesting, processing, producing, or raising
25 of agricultural products in the State, including crops, dairy animals,
26 livestock, fur-bearing animals, poultry, bees, crops used in
27 fermented alcoholic beverages and wine, and any products
28 therefrom, including organic agricultural products; aquacultural
29 products; horticultural products; and silviculture products.

30 "Veteran" means any enlisted person or officer who was
31 discharged or otherwise released from active service in the United
32 States Armed Forces, or any reserve component thereof, or the
33 organized militia of New Jersey under conditions other than
34 dishonorable, or as otherwise provided in subsection p. of section 6
35 of P.L.1954, c.84 (C.43:15A-6).

36 "Veterans in Agriculture Program" or "program" means the
37 program established pursuant to section 3 of this act.

38 "Veteran-owned business" means the same as defined in section
39 2 of P.L.2011, c.147 (C.52:32-49 et seq.).

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41 3. a. The department, in consultation with the Department of
42 Veterans Affairs, shall establish a "Veterans in Agriculture"
43 program, designed to integrate veterans into the agricultural
44 industry, and to support veterans currently working in farm
45 operations. The purpose of the program shall be to maximize
46 federal funding opportunities and partnerships with veteran-oriented
47 organizations, thus connecting veterans with resources to help those
48 veterans begin or sustain a career in the agricultural industry.

- 1 b. Through the program, the Department of Agriculture shall
2 facilitate connections between veterans with farming ambitions and
3 organizations that:
- 4 (1) support veterans in the agricultural industry by providing
5 outreach, training, and technical assistance opportunities;
- 6 (2) cultivate mentorships, internships, and apprenticeships
7 between retiring farmers and veterans with farming endeavors;
- 8 (3) establish agricultural educational or technical assistance
9 opportunities, as provided by institutions of higher education and
10 other organizations with demonstrated knowledge of the
11 agricultural industry;
- 12 (4) conduct assessments of farmland properties, and make
13 farmland property available for an affordable lease program for
14 veterans;
- 15 (5) provide training and support opportunities;
- 16 (6) connect veteran farm operators and their agricultural products
17 with local retailers;
- 18 (7) encourage the involvement of veteran farm operators in the
19 “Jersey Fresh”, “Jersey Grown”, and “Jersey Raised” programs;
- 20 (8) connect veteran farm operators and applicable local, State,
21 and federal programs and resources;
- 22 (9) identify, emphasize, and encourage the production and
23 marketing of New Jersey grown agricultural commodities by
24 qualified veteran farmers;
- 25 (10) provide assistance to veteran farm operators to apply for
26 available grant funding; and
- 27 (11) generally offer services, resources, or funding opportunities
28 which may further the purposes of the Veterans in Agriculture
29 program and support veterans’ involvement in agriculture.
- 30 c. In establishing the Veterans in Agriculture program, the
31 department, in consultation with the Department of Veterans
32 Affairs, shall develop guidelines and procedures for the program.
- 33 d. The guidelines and procedures shall, at a minimum, include
34 the following:
- 35 (1) an application process for participation in the program;
- 36 (2) criteria for the evaluation of applications;
- 37 (3) criteria for eligibility to receive technical or financial
38 assistance for farming operations, which shall include, but not be
39 limited to, being a veteran, a veteran-led organization, or a veteran-
40 owned business; and
- 41 (4) terms and conditions for participation in the program, which
42 shall include, but not be limited to, the responsibilities of veteran
43 farm operators who are involved in the program, and the incentives,
44 supports, and other benefits to be provided to program participants.
- 45 e. The department shall include, in a conspicuous location on its
46 Internet website, information intended to provide easy access to
47 program applications, documentation, and educational and
48 promotional materials.

1 4. a. To the maximum extent possible, the department, in
2 consultation with the Department of Veterans Affairs, shall give
3 consideration to, apply for, and accept, on behalf of the State, any
4 grants from the federal government or any agency thereof, or from
5 any foundation, corporation, association, or individual, in order to
6 develop and implement the Veterans in Agriculture program.

7 b. The department shall be authorized to use the funds that it
8 receives in support of the objectives of the program, providing
9 grants or other forms of financial or technical assistance to:

10 (1) veterans or veteran-owned businesses involved in agriculture;

11 or

12 (2) organizations which connect those veterans with resources to
13 begin or sustain the careers in the agricultural industry.

14 c. Any money so received shall be appropriated to, and may be
15 expended by, the department, subject to any terms, conditions, or
16 limitations imposed in such grants, and in accordance with guidance
17 from the Director of the Division of Budget and Accounting in the
18 Department of the Treasury.

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20 5. The department shall annually report to the Governor, and to
21 the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-
22 19.1), presenting information necessary to assess the success of the
23 program, and making recommendations as to any changes necessary
24 to implement the program more effectively.

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26 6. The department, as part of its annual budget request to the
27 Governor, may request such funds as shall be necessary for the
28 implementation of this act, as certified by the Secretary of
29 Agriculture and subject to the approval of the Director of the
30 Division of Budget and Accounting in the Department of the
31 Treasury.

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33 7. The Secretary of Agriculture and Commissioner of Veterans
34 Affairs shall, in accordance with the “Administrative Procedure
35 Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), adopt rules and
36 regulations as necessary to implement this act.

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38 8. This act shall take effect immediately.

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41 STATEMENT

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43 This bill would establish a “Veterans in Agriculture” program
44 (program), intended to maximize federal funding opportunities and
45 partnerships with veteran-oriented organizations, in order to
46 connect veterans, veteran-led organizations, or veteran-owned
47 businesses with resources to begin or sustain a career in the
48 agricultural industry. The program would be administered by the

1 Department of Agriculture, in consultation with the Department of
2 Veterans Affairs (collectively “departments”).

3 Through the program, the Department of Agriculture would
4 facilitate connections between veterans with farming ambitions and
5 organizations that: (1) support veterans in the agricultural industry
6 by providing outreach, training, and technical assistance
7 opportunities; (2) cultivate mentorships, internships, and
8 apprenticeships between retiring farmers and veterans with farming
9 endeavors; (3) establish agricultural educational or technical
10 assistance opportunities, as provided through institutions of higher
11 education and other organizations with demonstrated knowledge of
12 the agricultural industry; (4) conduct assessments of farmland
13 properties, and make farmland property available for an affordable
14 lease program for veterans; (5) create a website designed to provide
15 veterans with information on, and easy access to, program
16 applications, documentation, and educational and promotional
17 materials; (6) provide training and support opportunities; (7)
18 connect veteran farmers and their agricultural products with local
19 retailers; (8) encourage the involvement of veteran farmers in the
20 “Jersey Fresh”, “Jersey Grown”, and “Jersey Raised” programs; (9)
21 connect veteran farmers and applicable local, State, and federal
22 programs and resources; (10) identify, emphasize, and encourage
23 the production and marketing of New Jersey grown agricultural
24 commodities by qualified veteran farmers; (11) provide assistance
25 to veteran farmers to apply for available grant funding; and (12)
26 otherwise offer services, resources, or funding opportunities which
27 may further the purposes of the Veterans in Agriculture program
28 and support veterans’ involvement in agriculture.

29 The bill would require the departments to establish guidelines
30 and procedures for the program, including an application process,
31 criteria for the evaluation of applications, criteria for veteran,
32 veteran-led organization, or veteran-owned business eligibility to
33 receive technical or financial assistance for farming operations, and
34 other terms and conditions for program participation. The
35 Department of Agriculture would include, in a conspicuous location
36 on its Internet site, information intended to provide easy access to
37 program applications, documentation, and educational and
38 promotional materials.

39 The bill would require the departments to give maximum
40 consideration to, apply for, and accept, any grants from the federal
41 government, or any agency, foundation, corporation, association, or
42 individual, in order to implement the program. The department
43 would be authorized to use any funds that it receives to provide
44 grants or other forms of financial or technical assistance to veterans
45 or veteran-owned businesses which are involved in agriculture; or
46 organizations which connect those veterans and veteran-owned
47 businesses with resources to begin or sustain the careers in the
48 agricultural industry.

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1 Each year, the Department of Agriculture would submit an
2 annual report to the Legislature, presenting the information
3 necessary to assess the success of the program, and making
4 recommendations as to any changes necessary to implement the
5 program more effectively.