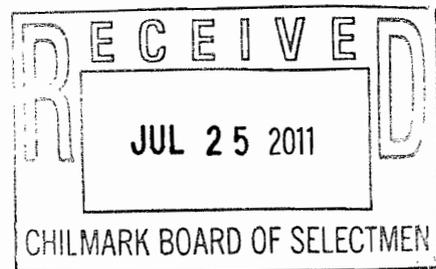




## THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

July 21, 2011



### Via First Class Mail

Warren Doty  
Chairman, Board of Selectmen  
P.O. Box 119  
401 Middle Rd  
Chilmark, MA 02535

Re: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 115, Veterans' Agents

Dear Selectman Doty,

Caring for and respecting veterans has been a hallmark of Massachusetts since the Revolutionary War. In keeping with this long tradition, the Commonwealth currently provides some of the most comprehensive veterans' benefits in the country. These benefits include various types of financial assistance for food, shelter, clothes, home heating fuel, medical care, burial expenses, employment and vocational opportunities, education, and counseling. We are proud of the assistance provided by the Commonwealth to the women and men who have sacrificed and served our country. We want to do more to ensure that veterans receive the benefits and assistance to which they are entitled.

Never has support for our veterans been as important as it is today. Since September 11, 2001, more than 35,000 men and women have returned to the Commonwealth as veterans of our armed forces. In addition, thousands of active duty, reserve, and National Guard personnel currently serve in defense of our nation both at home and abroad.

In this spirit, we are writing to remind you – as municipal leaders – of the obligations that all Massachusetts cities and towns are charged with under Chapter 115 of the general laws, Chapter 471 of the Acts of 1972, and Title 108 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations. By law, all of the 351 cities and towns within the Commonwealth are mandated statutorily to appoint a veterans' agent. The duties of veterans' agents include the obligation to reach-out to the veterans and their eligible dependents of their local community, to advise them of their rights and benefits, and help them apply for state and federal benefits. In order to effectively discharge these legal duties and obligations, full-time veterans' agents cannot hold another position unless the duties of such other position are subordinate to her or his duties and obligations as a veterans' agent. To this end, veterans' agents must post and hold office hours that coincide with the regular business hours of her or his municipal government.

All cities and towns with a population of 12,000 or more must either appoint a full-time veterans' agent, or a full-time director of a veterans' services district if the municipality is a constituent

member of a veterans' services district duly established under M.G.L. c. 115, §§ 1-3, 10-11, 14; 1972 Mass. Acts c. 471, §§ 1-3, *et seq.*; 108 CMR 2.02 and 12.01-12.04, *et seq.*; and *A Guide for Establishing Veterans' Services Districts under Chapter 115*. Towns with a population of less than 12,000 which are not constituent members of a veterans' services district must appoint a part-time veterans' agent.

Recently, the Department of Veterans' Services implemented an electronic benefit tracking and certification system, Web-VSMIS (Veterans Services Management Information Systems), for use by your veterans' agent and accounting department. This system greatly reduces the paperwork submission process, enhances accuracy of submissions, and provides an electronic certification process for municipal treasurers. In addition to streamlining the benefits processing system for veterans' agents, this system provides top-level management reporting which enables municipal financial managers to review and accurately forecast the amount of the 75 percent reimbursement for veterans' benefits from the Commonwealth pursuant to M.G.L. 115, § 6.

We are proud of the excellent work that our municipal counterparts do each and every day to provide the nation's very best benefits and services for veterans. To keep Massachusetts number one in caring and providing for our veterans, we ask you to review the current operations of your veterans' services department to ensure that your community is in full compliance with Massachusetts law. Upon completion of your review, please furnish the name(s), hours, and office location(s) of your veterans' agent or director of veterans' services to the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services on or before **September 1, 2011**. You may submit the same via facsimile to (617) 210-5755, by email to Keith Jones at [kmjones@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:kmjones@massmail.state.ma.us), or by mail to:

Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Department of Veterans' Services  
600 Washington Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02111  
Attn: *Compliance Officer Keith Jones*

Over the next few months the Department of Veterans' Services and the Attorney General's Office are conducting a full review to ensure all communities are in compliance with this important legal obligation.

We wish to aid those veterans in need of rehabilitation, assistance and reintegration into civilian life to the greatest extent possible. We look forward to working with you, and thank you in advance for your continued support of this vital effort.

Yours truly,



Martha Coakley  
Attorney General



Timothy P. Murray  
Lieutenant Governor



Coleman Nee  
Secretary, DVS