

# Bill renames state veterans agency

By JAKE STUMP  
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So many West Virginians confuse the federal Department of Veterans Affairs with the state Veterans Affairs agency that a group of lawmakers wants to change its name.

In a House bill introduced Thursday, the West Virginia Division of Veterans Affairs would become the Department of Veterans Assistance.

One of the lead sponsors of the bill, Delegate Richard Iaquina, D-Harrison, said the change would help veterans and their families differentiate between the federal and state agencies.

"There's so many people who get confused," said Iaquina, chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. "When they see the name Veterans Affairs, they think of the federal government. This way, I think our state government would get more involved with vets."

The state VA, however, has not taken a position on the bill, said Joe Thornton, deputy secretary of the West Virginia Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety.

"We've heard talk of this, but it's not a bill we've introduced," Thornton said. "I'd hesitate to say whether we support it or are against it. The system we have in place works fairly well, we think."

Changing the name of the agency would obviously incur costs, as the department would have to provide new stationary, signs, business cards and other items.

The estimated cost of such a change wasn't immediately

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Chairman, House Veterans Affairs Committee

known.

"We thought this might clear things up," Iaquina said. "That's the intention."

The name change would go into effect in July if the bill passes.

Ten House members, led by Delegate Barbara Evans Fleischer, D-Monongalia, are sponsoring the bill.

The same group of lawmakers introduced another veterans-related bill Thursday that would add more names to the state Veterans Memorial at the Capitol Complex.

Workers are currently redoing the memorial by adding 890 names that were omitted and another 146 names that

were misspelled to the black granite panels of the memorial.

The 13-year-old memorial bears the names of West Virginia veterans who died during World War I, World II, and the Korean and Vietnam wars.

Under the proposed House bill, the memorial would now include the names of veterans who died in more recent conflicts, such as in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq.

That bill would also become effective in July if it passes.

Contact writer Jake Stump at [jakestump@dailymail.com](mailto:jakestump@dailymail.com) or 348-4842.