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HOUSE FILE NO. 1612

FIRST COMMITTEE ENGROSSMENT

March 1, 2007

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The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs

Referred by Chair to Veterans Affairs Division.

March 9, 2007

Returned to the Committee on Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs as Amended.

1.1 A bill for an act
1.2 relating to the military; improving access to psychological counseling services
1.3 for returning soldiers and veterans; requiring a report; appropriating money.

1.4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

1.5 Section 1. **APPROPRIATIONS.**

1.6 Subdivision 1. **Veterans affairs.** The sums in this section are appropriated from the
1.7 general fund to the commissioner of veterans affairs for the fiscal years designated and
1.8 for the purposes specified. The commissioner may, where practicable, use these amounts
1.9 to make grants to local providers of psychological counseling services for the stated
1.10 purposes. These are onetime appropriations.

1.11 Subd. 2. **Hotline for veterans counseling referral.** For a staffed telephone
1.12 hotline and operator to refer soldiers and veterans to all available local, state, and federal
1.13 counseling services at all practicable hours of need. The commissioner must broadly
1.14 and repeatedly publish the number and availability of this telephone hotline and must
1.15 encourage local media and service providers to publish it as well.

1.16 \$ 2008

1.17 \$ 2009

1.18 Subd. 3. **Local veterans counseling services.** For the provision of local
1.19 psychological counseling services in underserved areas of the state having significant
1.20 population concentrations of service members and veterans.

1.21 \$ 2008

1.22 \$ 2009

2.1 Sec. 2. **NEEDS ASSESSMENT REQUIRED.**

2.2 By November 1, 2007, the commissioner of veterans affairs and the adjutant general
2.3 of the National Guard shall jointly report to the chair and ranking minority member of
2.4 each committee in the senate and house of representatives with jurisdiction over the policy
2.5 or finance of veterans affairs and military affairs regarding the psychological status and
2.6 needs of soldiers and veterans returning to Minnesota after having served in support of
2.7 contingency operations for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.
2.8 The report must provide the best relevant insights into and advice concerning how to
2.9 most effectively provide the psychological support services determined to be needed
2.10 by those soldiers and veterans.

2.11 **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This section is effective July 1, 2007.