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**DIEGNAN/BARNES/CONNERS/RAMOS BILL CREATING ‘TROOPS
TO COLLEGE’ PROGRAM PASSES ASSEMBLY**

Aims to Help Veterans Make Transition into Classroom

(TRENTON) – Legislation sponsored by Assemblymen Patrick J. Diegnan Jr., Peter J. Barnes III, Jack Conners and Ruben J. Ramos Jr. to help veterans make the transition from the battlefield to the college classroom was passed today by the General Assembly.

The bill (A-3360) would require the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education, in consultation with the Department of Veterans’ and Military Affairs, to establish the Troops to College Program.

The program would assist New Jersey’s public institutions of higher education in coordinating a comprehensive array of services to help veterans make the transition into the college classroom.

“Our veterans deserve the best, and that includes access to higher education,” said Diegnan (D-Middlesex). “This plan would make that transition easier and is the right thing to do for those who have sacrificed their time and energy to defend our nation.”

“The help we’re proposing here includes assistance in applying for tuition aid, counseling resources and a campus veterans’ assistance officer to provide a single point of contact for information on the institution’s benefits and programs for veterans,” said Barnes (D-Middlesex). “This is all basic information that we can offer to our veterans and make their transition easier.”

The bill also would require an online resource to consolidate pertinent information specifically for veterans attending that institution.

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“Veterans are owed our best, and this is one way to help make that reality,” said Conners, (D-

Burlington/Camden), chairman of the Assembly Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. “We all know a higher education is key to so much in our world, and our veterans should not be left behind.”

Under the program the commission would be required to include certain information on its Internet site that would be designed to assist veterans in accessing the higher education opportunities that exist in the state. The information must include, but need not be limited to:

- Contact information for the campus veterans’ assistance officer at each of the public institutions of higher education; and
- Information on the array of programs and services available to veterans at each of the public institutions of higher education.

“This is simply an effort to help veterans make that vital transition from the battlefield to the classroom,” said Ramos (D-Hudson). “A college education is crucial these days, and we owe it to our veterans to ensure they can more easily obtain one.”

The bill was passed 77-0, with no abstentions. It now goes to the Senate for further consideration.

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