



Office of
Representative Hannah E. Kane
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

For Immediate Release

Contact: Anna Darrow, 617-722-2810, Anna.Darrow@mahouse.gov

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Rep. Kane supports Governor's veto striking project labor agreement language from Holyoke Soldiers' Home bill

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) recently voted to sustain Governor Charlie Baker's veto striking language that would require the use of a Project Labor Agreement for the reconstruction of the Holyoke Soldiers' Home.

In voting against House leadership's attempts to override the veto on June 30, Representative Kane cited the Governor's concerns that the PLA language "threatens the viability of this project by limiting fair competition and disproportionately reducing opportunities for minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses" and would drive up the cost of the \$400 million project. The override attempt was ultimately successful, with the Governor's veto being overturned on a vote of 130-30.

Representative Kane has twice voted to support authorizing \$400 million in state borrowing for the construction of a new Soldiers' Home, first on April 15 and again on May 18 when the spending bill emerged from a conference committee. The bill was signed into law on May 25, clearing the way for the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) to begin the design and development phase for a new Soldiers' Home that will meet federal standards and guidelines for long term care and adult day health services.

Governor Baker has described the reconstruction of the Holyoke Soldiers' Home as "necessary for the health, safety, and comfort of future generations of veterans and staff" at the facility, which opened in 1952. Representative Kane said the bond authorization will allow the state to apply for up to \$260 million in federal matching funds through the Veterans Administration's State Veterans Home Construction Grant Program to help offset the costs of the project.

In issuing his veto of the PLA language on May 25, Governor Baker wrote that "PLAs create barriers to entry that eliminate the equality of opportunity that is central to the Commonwealth's public construction process. While PLAs do not technically prohibit non-union contractors from bidding on a project, PLA terms make it cost prohibitive and impractical for any non-union member to participate."

A statement released by the Executive Office of Administration and Finance prior to the House vote warned that retaining the PLA would "threaten the Commonwealth's ability to keep the project within \$400 million and jeopardize our ability to receive the 65% reimbursement from the Federal Government."

In 2017, the Legislature authorized \$199 million in funding to rebuild the Chelsea Soldiers' Home, which first opened in 1882. Representative Kane noted the Chelsea project was successfully completed without the use of a PLA.

The Senate still needs to take up the Governor's veto message before the PLA language is restored.

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