An Act establishing a pilot program in the New Jersey Turnpike Authority to aid military personnel in finding employment in the construction industry.

Be It Enacted by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. As used in this act:

"Authority" means the New Jersey Turnpike Authority established by section 3 of P.L.1948, c.454 (C.27:23-3) or its successor.

"Helmets to Hardhats Program" means the program administered by the non-profit Center for Military Recruitment, Assessment, and Veterans Employment that connects National Guard, Reserve, and transitioning active-duty military personnel with jobs in the construction industry.

"Highway project" shall have the meaning ascribed to that term in section 4 of P.L.1948, c.454 (C.27:23-4).

2. The authority shall establish a pilot program to aid former military personnel in finding employment in the construction industry. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 18 of P.L.1968,
c.461 (C.27:23-6.1) or any other law to the contrary, the pilot program shall require that for each highway project constructed by the authority, contracts shall be awarded such that not less than 20 percent of the projected labor hours per project are awarded to contractors registered with the Helmets to Hardhats Program.

3. The authority shall conduct the pilot program established pursuant to section 2 of this act for a period of 18 months from the effective date of this act.

4. The authority shall evaluate the pilot program established pursuant to section 2 of this act to determine what impact, if any, the program had in connecting former military personnel with jobs in the construction industry and on the cost of highway projects constructed by the authority. The authority shall report the findings of that evaluation to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), to the Legislature, within 24 months after the effective date of this act.

5. This act shall take effect on the first day of the seventh month next following enactment, but the authority may take such anticipatory administrative action in advance thereof as shall be necessary for the implementation of this act.

STATEMENT

This bill requires the New Jersey Turnpike Authority ("authority") to establish a pilot program to aid former military personnel in finding employment in the construction industry. The pilot program will require that for each highway project constructed by the authority, at least 20 percent of the projected labor hours are awarded to contractors registered with the Helmets to Hardhats Program.

The Helmets to Hardhats Program is a national program established in 2003 that connects National Guard, Reserve, and transitioning active-duty military members with quality career training and employment opportunities in the construction industry. The program is administered by the non-profit Center for Military Recruitment, Assessment, and Veterans Employment (CMRAVE). To participate in the program, employers must register with CMRAVE which approves employers for participation in
the program. The employer must participate in proven apprenticeship training programs and seek to ensure that transitioning veterans are provided with wages and benefits that allow them to maintain an appropriate standard of living in the community where the position is located.

The bill directs the authority to conduct the pilot program for a period of 18 months and to evaluate the pilot program to determine what impact, if any, the program has in connecting former military personnel with jobs in the construction industry and on the cost of highway projects constructed by the authority. The authority is directed to report the findings of that evaluation to the Governor and the Legislature within 24 months after the bill's effective date.