

Benefits for Veterans Without Wartime Service

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Issue

Summarize the benefits that state law gives to veterans who do not have wartime service. This report updates OLR Report [2017-R-0168](#).

Summary

Veterans who do not have qualifying wartime service (i.e., did not serve during a specified wartime period or for the minimum length of time required) are eligible for fewer benefits than those who served during wartime, as defined in law. At a minimum, peacetime veterans are eligible for (1) admission to the state Veterans Healthcare Center; (2) burial in one of the state veterans' cemeteries; and (3) other miscellaneous benefits, including employment, motor vehicle license and registration, and housing benefits. State law generally defines a "veteran" as an individual honorably discharged or released under honorable conditions from active service in the armed forces (U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Air Force and any of their reserve components, including the Connecticut National Guard performing duty under Title 32 of the U.S. Code (e.g., certain Homeland Security missions)). The law specifically extends certain benefits to individuals who were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable or for bad conduct and have a "qualifying condition" (i.e., a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury, or who have disclosed a military sexual trauma experience) ([CGS § 27-103\(a\)\(5\)](#)).

Regardless of their discharge classification, veterans who were or would have been denied federal benefits solely based on their sexual orientation under any federal policy prohibiting homosexual personnel from serving in the military (e.g., "Don't Ask, Don't Tell") are eligible for state benefits if their federal benefits have been restored ([CGS § 27-102g](#)).

Veterans' spouses, surviving spouses, or dependent children are eligible for some benefits.

Benefits are not granted automatically. The veteran or a qualified dependent must claim them. To make a claim, the applicant must document his or her eligibility. The most common proof of eligibility is the Department of Defense document, DD 214, which must indicate an honorable discharge or release. (All military services have used the DD 214 form since January 1, 1950, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (<http://www.dd214.us/>); before then, similar documents were called a "Report of Separation" and a "Certificate of Service.")

The National Archive's website states that "most veterans and their next-of-kin can obtain free copies of their DD Form 214 (or the applicable separation document) and records several ways," and provides a link to do so: <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/index.html>.

The law requires the Veterans Affairs Department to develop and maintain a contact list of armed forces members, including guard members, and honorably discharged veterans living in Connecticut to facilitate informing listed persons about benefits and services available to, and legislation affecting, them ([CGS § 27-100c](#)).

For further information on programs and eligibility requirements, veterans may contact the state Veterans Department Office of Advocacy and Assistance at (860) 616-3683 and visit the Veterans Department website: www.ct.gov/ctva/.

This report organizes peacetime veterans' benefits in broad categories, as shown in the Table of Contents.

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Benefits Not Requiring War Service

Admission to the Veterans Healthcare Center

Veterans who need medical or surgical care and treatment are eligible for admission to the Veterans Healthcare Center. Those with no adequate means of support are also eligible for admission to certain hospitals at state expense unless other funds or means of payment are available ([CGS § 27-108](#)). The veterans affairs commissioner has sole power to determine who is admitted to these facilities.

Burial in the State Veterans' Cemetery

Any veteran may ask the veterans affairs commissioner to be buried in the state veterans' cemetery. The veteran and his or her spouse are eligible for such burial ([CGS § 27-122b](#)).

Civil Service Exam Bonus Points

The law gives five bonus points to certain armed forces members who achieve a passing score on initial state civil service examinations. A service member qualifies for the bonus points if he or she is in the final year of an enlistment contract with any branch of the armed forces. It also gives five civil service exam bonus points to veterans who (1) were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable or for bad conduct and (2) have a qualifying condition ([CGS § 5-224](#)).

Income Disregards

To the extent allowed under federal law, state law directs the Department of Social Services commissioner to disregard a veteran's or surviving spouse's federal Aid and Attendance Pension benefits when calculating income for certain means-tested assistance programs (e.g., Medicaid) ([CGS § 17b-28i](#)).

Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) Fee and License Waivers

Motor Vehicle Fees and Plates. A veteran who applies within two years of receiving an honorable discharge is exempt from paying motor vehicle operator's license and registration fees for one licensing period ([CGS § 14-50\(c\)](#)).

A veteran may request a waiver of the motor vehicle license examination if he or she (1) previously held a military operator's license and (2) applies within two years of separation from service ([CGS § 14-36\(e\)](#)).

State law allows any type of motor vehicle owned or leased by a veteran or his or her surviving spouse for one year or longer to qualify for special veterans' license plates ([CGS § 14-20b](#)).

The law specifies that the DMV commissioner must issue a special registration certificate and a set of number plates to veterans, armed forces members, or their surviving spouse for any motor vehicle they use exclusively for farming as long as they engage in agricultural production as a trade or profession ([CGS § 14-20b](#)).

Veterans Status on Driver's License and Identity Card. The DMV commissioner must include a person's status as a veteran on his or her state driver's license or identity card. To get this, the person must submit a request to have this status included to the Department of Veterans Affairs, which must verify the status to the DMV commissioner ([CGS § 14-36h\(e\)](#)).

Wind-shield Handicap Placard. Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have an additional option to receive a windshield handicap placard. The law allows an applicant to get the placard by providing certification from a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs psychiatrist that he or she (1) is a veteran who has service-connected PTSD and (2) meets the federal definition of a person with a disability that limits or impairs the ability to walk ([CGS § 14-253a](#)).

Economic Benefits

Tax Incentives. The law provides a tax incentive to encourage certain veterans to start a farming business. Specifically, the law relaxes the conditions eligible veterans must meet to qualify for a sales and use tax exemption permit for property used exclusively in commercial agricultural production ([CGS § 12-412\(63\)\(D\)](#)).

Veterans Small Business Preference. The law provides certain veteran-owned businesses with up to a 15% price preference for certain Department of Administrative Services open market orders or contracts. These businesses must have gross revenue of up to \$3 million in the most recently completed fiscal year and have at least 51% of the ownership be held by one or more veterans ([CGS § 4a-59\(c\)](#)).

Education

Alternate Route to Certification. A new law requires the State Department of Education to reserve, for veterans, 10% of seats available in the existing alternate route to certification program (i.e., a program through which individuals from an alternate profession can attain their initial educator certificate) ([PA 19-62](#), effective July 1, 2019).

Educational Credit for Military Experience. The law requires public higher education institutions to award college credit for military occupational specialty training to enrolled veterans ([CGS § 10a-149d](#)). The applicant must have experience in a military occupation the institution recognizes as substituting for or meeting the requirements of, a particular course of study. Under the act, a "veteran" is anyone discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable from active service in the armed forces.

Undocumented Honorably Discharged Veterans Institutional Aid. The law allows certain honorably discharged veterans without legal immigration status to access institutional aid to attend a state public higher education institution (i.e., UConn and the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities). These veterans are eligible, to the extent allowed by federal law, if they meet certain age and criminal background requirements and file with the institution an affidavit about their intent to legalize their immigration status ([CGS § 10a-161d](#)).

Employment

Materials for Employers on Veterans' Mental Health Conditions. A new law requires the southwest workforce development board, among other things, to identify appropriate written materials on mental health conditions common to veterans to distribute to employers. Such mental health conditions include post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide risk, depression, and grief ([PA 19-129](#), § 3, effective July 1, 2019).

Reinstatement of Municipal Employees. State and municipal employers must reinstate an employee if he or she left service to enter the armed forces and applies to return to the job within 90 days after receiving a certificate confirming satisfactory military service. The appointing authority must certify in writing that the employee is able and qualified to perform the work required and that work is available ([CGS §§ 5-255](#) and [7-462](#)).

Foreclosure Protection

[CGS § 7-246b](#) requires municipalities, with a population of at least 100,000, that are served by a private water company regulated by the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority to adopt ordinances that, among other things, protect veterans, seniors, and low-income families from water pollution control authority foreclosures by restricting accelerated foreclosure proceedings for past due sewer fees. The law also institutes a one year delay for foreclosure actions on liens held by water pollution control authorities.

Housing

Preference to Veterans. Any entity operating a Department of Economic Development-funded low- or moderate-income rental housing project must give preference to veterans competing with other applicants when housing needs are substantially equal ([CGS § 8-75](#)).

Security Deposit Program. By law, the Department of Housing, through its Security Deposit Guarantee Program and within available appropriations, must provide security deposit guarantees (payment for any damages that occur) to financially eligible people living in emergency housing or receiving a government rental subsidy. The commissioner must prioritize providing these guarantees to eligible veterans ([CGS § 8-339](#)).

Licensing and Registration Exemptions

License and Registration Fees. Veterans are exempt from annual and biennial license and registration fees or occupational taxes for one year after they are honorably discharged from active service in the U.S. Armed Forces ([CGS § 27-102a](#)).

Hairdressing or Cosmetology. A veteran whose hairdressing or cosmetology license expired while he or she was in the armed services may have it reinstated without paying the \$5 renewal fee ([CGS § 20-256](#)).

Embalmer or Funeral Director Reinstatement. When a veteran's embalmer or funeral director's license expires while he or she is in the armed forces, the Department of Public Health (DPH) may waive the examination required for reinstatement, provided the department approves the veteran's professional qualifications. The veteran must apply within a year of separation from service ([CGS § 20-228](#)).

Licensure and Certification for Military Training

The law requires state agencies or boards that issue licenses or certificates requiring professional training, schooling, or apprenticeship to provide credits or exemptions to applicants who received applicable training, schooling, or experience while serving in the armed forces. It prohibits agencies from requiring applicants to repeat any substantively similar training or schooling required for licensure or certification ([CGS § 27-102b](#)).

The law requires various government entities to certify, waive, grant, or award certain licenses, registrations, examinations, training, or credit for veterans with military experience or qualifications

similar to those otherwise required. Under the law, a "veteran" is anyone discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable from active service in the armed forces.

For qualified veterans, the law requires the:

1. Police Officer Standards and Training Council to certify them as police officers ([CGS § 7-294d](#));
2. DMV to waive certain examinations or tests for motor vehicle operator's licenses ([CGS § 14-36\(e\)](#));
3. Department of Labor to submit a recommendation for review that waives the apprentice requirement to the appropriate licensing board and Department of Consumer Protection to allow the applicants to sit for licensing exams ([CGS §§ 20-333](#) and [31-22u](#));
4. Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to waive security guard training ([CGS § 29-161q](#)); and
5. DPH to certify them as emergency medical technicians ([CGS § 19a-179](#)).

Post-judgment Debt Collection Exemption

By law, veterans' benefits cannot be collected as part of postjudgment proceedings from people who have secured a court order (e.g., installment payment order or wage execution) ([CGS § 52-352b](#)).

Pretrial Diversionary Programs

Pretrial diversionary programs allow criminal defendants to avoid prosecution and incarceration by successfully completing these court-sanctioned community-based treatment programs before trial. Veterans may participate in an accelerated pretrial rehabilitation program twice, whereas non-veterans may only participate once ([CGS § 54-56e](#)).

The accelerated rehabilitation program is available for people accused of certain crimes or motor vehicle violations. It also allows veterans (1) participating in the pretrial drug education program or (2) with certain mental health conditions that are amenable to treatment to be assigned to state and federal departments of veterans affairs services as an alternative to services from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services ([CGS §§ 54-56i](#) and [54-56l](#)).

Probate Records

When the VA needs a probate record to determine a veteran's eligibility for benefits, the official with custody of the record must provide a free certified copy ([CGS § 45a-12](#)).

Property Tax Exemptions

State Mandated. State law allows property tax exemptions for veterans with (1) a VA-rated disability of at least 10% ([CGS § 12-81\(20\)](#)) and (2) severe service-related disabilities ([CGS § 12-81\(21\)](#)). Veterans with a VA disability rating of 10% or more are eligible for exemptions ranging from \$1,500 to \$3,000. Effective October 1, 2019, and applicable to assessment years commencing on or after that date, [PA 19-171](#) increases this base property tax exemption by \$500 and in doing so, the exemptions will range from \$2,000 to \$3,500.

Veterans with a severe, service-related disability rating are eligible for an exemption of either \$5,000 or \$10,000 depending on the nature of the disability. Veterans in the latter category may claim both exemptions, provided they meet the criteria for the first exemption.

Additional Income-Based Exemption. [CGS § 12-81g](#) requires municipalities to give veterans who get the disabled or severe service-related disabled exemption an additional income-based exemption, which is the same threshold as a wartime exemption. For a veteran whose income falls (1) below a certain statutorily determined limit, the additional exemption is equal to twice the exemption ([CGS § 12-81g\(a\)](#)) and (2) above the limit, the additional exemption is 50% of the exemption ([CGS § 12-81g\(d\)](#)). By increasing the base exemption by \$500, [PA 19-171](#) increases the income-based exemption by (1) \$1,000 if the disabled veteran's income is at or below the threshold or (2) \$250 if it is over the threshold. For 100% disabled veterans, the law statutorily sets the limit at \$18,000 for unmarried veterans and \$21,000 for married veterans, while others with disabilities have the same limit as the wartime veterans exemption (see above).

Additional Local Option for 100% Disabled Veterans. The law allows a municipality, with its legislative body's approval, to provide 100% disabled veterans, under certain income thresholds, with three times the amount provided under the additional income-based exemption. By increasing the base exemption by \$500, [PA 19-171](#) increases the local-option exemption by \$1,500. The income eligibility thresholds for this optional municipal property tax exemption is \$21,000, if single and \$24,000, if married ([CGS § 12-81g\(b\)](#)).

Additional Local Option for Disabled Veterans. Existing law allows a municipality to provide an additional property tax exemption to disabled veterans (but not to severely disabled veterans) with the same qualifying income levels as the additional optional municipal wartime veteran exemption (see above). If the municipality chooses to provide the exemption for disabled veterans, the exemption must be at least \$3,000 and applied to the assessed value of the veteran's property ([CGS § 12-81f\(b\)](#)).

Additional Local Option for Certain Non-disabled Veterans. The law establishes an additional optional municipal veteran's property tax exemption by allowing municipalities, with their legislative body's approval, to provide a property tax exemption to certain veterans who do not qualify for certain existing veteran property tax exemptions (i.e., wartime, disabled, and severe service-related exemptions). A municipality may exempt up to \$5,000 or 5% of the property's assessed value ([CGS § 12-81jj](#)). The qualifying income is the same as that of the additional optional municipal wartime veteran exemption (see above) ([CGS § 12-81jj](#)). (For a more detailed discussion of property tax exemptions, see OLR Report [2019-R-0178](#).)

Residency Requirement Waived

A new law removes prior law's two-year state residency requirement to be eligible for certain benefits for veterans who were not Connecticut residents at the time of enlistment or induction into the armed forces. These include, among other things:

1. admission into any hospital, upon the veterans affairs commissioner's request, at the state's expense unless other means of payment are available;
2. admission to the veterans residential services facility or healthcare center;
3. \$1,800 toward funeral expenses or cremation for certain indigent veterans;
4. cost of transporting and installing a grave headstone; and
5. temporary financial assistance ([PA 19-33](#), effective October 1, 2019).

State Identification Card Fee Waiver for Blind Veterans

The law authorizes the DMV commissioner to waive the \$22.50 non-driver identification card fee for blind veterans ([CGS § 1-1h](#)).

Tax Retirement Income Exemption

State law fully exempts federally taxable military retirement pay from the state income tax ([CGS § 12-701\(20\)\(B\)\(xvii\)](#)).

Utility Termination

The law limits when utility companies can terminate residential service for non-payment in hardship cases, which includes a veteran whose sole source of financial support is his or her veterans' benefit ([CGS § 16-262c\(b\)\(3\)](#)). For more information on utility termination, see OLR Report [2012-R-0170](#).

Workforce Development

A new law requires the workforce development board for the state's southwest region (i.e., The WorkPlace, Inc.) to, among other things, by October 1, 2019, develop and operate two pilot programs within its workforce development region (the Military to Machinists pilot program for veterans and the Veterans Platform to Employment pilot program).

The Military to Machinists pilot program must help veterans in the region served by the program to (1) earn an advanced manufacturing certificate from a qualifying certificate program and (2) secure employment, for certificate holders, with any eligible business in the advanced manufacturing field. Under the Veterans Platform to Employment pilot program, the new law requires the southwest workforce development board to provide training and subsidized employment for veterans who have experienced long-term unemployment.

The new law also requires the Department of Labor, when contacted by a veteran who is in need of employment or workforce development services to, under certain circumstances, provide the veteran with (1) contact information for the workforce development board and (2) information on the Military to Machinists pilot program ([PA 19-129](#), most provisions effective July 1, 2019).

Miscellaneous Benefits

Angel Investor Tax Credit. Among other things, a new law extends the angel investor tax credit program by five years, to July 1, 2024, and increases the aggregate amount of angel investor credits Connecticut Innovators (CI) may reserve each fiscal year. The new law authorizes CI to prioritize certain unreserved credits for various businesses, including veteran-owned businesses ([PA 19-117](#), § 347, effective July 1, 2019, and applicable to income and tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2019).

Municipal Veterans Representative. Under prior law, any municipality that did not have a local veterans' advisory committee or provide funding for a veterans' service officer had to designate an employee to serve as a veterans' service contact person. A new law substitutes the term "municipal veterans' representative" for the term "veterans' service contact person," allows volunteers to serve in this position, and subjects them to all the existing training requirements ([PA 19-148](#), effective October 1, 2019).

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