
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 917

AN ACT EXEMPTING VETERANS' FEDERAL PENSION BENEFITS FROM INCOME ELIGIBILITY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

SUMMARY

Under current law, the Department of Social Services (DSS) must disregard a veteran's or surviving spouse's federal aid and attendance pension benefits when calculating income for certain (1) means-tested state assistance programs and (2) federally-funded assistance programs, to the extent allowed by federal law. This bill expands the income disregard to include any U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)-administered federal pension benefits (see BACKGROUND). Under the bill, the income disregards apply to the following programs:

1. Medicaid (§§ 1 & 5),
2. Medicare Savings Program (§§ 1 & 4),
3. Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (§ 1),
4. State Administered General Assistance (§ 3),
5. State Supplement Program (§ 2),
6. Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders (§ 6), and
7. State Appropriated Fuel Assistance Program (which is currently inactive)(§ 7).

As under existing law, DSS may apply to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to amend the state Medicaid plan or seek a waiver from federal law, if necessary, to exempt these veterans' benefits (CGS § 17b-28i).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

BACKGROUND

Aid and Attendance

The VA's aid and attendance benefit is a monthly payment added to a VA pension for qualified veterans and survivors who need assistance performing daily activities, are bedridden, have limited eyesight, or are in a nursing home due to mental or physical incapacity.

U.S. VA-Administered Pension Benefits

The VA-administered veterans pension program provides monthly payments to wartime veterans who meet certain age or disability requirements and who have incomes and assets below specified limits. Eligible surviving spouses or children of a deceased veteran with wartime service may also qualify for a VA survivor's pension.

The VA also provides additional pension benefits for aid and attendance (as described above) and housebound allowances. The housebound allowance is an extra benefit for those who receive a VA pension and spend most of their time at home because of a permanent disability.

Related Bills

sHB 6482, favorably reported by the Veterans' Affairs Committee, expands the income disregard for veterans and their surviving spouses under the same DSS assistance programs to include any VA-administered federal benefit, rather than just aid and attendance benefits.

HB 5592, favorably reported by the Veterans' Affairs Committee, expands the general definition of "veteran" under state law to include those released with an other than honorable discharge based on specified qualifying conditions (e.g., military sexual trauma experience, a qualifying mental health condition, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression). In doing so, it expands eligibility for any statutory programs or benefits that reference this definition, including the DSS income disregards for veterans and their surviving spouses.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Veterans' Affairs Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 14 Nay 3 (03/18/2021)