

## 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 [2019-R-0179](#).

### 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. 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)). Veterans’ spouses, surviving spouses, or dependent children are also eligible for some benefits.

A veteran may also qualify for benefits if released with an other than honorable (OTH) discharge based on a “qualifying condition” ([CGS § 27-103\(a\)\(2\)](#)), as amended by [PA 21-79](#) & [PA 22-34](#)). For certain benefits though, state law defines “veteran” differently and exclusively for that program.

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 a Department of Defense document, DD 214 indicating 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 Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) 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 Department of Veterans’ Office of Advocacy and Assistance at (860) 616-3683 and visit its website: [www.ct.gov/ctva](http://www.ct.gov/ctva).

### ***“Qualifying Condition” Defined***

- *PTSD or traumatic brain injury diagnosis by a licensed health care professional at a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (U.S. VA) facility;*
- *Military sexual trauma experience disclosed to such a health care professional; or*
- *Determination by the Eligibility Qualifying Review Board (EQRB) that sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression was more likely than not the primary reason for an OTH discharge (EQRB, established in 2021, reviews veterans’ applications to have their eligibility for state benefits restored, and makes recommendations to the DVA commissioner on whether a veteran’s OTH discharge meets the statutory criteria to do so) ([PA 21-79 § 1](#), codified as [CGS § 27-103](#)).*

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## Benefits Not Requiring Wartime 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 (by law, eligibility for this benefit is based on the federal definition of “veteran” and requires a discharge or release from active service under conditions other than dishonorable). Those with no adequate means of support are also eligible for admission to certain hospitals at state expense unless other funds are available. The DVA commissioner has sole power to determine who is admitted to these facilities ([CGS § 27-108](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

### *Burial in the State Veterans’ Cemetery*

According to the DVA cemetery [website](#), veterans who resided in the state at the time of their death or when they entered service and have active duty service (other than for training purposes) may

ask the DVA commissioner to be buried in the state veterans' cemetery. The veterans' spouses are also eligible for burial there.

By law, certain other current and former service members, and their spouses, may also request burial there, including (1) Connecticut National Guard or reserve members with 20 years of qualifying service and (2) Hmong Laotian special guerrilla units who served in the United States' secret war in the Kingdom of Laos during the Vietnam War ([CGS § 27-122b](#), as amended by [PA 22-34](#)).

### ***Burial Expenses***

When a veteran dies and the DVA commissioner, in consultation with the probate court, determines he or she left insufficient funds to pay for funeral expenses, the state must pay \$1,800 toward these expenses. Covered expenses include the cost of funeral services and merchandise, burial, cremation or disposition, and an obituary. (For purposes of this benefit, covered individuals also include those who served as part of a Hmong Laotian special guerrilla unit in the United States' secret war in the Kingdom of Laos during the Vietnam War.) Claims must be made within one year after the veteran dies or his or her remains are returned from abroad ([CGS § 27-118](#), as amended by [PA 22-34](#), § 3).

### ***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](#)).

### ***DMV Fee and License Waivers***

*Fee Waiver for Veterans at One-Day Event.* The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) commissioner may waive driver's license and identity card renewal or duplication fees for certain veterans while attending a DVA-hosted one-day event that offers services, supplies, or assistance to veterans ([PA 21-106](#), § 50, codified as [CGS § 14-11k](#)).

*Motor Vehicle Fees.* A veteran who applies within two years of leaving service is exempt from paying motor vehicle operator's license and registration fees for one licensing period ([CGS § 14-50\(c\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

*License Examination.* A veteran may generally request a waiver of the motor vehicle license examination if he or she (1) previously held a military operator's license for the same class of

vehicles for which he or she is currently applying and (2) applies within two years of separation from service. If the veteran is applying for a commercial motor vehicle license, the driving skills test is waived and the commissioner may waive the knowledge test if he determines the veteran's military experience meets federal criteria for substitutions ([CGS § 14-36\(e\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#) and [PA 21-106](#)).

*Special Plates.* State law allows any type of motor vehicle owned or leased by a veteran or his or her surviving spouse for at least one year to qualify for special veterans' license plates. 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.

Certain Hmong Laotian special guerilla units that served during the Vietnam War, and their surviving spouses, are also eligible for these plates. To qualify they must submit a request with the DVA to verify their qualifying service with the DMV ([CGS § 14-20b](#), as amended by [PA 21-51](#), [PA 21-79](#), and [PA 21-106](#)).

*State Identification Card Fee Waiver for Blind Veterans.* The law authorizes the DMV commissioner to waive the \$28 non-driver identification card fee for blind veterans ([CGS § 1-1h](#)).

*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 (certain Hmong Laotian special guerilla unit members that served during the Vietnam era are also eligible for this benefit). To qualify, the veteran (or guerilla unit member) must submit a request to the DVA to verify his or her veteran status or qualifying service to the DMV commissioner [CGS § 14-36h\(e\) & \(f\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-51](#), [PA 21-79](#), and [PA 22-34](#)).

*Windshield 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. VA 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\(b\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-106](#)).

## ***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 Contracting Preference.* The law provides certain veteran-owned businesses with up to a 15% price preference for certain Department of Administrative Services (DAS) 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](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

## ***Education***

*Alternate Route to Educator Certification.* By law, the State Department of Education must reserve for veterans 10% of seats available in the alternate route to certification program (a program through which individuals from an alternate profession can attain their initial educator certificate) ([CGS § 10-145w](#)).

*Educational Credit for Military Experience.* The law requires public higher education institutions to award college credit to enrolled veterans for their military occupational specialty training. 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. Beginning by July 1, 2022, each institution must review and update its policies on awarding credit for a student's military training, coursework, and education ([CGS § 10a-149d](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#) and [PA 21-132](#)).

*Institutional Aid for Veterans Without Legal Immigration Status.* The law allows certain 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 federal law allows, if they (1) were born on or after June 15, 1992; (2) were age 15 or younger when they arrived in the United States; (3) have continuously resided in this country; (4) have no felony convictions; and (5) file with the institution an affidavit that they have applied or will apply to legalize their immigration status ([CGS § 10a-161d](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

## ***Employment***

*Civil Service Exam Bonus Points.* The law gives bonus points to certain armed forces members who achieve a passing score on initial state civil service examinations. A service member

qualifies for five bonus points if he or she is in the final year of an enlistment contract with any branch of the armed forces ([CGS § 5-224](#), as amended by [PA 22-34](#)).

*Priority Applicants for Economic Development Financial Assistance.* The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) commissioner must prioritize applicants for economic development financial assistance (i.e., DECD-approved grants, loans, loan guarantees, or combination) that demonstrate a willingness to make jobs available to certain individuals, including veterans ([PA 21-188](#), § 2, codified as CGS § 32-5d).

*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 employer must certify in writing (to the DAS commissioner for state jobs) that the employee is able and qualified to perform the work required and that work is available ([CGS §§ 5-255](#) and [7-462](#)).

*Workforce Development.* Under the [Military to Machinists](#) pilot program, veterans served by the program may (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 southwest region's workforce development board (i.e., The WorkPlace, Inc.) must provide training and subsidized employment for veterans who have experienced long-term unemployment ([CGS §§ 31-11ss & 31-11tt](#)).

## ***Housing***

*Foreclosure Protection.* Municipalities with a population of at least 100,000 that are served by a Public Utilities Regulatory Authority-regulated private water company must adopt ordinances that, among other things, protect veterans (as well as 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 ([CGS § 7-246b](#)).

*Preference to Veterans.* Veterans must be given preference for housing in certain state-funded low- or moderate-income rental housing projects when competing with other applicants whose housing needs are substantially equal ([CGS § 8-75](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

*Security Deposit Program.* By law, the Department of Housing's Security Deposit Guarantee Program must, if funding is available, 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](#)).

### ***Legal Proceedings and Records***

*Post-Judgment Debt Collection Exemption.* By law, veterans' benefits cannot be collected as part of post-judgment proceedings by people who have secured a court order (e.g., installment payment order or wage execution) ([CGS § 52-352b](#), as amended by [PA 21-161](#)).

*Pretrial Diversionary Programs.* Pretrial diversionary programs allow criminal defendants to avoid prosecution and incarceration for non-serious crimes 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](#), as amended by [PA 22-26](#) and [PA 22-40](#)).

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\(c\) & \(d\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-40](#), [PA 21-79](#), [PA 21-102](#) & [PA 21-1](#), [June Special Session \(JSS\)](#), and [CGS § 54-56l](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

*Probate Records.* When the U.S. 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](#)).

### ***Licensing and Registration Exemptions***

*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](#)).

*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](#)).



*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, or released under honorable conditions, from active service in the armed forces ([CGS § 27-102a](#)).

### ***Licensure and Certification Substitutions 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.

For qualified veterans, the law requires:

1. the Police Officer Standards and Training Council to certify them as police officers if their armed forces training was equivalent to the state-required training and they pass an exam, as required by the council ([CGS § 7-294d\(b\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#));
2. DMV to waive certain examinations or tests for motor vehicle operator's licenses, including the driving skill test for commercial motor vehicle licenses as well as the knowledge test, if the DMV commissioner waives it ([CGS § 14-36\(e\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#) and [PA 21-106](#));
3. Department of Labor to submit a recommendation for review to the Department of Consumer Protection that, for two years after a veteran's discharge from service, waives the apprentice requirement, allowing the applicants to sit for licensing exams held by certain boards (e.g., the Electrical Work Board; Plumbing and Piping Work Board; Elevator Installation, Repair and Maintenance Board) ([CGS § 20-333](#), as amended by [PA 21-152](#), and [CGS § 31-22u](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#));
4. Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to waive security guard training for two years after a veteran's discharge ([CGS § 29-161q\(b\)](#), as amended by [PA 22-130](#)); and
5. DPH to certify them as emergency medical technicians ([CGS § 19a-179](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

## ***Property Tax Exemptions***

*State Mandated Exemptions for Veterans With Disabilities.* By law, municipalities must provide property tax exemptions for veterans who have (1) a VA-rated disability of at least 10% or lost an arm or leg in service, for which they receive federal compensation or (2) certain severe service-related disabilities, listed in statute, that resulted from enemy action, disease, or an accident sustained during their service. As with the state mandated exemptions for wartime veterans, these exemptions are composed of two parts: a “basic exemption” and an “income-based exemption,” which is calculated as a percentage of the basic exemption.

For veterans with a U.S. VA disability rating of at least 10% or covered limb loss, the exemption is calculated as follows:

1. the basic exemption ranges from \$2,000 to \$3,500 and depends on the veteran’s age and disability rating (those age 65 or older or who have a rating of at least 75% receive the maximum amount) ([CGS § 12-81\(20\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)) and
2. the income-based exemption equals 200% of the basic exemption for veterans with incomes below the Office of Policy and Management (OPM)-set threshold (described above) and 50% of the basic exemption for veterans with incomes above it (except the income threshold for those with a 100% disability rating is \$21,000 for married individuals and \$18,000 for unmarried individuals) ([CGS § 12-81g\(a\) & \(d\)](#), as amended by [PA 22-74](#)).

For veterans with certain severe, service-related disabilities, the exemption applies against the assessed value of the veteran’s dwelling and is calculated as follows:

1. the basic exemption is either \$5,000 or \$10,000, depending on the nature of the disability (e.g., \$10,000 if the veteran lost both legs due to enemy action and \$5,000 if he or she lost one leg in the same manner) ([CGS § 12-81\(21\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)) and
2. the income-based exemption equals 200% of the basic exemption for veterans with incomes below the OPM-set threshold (described above) and 50% of the basic exemption for veterans with incomes above it ([CGS § 12-81g\(a\) & \(d\)](#), as amended by [PA 22-74](#)).

Municipalities must increase these basic exemption amounts using a statutorily specified formula if their grand list increases by a certain amount due to a revaluation ([CGS § 12-62g](#)). Increases to the basic exemption, in turn, result in an increase to the income-based exemption as well.

Although veterans are generally prohibited from receiving more than one exemption based on their status as a veteran, those who qualify based on their disability rating or federal compensation may also receive an additional exemption for severe service-related disabilities, provided they meet the criteria for both ([CGS § 12-90](#)).

*Local Option to Increase Exemption for Certain 100% Disabled Veterans.* The law allows municipalities, with their legislative bodies' approval (or board of selectmen in town meeting towns), to set the income-based exemption amount for 100% disabled veterans at three times (rather than twice) their basic exemption amount for veterans with incomes below \$21,000, if single and \$24,000, if married ([CGS § 12-81g\(b\)](#), as amended by [PA 22-74](#)).

*Additional Local Option Exemption for Veterans With Disability Ratings.*

Municipalities may, with their legislative bodies' approval, provide an additional property tax exemption to veterans who receive the state mandated exemption based on their VA-disability rating of at least 10% or loss of a limb. Municipalities may set the income threshold for this local option exemption, but it must not be lower than the OPM-set one. If the municipality chooses to provide this additional exemption, it must be at least \$3,000 and applied to the assessed value of the veteran's property ([CGS § 12-81f\(b\)](#)).

*Local Option Exemption for Certain Non-Disabled Veterans.* Municipalities may, with their legislative body's approval, provide a property tax exemption to veterans who do not qualify for certain other veteran property tax exemptions (i.e., wartime, disabled, and severe service-related exemptions) if their incomes are below a set threshold. The municipality may set the threshold, but it may not set it lower than the OPM-set one. The exemption may be up to \$5,000 or 5% of the property's assessed value ([CGS § 12-81jj](#)).

*New Local Option Exemption for Veterans' Primary Residences.* A new law allows municipalities, by a vote of their legislative body (or board of selectman if the legislative body is a town meeting) to establish a new local option exemption for income-qualifying veterans' primary residences. The exemption (1) is available to veterans with up to \$50,100 in federal adjusted gross income and (2) equals 10% of the assessed value of a dwelling the veteran owns and uses as a primary residence ([PA 22-34](#), § 33, effective October 1, 2022).

## ***Retirement Credit***

*State Employees' Retirement System (SERS).* Employees who leave state service for the sole purpose of entering the armed forces (regardless of whether it is during a period of war) may continue making contributions during their absence as paycheck deductions or make retroactive contributions upon their return, subject to 5% interest per year (less a six month grace period) ([CGS § 5-180\(c\)](#)).

*Teachers' Retirement System.* Veterans may purchase retirement credit for up to 30 months of their time in service (and up to 10 years of wartime service) ([CGS § 10-183e\(3\) & \(11\)](#)). Additional information can be found on the system's website [here](#).

### ***Retirement Income Tax Exemption***

State law fully exempts federally taxable military retirement pay from the state income tax ([CGS § 12-701\(20\)\(B\)\(xvii\)](#)), as amended by [PA 21-2, JSS](#), § 433 and [PA 22-118](#), § 410).

### ***Miscellaneous Benefits***

*Angel Investor Tax Credit.* Under the angel investor tax credit program, until July 1, 2024, angel investors (i.e., investors who are considered “accredited investors” by the Securities and Exchange Commission) who invest at least \$25,000 in approved businesses are eligible for a personal income tax credit, generally equal to 25% of their investment, up to a capped amount. The law caps the portion of credits that [Connecticut Innovations](#), which administers the credit program, may reserve each year for investments in certain types of businesses but allows it to prioritize certain unreserved credits for various businesses, including veteran-owned businesses ([CGS § 12-704d](#), as amended by [PA 21-1, JSS](#), § 133).

*Group Fishing License.* By law, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection may issue a group fishing license to a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization to conduct up to 50 group fishing events per year for qualified individuals, including disabled veterans ([CGS § 26-30\(h\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-12](#)).

*Municipal Veterans Representative.* Each town must have either a (1) paid veterans' service officer; (2) local veterans' advisory committee, which it may establish together with another town; or (3) designated town employee or volunteer to serve as the coordinating agency for all matters concerning veterans and their families (e.g., employment, education, rehabilitation, readjustment to peacetime living) and help them secure services and benefits ([CGS § 27-135](#)).

*Utility Termination.* The law limits when utility companies can terminate residential service for non-payment in hardship cases, which includes veterans whose sole source of financial support is U.S. VA benefits ([CGS § 16-262c\(b\)\(3\)](#)).

## **Additional Resources**

- *OLR Backgrounder: State Veterans' Benefits*, [OLR Report 2022-R-0186](#), August 16, 2022

- *Income-Based Veterans Exemptions Under CGS § 12-81g*, [OLR Report 2021-R-0187](#), October 26, 2021
- *OLR Backgrounder: Veterans' Property Tax Exemptions*, [OLR Report 2021-R-0177](#), December 23, 2021
- *Benefits for Veterans' Surviving Spouses*, [OLR Report 2020-R-0244](#), October 26, 2020
- [Veterans Benefits Administration](#), U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs
- [State of CT Guide to Benefits](#), DVA
- DVA [District Offices](#)

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