
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5048 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING THE FEES FOR VETERANS' SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATES.

SUMMARY

This bill authorizes an eligible former reservist, or his or her surviving spouse, to get a veteran license plate and registration certificate (§ 1). Additionally, eligible former reservists (but not surviving spouses) may receive a veteran designation on their driver's licenses or identification cards (§ 5).

The bill also makes the following changes to fees for veteran and military special license plates:

1. reduces, from 100% to 50%, the amount of production costs that must be covered by the fee the motor vehicles commissioner sets for veteran (including specific wartime service) plates (§§ 1 & 2);
2. reduces the fee for Support Our Troops! plates by 50%, from \$60 to \$30, for veterans and armed forces members (§ 3); and
3. requires that the fee charged to veterans and armed forces members by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for specified, administratively created veterans and military organization plates be 50% of the fee set by regulation (§ 4).

The bill's changes apply to the standard fee for the plates, with numbers and letters selected by DMV. These fees are in addition to registration fees, and higher fees still apply for plate remakes and vanity plates, among other things.

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2023

*House Amendment "A" adds provisions authorizing (1) eligible former reservists and spouses to be eligible for veteran license plates and (2) former reservists to be eligible for a veteran designation on driver's licenses or identification cards.

VETERAN STATUS

To receive a veteran's license plate or an indicator on a driver's license or identification card, as allowed under the bill, a former reservist or surviving spouse must submit a verification request and all available official documentation of the reservist's service to the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA). Within 30 days after receiving the request, DVA must verify the service and, if the requestor is eligible, notify the DMV. The reservist or spouse must also submit an application to DMV and pay any applicable fees.

Under the bill, an eligible former reservist is any person part of the United States Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Coast Guard Reserve, Air Force Reserve, or Air National Guard that was discharged (1) honorably, (2) under honorable conditions, or (3) with an "other than honorable" (OTH) discharge based on a qualifying condition (see BACKGROUND).

The bill specifies that receiving these benefits and being verified by DVA does not establish proof of eligibility for any other veterans' benefit.

VETERANS LICENSE PLATES FEES

Under current law, DMV sets a fee (currently \$27.50) for veteran license plates that must cover the entire cost of making any veteran or wartime service plate. Under the bill, DMV must set a fee that covers half the cost of making the plates.

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS! PLATE

Under current law, the fee for Support Our Troops! plates is \$60, of which \$15 is allocated to DMV for the cost of producing, issuing, renewing, and replacing these plates and \$45 is allocated to Connecticut Support Our Troops, Inc. for programs to help troops, families of troops,

and veterans. The bill reduces the fee for veterans and armed forces members to \$30, and the allocation to DMV and Support Our Troops, Inc. to \$7.50 and \$22.50, respectively.

VETERAN ORGANIZATION PLATES

By law, DMV has general authority to issue license plates on behalf of certain qualifying nonprofit organizations, including military and veteran organizations. An applicant must (1) apply for these plates through the applicable organization, which sets the eligibility criteria and verifies the applicant's eligibility and (2) pay a special fee, which the commissioner sets by regulation, for the initial plate (Conn. Agencies Regs., § 14-19a-1 et seq.).

The bill limits the standard fee DMV may charge veterans and active-duty armed forces members for specified, administratively created organization plates to 50% of the amount set in regulation (see table below). Currently, the fee in regulations for bona fide members of the Purple Heart Association, Pearl Harbor Veteran's Association, or any veterans' organization is \$10 (Conn. Agencies Regs., § 14-19a-8).

Organization eligibility requirements for these plates may include paying a membership fee or a donation to the organization, the amount of which is determined by the organization and not within DMV's purview.

Table: Organization License Plates Eligible for Reduced Fee

Connecticut Army National Guard Aviation	Marine Corps League
Disabled American Veterans	Military Order of the Purple Heart
First Company Governor's Foot Guard	National Guard Association of Connecticut (active)
First Company Governor's Horse Guard	National Guard Association of Connecticut (retired)
Greater Hartford Chapter of the Eighty-Second Airborne	Pearl Harbor 1941 Survivor
Iwo Jima Survivor	Second Company Governor's Foot Guard
Korean War Veterans Association	United States Submarine Veterans
Laos Veterans of America	

BACKGROUND

Related Bill

sSB 1131 (File Copy 222), favorably reported by the Veterans and Military Affairs committee, authorizes (1) eligible former reservists and spouses to be eligible for veteran license plates and (2) reservists to be eligible for a veteran designation on driver's licenses or identification cards.

Definition of Veteran

Under state law, a veteran is anyone who was honorably discharged, or released under honorable conditions, from active service in the United States armed forces. This also includes anyone who was released from active service with an other than honorable (OTH) discharge based on a "qualifying condition."

Qualifying Condition

A qualifying condition is a (1) post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury diagnosis by a licensed health care professional at a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs facility, (2) military sexual trauma disclosed to such a health care professional, or (3) determination by the Eligibility Qualifying Review Board that sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression was more likely than not the primary reason for the OTH discharge (CGS § 27-103).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 20 Nay 0 (03/07/2023)