



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 173

February Session, 2024

Substitute House Bill No. 5285

House of Representatives, March 28, 2024

The Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs reported through REP. NOLAN of the 39th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING VETERANS' SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATES AND DRIVER'S LICENSES FOR CERTAIN FORMER ARMED FORCES RESERVISTS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 14-20b of the general statutes is repealed and the
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2024*):

3 (a) The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, at the request of any veteran
4 or member of the armed forces or the surviving spouse of such veteran
5 or member, shall register any motor vehicle owned or leased for a period
6 of at least one year by such person and shall issue a special certificate of
7 registration and a set of number plates for each such motor vehicle,
8 including a special certificate of registration and a set of number plates
9 for any motor vehicle used exclusively for farming purposes by any
10 such veteran or member of the armed forces, or the surviving spouse of
11 such veteran or member, who is engaged in agricultural production as
12 a trade or business. The plates shall expire and be renewed as provided

13 in section 14-22. The commissioner shall charge a fee for such plates,
14 which fee shall cover the entire cost of making such plates and shall be
15 in addition to the fee for registration of such motor vehicle. The
16 commissioner shall charge a fee of fifteen dollars to replace such plates
17 that become mutilated or illegible. [As used in this subsection, "veteran"
18 and "armed forces" have the same meanings as provided in section 27-
19 103.] Any such member of the armed forces who is dishonorably
20 discharged shall return such plates to the commissioner not later than
21 thirty days after such discharge. The commissioner shall not renew such
22 plates for any motor vehicle owned or leased by any such member of
23 the armed forces who is dishonorably discharged.

24 (b) (1) The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, at the request of any
25 person who was a member of the Hmong Laotian special guerilla units,
26 which units served in the United States secret war in the Kingdom of
27 Laos during the Vietnam War, or any person who is an eligible former
28 reservist, or the surviving spouse of any such person, and after
29 verification from the Department of Veterans Affairs as provided under
30 subdivision (2) or (3), as applicable, of this subsection, shall register any
31 motor vehicle owned or leased for a period of at least one year by such
32 person and shall issue a special certificate of registration and a set of
33 number plates for each such motor vehicle, including a special certificate
34 of registration and a set of number plates for any motor vehicle used
35 exclusively for farming purposes by any such person, or the surviving
36 spouse of such person, who is engaged in agricultural production as a
37 trade or business. The plates shall expire and be renewed as provided
38 in section 14-22. The commissioner shall charge a fee for such plates,
39 which fee shall cover the entire cost of making such plates and shall be
40 in addition to the fee for registration of such motor vehicle.

41 (2) Any person who was a member of the Hmong Laotian special
42 guerilla units, or the surviving spouse of such person, may submit a
43 request to the Department of Veterans Affairs to be listed as a veteran,
44 based on such person's service during the Vietnam War, for the purpose
45 of obtaining a special certificate of registration and a set of number
46 plates under subdivision (1) of this subsection. Such person, or the

47 surviving spouse of such person, shall provide to said department (A)
48 an affidavit stating (i) when such person served, (ii) where such person
49 served, (iii) the unit in which such person served, and (iv) the capacity
50 in which such person served; (B) any available corroborating witness
51 affidavits; (C) any available official documentation of service; and (D)
52 any other documents supporting such person's or such surviving
53 spouse's affidavit. Said department shall, not later than thirty days after
54 receipt of such request, verify whether such person was a member of the
55 Hmong Laotian special guerilla units and, if so verified, notify the
56 Commissioner of Motor Vehicles of such request and verification.

57 (3) (A) Any person who is an eligible former reservist, or the
58 surviving spouse of such person, may submit a request to the
59 Department of Veterans Affairs to be listed as a veteran, based on such
60 person's service in a reserve component of the armed forces, for the
61 purpose of obtaining a special certificate of registration and a set of
62 number plates under subdivision (1) of this subsection. Such person, or
63 the surviving spouse of such person, shall provide to said department
64 all available official documentation of such service. Said department
65 shall, not later than thirty days after receipt of such request, verify such
66 person's service and, if so verified, notify the Commissioner of Motor
67 Vehicles of such request and verification.

68 (B) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (1) of this
69 subsection or subparagraph (A) of this subdivision, neither the issuance
70 of such registration and number plates to a person by the Commissioner
71 of Motor Vehicles nor the listing of such person as a veteran by the
72 Commissioner of Veterans Affairs shall constitute proof of such person's
73 eligibility for any other benefit available to veterans.

74 (c) [Any such member of the armed forces who is dishonorably
75 discharged shall return such plates to the commissioner not later than
76 thirty days after such discharge. The commissioner shall not renew such
77 plates for any motor vehicle owned or leased by any such member of
78 the armed forces who is dishonorably discharged.] As used in this
79 section, "eligible former reservist" means any person honorably

80 discharged from, released under honorable conditions from or released
81 with an other than honorable discharge based on a qualifying condition
82 from, the United States Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy
83 Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Coast Guard Reserve, Air Force
84 Reserve or Air National Guard; and "veteran", "armed forces" and
85 "qualifying condition" have the same meanings as provided in section
86 27-103.

87 Sec. 2. Section 14-36h of the general statutes is repealed and the
88 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2024*):

89 (a) Each motor vehicle operator's license issued by the Commissioner
90 of Motor Vehicles in accordance with section 14-36 and each identity
91 card issued by said commissioner in accordance with section 1-1h shall
92 contain the following: (1) The person's full legal name; (2) the person's
93 date of birth; (3) the person's gender; (4) the person's height and eye
94 color; (5) the person's assigned operator's license or identity card
95 number; (6) the person's address of principal residence in this state; (7)
96 the person's signature; (8) the person's photograph or digital image; and
97 (9) if applicable, the person's status as a veteran, as provided in
98 subsections (e) and (f) of this section.

99 (b) If any person does not reside in any state, territory or possession
100 of the United States because such person is on active military duty with
101 the United States Armed Forces, and such person's home state of record
102 is Connecticut, as reflected in the records of the United States
103 Department of Defense, United States Department of Homeland
104 Security or any federal department under which the United States Coast
105 Guard operates, such person may obtain a Connecticut operator's
106 license or identity card, provided such person: (1) Does not have an
107 operator's license or identity card issued by another state, territory or
108 possession of the United States, or surrenders any such license or
109 identity card; (2) has a current APO or FPO mailing address; (3)
110 designates such person's home address as 60 State Street, Wethersfield,
111 CT 06161; and (4) meets all other requirements for obtaining an
112 operator's license or identity card in this state.

113 (c) The commissioner shall provide that each such license or identity
114 card document contains physical security features designed to prevent
115 tampering, counterfeiting or duplication of the document.

116 (d) Each such document shall also contain one or more machine-
117 readable technology feature or component, including, but not limited to,
118 a bar code or magnetic strip.

119 (e) Any person who is a veteran may submit a request to the
120 Department of Veterans Affairs to have [his or her] such person's status
121 as a veteran contained on [his or her] such person's motor vehicle
122 operator's license or identity card. Said department shall, not later than
123 thirty days after receipt of such request, verify whether such person is a
124 veteran and, if so verified, notify the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles
125 of such request and verification. The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles
126 shall indicate such person's status as a veteran on any motor vehicle
127 operator's license or identity card issued to such person upon original
128 issuance or renewal of a motor vehicle operator's license or identity card
129 or upon issuance of a duplicate motor vehicle operator's license or
130 identity card.

131 (f) (1) Any person who was a member of the Hmong Laotian special
132 guerilla units, which units served in the United States secret war in the
133 Kingdom of Laos during the Vietnam War, or any person who is an
134 eligible former reservist, may submit a request to the Department of
135 Veterans Affairs to be listed as a veteran, based on such person's service
136 during the Vietnam War or in a reserve component of the armed forces,
137 respectively, on [his or her] such person's motor vehicle operator's
138 license or identity card. Said department shall, not later than thirty days
139 after receipt of such request and the documents required under
140 subdivision (2) or (3), as applicable, of this subsection, verify whether
141 such person was such a member or is such an eligible former reservist,
142 as applicable, and, if so verified, notify the Commissioner of Motor
143 Vehicles of such request and verification. The Commissioner of Motor
144 Vehicles shall indicate such person's status as a veteran on any motor
145 vehicle operator's license or identity card issued to such person upon

146 original issuance or renewal of a motor vehicle operator's license or
147 identity card or upon issuance of a duplicate motor vehicle operator's
148 license or identity card.

149 (2) Any such person who was a member of the Hmong Laotian
150 special guerilla units shall submit to the Department of Veterans Affairs,
151 in addition to the request under subdivision (1) of this subsection, (A)
152 an affidavit stating (i) when such person served, (ii) where such person
153 served, (iii) the unit in which such person served, and (iv) the capacity
154 in which such person served; (B) any available corroborating witness
155 affidavits; (C) any available official documentation of service; and (D)
156 any other documents supporting such person's affidavit.

157 (3) (A) Any such person who is an eligible former reservist shall
158 submit to the Department of Veterans Affairs, in addition to the request
159 under subdivision (1) of this subsection, all available official
160 documentation of such person's service in a reserve component of the
161 armed forces and discharge or release therefrom.

162 (B) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (1) of this
163 subsection, neither the listing of a person as a veteran by the
164 Commissioner of Veterans Affairs nor the indication of such person's
165 status as a veteran on any motor vehicle operator's license or identity
166 card by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles shall constitute proof of
167 such person's eligibility for any other benefit available to veterans.

168 (g) As used in this section: (1) "Full legal name" means the most
169 complete version of the name that appears on a person's certificate of
170 birth, official passport or other document or documents accepted by the
171 Commissioner of Motor Vehicles to verify the person's identity, unless
172 the person presents a marriage license or certificate, a certificate of civil
173 union, a divorce decree or an order of a court of competent jurisdiction
174 pertaining to a permanent change of the person's name; [and] (2)
175 "veteran" has the same meaning as provided in section 27-103, or any
176 former member of the armed forces who is entitled to retirement pay
177 under 10 USC Chapter 1223, as amended from time to time, or, but for
178 age, would be so entitled; (3) "eligible former reservist" means any

179 person honorably discharged from, released under honorable
 180 conditions from or released with an other than honorable discharge
 181 based on a qualifying condition from, the United States Army Reserve,
 182 Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Coast
 183 Guard Reserve, Air Force Reserve or Air National Guard; and (4)
 184 "armed forces" and "qualifying condition" have the same meanings as
 185 provided in section 27-103.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	October 1, 2024	14-20b
Sec. 2	October 1, 2024	14-36h

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

In Section 1(b)(1), "as applicable," was moved from after "of this subsection," to before "of this subsection," for consistency with standard drafting conventions.

VA *Joint Favorable Subst. -LCO*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 25 \$	FY 26 \$
Motor Vehicle Dept.	TF - Revenue Gain	Less than 90,000	Less than 120,000

Note: TF=Transportation Fund

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

The bill makes former reservists and surviving spouses eligible for a veteran license plate from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). It is unknown how many former reservists and surviving spouses live in Connecticut but, based on nationwide population data from the Department of Defense (DOD), current reservists make up less than 44% of the overall military population.¹ Assuming a similar proportionality applies in the veteran and former reservist population in Connecticut, and former reservists opt for the veterans plate at the same rate as veterans do, then this provision is expected to result in Special Transportation Fund revenue gain of less than \$90,000 in FY 25 and less than \$120,000 in FY 26 from plate fees.²

The bill also makes former reservists eligible for a veteran designation on driver's licenses issued by DMV. There is no impact associated with making former reservists eligible for a veteran designation on driver's licenses issued by DMV, as there is no additional

¹ According to DOD's 2022 military demographics profile there are 994,860 Military Service members in the Ready Reserve compared to 1,304,720 Active Duty members.

² Under the bill, former reservists and surviving spouses would pay the same fee (currently \$27.50) that veterans pay for veteran plates.

fee to the reservists or cost to DMV for this designation.

The Out Years

The out year revenue gain would decline following initial take-up of the veteran status plates by eligible reservists. There is no additional fee for renewing plates.

OLR Bill Analysis**HB 5285*****AN ACT CONCERNING VETERANS' SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATES AND DRIVER'S LICENSES FOR CERTAIN FORMER ARMED FORCES RESERVISTS.*****SUMMARY**

This bill allows an eligible former reservist, or his or her surviving spouse, to get a veteran license plate. The bill also allows an eligible former reservist (but not a surviving spouse) to receive a veteran designation on his or her driver's license or identification card. Under current law, generally only veterans and current service members (and, for license plates, surviving spouses) may get the plate or designation.

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

To receive these benefits, 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 Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). The reservist or spouse must also apply to DMV and pay any applicable fees.

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

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2024

BACKGROUND

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

Yea 20 Nay 0 (03/14/2024)