



# Acts Affecting Veterans and the Military

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## Notice to Readers

This report provides summaries of new laws (Public Acts) affecting veterans and the military enacted during the 2017 regular session. OLR's other Acts Affecting reports are, or soon will be, available on OLR's website: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/olr/actsaffecting.asp>.

Each summary indicates the Public Act (PA) number and effective date. Not all provisions of the acts are included. The report does not include vetoed acts unless the veto was overridden.

Complete summaries of Public Acts are, or will soon be, available on OLR's website: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/olr/olrsums.asp>. Readers are encouraged to obtain the full text of acts that interest them from the Connecticut State Library, House Clerk's Office, or General Assembly's website: <http://www.cga.ct.gov>.

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## **Agricultural License Plates**

A new law specifies that the motor vehicles 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 ([PA 17-148](#), effective July 1, 2017).

## **Burial in the State Veterans' Cemeteries**

Under a new law, National Guard members and reservists who do not have active-duty service beyond training may now be buried in a state veterans' cemetery ([PA 17-83](#), § 3, effective January 1, 2018).

## **Cigarette Tax Exemption for Sales to U.S. Veterans' Hospitals and Armed Forces Members**

To conform with federal law, a new law exempts from the cigarette tax, cigarettes sold to U.S. veterans' hospitals and members of the U.S. Armed Forces, if they are sold on a military base by an agency permitted by federal regulation to operate there ([PA 17-147](#), § 29, effective upon passage).

## **Contract Termination for Certain National Guard Ordered to Active Service**

Under a new law, Connecticut National Guard members may cancel certain contracts at any time after being ordered into active state service for 90 days or more to a location that does not support such a contract. These contracts include those for (1) telecommunication, Internet, television, and satellite radio services and (2) memberships at an athletic club or gym ([PA 17-197](#), effective October 1, 2017).

## **Disclosure of Certain Juvenile Records to Federal Military Law Enforcement**

A new law explicitly includes U.S. Department of Defense law enforcement authorities among the federal law enforcement officers to whom Department of Children and Families records must be disclosed without consent of the person who is the subject of the record, under certain circumstances specified in law ([PA 17-127](#), § 16, effective October 1, 2017).

## **Extension of Certain Armed Services Members' Driver's License Expiration Date**

The legislature passed a law that extends the time period during which a Connecticut driver's license held by an active-duty armed services member who was serving out of state is valid. Under prior law, such a license was generally valid for 30 days after the date the holder (1) was honorably separated from service or (2) returned to Connecticut. Under this new law, the license is instead valid until 60 days after the holder is validly separated from the service, regardless of when he or she returns to the state ([PA 17-79](#), § 6, effective July 1, 2017).

## **Handicap Placards for Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

Under a new law, veterans with PTSD have an additional option to receive a windshield handicap placard. The new 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 ([PA 17-79](#), § 23, effective upon passage).

## **Leave of Absence for National Guard Members of Another State**

A new law requires employers of anyone who serves in the National Guard of another state to grant leave to the employee for the purposes of such service ([PA 17-127](#), § 14, effective October 1, 2017).

## **Military Recruitment Ribbon**

A new law creates a recruitment award that the Connecticut National Guard adjutant general must issue to state armed forces members who help to recruit at least three people who enlist in the guard on or after July 1, 2017, complete basic training, and qualify for a military occupational specialty ([PA 17-196](#), effective July 1, 2017).

## **Online Bazaar and Raffle Ticket Sales**

Under a new law, qualified veterans organizations, among other qualified organizations (e.g., charitable and nonprofit), may sell or promote the sale of raffle tickets on their website ([PA 17-161](#), effective October 1, 2017).

## **Optional Municipal Property Tax Exemptions**

### ***Additional Veterans' Property Tax Exemption***

A new 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 ([PA 17-189](#), §§ 3 & 4, effective October 1, 2017, and applicable to assessment years beginning on or after October 1, 2017).

### ***Gold Star Exemption***

This session, the legislature passed a law that allows a municipality, with its legislative body's approval, to provide a property tax exemption to a parent or surviving spouse of a service member killed in action while performing active military duty with the U.S. Armed Forces (i.e., "Gold Star" parent or surviving spouse). A municipality may exempt up to \$20,000 or 10% of the property's assessed value. The Gold Star exemption is in addition to any property tax exemption the parent or surviving spouse is entitled to, but the new law prohibits them from receiving more than one additional municipal property tax exemption for veterans and their family members ([PA 17-65](#), effective October 1, 2017, and applicable to assessment years beginning on or after October 1, 2017).

### ***Increase in Income Threshold for 100% Disabled Veterans***

The legislature increased the income eligibility thresholds for an existing optional municipal property tax exemption. Existing law allows a municipality, with its legislative body's approval, to provide 100% disabled veterans, under such income thresholds, with three times the amount provided under the state-mandated disabled veterans exemption. The new law increases such income eligibility thresholds from (1) \$18,000 to \$21,000, if single and (2) \$21,000 to \$24,000, if married. ([PA 17-189](#), § 2, effective October 1, 2017, and applicable to assessment years beginning on or after October 1, 2017).

## **Prohibiting Discriminatory Practices on the Basis of Veteran Status**

A new law prohibits discrimination on the basis of a veteran's status in employment, public accommodations, the sale or rental of housing, the granting of credit, and other laws over which the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) has jurisdiction. It authorizes any veteran aggrieved by an alleged discriminatory practice to file discrimination complaints with CHRO, which enforces antidiscrimination laws in these areas ([PA 17-127](#), §§ 1-13, effective October 1, 2017).

## **Protecting Certain Military Identification Information**

A new law requires anyone who possesses military identification information to (1) safeguard the data, and computer files and documents containing it, from misuse by third parties and (2) destroy, erase, or make unreadable such data, computer files, and documents before disposing of them. "Military identification information" is information identifying a person as a veteran or armed forces member, including a selective service number, military identification number, discharge document, military identification card, or military retiree identification card ([PA 17-137](#), effective October 1, 2017).

## **Registration for Medicaid Programs for Certain Family Members**

The legislature passed a law that allows an armed forces member on active duty to apply on behalf of his or her spouse or child for any Medicaid home- or community-based program in Connecticut for which the spouse or child is eligible ([PA 17-127](#), § 15, effective October 1, 2017).

## **Soldiers', Sailors' and Marines' Fund (SSMF) Records Disclosure**

A new law, with certain exceptions for personal information, deems any American Legion records related to administering the SSMF as public records subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act ([PA 17-189](#), § 1, effective upon passage).

## **Veteran's Ribbon and Medal Eligibility**

The legislature passed a law that extends eligibility of the veteran's ribbon and medal to all veterans living in Connecticut when the award is made. It also requires the commissioner to award the ribbon and medal to any former member of an armed forces reserve component who was honorably discharged and (1) was a Connecticut resident when serving in the reserves during a time of war or (2) is living in Connecticut when the award is made ([PA 17-83](#), § 1, effective October 1, 2017).

## **Veteran Status on Driver's Licenses and Identity Cards**

Under a new law, former service members entitled to military retirement pay under federal law, regardless of age, may request to have their veteran status listed on their driver's license or identity card ([PA 17-83](#), § 2, effective October 1, 2017).

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