OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
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Special Report

2026 Acts Affecting Veterans and the Military

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Notice to Readers

This report provides summaries of new laws (public acts and special acts) significantly affecting veterans and the military enacted during the 2026 regular legislative session. OLR's other Acts Affecting reports are, or will soon be, available on OLR's website.

Each summary indicates the public act (PA) or special act (SA) number. 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.

Readers are encouraged to obtain the full text of acts that interest them from the General Assembly's website or the Connecticut State Library.

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Benefits

Adjusting Veterans' Property Tax Exemption Amounts After Revaluations

By law, municipalities must increase certain property tax exemption amounts for veterans and their families if, after a revaluation, their grand lists increase by a certain amount. When calculating this increase, municipalities must compare their net grand list for that year (post-revaluation) to their net grand list for the prior year (pre-revaluation). A new law specifies that municipalities must use the grand lists that are set following a process existing law requires when doing this calculation (PA 26-114, § 8, effective October 1, 2026).

Income Tax Exemptions for Honor Guard, National Guard, and U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps

A new law establishes state income tax deductions for (1) compensation for an honor guard detail at a veteran's funeral; (2) pay a National Guard member receives for being ordered out for active service; and (3) any income received from the U.S. government as retirement pay for retired members of the U.S. Public Health Service's commissioned corps (a U.S. uniformed service) (PA 26-35, §§ 18 & 19, and PA 26-68, § 277, effective July 1, 2026, but applicable on differing taxable years).

Information on Veterans' Benefits and Services

A new law requires, within available appropriations, the labor commissioner and the chief manufacturing officer to consult with the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) commissioner and post information about veterans' benefits and services on both the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Office of Manufacturing websites. This information must be available for download by employers to display in their workplaces (PA 26-12, § 48, effective October 1, 2026).

Office of Advocacy and Assistance Trainings

A new law expands the Office of Advocacy and Assistance manager's annual training for certain individuals who provide veterans' services to cover all veterans, not just women veterans as required under prior law. But it requires a dedicated training on how to help and advise women veterans on issues unique to them.

The training must include information on (1) charitable or social service organizations that help with veterans' services or benefits and (2) community or nonprofit programs and charitable or social service organizations that may help veterans (PA 26-35, § 3, effective October 1, 2026).

Proof of Eligibility for Veterans' Property Tax Exemptions

By law, veterans and their families claiming a property tax exemption based on military service must generally show the town clerk proof of the qualifying service. Under prior law, this proof had to show the veteran had an honorable discharge from military service even though other discharge characterizations qualify a veteran or his or her family for an exemption. A new law expands what proof they may show, aligning requirements with eligibility criteria in existing law.

This new law also makes the assessor, rather than the tax collector, responsible for receiving proof a claimant is retroactively eligible for an exemption based on his or her service-connected disability rating (PA 26-114, §§ 18, 20 & 21, generally effective October 1, 2026).

Veterans Organization Sales and Use Tax Exemption Study

A new law requires the Department of Revenue Services commissioner to conduct a study to (1) determine the amount of tangible personal property or services these organizations purchase annually and (2) evaluate the fiscal impact of establishing a state's sales and use tax exemption. The commissioner must submit his findings and recommendations to the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee by January 1, 2027 (PA 26-35, § 23, effective upon passage).

World War II Military Service Property Tax Exemption

Existing law generally entitles U.S. citizens who served with an allied or associated nation's military during World War II to a property tax exemption (of at least $1,500) if he or she received an honorable discharge. A new law expands eligibility criteria to also cover individuals who served with these other nations if they received certain other discharge characterizations (such as a general discharge under honorable conditions) (PA 26-114, § 17, effective October 1, 2026, and applicable to assessment years starting on and after that date).

Businesses and Jobs

Troops-to-Trades

A new law requires various agencies to take specified actions to assist current and former armed forces or National Guard members transition into the civilian workforce. It requires:

1. the DOL commissioner to improve and update the veteran employment information on the department's website and study certain models from northeastern states that use technology to connect current and former armed forces members with prospective employers;

2. the DVA commissioner to send a periodic email newsletter with relevant resources and materials on the DOL informational webpage;

3. the adjutant general to promote and periodically improve the Military Department's employment assistance program for current and former National Guard members;

4. the military department to conduct an annual job fair and publicize it on the department's website and in emails; and

5. the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) commissioner to develop and submit legislative recommendations for promoting employment of current and former Armed Forces members (PA 26-12, §§ 35-37, various effective dates).

Civil Air Patrol

Civil Air Patrol Stipend Study

This session, the legislature required the state comptroller to study the feasibility and cost of establishing a program to pay stipends to civil air patrol members when they miss work to (1) respond to an emergency declared by the governor or president; (2) respond to a request for assistance in an emergency, natural disaster, or life-threatening event; or (3) participate in required emergency services training programs and exercises. The comptroller must submit a report on his findings to the Labor and Public Employees Committee by January 1, 2027 (SA 26-31, effective upon passage).

Civil Air Patrol Youth Camp

A new law allows the Connecticut Wing of the Civil Air Patrol to open, operate, and maintain a youth camp without an Office of Early Childhood license. However, to be exempt, the camp must (1) be opened, operated, and maintained on state-owned or -leased property and use a facility operated exclusively by the Connecticut Military Department or U.S. Armed Forces, and (2) comply with certain guidelines (PA 26-45, § 14, effective October 1, 2026).

Education

Minimally Disruptive Transition to the Early Intervention System for Armed Forces Members' Children

This session, the legislature enacted a new law that requires the state early intervention system (Birth-to-Three Program) to take steps to provide a minimally disruptive transition for a relocating armed forces member's child who was previously enrolled in the program in another state or territory with an individualized family service plan (PA 26-35, § 10, effective July 1, 2026).

National Guard Fee Waivers

This year, the legislature expands the tuition waiver for active National Guard members enrolled at Connecticut State Community Colleges, Connecticut State Universities, and UConn to include all mandatory fees (PA 26-12, §§ 69-71, effective July 1, 2027).

Healthcare

Long-term Care Ombudsman Study

A new law requires the long-term care ombudsman to submit a report to the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee by January 1, 2027, on her recommendations for:

1. creating an Office of the Veterans' and Military Healthcare Ombudsman;
2. appointing a person to serve as the Veterans' Healthcare Ombudsman and head the office; and
3. specifying the new office's powers, duties, and staffing requirements (PA 26-35, § 20, effective July 1, 2026).

Study on Incentivizing Federal Nursing Home Contracts

This session, the legislature established a task force to study ways to encourage Medicaid-certified nursing homes to contract with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) and provide care to eligible veterans. The task force must consider financial incentives, ways to supplement reimbursement for care, tax credits, and other ways of encouraging nursing homes to provide care to eligible veterans covered by USDVA. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee by January 1, 2029 (PA 26-35, § 6, effective January 1, 2027).

UConn Health Neuromodulation Center

Last year's budget implementer required UConn Health to establish a Center of Excellence for Neuromodulation Treatments and allowed UConn Health to collaborate with an in-state hospital to provide neuromodulation treatments at this center. This year, a new law limits the treatments to disabled veterans (in line with UConn Health's plans for the center, which is not yet open). It also specifically allows for neuromodulation research at this center (PA 26-1, § 8, effective upon passage).

Veteran Dental Care Program

This session, the legislature created a Veteran Dental Care Program to help eligible veterans receive certain dental services, up to $3,000 a year per veteran and $1 million per fiscal year for the program. The program is administered by the Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines Fund administrator and uses money from the fund, to help eligible veterans get certain dental services.

The program covers biannual examinations, fillings, root canals, crowns, prosthetics, and oral surgery. It does not cover implants, fixed bridges, orthodontics, cosmetic services (for example, whitening or veneers), or telehealth services (PA 26-35, §§4-5, effective October 1, 2026).

Military Department

Camp Nett

This session, the legislature enacted a law renaming the state military training facility in Niantic as Camp Nett to follow Army facility naming conventions (PA 26-35, §§ 12-13, effective October 1, 2026).

Emergency Response Account

A new law establishes the Military Department emergency response account as a separate, nonlapsing account for the adjutant general to administer. It requires the account cover costs:

1. the state incurs in responding to an emergency (for example, a natural disaster or civil emergency) and
2. when federal funds are not immediately available for this purpose, subject to gubernatorial approval and in consultation with the emergency services and public protection commissioner.

The law requires the treasurer transfer $500,000 for FY 27 from the Military Relief Fund to the account (PA 26-35, §§ 21-22, effective July 1, 2026).

John N. Dempsey Putnam National Guard Readiness Center

This session, the legislature enacted a law naming the Connecticut National Guard readiness center in Putnam the "John N. Dempsey Putnam National Guard Readiness Center." John N. Dempsey was the 81st governor and captain-general of Connecticut and served as both mayor of and state representative for Putnam (PA 26-97, effective October 1, 2026).

Military Staff

Prior law required the governor to appoint a military staff that included the adjutant general, assistant adjutant generals, the Air National Guard chief of staff, and various aides-de-camp. A law instead allows the governor to appoint a military staff and, if he does so, requires it to consist of the adjutant general, assistant adjutant generals, and other officers and senior enlisted noncommissioned officers as he deems necessary.

It also (1) eliminates certain provisions about ranks of the staff and ex officio members from the Governor's Foot Guards and Horse Guards and (2) permits the adjutant general, in addition to the governor, to appoint honorary staff to the National Guard (PA 26-35, §11, effective January 1, 2027).

Transportation

Hispanic American Veterans of Connecticut Account Distribution

A new law changes, from quarterly to annually, the Office of Policy and Management's requirement to distribute funds to the Hispanic-American Veterans of Connecticut account. The account is a separate, nonlapsing General Fund account created to receive fees other than the money designated for the Department of Motor Vehicles' (DMV) cost to produce commemorative license plates in recognition of "The Borinqueneers" (the primarily Puerto Rican members of the 65th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army who served with distinction) (PA 26-68, § 64, effective July 1, 2026).

Veteran Bus Passes and Fares

New legislation requires DVA to purchase passes for CTtransit buses and distribute them without cost to Connecticut veterans. It relatedly (1) requires veterans to apply to DVA for the bus passes and (2) allows DVA to develop guidelines and criteria needed to distribute the passes, including setting the application process. Starting by July 1, 2027, DVA must annually report to the Veterans' and Military Affairs and Transportation committees on the number of passes it purchased and distributed during the prior year and the impact on veterans.

A new law also requires the Department of Transportation to spend $2.5 million of its FY 27 bus operations appropriation from the Special Transportation Fund to, among other things, provide discounted CTtransit bus fares for veterans (PA 26-21, § 8, effective July 1, 2026 & PA 26-76, § 65, effective upon passage).

Veteran Motor Vehicle Related Grace Period Extension and Fee Waiver

This session, the legislature increased the grace period for certain armed forces members, from 60 to 90 days from release from qualifying service, for certain motor vehicle-related renewals or testing (driver's licenses, car registrations, and emissions testing). This applies to members of any state's armed forces or U.S. reserve called to active service in the armed forces of any state.

The new law also requires the DMV to waive the fee for an original driver's license or identity card for DVA-verified veterans (previously, the DMV could waive the identity card fee for a blind veteran) (PA 26-35, §§ 7-9, effective October 1, 2026).

Veteran Recognition and Memorialization

Maintaining Wartime Veterans' Graves

Under existing law, municipalities are responsible for the cost of caring for and maintaining the graves of anyone who served in a time of war if the services are not paid for by private individuals or cemetery trustees. A new law transfers $100,000 for FY 27 from the General Fund to the existing neglected cemetery account and allows account funds to be used as grants to municipalities to care for and maintain these graves.

The new law also requires the DVA commissioner to make a form and put it on the department website where people may submit information about these unmaintained graves. The commissioner must notify the municipality's chief executive authority within seven days of receiving any submission (PA 26-111, effective July 1, 2026).

Military Suicide Remembrance and Awareness Day

A new law designates September 30 as Military Suicide Remembrance and Awareness Day, to honor veterans and military members lost to suicide and raise awareness of mental health issues among veterans and military members and the available resources and supports for them (PA 26-19, § 3, effective upon passage).

Unclaimed Military Medals

By law, military medals held by banking or financial organizations that are presumed abandoned must be given to the DVA commissioner as outlined by the treasurer's procedures. Under a new law, if more than one person has a claim for a medal, and the treasurer has made reasonable efforts to identify and contact all known potential rightful owners, the treasurer is allowed to give the medal to the claimant he deems appropriate (PA 26-94, § 6, effective July 1, 2026).

War Memorial Grant Program

A new law requires DECD to administer a grant program for municipalities and nonprofits providing human or social services for capital expenditure projects to place or maintain war or veterans' memorials or monuments. The law also authorizes $2 million in general obligation (GO) bonds for the program (PA 26-68, §§ 297 & 342).

Miscellaneous

Governor's Guard Accounts

The budget act (PA 26-68, §§ 486 & 487) established two subaccounts within the Governor's Guards horse account. A new law eliminates these subaccounts and instead requires money in the Governor's Guards horse account to be allocated and accounted for by each unit (First and Second Company). Funds generated by, or attributed to, a specific unit must be credited to that unit and spent only on expenses incurred for maintenance costs of the horses related to operating that unit (PA 26-76, § 63, effective upon passage).

Pretrial Diversionary Program

State law provides a supervised diversionary program for people with psychiatric disabilities and veterans with mental health conditions who are accused of nonserious crimes. To participate in the program, a prospective participant must have his or her mental health condition assessed and a provision in the annual court operations act requires that if the applicant lives outside of Connecticut, he or she must return to the state for the assessment. A new law also requires, for supervision and monitoring purposes, program participants to be classified based on the level of risk they pose to the community (PA 26-92, § 12, effective October 1, 2026).

Qualified Veterans' Charitable Organizations List

Existing law requires the DVA commissioner to publish a list of veterans' charitable organizations. This session, the legislature eliminated a requirement that organizations remain on the list for three years and then reapply for continued inclusion on the list. The new law allows the commissioner to remove organizations from this list with good cause. It also changes the required documentation for organizations by requiring their most recently filed IRS tax form for tax exempt organizations (Form 990) (PA 26-35, § 2, effective October 1, 2026).

Warnings on Authorized Representatives for Veterans Claims

A new law requires the DVA commissioner, starting July 1, 2026, to conspicuously post on the department website a plain language warning about:

1. people or entities acting as claims agents or attorneys without USDVA recognition (offering these services without this recognition is federally prohibited) and

2. sharing their USDVA account login or bank account login information with anyone (for example, usernames or passwords).

The law also requires the commissioner to post a link to a USDVA online tool that allows someone to (1) report individuals who offer services without federal recognition; (2) search for recognized claims agents, attorneys, or entities; and (3) find final disciplinary decisions for unrecognized people or entities (PA 26-35, § 1, effective July 1, 2026).

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