

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 [2008-R-0170](#).

Summary

Veterans who served only in peacetime are eligible for fewer benefits than those who served during wartime, as defined in law. At a minimum, honorably discharged peacetime veterans are eligible for (1) admission to the state Veterans Healthcare Center; (2) burial in one of the state veterans' cemeteries; and (3) other miscellaneous benefits, including employment, motor vehicle license and registration, and housing benefits. 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 are eligible for state benefits, regardless of their discharge classification, if they were or would have been denied such benefits solely based on their sexual orientation under any current or former federal policy prohibiting homosexual personnel from serving in the military ([CGS § 27-102q](#)).

A veteran's surviving spouse or dependent children are eligible for some benefits to which the deceased veteran was eligible.

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 the Department of Defense document, DD 214, which must indicate 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 Veterans Affairs Department 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 Veterans Department Office of Advocacy and Assistance at (860) 616-3683 and visit the Veterans Department website: www.ct.gov/ctva/.

Benefits Not Requiring War 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. Those with no adequate means of support are also eligible for admission to certain hospitals at state expense unless other funds or means of payment are available ([CGS § 27-108](#)). The veterans affairs commissioner has sole power to determine who is admitted to these facilities.

Burial in the State Veterans’ Cemetery

Any veteran may ask the veterans affairs commissioner to be buried in the state veterans’ cemetery. The veterans and one spouse are eligible for such burial ([CGS § 27-122b](#)).

Certain Veterans Benefits Not Included in Assistance Program Eligibility Calculations

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](#)).

Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) Fee and License Waivers

Motor Vehicle Fees and Plates. A veteran who applies within two years of receiving an honorable discharge is exempt from paying motor vehicle operator's license and registration fees for one licensing period ([CGS § 14-50\(c\)](#)).

A veteran may request waiver of the motor vehicle license examination if he or she (1) previously held a military operator's license and (2) applies within two years of separation from service ([CGS § 14-36\(e\)](#)).

State law allows any type of motor vehicle owned or leased by a veteran or his or her surviving spouse for one year or longer to qualify for special veterans' license plates ([CGS § 14-20b](#)).

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 ([PA 17-148](#), effective July 1, 2017).

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. To get this, the person must submit a request to have this status included to the Department of Veterans Affairs, which must verify the status to the DMV commissioner ([CGS § 14-36h\(e\)](#)).

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](#), effective October 1, 2017).

Windshield Handicap Placard. Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (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](#), effective June 27, 2017).

Economic Benefits

Tax Incentives. This program gives 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 Preference. The law provides certain veteran-owned businesses with up to a 15% price preference for certain Department of Administrative Services 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\(c\)](#)).

Educational Credit for Military Experience

The law requires public higher education institutions to award college credit for military occupational specialty training to veterans enrolled at the institutions ([CGS § 10a-149d](#)). 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. Under the act, a "veteran" is anyone discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable from active service in the armed forces.

Employment

Reinstatement. 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 appointing authority must certify in writing that the employee is able and qualified to perform the work required and that work is available ([CGS §§ 5-255](#) and [7-462](#)).

Unemployed Armed Forces Member Subsidized Training and Employment Program. This program provides grants to subsidize a business's costs of hiring honorably discharged unemployed veterans during their first 180 days on the job. These veterans must have served at least 90 days or have been separated from service earlier due to a service-connected disability ([CGS § 31-3uu](#)).

Housing

The entity operating any Department of Economic Development-funded low- or moderate-income rental housing project must give preference to veterans competing with other applicants when housing needs are substantially equal ([CGS § 8-75](#)).

Licensing and Registration Exemptions

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 from active service in the U.S. Armed Forces ([CGS § 27-102a](#)).

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](#)).

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](#)).

World War II and Korean War Opticians. DPH may suspend any provision of law governing qualifications for opticians with respect to Korean War veterans if the department deems the provision unjust and the suspension does not jeopardize public health and safety ([CGS § 20-147](#)).

Licensure and Certification 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. Under the law, a "veteran" is anyone discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable from active service in the armed forces.

For qualified veterans, the law requires the:

1. Police Officer Standards and Training Council to certify them as police officers ([CGS § 7-294d](#));
2. DMV to waive certain examinations or tests for motor vehicle operator's licenses ([CGS § 14-36\(e\)](#));
3. Department of Labor to submit a recommendation for review that waives the apprentice requirement to the appropriate licensing board and Department of Consumer Protection to allow the applicants to sit for licensing exams (CGS §§ [20-333](#) & [31-22u](#));
4. Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to waive security guard training ([CGS § 29-161q](#)); and
5. DPH to certify them as emergency medical technicians ([CGS § 19a-179](#)).

Pretrial Diversionary Programs

Pretrial diversionary programs allow criminal defendants to avoid prosecution and incarceration 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](#)).

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](#) and [54-56l](#)).

Probate Records

When the 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](#)).

Property Tax Exemptions

State Mandated. State law allows property tax exemptions for veterans with (1) a VA-rated disability of at least 10% ([CGS § 12-81\(20\)](#)) and (2) severe service-related disabilities ([CGS § 12-81\(21\)](#)). Veterans with a VA disability rating of 10% or more are eligible for exemptions ranging from \$1,500 to \$3,000. Veterans with a severe, service-related disability rating are eligible for an exemption of either \$5,000 or \$10,000 depending on the nature of the disability. Veterans in the latter category may claim both exemptions, provided they meet the criteria for the first exemption.

[CGS § 12-81g](#) requires municipalities to give veterans who get the disabled or severe service-related disabled exemption an additional income-based exemption, which is the same threshold as a wartime exemption. For a veteran whose income falls (1) below a certain statutorily determined limit, the additional exemption is equal to twice the exemption ([CGS § 12-81g\(a\)](#)) and (2) above the limit, the additional exemption is 50% of the exemption ([CGS § 12-81g\(d\)](#)). For 100% disabled veterans, the law statutorily sets the limit at \$18,000 for unmarried veterans and \$21,000 for married veterans, while others with disabilities have the same limit as the wartime veterans exemption (see above). For a more detailed discussion of property tax exemptions, see OLR Report [2017-R-0170](#).

Additional Local Option for 100% Disabled Veterans. The law allows a municipality, with its legislative body's approval, to provide 100% disabled veterans, under certain income thresholds, with three times instead of two times the amount provided under the additional income-based exemption (see above). [PA 17-189](#), effective October 1, 2017 increases the income eligibility thresholds for this optional municipal property tax exemption from (1) \$18,000 to \$21,000, if single and (2) \$21,000 to \$24,000, if married.

Additional Local Option for Disabled Veterans. Existing law allows a municipality to provide an additional property tax exemption to disabled veterans (but not to severely disabled veterans) with the same qualifying income levels as the additional optional municipal wartime veteran exemption (see above). If the municipality chooses to provide the exemption for disabled veterans, the exemption must be at least \$3,000 and applied to the assessed value of the veteran's property ([CGS § 12-81f\(b\)](#)).

Optional Municipal Property Tax Exemption for Certain Non-disabled Veterans. The 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](#), effective October 1, 2017).

Ribbon and Medal Eligibility

The law requires the veterans affairs commissioner to award the ribbon and medal to each honorably discharged veteran or former reservist (1) who was a Connecticut resident when called to active duty or served in the reserves in a time of war or (2) living in Connecticut when the award is made ([CGS § 27-73e](#), as amended by [PA 17-83](#), effective October 1, 2017).

State Identification Card Fee Waiver for Blind Veterans

The law authorizes the DMV commissioner to waive the \$22.50 non-driver identification card fee for blind veterans ([CGS § 1-1h](#)).

Security Deposit Program

By law, the Department of Housing, through its Security Deposit Guarantee Program and within available appropriations, must 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 § 17b-802](#)).

Tax Retirement Income Exemption

State law fully exempts federally taxable military retirement pay from the state income tax ([CGS § 12-701\(20\)\(B\)\(xvii\)](#)).

Utility Termination

The law limits when utility companies can terminate residential service for non-payment in hardship cases, which includes a veteran whose sole source of financial support is his or her veterans' benefit ([CGS § 16-262c\(b\)\(3\)](#)). For more information on utility termination, see OLR Report [2012-R-0170](#).

Veterans' Benefits Exempt from Post-judgment Debt Collection

By law, veterans' benefits cannot be collected as part of postjudgment proceedings from people who have secured a court order (e.g., installment payment order or wage execution) ([CGS § 52-352b](#)).

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