



National Guard Association of Connecticut
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www.ngact.org

Feb. 19, 2013

Testimony in Favor of Proposed Bills 383, 5133, 5134, 5556, 5753, 5188, 5386, 5387, 649 and 6167

Good Afternoon Sen. Leone, Representative Hennessy and members of the Committee on Veterans Affairs. I am Debbi Newton, Legislative Chair of the National Guard Association of Connecticut (NGACT). I have served in that position for 10 years and have been a member of the Connecticut National Guard for 33 years.

I am here today to speak in favor of several bills currently before you.

Proposed Bills 383, 5133, 5134, 5556 and 5753 all are designed to give Veterans and those who serve additional, or in some cases new, tax exemptions. Whether a member of the Armed Services has served overseas during time of war, served stateside during time of war or has served, they have all served their country, and in the case of National Guardsmen, their state. They have done it proudly and they have volunteered to do it. They constitute less than 1% of our country's population. That's right. Less than 1% of our country's population volunteers to serve in the US military. Allowing municipalities to offer these property tax exemptions and to expand the eligible group, is one way to say thank you to the few who do choose to serve.

Proposed Bill 5188, An Act Providing Free Admissions to and Parking at State Parks for Connecticut Veterans has been before you many times. In fact, I have heard some of you say you thought this act had, in fact, already been passed. It has not. Cost of entrance to the State Parks and Forests is minimal. Parking fees range from \$6 on weekdays to \$13 on weekends or holidays. Many parks do charge a fee at all during the week, and many only charge a fee from May through October. We understand that the financial situation in the state is not the best it has been, so let's look at it from the dollars and cents side of things. The average weekend cost of admission is \$9.00 per carload (or family. Let's say 200 Veteran families take advantage of the free admission per month. That is \$1,800 a month. Over the 6 month period that most parks charge a fee, the total cost would be \$10,800. But let us also remember that many of these parks have food for sale or souvenir shops which families would use...families that might not otherwise even go to these parks. In fact, I see this having a positive effect on potential revenue. If you go to a movie or restaurant and enjoy it, you tend to tell other people who then go based on what you've told them. The same would hold true with the parks and forests. If I go to a park I have not been to before because I can get in free and I tell my three brothers and they take their families someplace they might not have before, there are now three families paying admission. The National Park Service also offers a free annual pass to all National Parks to members of the US Military and their dependents. I have attached the State Park Fee Schedule as well as the National Parks and Federal

Lands Pass Series information. Allowing Service Members and their families the ability to enjoy our state parks and forests without charging them is a very nice way of saying thank you for their service and of exposing people to our wonderful resources.

Proposed Bill 5386, An Act Concerning Housing Assistance for Veterans is, unfortunately, an act that is much needed right now. The sad fact is that many Veterans have not been able to find jobs, or jobs that pay enough to keep a roof over their heads. Homelessness among Veterans is very high. Giving Veterans Preference to those in need of housing assistance is something we do need to do.

Proposed Bills 649, An Act Concerning Reduced fares on the Metro North Railroad and 6167, An Act Concerning Fares for Disabled Veterans Who Use Mass Transportation also fall under the unfortunate need category. It is my understanding that many free Veteran Transportation Programs have become victims of budget cuts and because of this, many of our Veterans are unable to make their medical appointments, job interviews or even jobs. Allowing for reduced or even free mass transportation would go a long way to easing this situation for many of our Veterans. I would not necessarily help those who live in rural areas of Connecticut where mass transportation is not available, but it would assist many.

Finally, **Proposed Bill 5387, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study the Use of Military Occupational Specialty Training as a Substitute for State Licensing Requirements** carries through on a law the Connecticut General Assembly passed two years ago allowing for military training to be used as a substitute. We worked to get that law passed as a way to qualify more of our Soldiers and Airmen for valuable jobs in the state of Connecticut and passage of that law was a great step in the right direction. However, not having a task force or other such group established to look at the military training and the state civilian requirements for licensure, in effect, negate the work we all did to pass that law and keeps many from being gainfully employed in many fields right here in Connecticut today. We urge passage of this bill.

NGACT fully understands the fiscal situation the state is facing, but we ask you to remember when casting your votes on these bills, that they directly affect only 1% of our population...those who chose to serve their country and, in some cases their state, but will also have an indirect affect on their families. These bills are all effective ways of saying thank you to these men and women, and helping them transition into civilian life as productive citizens.

I thank you for your time and for what you do for the Veterans, Military Members and Retirees of Connecticut and their families and congratulate you on your status as a Standing Committee. This concludes my testimony and I am available for any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Debbi Newton
Legislative Chair NGACT
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Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

State Park Fees	
A - D	E - H
I - P	Q - Z
State Forest Fees	

State Parks and Forests Fees

Some facilities do not charge a parking fee and others charge only for weekends and holidays. **Facilities not listed here do not charge for parking or camping.**

Dinosaur, Fort Trumbull and Gillette Castle State Parks offer free parking. There is a per person admission fee to visit the Dinosaur Exhibit Center, the Fort Trumbull Visitor Center or for touring the Castle.

Special Passes
The Charter Oak Pass provides access to the State Parks and Forests and is available free to Connecticut residents, 65 years of age or older.
The Heritage Passport provides convenient access to three unique parks: Dinosaur, Fort Trumbull and Gillette Castle.
Season passes allow unlimited vehicle access to any state park or recreation area that has a parking fee.

KEY:	R = CT Registered Vehicle Fee	NC = No Charge
	NR = Out-of-State Registered Vehicle Fee	n/a = Not Applicable

State Park Fees			
A - D			
Park Name	Weekends/ Holidays	Weekdays	Camping
Bigelow Hollow State Park	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR \$5 R after 4 pm \$6 NR after 4 pm	NC	n/a
Black Rock State Park and Campground	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	\$ 6.00 R \$ 10.00 NR	\$17/night CT residents \$27/night/non-CT residents Plus Reservation Processing Fee
Burr Pond State Park	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	\$ 6.00 R \$ 10.00 NR	n/a
Chatfield Hollow State Park	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	\$ 6.00 R \$ 10.00 NR	n/a
Day Pond State Park	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	NC	n/a
Devil's Hopyard State Park and Campground	NC	NC	\$14/night CT residents \$24/night non-CT residents Plus Reservation Processing Fee

Dinosaur State Park	Age 13 and Over: \$6 Ages 6-12: \$2 Ages 5 and under: Free Heritage Passport Information	n/a
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E - H			
Park Name	Weekends/ Holidays	Weekdays	Camping
Fort Trumbull State Park	Visitor Center and Fort Tours Only: Age 13 and Over: \$6 Ages 6-12: \$2 Ages 5 and under: Free Heritage Passport Information		n/a
Gay City State Park	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	NC	n/a
Gillette Castle State Park	Age 13 and Over: \$6 Ages 6-12: \$2 Ages 5 and under: Free Heritage Passport Information		n/a
Hammonasset State Park and Campground	\$ 13.00 R \$ 22.00 NR \$6 R after 4 pm \$7 NR after 4 pm	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR \$6 R after 4 pm \$7 NR after 4 pm	\$20/night CT residents \$30/night non-CT residents \$70/night rustic cabin Plus Reservation Processing Fee
Harkness Memorial State Park	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR \$6 R after 4 pm \$7 NR after 4 pm	\$ 6.00 R \$ 10.00 NR \$6 R after 4 pm \$7 NR after 4 pm	n/a
Hopeville Pond State Park and Campground	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	NC	\$17/night CT residents \$27/night for non-CT residents Plus Reservation Processing Fee
Housatonic Meadows State Park and Campground	NC	NC	\$17/night CT residents \$27/night non-CT residents Plus Reservation Processing Fee

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I - P			
Park Name	Weekends/ Holidays	Weekdays	Camping
Indian Well State Park	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR \$5 R after 4 pm \$6 NR after 4 pm	\$ 6.00 R \$ 10.00 NR \$5 R after 4 pm \$6 NR after 4 pm	n/a

Kent Falls State Park	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	NC	n/a
Kettletown State Park and Campground	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	NC	\$17/night CT residents \$27/night non-CT residents Plus Reservation Processing Fee
Lake Waramaug State Park and Campground	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	NC	\$17/night CT residents \$27/night non-CT residents Plus Reservation Processing Fee
Macedonia Brook State Park and Campground	NC	NC	\$14/night CT residents \$24/night non-CT residents Plus Reservation Processing Fee
Mashamoquet Brook State Park and Campground	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	NC	\$14/night CT residents \$24/night non-CT residents Plus Reservation Processing Fee
Mount Tom State Park	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	\$ 6.00 R \$ 10.00 NR	n/a

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Q - Z			
Park Name	Weekends/ Holidays	Weekdays	Camping
Quaddick State Park	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	NC	n/a
Rocky Neck State Park and Campground	\$ 13.00 R \$ 22.00 NR \$6 R after 4 pm \$7 NR after 4 pm	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR \$6 R after 4 pm \$7 NR after 4 pm	\$20/night CT residents \$30/night non-CT residents Plus Reservation Processing Fee
Salt Rock State Park Campground	NC	NC	\$33/\$37/\$40/night CT residents \$45/\$48/\$52/night non-CT residents Plus Reservation Processing Fee
Selden Neck State Park	NC	NC	\$5 per person per night (Primitive riverside camping)
Sherwood Island State Park	\$ 13.00 R \$ 22.00 NR \$6 R after 4 pm \$7 NR after 4 pm	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR \$6 R after 4 pm \$7 NR after 4 pm	n/a
Sleeping Giant State Park	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR \$5 R after 4 pm \$6 NR after 4 pm	NC	n/a

Squantz Pond State Park	\$ 13.00 R \$ 22.00 NR \$6 R after 4 pm \$7 NR after 4 pm	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR \$6 R after 4 pm \$7 NR after 4 pm	n/a
Stratton Brook State Park	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	NC	n/a
Wadsworth Falls State Park	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	\$ 6.00 R \$ 10.00 NR	n/a
Wharton Brook State Park	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR \$5 R after 4 pm \$6 NR after 4 pm	NC	n/a

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State Forest Fees			
Park Name	Weekends/ Holidays	Weekdays	Camping
American Legion State Forest and Campground	NC	NC	\$17/night CT residents \$27/night non-CT residents Plus Reservation Processing Fee
Cockaponset State Forest-Pataconk Recreation Area	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	NC	n/a
Pachaug State Forest - Mt. Misery Campground	NC	NC	\$14/night CT residents \$24/night non-CT residents
Pachaug State Forest - Green Falls Campground	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	NC	\$17/night CT residents \$27/night non-CT residents
People's State Forest and Campground	\$ 9.00 R \$ 15.00 NR	NC	\$17/night CT residents \$27/night non-CT residents Plus Reservation Processing Fee

If you have questions or need additional information on Connecticut State Parks and Forests, please contact the State Parks Division by e-mail at deep.stateparks@ct.gov or by phone at 860-424-3200.

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Content last updated June 22, 2011

National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior

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America the Beautiful

The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass Series

A pass is your ticket to more than 2,000 federal recreation sites. Each pass covers entrance fees at national parks and national wildlife refuges as well as standard amenity fees at national forests and grasslands, and at lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Reclamation. A pass covers entrance and standard amenity fees for a driver and all passengers in a personal vehicle at per vehicle fee areas (or up to four adults at sites that charge per person). Children age 15 or under are admitted free.

The following passes make up the series:

Annual Pass

\$80 annual pass

Available to everyone.

Can be obtained in person at a federal recreation site, or by calling 1-888-ASK USGS (1-888-275-8747), Ext. 1, or online. *Buy Now*

Non-transferable.

[Frequently Asked Questions about the Interagency Annual Pass](#)



Free Annual Pass for U.S. Military

Available to U.S. military members and dependents in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard and also, Reserve and National Guard members.

Must be obtained in person at a Federal recreation site by showing a Common Access Card (CAC) or Military ID (Form 1173).

[Frequently Asked Questions about the Annual Pass for U.S. Military](#)



Senior Pass

\$10 Lifetime pass

For U.S. citizens or permanent residents age 62 or over.

May be obtained in person at a federal recreation site or through the mail using this application form. The cost of obtaining a Senior Pass through the mail is twenty dollars (\$20). Ten (\$10) for the Senior Pass and ten (\$10) for processing the application. Applicants must provide documentation of age and residency or citizenship.

May provide a 50 percent discount on some amenity fees charged for facilities and services such as camping, swimming, boat launch, and specialized interpretive services.

Generally does NOT cover or reduce special recreation permit fees or fees charged by concessioners.

[Frequently Asked Questions about the Interagency Senior Pass](#)



Access Pass

Free

For U.S. citizens or permanent residents with permanent disabilities.

May be obtained in person at a federal recreation site or through the mail using this application form. The cost of obtaining an Access Pass through the mail is ten dollars (\$10) for processing the application (the Pass is free). Applicants must provide documentation of permanent disability and residency or citizenship.

May provide a 50 percent discount on some amenity fees charged for facilities and services such as camping, swimming, boat launching, and specialized interpretive services.



Generally does NOT cover or reduce special recreation permit fees or fees charged by concessioners.
Frequently Asked Questions about the Interagency Access Pass

Volunteer Pass

Free

For volunteers with 250 service hours with federal agencies that participate in the Interagency Pass Program.

Contact your local federal recreation site for more information about volunteer opportunities or visit Volunteer.gov.



NOTE: Golden Access and Golden Age Passports are no longer sold. However, these passes will continue to be honored according to the provisions of the pass.

The five agencies that participate in the Interagency Pass Program are:

- National Park Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation

See the site locations that issue these passes.

Pass Program Definitions



nps.gov

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Overview of the Annual Pass for US Military and Their Dependents

[Pass Use](#)

- Free
- Available to US military members and their dependents in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard, as well as most members of the US Reserves and National Guard. Proper military ID is required (CAC Card or DoD Form 1173).
- Obtained in person at Federal recreation sites that charge entrance or standard amenity fees.
- Covers entrance to Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service sites that charge Entrance Fees, and Standard Amenity Fees at Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Reclamation sites.
- Admits the pass owners and any accompanying passengers in a private non-commercial vehicle at per vehicle fee areas, or the pass owner and up to additional 3 adults at sites that charge per person.
- Non-transferable

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Pass Use

1. What are the benefits for the Annual Pass - Military?

Free admission at sites that charge entrance or standard amenity fees for one full year from the month obtained (through last day of that month).

- Allows pass owner and accompanying passengers in a single, private, non-commercial vehicle to enter federally operated recreation sites across the country.
- Covers the pass owner and three (3) accompanying adults age 16 and older at sites where per person entrance fees are charged. No entry fee charged for children 15 and under.

The pass does not cover or provide a discount on expanded amenity fees such as camping, boat launch or interpretive fees.

2. Who qualifies for the Annual Pass - Military?

US military members and their dependents in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard, as well as most members of the US Reserves and National Guard. Proper military ID is required (CAC Card or DoD Form 1173).

3. Can dependents of National Guard and the Reserve members acquire a pass?

Dependents of deployed military members with DoD Form 1173 may obtain a pass. If the military member has not been deployed, the dependent may be the second signer on their sponsor's pass.

4. Are there any benefits for veterans?

There is not a pass specifically for veterans; however, many veterans qualify for one of the other discount passes offered as part of our pass program.

If you are 62 or older you qualify for a [Senior Pass](#). You can buy a Senior Pass in person from a participating Federal recreation site or office or by mail.

If you have a permanent disability you may qualify for an [Access Pass](#). This is a free lifetime pass that you may obtain in person from a participating Federal recreation site or office or by mail.

5. Where can I use my pass?

Please contact a site directly if you have a question about pass acceptance and fees. The Forest Service, the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Reclamation honor the Annual Pass at sites where [Entrance or Standard Amenity Fee\(s\)](#) are charged.

- Bureau of Land Management <http://www.blm.gov>
- Bureau of Reclamation <http://www.usbr.gov>
- Fish and Wildlife Service <http://www.fws.gov>
- USDA Forest Service <http://www.fs.fed.us>
- National Park Service <http://www.nps.gov>

US Army Corps of Engineers will not be issuing this pass, however they may honor it for free access at some sites. For more information contact your local [US Army Corps of Engineers](#).

6. How do I get my pass?

You can receive your pass by presenting your US military ID at most Federal lands that charge an entrance fee. [A list of sites that sell pass is available](#). Sites that issue the Annual Pass will generally also issue the free US military version as well. Please contact the Federal Land you will be visiting in advance to ensure that they have the pass available.

7. Can I loan my pass to a friend to use?

No. The pass owner must be present when the pass is used and it is not transferrable.

8. Who can sign the Pass?

One pass covers everyone in a non-commercial vehicle at sites that charge "per vehicle."

The Pass has two signature lines. The pass is not valid until it is signed, so the US military member or dependent must sign the pass with first and last name when the pass is issued. The second signature line is optional, but may only be signed by another US military member or dependent. One of the signers must be present when using the pass.

9. If I have more than four people in my car, how many passes do I need?

One pass covers the vehicle at sites that charge "per vehicle." At "per person" sites, the applicable fee will be charged for each additional person.

10. My family is traveling in two vehicles; will one pass let all of us into the site?

No. Only the vehicle with the pass owner is covered. The second vehicle is subject to an entrance fee, or must have (or purchase) a second pass.

11. What about motorcycle drivers who obtain this Pass?

The pass permits entrance for the two individuals that sign the Pass on two separate motorcycles. Identification must match the signatures of the pass owner(s). If only one pass owner is present the pass will admit only one motorcycle.

12. I ride my bicycle into a Federal recreation site that charges an entry fee. Can my friends come in with me with my pass?

Yes, generally the pass owner and up to 3 other bicyclists can enter for free. Be sure to check with the recreation site you plan to visit before leaving because there can be differences in the way a pass is honored at different sites.

13. What is NOT covered by the Pass?

The Pass does not cover Expanded Amenity fees such as camping, boat launching, parking, special tours, special permits or ferries.

Also, some facilities and activities on Federal recreation lands (including those mentioned above) are managed by private concessionaires. The concessionaires charge for their services as any private company does and the Pass is not valid for their services.

14. Can lost or stolen passes be replaced? Is there a way that the serial numbers can be tracked?

No. Due to privacy and logistical considerations, passes cannot be replaced if lost or stolen; a new Pass may be obtained.

15. How do I show my pass at a site that doesn't have an entrance station?

At Federal recreation sites that don't have entrance stations you need to display your pass or show proof of pass ownership to compliance officers via one of the two following methods:

HANGTAGS

A pass can either be displayed on your rearview mirror using a free hangtag or on your dashboard with the signature side showing. Remember, the hangtag itself is only a way to display your Pass, and is not valid for entry unless it holds a valid Pass.

DECALS

If you own an open-topped vehicle (jeep, motorcycle, etc.) you may obtain a free decal to attach to your vehicle that will serve as proof of payment at sites that don't have a staffed entrance station.

16. If I forget to bring my pass to a site and pay the entrance or use fee, can I mail in the receipt and a photocopy of my pass and get a refund?

Refunds are not issued.

17. If I purchased an \$80 Annual Pass earlier in the year can I return the pass and get a refund?

Refunds will not be issued for passes purchased before the free passes became available.

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[U.S. Department of the Interior | U.S. Geological Survey](#)

URL: <http://store.usgs.gov/pass/index.html>

Page Contact Information: usgsstore@usgs.gov

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