
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 6561 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING VETERANS.

SUMMARY:

This bill concerns awards for members of the state military and establishes a civilian medal of honor.

The bill establishes a medal of achievement to be awarded, within available appropriations, by the adjutant general to any Connecticut National Guard or Air National Guard member. It specifies (1) eligibility criteria, (2) a selection method, and (3) how the award must be displayed.

It also authorizes the emergency services and public protection commissioner, within available appropriations, to award the civilian medal of honor, directly or posthumously, to any Connecticut citizen. The bill specifies (1) eligibility criteria and (2) a selection method.

The bill also makes changes to provisions authorizing the adjutant general to award emergency service and outstanding unit awards. It requires recipients of these awards to wear a silver oak leaf cluster in lieu of five bronze oak leaf clusters, rather than allow them to wear a silver cluster in lieu of three bronze clusters, as is current law.

Lastly, the bill makes minor and technical changes.

*House Amendment "A" replaces the underlying bill, which required the Department of Veterans' Affairs to study and report on hardships that Connecticut veterans are facing.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except provisions regarding the civilian medal of honor are effective October 1, 2013.

§ 1 — MEDAL OF ACHIEVEMENT

Eligibility

Under the bill, any Connecticut National Guard and Air National Guard member may be awarded a medal of achievement for outstanding achievement or meritorious service during state military service, including service ordered by the governor without federally authorized pay and emergency service in other states performed pursuant to the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

Selection

The bill requires the adjutant general to appoint and work with two officers of field grade (i.e., the rank of Major in the Army, Air Force, and Marines) or above, to select medal recipients from recommendations made through military channels.

Display

Medal recipients receive bronze oak leaf clusters for subsequent awards. They must wear a silver cluster in place of five bronze clusters.

§ 4 — MEDAL OF HONOR

Eligibility

Under the bill, any Connecticut citizen, living or deceased, may be awarded a civilian medal of honor in recognition of (1) a valorous and heroic deed performed in saving a life or (2) injury or death or threat of such incurred (a) in the service of the state or the person's community or (b) on behalf of the health, welfare, or safety of other people.

Selection

The bill allows any member of the public to submit recommendations for the award to the commissioner, in the form and manner he prescribes. The commissioner must forward recommendations to a selection board, which must review them and select nominees, giving due consideration to the selection criteria. The commissioner must review the board's nominations and award the medal to any such nominee he deems deserving.

Selection Board. The nine-member selection board consists of (1)

one member each appointed by the six top legislative leaders and the governor and (2) two members appointed by the commissioner. The governor's appointee serves as the chairperson and must call at least one meeting per year.

BACKGROUND

Medals, Awards, and Ribbons

The state awards the following decorations and awards to state armed forces members, including National Guard members:

1. Long service medal,
2. Medal of valor,
3. Medal of merit,
4. Emergency service awards,
5. Outstanding unit awards,
6. Selected reserve force awards,
7. Service ribbons for military operations after September 11, 2001,
8. Ribbons and medals for veterans who served in time of war, and
9. Achievement ribbons

Related Bills

HB 6597 (File 375), reported favorably by the Public Safety and Security and Appropriations committees, establishes the civilian medal of honor.

HB 6455 (File 135), reported favorably by the Veterans' Affairs Committee, establishes a medal of achievement for Connecticut military.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Veterans' Affairs Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 13 Nay 0 (03/07/2013)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 52 Nay 0 (04/22/2013)