



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 108

January Session, 2015

House Bill No. 6385

House of Representatives, March 19, 2015

The Committee on Veterans' Affairs reported through REP. HENNESSY of the 127th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the bill ought to pass.

AN ACT PROVIDING FREE ADMISSION TO AND PARKING AT STATE PARKS FOR CONNECTICUT VETERANS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Subsection (d) of section 23-26 of the general statutes is
2 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective*
3 *October 1, 2015*):

4 (d) The commissioner shall issue to any resident of the state who is
5 sixty-five years of age or older and to any resident of this state who is a
6 [disabled] veteran, as defined in subsection (a) of section [14-254, or
7 under federal law] 27-103, without fee, upon application of such
8 resident, a nontransferable lifetime pass which shall permit free
9 parking, admission and boat access parking for use at any state park,
10 forest or state recreational facility, provided the commissioner shall not
11 be required to issue such a pass for use of any park, forest or facility
12 which is wholly managed by a private concessionaire and may require
13 payment of fees for special events.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>October 1, 2015</i>	23-26(d)

VA *Joint Favorable*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 16 \$	FY 17 \$
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	GF - Revenue Loss	Significant	Significant

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

This bill makes any veteran, who is a state resident, eligible for a free lifetime pass to state parks, forests, and recreational facilities. Currently, certain disabled veterans and residents age 65 or older are eligible for this lifetime pass.¹

In FY 13, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) collected \$3 million from the sale of resident passes² to state parks, forests and recreational areas. In FY 14, DEEP collected \$3.2 million.

It is estimated that there are 250,000³ veterans living in the state. Making this population eligible for a free lifetime pass is anticipated to result in a significant revenue loss.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to the number of passes obtained.

¹ Since the program begin in 1992 DEEP estimates that 100,000 free lifetime passes have been distributed. Not all of these passes are still active.

² This includes both season passes and daily passes.

³ Estimate from the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

OLR Bill Analysis**HB 6385*****AN ACT PROVIDING FREE ADMISSION TO AND PARKING AT STATE PARKS FOR CONNECTICUT VETERANS.*****SUMMARY:**

This bill makes any veteran living in the state, instead of just those veterans with a disability, eligible for a free Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) lifetime pass to state parks, forests, and recreational facilities. The bill covers free admission and parking, including boat access parking, at these locations. DEEP is not required to issue the pass for use at locations wholly managed by a private concessionaire, and such individuals may also be required to pay fees for special events. Under the bill, a veteran is eligible for the free pass if he or she was honorably discharged or released from active service in the U.S. Armed Forces or the reserve components, including the National Guard in Title 32 status (e.g., certain Homeland Security missions).

To be eligible for the free pass under current law, the veteran must be a disabled veteran as defined (1) in federal law or (2) under a state statute that requires the veteran to have served during wartime and have certain service-connected disabilities certified by the Veterans' Administration. Because the current law does not reference a specific federal statute, it is unclear whether the federal law also requires wartime service. The bill eliminates the reference to the federal law.

By law, state residents age 65 or older also receive the free pass benefit subject to the same exception for private concessionaires and fees for special events.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2015

COMMITTEE ACTION

Veterans' Affairs Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 14 Nay 0 (03/05/2015)