



## SOLDIERS, SAILORS AND MARINES FUND

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### ISSUE

Answer the following questions on the Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Fund (SSMF).

#### **1. When was the SSMF established?**

The SSMF was established in 1919 when the Connecticut legislature directed the state treasurer to buy up to \$2.5 million in war bonds to establish a trust fund. The interest from the trust fund is used to provide, among other things, temporary assistance in the form of food, clothing, medical care and pay for funeral expenses of needy Connecticut wartime veterans and certain family dependents.

#### **2. What entity administers the fund? Is the entity a state agency?**

Since 2014, the American Legion has been administering the fund. The American Legion is not a state agency.

#### **3. Who administered the fund in the past?**

[PA 13-247, §§ 121-122](#), transferred the SSMF's administration from a state agency of the same name to the American Legion, effective July 1, 2014.

#### **4. How is the SSMF funded? How much money is currently in the fund and how much was allocated?**

The state treasurer is the trustee of the fund. The State Treasurer's Office handles its investment and oversight duties for the SSMF in a manner similar to the way it handles the assets it invests for retirement plans and other trust funds ([CGS § 27-138](#)).

According to the State Treasurer's Office, there was \$71.8 million in the fund as of April 30, 2016. By law, the treasurer must annually disburse at least \$2 million to the American Legion to pay for veterans' benefits. The treasurer must make the disbursements from the fund's (1) interest earnings and (2) principal, if the interest earnings are not enough to cover the disbursements ([CGS § 27-138\(b\)](#)).



**5. What does state law require the American Legion to disclose?**

The American Legion must make certain disclosures and documents available to the public and have an annual audit conducted on the fund. It must make its (1) regulations, as well as its bylaws, available online and (2) aid applications available to each town clerk ([CGS § 27-138a](#)).

By law, the annual audit report must include (1) a detailed description of the American Legion's administrative and operating expenditures for administering the fund; (2) the names, titles, and compensation of the fund's administrative staff; and (3) expenditures by type and amount, by month, that also includes the assistance amount and the number of recipients. The American Legion must submit the report to the state auditors, the Office of Policy and Management, and the Appropriations and Veterans' Affairs committees ([CGS § 27-138e](#)).

**6. What is the appeals process for veterans denied benefits?**

State law allows applicants denied benefits to appeal to a three-person review board, comprised of three American Legion State Fund Commission members as specified by the American Legion's bylaws. Anyone aggrieved by the review board's decision may appeal to the Superior Court (CGS §§ 27-138b & 138c).

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