

Honor Guard at Veterans' Funerals

By: Duke Chen, Principal Analyst
February 8, 2017 | 2017-R-0036

Issue

Provide background information on what federal law requires for veterans' funerals and the states that provide additional benefits.

Summary

Under federal law, the Department of Defense is responsible for providing military funeral honors to eligible veterans when asked to do so. It requires an honor guard detail of at least two uniformed (currently serving) military persons (at least one from the veteran's parent service) and a bugler, if available ([10 U.S.C. § 1491](#)). The honor guard detail may be augmented with volunteers who are military veterans, including retirees; members of veterans' service organizations (e.g., the American Legion); or other approved organizations. There must also be the playing of Taps, folding of the U.S. flag, and presentation of the flag to the veteran's family.

In addition to the federal requirements, Connecticut along with at least 11 other states (Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Rhode Island, Wisconsin, and Wyoming) statutorily authorize honor guard details. In several of the states, but not Connecticut, the funding is authorized within available appropriations. All 50 states use federal funding to offset some of the costs of the honor guard detail.

State Funding

Connecticut

Connecticut law requires an honor guard detail of up to five members, plus one bugler. The honor guard detail may include members of the National Guard, naval militia, State Guard, organized militia, or, if such members are unavailable, members of a Connecticut veterans' organization.

Connecticut pays each member who serves as an honor guard at a veteran's funeral a flat rate of \$50 per day. The compensation is paid from state funds appropriated to the adjutant general and federal funds received for such purpose ([CGS § 27-76](#)).

Georgia

By law, the governor may direct National Guard members to serve on honor guard detail for veterans' funerals while on state active duty. The adjutant general must request reimbursement for the pay and allowances due to members of the honor guard detail. Compensation, which covers pay and allowances for active duty, is subject to available appropriations ([Ga. Code. Ann. § 38-2-12](#))

Illinois

The Illinois Military Funeral Honors Program allows a member of the National Guard to be ordered to funeral honors duty. It also allows the adjutant general to authorize another appropriate organization to provide these honors and, within available appropriations, to pay a \$100 stipend to the organization ([20 Ill. Comp. Stat. 1805/28.6](#)).

Indiana

Indiana law authorizes the establishment of a ceremonial unit to perform the honor guard detail. Members of the unit include members of the Indiana National Guard. Members participate in honor guard detail in a volunteer status. The law authorizes payment of actual expenses to members from donations made to the state armory ([Ind. Code § 10-16-5](#)).

Kentucky

Kentucky has two separate trust funds that provide money to offset the costs of veterans' burial honor guards: the Military Honor Guard Trust Fund and the Veteran's Service Organization (VSO) Burial Honor Guard Trust Fund. The funds contain state appropriations, gifts, grants, federal funds, and other public or private funds.

The Military Honor Guard Trust Fund is used to reimburse the costs, beyond federal reimbursements, incurred by the Military Affairs and Veterans' Affairs departments to run the Military Burial Honor Guard Program. The program involves only members of the Kentucky National Guard ([Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 36.392](#)).

The VSO Burial Honor Guard Trust Fund is used to support the costs incurred by VSOs in providing honor guards ([Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 40.362](#)).

Louisiana

Louisiana law authorizes the Reserve Officers Training Corps in the state university systems to provide an honor guard for military funerals. The honor guard must consist of a bugler and between seven and 10 people ([La. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 29:292](#)).

Maryland

Under Maryland law, the adjutant general may organize an honor guard from the National Guard if, among other things, one is not provided by the active armed forces or veterans' organizations. The adjutant general must set reasonable compensation for honor guard members based on available appropriations. The maximum compensation per member covers the expenses incurred in participating in the ceremony, plus the greater of either the daily pay rate as determined by state minimum wage law or the federal Department of Defense pay scale ([Md. Code Ann., Pub. Saf. § 13-215](#)).

Minnesota

Minnesota law requires the veterans commissioner to pay, within available appropriations and upon request of certain veterans organizations, up to \$50 for the unit to provide an honor guard detail at a veteran's funeral. If the organization provides a student, the local unit may pay the student some or all of the \$50 ([Minn. Stat. § 197.231](#)).

Missouri

Missouri's statute authorizes the adjutant general, subject to appropriations, to order the appropriate requested uniform honor detail at a veteran's funeral. If a recognized veterans' organization provides the service, it is compensated from the Missouri National Guard Trust Fund, within available appropriations. The law requires the adjutant general to determine the amount paid to such organizations ([Mo. Rev. Stat. § 41.958](#)).

Rhode Island

Rhode Island's statute requires the adjutant general to furnish a firing squad and, whenever possible, a bugler to play Taps live ([R.I. Gen. Laws § 30-25-1-2](#)). The law requires the legislature to annually appropriate an amount it deems necessary to carry out these duties ([R.I. Gen. Laws § 30-25-2](#)).

Wisconsin

By law, the Department of Veterans' Affairs administers a military funeral honors program. Under the program, honor guard details are provided by certain local units of member organizations and by members of the Wisconsin National Guard. The law authorizes reimbursement to local member organizations of the council for the costs of providing a military honors funeral. The maximum reimbursement for each funeral is \$50. In addition to this stipend, the law creates a tuition voucher for certain students of \$25 to someone who plays Taps on a bugle, trumpet, or cornet ([Wis. Stat. § 45.19](#)).

Wyoming

Wyoming provides reimbursement to registered veteran burial teams for performing honor guard detail. The maximum reimbursement to a team is \$100 for each funeral. Funding is through the Veteran Burial Team Account. A veteran burial team is any group of veterans with whom the veterans' commission contracts to perform military services. If there is not enough money, then the commission must prorate the reimbursements among all the claims ([Wyo. Stat. Ann. §19-14-109](#)).

DC:cym