
OLR Bill Analysis

SB 861

AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEFINITION OF "SERVICE IN TIME OF WAR" AND STATE RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTAIN VETERANS' SERVICES.

SUMMARY

This bill extends certain state war service benefits to veterans who served less than 90 days in a period of war (see BACKGROUND) because they incurred or aggravated an injury in the line of duty that is not a service-connected disability rated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (U.S. VA).

The bill also removes current law's two-year state residency eligibility requirement for certain state benefits (e.g., hospital care and funeral expenses) for veterans who did not reside in Connecticut at the time of their enlistment or induction into the armed forces.

It also makes technical, minor, and conforming changes.

INJURY INCURRED OR AGGRAVATED IN THE LINE OF DUTY

The bill extends certain state war service benefits to veterans who served less than 90 days in a war, but were separated from service because of an injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, even if the injury was not a service-connected disability rated by the U.S. VA, as current law requires in such circumstances. For eligible veterans (some benefits also accrue to eligible spouses and dependent children), such benefits include, among other things:

1. certain property tax exemptions (minimum of \$1,500) (CGS §§ 12-81(19) and 12-81g);
2. tuition waivers for the state's public colleges and universities (CGS §§ 10a-77, 10a-99, and 10a-105);

3. civil service exam bonus points (CGS § 5-224);
4. Connecticut Airport Authority set-aside of at least 30% of projects and contracts (CGS § 13b-50b);
5. state employee hazardous duty retirement credit (CGS § 5-173);
6. vesting service for the state employee retirement system (SERS) (CGS § 5-192i);
7. special service credit for SERS (CGS § 5-180);
8. being considered a “veteran” under the state personnel act (CGS § 5-196, et seq.);
9. temporary aid from the Soldiers’, Sailors’ and Marines’ Fund (CGS § 27-138 et seq.);
10. special license plate and parking privileges of disabled veterans (CGS § 14-254);
11. veterans’ service ribbons and medals (CGS § 27-73e); and
12. funeral honor guards (CGS § 27-76).

Presumably, such veterans are already eligible for benefits that require wartime service but do not specify service days (e.g., honorary high school diploma (CGS § 10-221a(i)) and temporary assistance from the Veterans Affairs commissioner (CGS § 27-125)).

REMOVAL OF THE TWO-YEAR RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT

The bill removes current law’s two-year state residency requirement for veterans who were not Connecticut residents at the time of enlistment or induction into the armed forces for eligibility for certain benefits, including, among other things:

1. admission into any hospital, upon the Veterans Affairs commissioner’s request, at the state’s expense unless other means of payment are available (CGS § 27-109);

2. admission to the veterans residential services facility or healthcare center (CGS § 27-108);
3. \$1,800 toward funeral expenses or cremation for certain indigent veterans (CGS § 27-118);
4. cost of transportation and erection or installation of a grave headstone (CGS § 27-119); and
5. temporary assistance (CGS § 27-125).

BACKGROUND

War Time Service

Table 1 summarizes the dates and service conditions that constitute “service in time of war” for purposes of state veterans’ benefits.

Table 1: Post-1940 "Service in Time of War"

<i>Operation</i>	<i>Period of War</i>	<i>Service Condition</i>
World War II	12/07/41-12/31/46*	Active service during the war
Korean War	06/27/50-01/31/55	Active service during the war
Lebanon Conflict	07/01/58-11/01/58 or 09/29/82-03/30/84	Combat or combat-support role in Lebanon
Vietnam Era	02/28/61-07/01/75	Active service during the war
Grenada invasion	10/25/83-12/15/83	Combat or combat-support role in Grenada required
Operation Earnest Will (escort of Kuwaiti tankers flying U.S. flag in Persian Gulf)	07/24/87-08/01/90	Combat or combat-support role required in the operation
Panama invasion	12/20/89-01/31/90	Combat or combat-support role required in the invasion
Persian Gulf War	08/02/1990 until a date prescribed by the President or law	Active-service anywhere during the war (not necessarily in the Persian Gulf or in a combat role)

*Ending dates specified in CGS § 12-86 for property tax exemptions are 12/31/47

COMMITTEE ACTION

Veterans' Affairs Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 16 Nay 0 (03/12/2019)