

## OLR Backgrounder: State Veterans' Benefits

By: Michelle Kirby, Senior Legislative Attorney

October 8, 2019 | 2019-R-0166

### Issue

Provide a summary of the primary benefits the state provides to veterans. This report updates OLR Report [2018-R-0235](#) and does not include federal benefits. **This report has been updated by OLR Report [2022-R-0186](#).**

### Summary

State law defines a “veteran” in several ways, with some statutes defining a veteran especially for a particular benefit program. In the absence of a specific definition, eligibility is determined according to a general definition in [CGS § 27-103\(a\)\(2\)](#). This law defines a veteran as an individual honorably discharged or released under honorable conditions from active service in the armed forces. By law “armed forces” means the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Air Force and any of their reserve components, including the Connecticut National Guard performing duty under Title 32 of the U.S. Code (e.g. certain Homeland Security missions) ([CGS § 27-103\(a\)\(1\)](#)).

To qualify for some benefits, war service is required. Other benefits are available to all veterans honorably discharged from active-duty service, irrespective of whether they served during wartime. The law specifically extends certain veterans’ benefits to individuals who were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable or for bad conduct and have a “qualifying condition” (i.e., a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury, or who have disclosed a military sexual trauma experience) ([CGS § 27-103\(a\)\(5\)](#)). Veterans’ spouses, surviving spouses, or dependent children are eligible for some benefits.

Regardless of their discharge classification, veterans who were or would have been denied federal benefits solely based on their sexual orientation under any federal policy prohibiting homosexual personnel from serving in the military (e.g., “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”) are eligible for state benefits if their federal benefits have been restored ([CGS § 27-102g](#)).

This report organizes veterans' benefits based on whether or not war service is required.

## Table of Contents

War Service Benefits.....	3
Education Benefits.....	3
Employment.....	4
Financial and Other Aid .....	4
Motor Vehicle Registration Fee Exemptions for Disabled Vets.....	5
Miscellaneous War Service Benefits .....	5
Property Tax Exemptions .....	7
Retirement Credit.....	8
Veterans Who Served Less Than 90 days in a War.....	8
Benefits Not Requiring War Service .....	9
Admission to the Veterans Healthcare Center.....	9
Burial in the State Veterans' Cemetery .....	9
Civil Service Exam Bonus Points .....	9
Income Disregards.....	9
Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) Fee and License Waivers.....	10
Economic Benefits .....	10
Education.....	11
Employment.....	11
Foreclosure Protection.....	12
Housing.....	12
Licensing and Registration Exemptions .....	12
Licensure and Certification for Military Training.....	12
Post-judgment Debt Collection Exemption.....	13
Pretrial Diversionary Programs .....	13
Probate Records.....	14
Property Tax Exemptions .....	14
Residency Requirement Waived .....	15
State Identification Card Fee Waiver for Blind Veterans.....	15
Tax Retirement Income Exemption.....	15
Utility Termination .....	16
Workforce Development.....	16
Miscellaneous Benefits .....	16
Additional Resources.....	17
Proof of Eligibility.....	17
Veterans' Department Office of Advocacy and Assistance .....	17

## War Service Benefits

To be eligible for war service benefits, generally a veteran must have completed at least 90 days cumulative wartime service during or in specified wars, operations, or conflicts unless he or she (1) was separated from service sooner because of a Veterans' Administration (VA)-rated, service-connected disability or (2) served for the duration of any military operation that lasted for less than 90 days.

[PA 19-33](#), effective October 1, 2019, 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. Veterans Affairs Department, as prior law required in such circumstances.

Table 1 shows the post-1940 qualifying war periods for purposes of state veterans' benefits.

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

<i>Operation</i>	<i>Date</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 the 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	08/02/90 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.

Sources: 38 USC § 101; [CGS § 27-103](#)

## Education Benefits

*Financial Aid for Certain Children.* The law provides state aid to children between ages 16 and 23 of wartime veterans who were killed in action, died from an illness or accident while on active duty, are totally and permanently disabled, or missing in action in Vietnam. The amount of aid, which is based on need, is up to \$400 per year for tuition, matriculation fees, board, rent, books, and supplies ([CGS § 10a-166](#)).

*High School Diplomas.* Local or regional school boards may award high school diplomas certain to veterans who did not receive their diplomas because they left high school for military service. Such veterans are those who were (1) honorably discharged World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War veterans or (2) discharged under conditions other than dishonorable or for bad conduct and have a qualifying condition ([CGS § 10-221a\(i\)](#)).

*Tuition Waivers.* The law requires the state's public colleges and universities to waive tuition in excess of federal veterans' benefit via post 9/11 GI bill, for wartime veterans who are accepted at an approved institution and live in the state at the time of the acceptance. The waiver applies at community-technical colleges, the Connecticut State University System (CSUS), and the University of Connecticut (UConn). It covers the cost of tuition for credit-bearing undergraduate and graduate programs. It does not apply to other charges or fees, such as student activity fees and room and board ([CGS §§ 10a-77\(e\)\(1\)](#), [10a-99\(e\)\(1\)](#), and [10a-105\(f\)\(1\)](#)).

## ***Employment***

*Civil Service Exams.* The law gives bonus points to wartime veterans who achieve a passing score on initial state and municipal civil service examinations. A wartime veteran eligible for or receiving Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation or pension, and unable to pursue gainful employment because of the disability, receives 10 bonus points; a wartime veteran ineligible for VA disability compensation or pension is eligible for five bonus points ([CGS §§ 5-224](#) and [7-415](#)).

If an honorably discharged or released veteran has served in a military action and received or is entitled to receive a campaign badge or expeditionary medal and is not otherwise eligible to receive bonus points, he or she qualifies for five bonus points if he or she receives the passing grade on the examination ([CGS § 5-224](#)).

## ***Financial and Other Aid***

*Commissioner's Temporary Assistance.* By law, wartime veterans who need help because of a disability or other service-related cause are eligible for temporary financial assistance from the veterans' affairs commissioner in an amount and for a time he decides. He may also help the spouse, parents, children, or siblings of any veteran who died as a result of such service if they cannot support themselves because of the veteran's death ([CGS § 27-125](#)).

*Soldiers', Sailors' and Marines' Fund.* This fund provides assistance (temporary aid, food, clothing, medical and surgical aid, general care and relief, or burial expenses) to needy wartime veterans or their (1) spouses living with them or who lived with them when they died or (2)

dependent children under age 18. The veteran must live in the state when he or she applies for and while getting the assistance ([CGS § 27-138, et seq.](#)).

### ***Motor Vehicle Registration Fee Exemptions for Disabled Vets***

The law grants free motor vehicle registration to disabled wartime veterans with certain service-connected disabilities, former prisoners of war, and recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor. Disabled veterans are eligible for fee exemptions for up to three vehicles in the (1) passenger; (2) camper; or (3) combination passenger and commercial registration categories, whether the veteran owns or leases them. The other two categories of veterans are eligible for exemptions on two vehicles. The spouses of the recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor and former prisoners of war may retain the registration for life or until remarriage ([CGS §§ 14-49\(o\)](#) and [14-21d](#)).

Disabled wartime veterans with certain VA-rated disabilities are entitled, upon application, to free special license plates. The plate exempts the veterans from overtime parking fines, provided they do not leave their vehicles at the same spot for more than 24 hours. Surviving spouses may keep the plates and identification cards until death or remarriage ([CGS § 14-254](#)).

### ***Miscellaneous War Service Benefits***

*Burial Expenses.* When any wartime veteran dies and does not leave enough money to pay for burial expenses, as determined by the commissioner after consulting with the appropriate probate court, the state must pay \$1,800 toward his or her funeral expenses or cremation. Claims must be made within one year after the veteran dies or his or her remains are returned from abroad ([CGS § 27-118](#)).

*Bonus Program.* Current or former guard members called to active service on or after September 11, 2001, are entitled to a service bonus of up to \$1,200 (1) if they are or were in active service for at least 90 consecutive days; (2) if while in such service, they are or were deployed in a combat zone designated by the president; and (3) if discharged, they were discharged honorably or because of a line-of-duty injury. There is also a \$500 maximum bonus for otherwise qualified current or former guard members whose active service is or was not in a combat zone. Applicants must submit bonus requests within three years after the end of the operation in which they served ([CGS § 27-61a](#)).

*Depleted Uranium Exposure Tests.* The law requires the adjutant general and the veterans' affairs commissioner to help eligible guard members and veterans get federal treatment services, including a best practice health screening test for exposure to depleted uranium, if they (1) are assigned a risk level I, II, or III for depleted uranium exposure by their branch of service; (2) are

referred by a military physician; or (3) have reason to believe that they were exposed to depleted uranium during military service.

The law applies to (1) Connecticut National Guard members who served in the Persian Gulf War or in an area designated as a combat zone by the president during Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom and (2) honorably discharged veterans who served as guard members under these same circumstances ([CGS § 27-140ii](#)).

*Free Passes to Any State Park, Forest, or State Recreational Facility for Certain Disabled Veterans.* The law grants a free non-transferrable lifetime pass for state parks, forests, and recreational facilities to any resident who is a disabled wartime veteran. The pass allows free admission and boat access parking ([CGS § 23-26\(d\)](#)). (The pass does not apply to any park, forest, or facility that a private concessionaire wholly manages and may not apply to payments required for special events.)

*Funeral Honor Guards.* A veteran is entitled to an honor guard detail at his or her funeral if the veteran served in wartime, served in the National Guard for more than 20 years, or died while serving as a guard member ([CGS § 27-76](#)).

*Itinerant Vendor Permit Fee Exemptions.* Wartime veterans are exempt from the \$200 fee for a town hawker and peddler permit (but not from the requirement to get a permit). The veteran must live in the state for at least two years before he or she qualifies ([CGS § 21-37](#)).

Wartime veterans are entitled to an exemption from any local itinerant vendor's license fee, if they live in Connecticut for at least two years before applying ([CGS § 21-30](#)).

*Veterans' Service Ribbons and Medals.* The veterans' affairs commissioner, in conjunction with the adjutant general, must award a ribbon and medal to any wartime veteran who lived in Connecticut when called to active duty service or is living in Connecticut when the award is made. The award is called the Connecticut Veterans Wartime Service Medal. Within existing budgetary resources, the law allows posthumous awards to veterans who died on or after November 12, 1918 ([CGS § 27-73e](#)). More information, including how to apply for the award, is available at: <http://www.ct.gov/ctva/cwp/view.asp?a=1992&q=313194>.

## ***Property Tax Exemptions***

*State Mandated.* State law provides, at a minimum, \$1,500 in municipal property tax exemptions for qualified veterans. The main state-mandated veterans' property tax exemptions in Connecticut are granted through two statutes: (1) [CGS § 12-81\(19\)](#) requires municipalities to exempt from taxation \$1,000 of the property owned by a veteran or his or her surviving spouse (i.e., basic exemptions) and (2) [CGS § 12-81g](#) requires municipalities to give veterans who get the basic exemption an additional income-based exemption. For a veteran whose income falls below a certain statutorily determined limit, the additional exemption is equal to twice the basic exemption ([CGS § 12-81g\(a\)](#)). For a veteran whose income exceeds the limit, the additional exemption is 50% of the basic exemption ([CGS § 12-81g\(d\)](#)).

*Eligibility.* In addition to those veterans who meet the general 90-day active-duty during war and honorable discharge requirement, those still in the service are eligible for property tax exemptions if they meet the 90-day war service requirement, as are veterans who retired after 30 years of service. World War II veterans with certain Merchant Marine service and military service with allied armies also qualify ([CGS § 12-81\(19\)](#)). A veteran's spouse is ordinarily entitled to the property tax exemption for which the deceased veteran qualified. A sole surviving parent and the minor child of a veteran who died while serving in the armed forces or after receiving an honorable discharge is also entitled to an exemption ([CGS § 12-81\(19\) to \(25\)](#)).

To obtain an exemption, an applicant must document his or her eligibility to the local town clerk. If the veteran is no longer in service, he or she must establish eligibility only once to receive the basic exemption; if the veteran is still serving, he or she must send the town clerk a written statement every year signed by his or her commanding officer or other appropriate officer attesting to his or her service. For income-based exemptions, the veteran must reestablish his or her eligibility every two years. Veterans' disability payments are excluded when determining income for an income-based property tax exemption for veterans.

*Additional Local Option Tax.* [CGS § 12-81f](#) allows municipalities to provide a property tax exemption in addition to the veterans' exemptions they are required to provide by law. The exemption can be up to \$20,000 or 10% of a property's assessed value for eligible veterans. Municipalities may increase the income threshold for eligibility, with the minimum being the amount the state annually sets for other property tax exemptions (for 2019, \$36,000 for individuals and \$43,900 for married joint filers). The state does not reimburse municipalities for revenue they lose as a result of providing the optional exemption. (For a more detailed discussion of property tax exemptions, see OLR Report [2019-R-0178](#).)

## ***Retirement Credit***

Members of the Municipal Employees' Retirement System who leave municipal employment to enter the armed forces while the United States is at war, engaged in hostilities, or during national emergencies and are reemployed by the municipality within six months of discharge are credited with the period of service as though they had been continuously employed. This six-month limitation can be extended in cases of a service-related disability ([CGS § 7-434](#)).

Wartime veterans who become members of the State Employees' Retirement System (SERS); Teachers' Retirement System; or Judges Retirement System may purchase retirement credit for time of service. The Teachers' Retirement System allows credit for up to 30 months for peacetime military service. Veterans purchasing teachers' retirement credit may not receive or be eligible to receive retirement credit for service from any other government source ([CGS §§ 5-180; 10-183e\(b\)\(3\)](#) and [\(11\)](#); and [51-49h](#)).

State police officers, correction guards and instructors, and other people in hazardous duty service who were granted military leave and returned to service within 90 days after discharge receive retirement credit for any period of wartime service. They may also get retirement credit for wartime service prior to such employment, provided they make the appropriate contributions to the retirement fund ([CGS § 5-173](#)).

## ***Veterans Who Served Less Than 90 days in a War***

[PA 19-33](#), effective October 1, 2019, 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 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](#)).

## **Benefits Not Requiring War Service**

### ***Admission to the Veterans Healthcare Center***

Veterans who need medical or surgical care and treatment are eligible for admission to the Veterans Healthcare Center. Those with no adequate means of support are also eligible for admission to certain hospitals at state expense unless other funds or means of payment are available ([CGS § 27-108](#)). The veterans affairs commissioner has sole power to determine who is admitted to these facilities.

### ***Burial in the State Veterans’ Cemetery***

Any veteran may ask the veterans affairs commissioner to be buried in the state veterans’ cemetery. The veteran and his or her spouse are eligible for such burial ([CGS § 27-122b](#)).

### ***Civil Service Exam Bonus Points***

The law gives five bonus points to certain armed forces members who achieve a passing score on initial state civil service examinations. A service member qualifies for the bonus points if he or she is in the final year of an enlistment contract with any branch of the armed forces. It also gives five civil service exam bonus points to veterans who (1) were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable or for bad conduct and (2) have a qualifying condition ([CGS § 5-224](#)).

### ***Income Disregards***

To the extent allowed under federal law, state law directs the Department of Social Services commissioner to disregard a veteran’s or surviving spouse’s federal Aid and Attendance Pension benefits when calculating income for certain means-tested assistance programs (e.g., Medicaid) ([CGS § 17b-28i](#)).

## ***Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) Fee and License Waivers***

***Motor Vehicle Fees and Plates.*** A veteran who applies within two years of receiving an honorable discharge is exempt from paying motor vehicle operator's license and registration fees for one licensing period ([CGS § 14-50\(c\)](#)).

A veteran may request a waiver of the motor vehicle license examination if he or she (1) previously held a military operator's license and (2) applies within two years of separation from service ([CGS § 14-36\(e\)](#)).

State law allows any type of motor vehicle owned or leased by a veteran or his or her surviving spouse for one year or longer to qualify for special veterans' license plates ([CGS § 14-20b](#)).

The law specifies that the DMV commissioner must issue a special registration certificate and a set of number plates to veterans, armed forces members, or their surviving spouse for any motor vehicle they use exclusively for farming as long as they engage in agricultural production as a trade or profession ([CGS § 14-20b](#)).

***Veterans Status on Driver's License and Identity Card.*** The DMV commissioner must include a person's status as a veteran on his or her state driver's license or identity card. To get this, the person must submit a request to have this status included to the Department of Veterans Affairs, which must verify the status to the DMV commissioner ([CGS § 14-36h\(e\)](#)).

***Wind-shield Handicap Placard.*** Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have an additional option to receive a windshield handicap placard. The law allows an applicant to get the placard by providing certification from a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs psychiatrist that he or she (1) is a veteran who has service-connected PTSD and (2) meets the federal definition of a person with a disability that limits or impairs the ability to walk ([CGS § 14-253a](#)).

## ***Economic Benefits***

***Tax Incentives.*** The law provides a tax incentive to encourage certain veterans to start a farming business. Specifically, the law relaxes the conditions eligible veterans must meet to qualify for a sales and use tax exemption permit for property used exclusively in commercial agricultural production ([CGS § 12-412\(63\)\(D\)](#)).

***Veterans Small Business Preference.*** The law provides certain veteran-owned businesses with up to a 15% price preference for certain Department of Administrative Services open market

orders or contracts. These businesses must have gross revenue of up to \$3 million in the most recently completed fiscal year and have at least 51% of the ownership be held by one or more veterans ([CGS § 4a-59\(c\)](#)).

## ***Education***

*Alternate Route to Certification.* A new law requires the State Department of Education to reserve, for veterans, 10% of seats available in the existing alternate route to certification program (i.e., a program through which individuals from an alternate profession can attain their initial educator certificate) ([PA 19-62](#), effective July 1, 2019).

*Educational Credit for Military Experience.* The law requires public higher education institutions to award college credit for military occupational specialty training to enrolled veterans ([CGS § 10a-149d](#)). The applicant must have experience in a military occupation the institution recognizes as substituting for or meeting the requirements of, a particular course of study. Under the act, a "veteran" is anyone discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable from active service in the armed forces.

*Undocumented Honorably Discharged Veterans Institutional Aid.* The law allows certain honorably discharged veterans without legal immigration status to access institutional aid to attend a state public higher education institution (i.e., UConn and the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities). These veterans are eligible, to the extent allowed by federal law, if they meet certain age and criminal background requirements and file with the institution an affidavit about their intent to legalize their immigration status ([CGS § 10a-161d](#)).

## ***Employment***

*Materials for Employers on Veterans' Mental Health Conditions.* A new law requires the southwest workforce development board, among other things, to identify appropriate written materials on mental health conditions common to veterans to distribute to employers. Such mental health conditions include post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide risk, depression, and grief ([PA 19-129](#), § 3, effective July 1, 2019).

*Reinstatement of Municipal Employees.* State and municipal employers must reinstate an employee if he or she left service to enter the armed forces and applies to return to the job within 90 days after receiving a certificate confirming satisfactory military service. The appointing authority must certify in writing that the employee is able and qualified to perform the work required and that work is available ([CGS §§ 5-255](#) and [7-462](#)).

## ***Foreclosure Protection***

[CGS § 7-246b](#) requires municipalities served by a PURA-regulated private water company with a population of at least 100,000 to adopt ordinances that, among other things, protect veterans, seniors, and low-income families from water pollution control authority foreclosures by restricting accelerated foreclosure proceedings for past due sewer fees. The law also institutes a one year delay for foreclosure actions on liens held by water pollution control authorities.

## ***Housing***

*Preference to Veterans.* Any entity operating a Department of Economic Development-funded low- or moderate-income rental housing project must give preference to veterans competing with other applicants when housing needs are substantially equal ([CGS § 8-75](#)).

*Security Deposit Program.* By law, the Department of Housing, through its Security Deposit Guarantee Program and within available appropriations, must provide security deposit guarantees (payment for any damages that occur) to financially eligible people living in emergency housing or receiving a government rental subsidy. The commissioner must prioritize providing these guarantees to eligible veterans ([CGS § 8-339](#)).

## ***Licensing and Registration Exemptions***

*License and Registration Fees.* Veterans are exempt from annual and biennial license and registration fees or occupational taxes for one year after they are honorably discharged from active service in the U.S. Armed Forces ([CGS § 27-102a](#)).

*Hairdressing or Cosmetology.* A veteran whose hairdressing or cosmetology license expired while he or she was in the armed services may have it reinstated without paying the \$5 renewal fee ([CGS § 20-256](#)).

*Embalmer or Funeral Director Reinstatement.* When a veteran's embalmer or funeral director's license expires while he or she is in the armed forces, the Department of Public Health (DPH) may waive the examination required for reinstatement, provided the department approves the veteran's professional qualifications. The veteran must apply within a year of separation from service ([CGS § 20-228](#)).

## ***Licensure and Certification for Military Training***

The law requires state agencies or boards that issue licenses or certificates requiring professional training, schooling, or apprenticeship to provide credits or exemptions to applicants who received

applicable training, schooling, or experience while serving in the armed forces. It prohibits agencies from requiring applicants to repeat any substantively similar training or schooling required for licensure or certification ([CGS § 27-102b](#)).

The law requires various government entities to certify, waive, grant, or award certain licenses, registrations, examinations, training, or credit for veterans with military experience or qualifications similar to those otherwise required. Under the law, a "veteran" is anyone discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable from active service in the armed forces.

For qualified veterans, the law requires the:

1. Police Officer Standards and Training Council to certify them as police officers ([CGS § 7-294d](#));
2. DMV to waive certain examinations or tests for motor vehicle operator's licenses ([CGS § 14-36\(e\)](#));
3. Department of Labor to submit a recommendation for review that waives the apprentice requirement to the appropriate licensing board and Department of Consumer Protection to allow the applicants to sit for licensing exams ([CGS §§ 20-333](#) and [31-22u](#));
4. Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to waive security guard training ([CGS § 29-161q](#)); and
5. DPH to certify them as emergency medical technicians ([CGS § 19a-179](#)).

### ***Post-judgment Debt Collection Exemption***

By law, veterans' benefits cannot be collected as part of postjudgment proceedings from people who have secured a court order (e.g., installment payment order or wage execution) ([CGS § 52-352b](#)).

### ***Pretrial Diversionary Programs***

Pretrial diversionary programs allow criminal defendants to avoid prosecution and incarceration by successfully completing these court-sanctioned community-based treatment programs before trial. Veterans may participate in an accelerated pretrial rehabilitation program twice, whereas non-veterans may only participate once ([CGS § 54-56e](#)).

The accelerated rehabilitation program is available for people accused of certain crimes or motor vehicle violations. It also allows veterans (1) participating in the pretrial drug education program or (2) with certain mental health conditions that are amenable to treatment to be assigned to state

and federal departments of veterans affairs services as an alternative to services from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services ([CGS §§ 54-56i](#) and [54-56l](#)).

### ***Probate Records***

When the VA needs a probate record to determine a veteran's eligibility for benefits, the official with custody of the record must provide a free certified copy ([CGS § 45a-12](#)).

### ***Property Tax Exemptions***

*State Mandated.* State law allows property tax exemptions for veterans with (1) a VA-rated disability of at least 10% ([CGS § 12-81\(20\)](#)) and (2) severe service-related disabilities ([CGS § 12-81\(21\)](#)). Veterans with a VA disability rating of 10% or more are eligible for exemptions ranging from \$1,500 to \$3,000. Effective October 1, 2019, and applicable to assessment years commencing on or after that date, [PA 19-171](#) increases this base property tax exemption by \$500 and in doing so, the exemptions will range from \$2,000 to \$3,500.

Veterans with a severe, service-related disability rating are eligible for an exemption of either \$5,000 or \$10,000 depending on the nature of the disability. Veterans in the latter category may claim both exemptions, provided they meet the criteria for the first exemption.

*Additional Income-Based Exemption.* [CGS § 12-81g](#) requires municipalities to give veterans who get the disabled or severe service-related disabled exemption an additional income-based exemption, which is the same threshold as a wartime exemption. For a veteran whose income falls (1) below a certain statutorily determined limit, the additional exemption is equal to twice the exemption ([CGS § 12-81g\(a\)](#)) and (2) above the limit, the additional exemption is 50% of the exemption ([CGS § 12-81g\(d\)](#)). By increasing the base exemption by \$500, [PA 19-171](#) increases the income-based exemption by (1) \$1,000 if the disabled veteran's income is at or below the threshold or (2) \$250 if it is over the threshold. For 100% disabled veterans, the law statutorily sets the limit at \$18,000 for unmarried veterans and \$21,000 for married veterans, while others with disabilities have the same limit as the wartime veterans exemption (see above).

*Additional Local Option for 100% Disabled Veterans.* The law allows a municipality, with its legislative body's approval, to provide 100% disabled veterans, under certain income thresholds, with three times the amount provided under the additional income-based exemption. By increasing the base exemption by \$500, [PA 19-171](#) increases the local-option exemption by \$1,500. The income eligibility thresholds for this optional municipal property tax exemption is \$21,000, if single and \$24,000, if married ([CGS § 12-81g\(b\)](#)).

*Additional Local Option for Disabled Veterans.* Existing law allows a municipality to provide an additional property tax exemption to disabled veterans (but not to severely disabled veterans) with the same qualifying income levels as the additional optional municipal wartime veteran exemption (see above). If the municipality chooses to provide the exemption for disabled veterans, the exemption must be at least \$3,000 and applied to the assessed value of the veteran's property ([CGS § 12-81f\(b\)](#)).

*Additional Local Option for Certain Non-disabled Veterans.* The law establishes an additional optional municipal veteran's property tax exemption by allowing municipalities, with their legislative body's approval, to provide a property tax exemption to certain veterans who do not qualify for certain existing veteran property tax exemptions (i.e., wartime, disabled, and severe service-related exemptions). A municipality may exempt up to \$5,000 or 5% of the property's assessed value ([CGS § 12-81jj](#)). The qualifying income is the same as that of the additional optional municipal wartime veteran exemption (see above) ([CGS § 12-81jj](#)). (For a more detailed discussion of property tax exemptions, see OLR Report [2019-R-0178](#).)

### ***Residency Requirement Waived***

A new law removes prior law's two-year state residency requirement to be eligible for certain benefits for veterans who were not Connecticut residents at the time of enlistment or induction into the armed forces. These include, 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;
2. admission to the veterans residential services facility or healthcare center;
3. \$1,800 toward funeral expenses or cremation for certain indigent veterans;
4. cost of transporting and installing a grave headstone; and
5. temporary financial assistance ([PA 19-33](#), effective October 1, 2019).

### ***State Identification Card Fee Waiver for Blind Veterans***

The law authorizes the DMV commissioner to waive the \$22.50 non-driver identification card fee for blind veterans ([CGS § 1-1h](#)).

### ***Tax Retirement Income Exemption***

State law fully exempts federally taxable military retirement pay from the state income tax ([CGS § 12-701\(20\)\(B\)\(xvii\)](#)).

## ***Utility Termination***

The law limits when utility companies can terminate residential service for non-payment in hardship cases, which includes a veteran whose sole source of financial support is his or her veterans' benefit ([CGS § 16-262c\(b\)\(3\)](#)). For more information on utility termination, see OLR Report [2012-R-0170](#).

## ***Workforce Development***

A new law requires the workforce development board for the state's southwest region (i.e., The WorkPlace, Inc.) to, among other things, by October 1, 2019, develop and operate two pilot programs within its workforce development region (the Military to Machinists pilot program for veterans and the Veterans Platform to Employment pilot program).

The Military to Machinists pilot program must help veterans in the region served by the program to (1) earn an advanced manufacturing certificate from a qualifying certificate program and (2) secure employment, for certificate holders, with any eligible business in the advanced manufacturing field. Under the Veterans Platform to Employment pilot program, the new law requires the southwest workforce development board to provide training and subsidized employment for veterans who have experienced long-term unemployment.

The new law also requires the Department of Labor, when contacted by a veteran who is in need of employment or workforce development services to, under certain circumstances, provide the veteran with (1) contact information for the workforce development board and (2) information on the Military to Machinists pilot program ([PA 19-129](#), most provisions effective July 1, 2019).

## ***Miscellaneous Benefits***

*Angel Investor Tax Credit.* Among other things, a new law extends the angel investor tax credit program by five years, to July 1, 2024, and increases the aggregate amount of angel investor credits Connecticut Innovators (CI) may reserve each fiscal year. The new law authorizes CI to prioritize certain unreserved credits for various businesses, including veteran-owned businesses ([PA 19-117](#), § 347, effective July 1, 2019, and applicable to income and tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2019).

*Municipal Veterans Representative.* Under prior law, any municipality that did not have a local veterans' advisory committee or provide funding for a veterans' service officer had to designate an employee to serve as a veterans' service contact person. A new law substitutes the term "municipal veterans' representative" for the term "veterans' service contact person," allows



volunteers to serve in this position, and subjects them to all the existing training requirements ([PA 19-148](#), effective October 1, 2019).

## **Additional Resources**

### ***Proof of Eligibility***

Veterans' benefits are not granted automatically. The veteran or a qualified dependent must claim them. To make a claim, the applicant must document his or her eligibility. The most common proof of eligibility is the Department of Defense document, DD 214. (All military services have used DD 214s since January 1, 1950, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs (<http://www.dd214.us/>); before then, similar documents were called a "Report of Separation" and a "Certificate of Service.")

The National Archive's website states that "most veterans and their next-of-kin can obtain free copies of their DD Form 214 (or the applicable separation document) and records several ways," and provides the following link for them to do so: <https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records>.

### ***Veterans' Department Office of Advocacy and Assistance***

For further information on programs and eligibility requirements, veterans may contact the state Veterans' Department Office of Advocacy and Assistance at (866) 9CT-VETS and visit the Veterans' Department website: <https://portal.ct.gov/dva>.

MK:kc:kl