

## OLR Backgrounder: State Veterans' Benefits

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### Issue

Provide a summary of the primary benefits the state provides to veterans. This report updates OLR Report [2019-R-0166](#) and does not include federal benefits.

### Summary

State law provides tuition, employment, housing, property tax, and other assistance to veterans. The eligibility criteria for each benefit vary, but many require an individual to (1) qualify as a veteran and (2) have served during a specified wartime period (i.e., have “wartime service”); and (3) in particular for property tax benefits, have income below a set threshold. Other benefits do not require wartime service but often require a veteran to meet different criteria (e.g., have a severe, service-related disability).

To qualify as a veteran for most benefits, an individual must have been honorably discharged, or released under honorable conditions, from active service in the armed forces, or released with an other than honorable (OTH) discharge based on a “qualifying condition” ([CGS § 27-103\(a\)\(2\)](#)), as amended by [PA 21-79](#) & [PA 22-34](#)). For certain benefits though, state law defines “veteran” differently and exclusively for that program.

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\(a\)\(1\)](#)), as amended by [PA 21-79](#) & [PA 22-34](#)).

This report organizes the benefits into two categories: those that require wartime service and those that do not require wartime service. Benefits that are available to both wartime and non-wartime veterans but to different extents (e.g., providing wartime veterans more preference points on a civil service exam) are included in both categories.

Some of these benefits may also be available to active members, as well as veterans’ spouses, surviving spouses, or dependent children.

### ***“Qualifying Condition” Defined***

- *PTSD or traumatic brain injury diagnosis by a licensed health care professional at a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (U.S. VA) facility;*
- *military sexual trauma experience disclosed to such a health care professional; or*
- *determination by the Eligibility Qualifying Review Board (EQRB) that sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression was more likely than not the primary reason for an OTH discharge ([EQRB](#), established in 2021, reviews veterans’ applications to have their eligibility for state benefits restored, and makes recommendations to the DVA commissioner on whether a veteran’s OTH discharge meets the statutory criteria to do so) ([PA 21-79](#), § 1, codified as CGS § 27-103).*

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## Wartime Service Benefits

To be eligible for wartime service benefits, generally a veteran must have cumulatively served at least 90 days during specified wars, operations, or conflicts (see Table 1 below). A veteran who served fewer days may still be eligible if he or she (1) was separated from service earlier because of either a service-connected U.S. Veterans' Administration (VA)-rated disability or an injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty or (2) served for the duration of a military operation that lasted for fewer than 90 days ([CGS § 27-103\(a\)\(3\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#) & [PA 22-34](#)).

Table 1 shows the post-1940 qualifying war periods for purposes of state veterans' benefits. According to the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), all veterans who served on or after August 2, 1990 (the statutorily-set start date of the Persian Gulf War), and meet other qualifying criteria (e.g., the 90-days of service) are considered to have wartime service, regardless of where that service occurred or whether it was in a combat, or combat support, role (OPM, [Questions and Answer Booklet](#), p. 25 (2022)). An end date to the Persian Gulf War period has not been prescribed by presidential proclamation or by law; as a result, it is ongoing for purposes of determining veterans' benefits.

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

Operation	Covered Period	Service Condition
World War II	12/7/41–12/31/46*	Active service during the covered period
Korean conflict	6/27/50–1/31/55	Active service during the covered period
Lebanon conflict	7/1/58–11/1/58 or 9/29/82–3/30/84	Combat or combat-support role in Lebanon during the covered periods
Vietnam era	2/28/61–7/1/75	Active service during the covered period
Grenada invasion	10/25/83–12/15/83	Combat or combat-support role in Grenada during the covered period
Operation Earnest Will (escort of Kuwaiti tankers flying U.S. flag in the Persian Gulf)	7/24/87–8/1/90	Combat or combat-support role in the operation during the covered period
Panama invasion	12/20/89–1/31/90	Combat or combat-support role in the invasion during the covered period
Persian Gulf War	8/2/90 until a date prescribed by the President or law	Active service during the covered period
Afghanistan	10/24/01–8/30/21	Active service during the covered period
Iraq	3/19/03–12/31/11 or 6/1/2014–12/9/21	Active service during the covered period

\*Ending dates specified in [CGS § 12-86](#) for property tax exemptions are 12/31/47  
Sources: 38 U.S.C. § 101; [CGS § 27-103](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#) & [PA 22-34](#))

## ***Education Benefits***

*High School Diplomas.* Local or regional school boards may award high school diplomas to veterans who did not receive their diplomas because they left high school for military service and served in World War II, the Korean hostilities (from June 27, 1950, until October 27, 1953, for purposes of this benefit), or the Vietnam era ([CGS § 10-221a\(i\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#) and [PA 21-174](#)).

*Tuition Waivers.* The law requires the state's public colleges and universities to waive wartime veterans' tuition amounts that exceed amounts covered by the federal post 9/11 GI bill. To qualify, veterans must be 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, and 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\(d\)\(2\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#), [CGS § 10a-99\(d\)\(2\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#), and [CGS § 10a-105\(e\)\(2\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

## ***Employment***

*Civil Service Exams.* By law, certain veterans and active members who achieve a passing score on state and municipal civil service exams for initial appointments are entitled to additional points ("preference points") added to their exam scores. For state exams:

- wartime veterans who are ineligible for a VA disability pension or compensation receive five points;
- wartime veterans who are eligible for a VA disability pension or compensation receive 10 points;
- veterans who earned a campaign badge or expeditionary medal, and are ineligible under other categories, receive five points; and
- active members in their final year of enlistment receive five points ([CGS § 5-224](#)).

On municipal exams, as with state exams, wartime veterans receive five points; those who are eligible for a VA disability pension or compensation receive 10 points ([CGS § 7-415](#)).

## ***Financial Aid and Other Economic Benefits***

***Bonus Program.*** Eligible current and former Connecticut National Guard members called to active service on or after September 11, 2001, are entitled to a service bonus of \$50 for each month of active service, up to:

1. \$1,200 if they are or were deployed in an area the president designated as a combat zone or
2. \$500 for service in a non-combat zone.

To be eligible, the member must have been in active service for at least 90 consecutive days and, unless still a member, discharged honorably or because of injuries sustained in the line of duty. Applicants must submit bonus requests within three years after the end of the operation in which they served ([CGS § 27-61a](#); [Conn. Agencies Reg. §§ 27-61a-1 et. seq.](#)).

***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 state Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) commissioner in an amount and for a time he decides. The commissioner may also help the spouse, parents, children, or siblings of any armed forces member who died as a result of such service if they cannot support themselves because of the veteran's death ([CGS § 27-125](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

***Soldiers', Sailors', and Marines' Fund.*** The American Legion administers the Soldiers', Sailors' and Marines' Fund and provides assistance (temporary income, food, clothing, medical and surgical aid, general care and relief, or funeral expenses) from it to wartime veterans in need. The veteran must have lived in the state when he or she entered the armed forces and at the time he or she applies for, and while receiving, the assistance ([CGS §§ 27-138](#) and [27-140](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)). The American Legion [bylaws](#) and [website](#) provide additional information.

## ***Motor Vehicle Registration and License Plates***

***Registration Fee Waiver and Special Plates.*** The law generally grants free special plates and motor vehicle registrations to:

1. wartime veterans who have certain conditions or disabilities (e.g., service-connected traumatic brain injury, loss of use of a limb, or blindness), for up to three vehicles, so long as they are not used for hire ([CGS §§ 14-49\(o\)](#) and [14-254](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#));
2. veterans and active members who were prisoners of war, for two vehicles; ([CGS § 14-21d\(a\)](#)); and

3. Congressional Medal of Honor recipients, for two vehicles ([CGS § 14-21d\(b\)](#)).

The plates for wartime veterans who have certain disabilities exempts them from overtime parking fines, provided they do not leave their vehicles at the same spot for more than 24 hours. These plates and registrations are free following a formal Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) determination they should be waived ([CGS § 14-254](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

*Wartime Service Plates.* DMV must issue special license plates indicating service during certain statutorily defined periods of war at the request of veterans or armed forces members who received a campaign medal. The plates must bear the words “(Name of War) Veteran.” The plates cost \$96.50 and expire in the same manner as other existing license plates ([PA 21-106](#), § 49, codified as [CGS § 14-20d](#), amended by [PA 22-44](#)). The [DMV website](#) provides additional information and examples of the plates.

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

To obtain a property tax exemption, applicants must document their eligibility with the town. If the veteran is no longer in service, he or she must establish eligibility only once to receive the basic exemption (described below) ([CGS § 12-93](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)). For the income-based exemptions described below, the veteran must reestablish his or her eligibility every two years ([Conn. Agencies Regs. § 12-81g-2](#)). Veterans’ disability payments are excluded when determining income for an income-based property tax exemption for veterans.

By law, individuals may generally only claim one veteran-related exemption even if they qualify under more than one statutory section ([CGS § 12-90](#)). For a more detailed discussion of property tax exemptions, see OLR Report [2021-R-0177](#) and OPM’s 2022 [Questions and Answer Booklet](#).

#### ***“Exemptions”***

*Property tax payments are calculated by multiplying a property’s net assessment (i.e., total assessed value less applicable exemptions) by a taxing jurisdiction’s mill rate. Exemptions are a reduction in a property’s assessed value on which taxes are owed; they are not credits against the total amount owed.*

*State Mandated Exemption.* By law, municipalities must provide at least \$1,500 in property tax exemptions for veterans with wartime service. The exemption amount is composed of two parts:

1. a “basic exemption” of \$1,000 ([CGS § 12-81\(19\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)) plus
2. an “income-based exemption” equal to (a) twice the basic exemption if the veteran’s income is at or below an OPM-set threshold or (b) 50% of the basic exemption if the veteran’s income exceeds the threshold ([CGS § 12-81g\(a\) & \(d\)](#)).

Although the basic exemption is set at \$1,000, by law, municipalities must increase it using a statutorily-specified formula if their grand list increases by a certain amount due to a revaluation ([CGS § 12-62g](#)). Increases to the basic exemption, in turn, result in an increase to the income-based exemption as well.

## OPM Income Threshold

For 2022, the threshold is based on 2021 income and set at \$38,100 for unmarried veterans and \$46,400 for married veterans.

This exemption is also available to (1) active members with qualifying wartime service, (2) veterans who retired after 30 years of service due to disabilities or reaching the age limit, (3) World War II veterans with certain Merchant Marine service, and (4) state residents with military service with allied armies during World War II ([CGS § 12-81\(19\)](#)), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

*Additional Local Option Tax Exemption.* Municipalities may provide an additional property tax exemption to wartime veterans and other veterans who qualify (e.g., 30-year retirees and active wartime members) for the state-mandated one described above. Municipalities may exempt up to \$20,000 or 10% of a property's assessed value for veterans whose incomes are below a set threshold. Municipalities may set the income threshold, but it must not be lower than the OPM-set one (described above) ([CGS § 12-81f](#)).

## ***Retirement Credit***

*Connecticut Municipal Employees' Retirement System (CMERS).* Employees of municipalities or municipal units that participate in [CMERS](#) 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](#)).

*Judges' Retirement System.* Judges, including family support magistrates and administrative law judges, who have served in that capacity for at least 10 years may purchase credit for up to three years of their military service during certain periods (World War II, the Korean hostilities, and Vietnam era). They may also receive credit, but are not required to make payment, for any periods spent as a prisoner of war ([CGS § 51-49h](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#) and [PA 22-34](#))

*State Employees' Retirement System (SERS).* Wartime veterans who become members of SERS may purchase retirement credit for their time of service (up to their total period of compulsory service, if any, plus three years), subject to certain limitations ([CGS § 5-180\(b\)](#)).



*Teachers' Retirement System.* Veterans may purchase up to 10 years of retirement credit for their service during wartime (and up to 30 months for peacetime service) ([CGS § 10-183e\(b\)\(3\) & \(11\)](#)), as amended by [PA 22-118](#)). Additional information can be found on the system's website [here](#).

### ***Hazardous Duty Service***

State police officers, correction guards and instructors, and other people in hazardous duty service who were granted military leave and returned to their employment within 90 days after discharge receive retirement credit for any period of wartime service; this service also counts toward the 20-year minimum service requirement. They may also get retirement credit for wartime service prior to such employment, provided they make the appropriate contributions to the retirement fund, but it will not count toward the minimum service requirement ([CGS § 5-173\(c\)](#)).

### ***Miscellaneous Wartime Service Benefits***

*Depleted Uranium Exposure Tests.* The law requires the adjutant general and the veterans' affairs commissioner to help eligible Connecticut National 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.

By law, this assistance must be available 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) 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 Veterans With Certain Disabilities.* The law grants a non-transferrable lifetime pass for free admission and boat access parking at state parks, forests, and recreational facilities to Connecticut residents who are wartime veterans and have certain disabilities (e.g., service-connected traumatic brain injury, loss of use of a limb, or blindness). 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 ([CGS § 23-26\(d\)](#)). (Beginning in 2018, the law exempts all persons with a valid in-state license plate from parking fees at state parks, forests, and other state recreational facilities.)

*Funeral Honor Guards.* A veteran is entitled to an honor guard detail at his or her funeral if the veteran (1) served in wartime, (2) served in the National Guard for more than 20 years, or (3) died while serving as a guard member ([CGS § 27-76](#), as amended by [PA 22-118](#)).

*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](#)).

*Veterans' Service Ribbons and Medals.* The DVA commissioner, in conjunction with the adjutant general, must award a ribbon and medal (the "Connecticut Veterans Wartime Service Medal") to wartime veterans who are Connecticut residents or were residents when called to active duty. Hmong Laotian special guerrilla units who served in the United States' secret war in the Kingdom of Laos during the Vietnam War are also eligible for it. Within existing budgetary resources, the law allows posthumous awards to veterans who died on or after November 12, 1918 ([CGS § 27-73e](#) and [PA 21-51](#), codified as CGS § 27-73j). More information, including how to apply, is available on the DVA [website](#).

## **Benefits Not Requiring Wartime 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 (by law, eligibility for this benefit is based on the federal definition of "veteran" and requires a discharge or release from active service under conditions other than dishonorable). Those with no adequate means of support are also eligible for admission to certain hospitals at state expense unless other funds are available. The DVA commissioner has sole power to determine who is admitted to these facilities ([CGS § 27-108](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

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

According to the DVA cemetery [website](#), veterans who resided in the state at the time of their death or when they entered service and have active duty service (other than for training purposes) may ask the veterans affairs commissioner to be buried in the state veterans' cemetery. The veterans' spouses are also eligible for burial there.

By law, certain other current and former service members, and their spouses, may also request burial there, including (1) Connecticut National Guard or reserve members with 20 years of qualifying service and (2) Hmong Laotian special guerrilla units who served in the United States'

secret war in the Kingdom of Laos during the Vietnam War ([CGS § 27-122b](#), as amended by [PA 22-34](#)).

*Burial Expenses.* When a veteran dies and the DVA commissioner, in consultation with the probate court, determines he or she left insufficient funds to pay for funeral expenses, the state must pay \$1,800 toward these expenses. Covered expenses include the cost of funeral services and merchandise; burial, cremation or disposition; and an obituary. (For purposes of this benefit, covered individuals also include those who served as part of a Hmong Laotian special guerrilla unit in the United States' secret war in the Kingdom of Laos during the Vietnam War.) Claims must be made within one year after the veteran dies or his or her remains are returned from abroad ([CGS § 27-118](#), as amended by [PA 22-34](#), § 3).

### ***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](#)).

### ***DMV Fee and License Waivers***

*Fee Waiver for Veterans at One-Day Event.* The DMV commissioner may waive driver's license and identity card renewal or duplication fees for certain veterans while attending a DVA-hosted one-day event that offers services, supplies, or assistance to veterans ([PA 21-106](#), § 50, codified as [CGS § 14-11k](#)).

*Motor Vehicle Fees.* A veteran who applies within two years of leaving service is exempt from paying motor vehicle operator's license and registration fees for one licensing period ([CGS § 14-50\(c\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

*License Examination.* A veteran may generally request a waiver of the motor vehicle license examination if he or she (1) previously held a military operator's license for the same class of vehicles for which he or she is currently applying and (2) applies within two years of separation from service. If the veteran is applying for a commercial motor vehicle license, the driving skills test is waived and the commissioner may waive the knowledge test if he determines the veteran's military experience meets federal criteria for substitutions ([CGS § 14-36\(e\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#) and [PA 21-106](#)).

*Special Plates.* State law allows any type of motor vehicle owned or leased by a veteran or his or her surviving spouse for at least one year to qualify for special veterans' license plates. 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.

Certain Hmong Laotian special guerilla units that served during the Vietnam War, and their surviving spouses, are also eligible for these plates. To qualify they must submit a request with the DVA to verify their qualifying service with the DMV ([CGS § 14-20b](#), as amended by [PA 21-51](#), [PA 21-79](#), and [PA 21-106](#)).

*State Identification Card Fee Waiver for Blind Veterans.* The law authorizes the DMV commissioner to waive the \$28 non-driver identification card fee for blind veterans ([CGS § 1-1h](#)).

*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 (certain Hmong Laotian special guerilla unit members that served during the Vietnam era are also eligible for this benefit). To qualify, the veteran (or guerilla unit member) must submit a request to the DVA to verify his or her veteran status or qualifying service to the DMV commissioner [CGS § 14-36h\(e\) & \(f\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-51](#), [PA 21-79](#), and [PA 22-34](#)).

*Windshield 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. VA 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\(b\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-106](#)).

## ***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 Contracting Preference.* The law provides certain veteran-owned businesses with up to a 15% price preference for certain Department of Administrative Services (DAS) 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](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

## ***Education***

*Alternate Route to Educator Certification.* By law, the State Department of Education must reserve for veterans 10% of seats available in the alternate route to certification program (a program through which individuals from an alternate profession can attain their initial educator certificate) ([CGS § 10-145w](#)).

*Educational Credit for Military Experience.* The law requires public higher education institutions to award college credit for military occupational specialty training to enrolled veterans. 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. Beginning by July 1, 2022, each institution must review and update its policies on awarding credit for a student's military training, coursework, and education ([CGS § 10a-149d](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#) and [PA 21-132](#)).

*Institutional Aid for Veterans Without Legal Immigration Status.* The law allows certain 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 federal law allows, if they (1) were born on or after June 15, 1992; (2) were age 15 or younger when they arrived in the United States; (3) have continuously resided in this country; (4) have no felony convictions; and (5) file with the institution an affidavit that they have applied or will apply to legalize their immigration status ([CGS § 10a-161d](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

## ***Employment***

*Civil Service Exam Bonus Points.* The law gives bonus points to certain armed forces members who achieve a passing score on initial state civil service examinations. A service member qualifies for five bonus points if he or she is in the final year of an enlistment contract with any branch of the armed forces. (As discussed above, wartime veterans are also entitled to five bonus points, or 10 if they are eligible for disability compensation) ([CGS § 5-224](#), as amended by [PA 22-34](#)).

*Priority Applicants for Economic Development Financial Assistance.* The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) commissioner must prioritize applicants for

economic development financial assistance (i.e., DECD-approved grants, loans, loan guarantees, or combination) that demonstrate a willingness to make jobs available to certain individuals, including veterans ([PA 21-188](#), § 2, codified as CGS § 32-5d).

*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 employer must certify in writing (to the DAS commissioner for state jobs) that the employee is able and qualified to perform the work required and that work is available ([CGS §§ 5-255](#) and [7-462](#)).

*Workforce Development.* Under the [Military to Machinists](#) pilot program, veterans served by the program may (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 southwest region's workforce development board (i.e., The WorkPlace, Inc.) must provide training and subsidized employment for veterans who have experienced long-term unemployment ([CGS §§ 31-11ss & -11tt](#)).

## **Housing**

*Foreclosure Protection.* Municipalities with a population of at least 100,000 that are served by a Public Utilities Regulatory Authority-regulated private water company must adopt ordinances that, among other things, protect veterans (as well as 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 ([CGS § 7-246b](#)).

*Preference to Veterans.* Veterans must be given preference for housing in certain state-funded low- or moderate-income rental housing projects when competing with other applicants whose housing needs are substantially equal ([CGS § 8-75](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

*Security Deposit Program.* By law, the Department of Housing's Security Deposit Guarantee Program must, if funding is available, 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](#)).

## ***Legal Proceedings and Records***

*Post-Judgment Debt Collection Exemption.* By law, veterans' benefits cannot be collected as part of post-judgment proceedings by people who have secured a court order (e.g., installment payment order or wage execution) ([CGS § 52-352b](#), as amended by [PA 21-161](#)).

*Pretrial Diversionary Programs.* Pretrial diversionary programs allow criminal defendants to avoid prosecution and incarceration for non-serious crimes 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](#), as amended by [PA 22-26](#) and [PA 22-40](#)).

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\(c\) & \(d\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-40](#), [PA 21-79](#), [PA 21-102](#) & [PA 21-1](#), [June Special Session \(JSS\)](#), and [CGS § 54-56l](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

*Probate Records.* When the U.S. 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](#)).

## ***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, or released under honorable conditions, from active service in the 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 Substitutions 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.

For qualified veterans, the law requires:

1. the Police Officer Standards and Training Council to certify them as police officers if their armed forces training was equivalent to the state-required training and they pass an exam, as required by the council ([CGS § 7-294d\(b\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#));
2. DMV to waive certain examinations or tests for motor vehicle operator's licenses, including the driving skill test for commercial motor vehicle licenses as well as the knowledge test, if the DMV commissioner waives it ([CGS § 14-36\(e\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#) and [PA 21-106](#));
3. Department of Labor to submit a recommendation for review to the Department of Consumer Protection that, for two years after a veteran's discharge from service, waives the apprentice requirement, allowing the applicants to sit for licensing exams held by certain boards (e.g., the Electrical Work Board; Plumbing and Piping Work Board; Elevator Installation, Repair and Maintenance Board) ([CGS § 20-333](#), as amended by [PA 21-152](#), and [CGS § 31-22u](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#));
4. Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to waive security guard training for two years after a veteran's discharge ([CGS § 29-161q\(b\)](#), as amended by [PA 22-130](#)); and
5. DPH to certify them as emergency medical technicians ([CGS § 19a-179](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)).

## ***Property Tax Exemptions***

*State Mandated Exemptions for Veterans With Disabilities.* By law, municipalities must provide property tax exemptions for veterans who have (1) a VA-rated disability of at least 10% or lost an arm or leg in service, for which they receive federal compensation or (2) certain severe service-related disabilities, listed in statute, that resulted from enemy action, disease, or an accident sustained during their service. As with the state mandated exemptions for wartime veterans, these exemptions are composed of two parts: a "basic exemption" and an "income-based exemption," which is calculated as a percentage of the basic exemption.



For veterans with a U.S. VA disability rating of at least 10% or covered limb loss, the exemption is calculated as follows:

1. the basic exemption ranges from \$2,000 to \$3,500 and depends on the veteran's age and disability rating (those age 65 or older or who have a rating of at least 75% receive the maximum amount) ([CGS § 12-81\(20\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)) and
2. the income-based exemption equals 200% of the basic exemption for veterans with incomes below the OPM-set threshold (described above) and 50% of the basic exemption for veterans with incomes above it (except the income threshold for those with a 100% disability rating is \$21,000 for married individuals and \$18,000 for unmarried individuals) ([CGS § 12-81g\(a\) & \(d\)](#), as amended by [PA 22-74](#)).

For veterans with certain severe, service-related disabilities, the exemption applies against the assessed value of the veteran's dwelling and is calculated as follows:

1. the basic exemption is either \$5,000 or \$10,000, depending on the nature of the disability (e.g., \$10,000 if the veteran lost both legs due to enemy action and \$5,000 if he or she lost one leg in the same manner) ([CGS § 12-81\(21\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-79](#)) and
2. the income-based exemption equals 200% of the basic exemption for veterans with incomes below the OPM-set threshold (described above) and 50% of the basic exemption for veterans with incomes above it ([CGS § 12-81g\(a\) & \(d\)](#), as amended by [PA 22-74](#)).

Municipalities must increase these basic exemption amounts using a statutorily specified formula if their grand list increases by a certain amount due to a revaluation ([CGS § 12-62g](#)). Increases to the basic exemption, in turn, result in an increase to the income-based exemption as well.

Although veterans are generally prohibited from receiving more than one exemption based on their status as a veteran, those who qualify based on their disability rating or federal compensation may also receive an additional exemption for severe service-related disabilities, provided they meet the criteria for both ([CGS § 12-90](#)).

*Local Option to Increase Exemption for Certain 100% Disabled Veterans.* The law allows municipalities, with their legislative bodies' approval (or board of selectmen in town meeting towns), to set the income-based exemption amount for 100% disabled veterans at three times (rather than twice) their basic exemption amount for veterans with incomes below \$21,000, if single and \$24,000, if married ([CGS § 12-81g\(b\)](#), as amended by [PA 22-74](#)).

*Additional Local Option Exemption for Veterans With Disability Ratings.*

Municipalities may, with their legislative bodies' approval, provide an additional property tax

exemption to veterans who receive the state mandated exemption based on their VA-disability rating of at least 10% or loss of a limb. Municipalities may set the income threshold for this local option exemption, but it must not be lower than the OPM-set one. If the municipality chooses to provide this additional exemption, it must be at least \$3,000 and applied to the assessed value of the veteran's property ([CGS § 12-81f\(b\)](#)).

*Local Option Exemption for Certain Non-Disabled Veterans.* Municipalities may, with their legislative body's approval, provide a property tax exemption to veterans who do not qualify for certain other veteran property tax exemptions (i.e., wartime, disabled, and severe service-related exemptions) if their incomes are below a set threshold. The municipality may set the threshold, but it may not set it lower than the OPM-set one. The exemption may be up to \$5,000 or 5% of the property's assessed value ([CGS § 12-81jj](#)).

*New Local Option Exemption for Veterans' Primary Residences.* A new law allows municipalities, by a vote of their legislative body (or board of selectman if the legislative body is a town meeting) to establish a new local option exemption for income-qualifying veterans' primary residences. The exemption (1) is available to veterans with up to \$50,100 in federal adjusted gross income and (2) equals 10% of the assessed value of a dwelling the veteran owns and uses as a primary residence ([PA 22-34](#), § 33, effective October 1, 2022).

### ***Retirement Credit***

*State Employees' Retirement System (SERS).* Employees who leave state service for the sole purpose of entering the armed forces (regardless of whether it is during a period of war) may continue making contributions during their absence as paycheck deductions or make retroactive contributions upon their return, subject to 5% interest per year (less a six month grace period) ([CGS § 5-180\(c\)](#)).

*Teachers' Retirement System.* Veterans may purchase retirement credit for up to 30 months of their time in service (and up to 10 years of wartime service) ([CGS § 10-183e\(3\) & \(11\)](#)). Additional information can be found on the system's website [here](#).

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

State law fully exempts federally taxable military retirement pay from the state income tax ([CGS § 12-701\(20\)\(B\)\(xvii\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-2, JSS](#), § 433 and [PA 22-118](#), § 410).

## ***Miscellaneous Benefits***

*Angel Investor Tax Credit.* Under the angel investor tax credit program, until July 1, 2024, angel investors (i.e., investors who are considered “accredited investors” by the Securities and Exchange Commission) who invest at least \$25,000 in approved businesses are eligible for a personal income tax credit, generally equal to 25% of their investment, up to a capped amount. The law caps the portion of credits that [Connecticut Innovations](#), which administers the credit program, may reserve each year for investments in certain types of businesses but allows it to prioritize certain unreserved credits for various businesses, including veteran-owned businesses ([CGS § 12-704d](#), as amended by [PA 21-1, JSS](#), § 133).

*Group Fishing License.* By law, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection may issue a group fishing license to a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization to conduct up to 50 group fishing events per year for qualified individuals, including disabled veterans ([CGS § 26-30\(h\)](#), as amended by [PA 21-12](#)).

*Municipal Veterans Representative.* Each town must have either a (1) paid veterans’ service officer; (2) local veterans’ advisory committee, which it may establish together with another town; or (3) designated town employee or volunteer to serve as the coordinating agency for all matters concerning veterans and their families (e.g., employment, education, rehabilitation, readjustment to peacetime living) and help them secure services and benefits ([CGS § 27-135](#)).

*Utility Termination.* The law limits when utility companies can terminate residential service for non-payment in hardship cases, which includes veterans whose sole source of financial support is U.S. VA benefits ([CGS § 16-262c\(b\)\(3\)](#)).

## **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. VA (<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>.

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