

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-348

AN ACT ELIMINATING SERVICE IN TIME OF WAR AS AN ELIGIBILITY

Title: CRITERION FOR CERTAIN STATE AND MUNICIPAL VETERANS' BENEFITS.

Vote Date: 3/14/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Finance, Revenue and Bonding

PH Date: 3/7/2024

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This proposed legislation eliminates, for certain state benefits, the requirement that a veteran have wartime service. Specifically, it applies to:

1. a property tax exemption of at least \$1,500.
2. tuition waivers for the state's public colleges and universities.
3. additional points on state and municipal civil service exams for initial appointments.
4. temporary financial assistance from the veteran's affairs commissioner.
5. temporary aid from the Soldiers', Sailors', and Marines' Fund.
6. free motor vehicle registration for up to three vehicles and special license plates for veterans with certain disabilities.
7. funeral honor guards.
8. exemption from any municipal fee for a hawker or peddler permit.

Due to many Veterans serving in the military not during a time of war, many veterans are not eligible for the listed benefits. Also, due to some peoples not being allowed to serve in the military during times of war in the past, such as women for example, many veterans are still having to deal with things like gender discrimination. This bill would help to promote higher education for veterans, reduce the effects of past gender discrimination, provide financial aid for veterans, and provide a property tax exemption for veterans. These would greatly help the veterans that need help or are seeking to further their personal or professional growth.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut General Assembly, 67th Assembly District, Representative Bill Buckbee: supports this bill and states that because there was a time when women were not allowed to serve, women have been unable to collect on equal benefits due to the current criteria. This would help to fight gender discrimination.

Raymond Higgins: states that they served in the U.S. Navy from 1975 to 1979 and due to that not being a time of war, they are unable to collect on certain benefits.

Connecticut Education Association, Policy, Research, and Government Relations, Director, Ray Rossomando: states that currently, UConn and the CSCU system provide tuition waivers for veterans who served during times of war, and they state that criteria limits eligibility for these benefits. Expanding eligibility for tuition waivers would promote the recruitment of highly skilled individuals into the teaching profession, foster personal growth and career advancement by removing financial barriers to education, and potentially provide cost-savings for school districts.

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, Executive Director, Alison Weir: supports the elimination of the requirement of service during "time of war" for benefits. They state that service members are always at risk and eligibility for these benefits should not be decided by whether congress decided to declare war or not during a service members time in the military.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Berlin V.F.W. 0732, Quartermaster, Stuart Topliff MSG: oppose this bill and recommends increasing the dollar amount of the exemption for veterans who qualify under CGS 12-81 (21). They also state that increasing the exemption for those who are eligible for V.F.W. membership should be a priority.

Reported by: Patrick Buckley

Date: 3/26/2024