
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5404 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING MILITARY TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE AND THE DRIVER'S LICENSE ENDORSEMENT TO OPERATE FIRE APPARATUS.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) commissioner to waive certain Q-endorsement eligibility requirements for qualifying veterans and members of the armed forces or National Guard ("military members"). (A Q-endorsement is a license endorsement that authorizes holders to operate a fire apparatus (i.e., drive a fire truck).) Under current law, applicants for this endorsement must have (1) been trained to drive a fire truck according to Commission on Fire Prevention and Control standards and (2) demonstrated the necessary skills (i.e., passed a driving test) on a representative vehicle, among other requirements.

To qualify for a waiver under the bill, members must meet minimum requirements set in a federal law on commercial driver's license (CDL) testing waivers. This federal law allows states to waive the CDL knowledge test and driving skills test and sets qualifications for the waivers (see below). Under the bill, the DMV commissioner must waive both the Q-endorsement training and driving test requirements for members who meet the minimum federal requirements for either the CDL knowledge test or driving skills test waiver.

*House Amendment "A" (1) requires the commissioner to waive both the Q-endorsement driving test and the training requirement, and (2) replaces the underlying bill's eligibility requirements (based, in part, on a Federal Highway Administration vehicle classification system) with eligibility requirements based on federal CDL eligibility waivers.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2024

FEDERAL CDL WAIVER REQUIREMENTS APPLIED TO Q-ENDORSEMENTS

Federal law sets rules for CDLs for interstate operation and states are generally required to conform their licensing laws to these requirements. Among other things, these rules include requiring CDL applicants to pass a knowledge test and driving skills test. However, they allow states to waive these test requirements under certain circumstances.

Federal law generally allows states to waive the CDL knowledge test requirement for military members who show that, within the year prior to applying, they:

1. were regularly employed in one of seven specified military capacities (e.g., an Air Force pavement and construction equipment operator, Army PATRIOT launching station operator, or Marine Corps motor vehicle operator – 3531);
2. operated a commercial motor vehicle representative of the type they expect to operate upon separation from the military;
3. have not held more than one civilian license at the same time; and
4. have not been convicted of certain specified motor vehicle offenses or had any license suspended or revoked.

Similarly, states may generally waive the CDL driving skills test requirement for military members who show, among other things, that they:

1. were regularly employed within the last year in a military position that required driving a commercial motor vehicle;
2. drove, for the two years prior to separating from the military, a vehicle representative of the commercial type they expect to operate upon separation from the military;
3. have not held more than one civilian license at the same time; and

4. have not been convicted of certain specified motor vehicle offenses or had any license suspended or revoked.

Under the bill, if a military member meets either of these sets of CDL waiver requirements (i.e., for either the knowledge test or driving skills test), the DMV commissioner must waive both the Q-endorsement knowledge test and training requirements.

BACKGROUND

By law, a veteran is anyone honorably discharged or released under honorable conditions, or released with an other than honorable discharge based on a qualifying condition, from active service in the armed forces (i.e., the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Space Force, Air Force, and any of their reserve components, including the Connecticut National Guard when under federal service) (CGS § 27-103, as amended by PA 23-71).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 20 Nay 0 (03/14/2024)

Transportation Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 35 Nay 0 (04/15/2024)