
OLR Bill Analysis

SB 376

AN ACT ELIMINATING SERVICE IN TIME OF WAR AS AN ELIGIBILITY CRITERION FOR CERTAIN STATE AND MUNICIPAL VETERANS' BENEFITS.

SUMMARY

This bill eliminates the requirement that a veteran have wartime service to qualify for certain state and municipal veterans' benefits. In doing so, it extends these benefits to veterans who are otherwise eligible but did not serve during a statutorily defined period of war for the minimum amount of time currently required under the law (generally at least 90 days; see BACKGROUND).

The bill also makes technical and minor changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025, for the provisions on tuition waivers (§§ 1-3) and October 1, 2025, for the remaining provisions, with the provision on property tax exemptions (§ 9) applicable to assessment years starting on or after that date.

STATE VETERANS' BENEFITS

The bill extends certain financial, employment, and other benefits to eligible veterans who do not have qualifying wartime service (and, for certain benefits that accrue to them, their eligible spouses, certain surviving parents, and dependent children). These benefits include the following:

1. a property tax exemption of at least \$1,000 (plus additional amounts the municipality may, and in some cases must, provide to veterans who are eligible for this exemption) (§ 9);
2. tuition waivers for undergraduate and graduate degree programs at the state's public colleges and universities (§§ 1-3);

3. additional points on state and municipal civil service exams for initial appointments (§§ 4 & 5);
4. temporary financial assistance from the veterans affairs commissioner (§ 6);
5. temporary aid from the Soldiers', Sailors' and Marines' Fund (§ 7);
6. free motor vehicle registration for up to three vehicles and special license plates for veterans with certain disabilities (§ 8 & CGS § 14-49(o));
7. funeral honor guards (§ 10); and
8. exemption from any municipal fee for a hawker or peddler permit (§ 11).

BACKGROUND

Definition of Veteran

Under state law, a veteran is anyone who was honorably discharged, or released under honorable conditions, from active service in the United States armed forces. This also includes anyone who was released from active service with an other than honorable (OTH) discharge based on a "qualifying condition."

A qualifying condition is a (1) post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury diagnosis by a licensed health care professional at a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs facility; (2) military sexual trauma disclosed to such a health care professional; or (3) determination by the Qualifying Review Board that sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression was more likely than not the primary reason for the OTH discharge (CGS § 27-103).

Wartime Service

By law, to be eligible for state benefits that require service in a time of war, a veteran must have served at least 90 cumulative days during a statutorily specified period of war, as described in the table below. A

veteran who served fewer days may be eligible if he or she (1) was separated from service earlier because of either a service-connected U.S. Veterans' Administration-rated disability or an injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty or (2) served for the duration of a period of war that lasted fewer than 90 days (CGS § 27-103(a)(3)).

The table below summarizes the dates and service conditions that constitute service during a period of war for state veterans' benefits (CGS § 27-103(a)(4)). (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 determining veterans' benefits.)

Table: Post-1940 "Periods 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 6/1/14—12/9/21	Active service during the covered period

*For certain property tax exemptions, the end date is considered 12/31/47 (CGS § 12-86)

COMMITTEE ACTION

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 20 Nay 0 (02/18/2025)