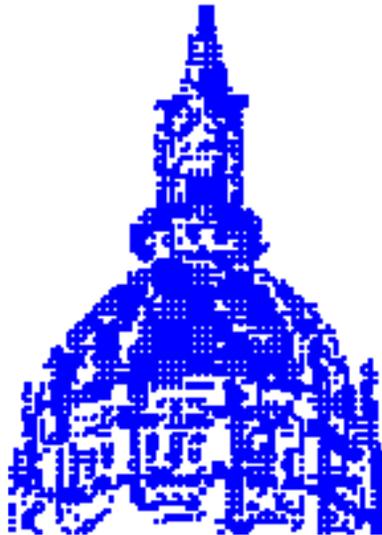


Office of Legislative Research
Connecticut General Assembly



OLR ACTS AFFECTING

VETERANS



By:
Veronica Rose, Principal Analyst

2003-R-0529
July 16, 2003

NOTICE TO READERS

This report provides brief highlights of public and special acts affecting veterans enacted during the 2003 regular session.

Not all provisions of the acts are included; readers are encouraged to obtain the full text of acts that interest them from the Connecticut State Library, the House Clerk's Office, or the General Assembly's website (<http://www.cga.state.ct.us>). Complete summaries of all public acts passed during the 2003 regular session will be available in early fall when OLR's *Public Act Summary* book is published; some are available now on the OLR website (<http://www.cga.state.ct.us/olr/publicactsummaries.asp>).

All acts summarized here are effective upon passage unless otherwise noted.

TRANSITIONAL LIVING SERVICES

A new law eliminates a \$400,000 General Fund transfer to the Veterans' Affairs Department for transitional living services (**PA 03-2**).

MORTGAGE LOAN APPLICATIONS

A new law requires financial institutions and federal banks to keep for two years and two months the mortgage application of any reservist or national guardsman called to active duty before a determination is made on it. The applicant has 30 days from the date of the call to submit a written statement asking that his application be kept on file. If he returns from active duty within two years after submitting the application and, within 60 days after discharge from active duty, submits a written statement that his income, assets, debts, or employment have not changed materially, the institution or bank must (1) finish processing the application in accordance with original terms and conditions and (2) offer him any different terms and conditions it is offering to the public (**PA 03-24**, effective July 1, 2003).

TUITION FEES

Under a new law, students in state higher education institutions called to active duty in the armed forces will be able to reenroll in any course for which they paid but did not complete because of their active duty status. They will have four years to reenroll from the date they are released from active duty. The schools may not impose any additional tuition, student fee, or related charge for the courses, unless they had fully reimbursed the students (**PA 03-33**, effective May 12, 2003).

VETERANS' BENEFITS

War Service Benefits. A new law makes all veterans who have at least 90 days of active duty service in the armed forces since August 2, 1990 eligible for property tax, education, and other war service benefits, even if they did not serve in a war or war theater. Under prior law, veterans of this period were eligible only if they served in Somalia after December 2, 1992; in Bosnia after December 20, 1995; or during Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm, August 2, 1990 to June 30, 1994.

On the other hand, the law eliminates benefits for veterans of the Cuban pacification, Nicaraguan campaign, Haitian campaign, and Berlin airlift. It

also eliminates benefits for (1) veterans with active duty service in South Korea's demilitarized zone after February 1, 1955; (2) veterans who did not serve in a combat or combat-support role in the Lebanon conflict, July 1, 1958 to November 1, 1958; and (3) some veterans of the Mexico expedition, by adopting the federal dates—May 9, 1916 to April 5, 1917. Under prior law, the expedition dates were March 10, 1916 to April 6, 1917 (**PA 03-85**).

Property Tax Exemption. A new law expands the number of veterans and their surviving spouses eligible for an optional property tax exemption by increasing the maximum income a person can have and be eligible for the program by \$25,000, to \$51,100 for a single veteran or a survivor of a veteran and \$56,900 for married veteran. To be eligible for the optional benefit, the person must be eligible for the \$1,000 property tax exemption that municipalities must provide for eligible wartime veterans and their surviving spouses.

By law, a municipality may exempt up to \$10,000 of the property's value. The new law alternatively allows the municipality to set a maximum exemption of up to 10% of the property's value (**PA 03-44**, effective July 1, 2003, and applicable to assessment years

starting on and after October 1, 2003).

Property Tax Exemption. A new law extends certain veterans and armed forces members' property tax exemptions that formerly applied only to owned property to include leased motor vehicles. It allows eligible recipients to receive refunds of taxes on leased vehicles, whether they paid the taxes directly or through their lease payments (**PA 03-269**, effective October 1, 2003).

STATE HIGHWAYS

A new law designates veterans' commemorative or memorial names for several state highway segments (**PA 03-115**).

VETERANS' ADVOCACY AND ASSISTANCE

By law, the Veterans' Advocacy and Assistance Unit must have at least six service officers. A new law revises their statutory assignment to require that one be assigned to each of the five, rather than six, congressional districts. The unit generally (1) assists veterans, their spouses, and eligible dependents and family members in applying for aid; (2) gathers and disseminates information; and (3) assesses veterans' needs (**PA 03-170**).

VR:ro