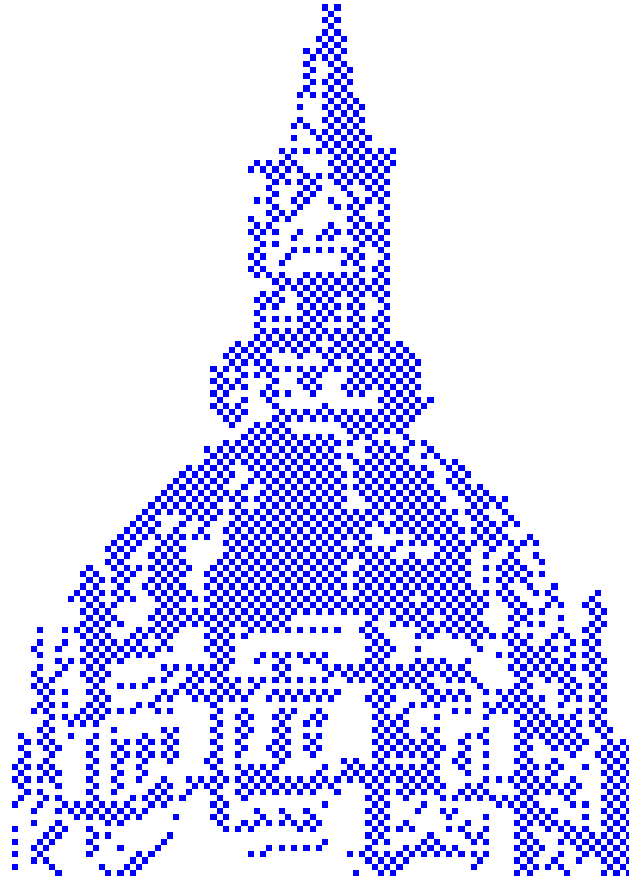




ACTS AFFECTING VETERANS AND THE MILITARY



2016-R-0113

Duke Chen, Principal Analyst

June 9, 2016



NOTICE TO READERS

This report provides highlights of new laws (public acts) affecting veterans and the military enacted during the 2016 legislative session. In each summary, we indicate the public act (PA) number.

Not all provisions of the acts are included here. Complete summaries of all 2016 public acts are available on OLR's webpage: <http://cga.ct.gov/olr/olrsums.asp>.

Readers are encouraged to obtain the full texts of acts that interest them from the Connecticut State Library, House Clerk's Office, or General Assembly's website: <http://www.cga.ct.gov>.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

**CONNECTICUT FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT AND ACTIVE DUTY
MILITARY SERVICE 4**

**ELIMINATING SIMULTANEOUS MEMBERSHIP IN MULTIPLE UNITS
OF THE STATE MILITARY 4**

EXEMPLARY VETERANS EDUCATION PROGRAM 4

**LABOR DEPARTMENT RESOURCE NETWORK AND VETERANS'
DEPARTMENT VISITATION, OUTREACH, AND TRAINING 4**

LEASING MILITARY FACILITIES 5

MEDAL OF ACHIEVEMENT AWARD 5

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS 5

MILITARY DEPARTMENT'S NONDISCRIMINATION LAWS 5

MINOR, TECHNICAL, AND CONFORMING CHANGES 5

**POSTHUMOUS AWARDING OF THE CONNECTICUT WARTIME SERVICE
MEDAL 6**

PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION AND WAIVER 6

QUALIFICATIONS FOR ADJUTANT GENERAL 6

VETERAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES 6

VETERANS' HEALTH RECORDS 7

WOMEN VETERANS 7

CONNECTICUT FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT AND ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY SERVICE

A new law requires certain private employers and the state to allow their employees to take unpaid time off because of any qualifying exigency arising from the employee's spouse, child, or parent being on active duty or notified of an impending call or order to active duty in the armed forces ([PA 16-195](#), effective upon passage).

ELIMINATING SIMULTANEOUS MEMBERSHIP IN MULTIPLE UNITS OF THE STATE MILITARY

A new law repeals the (1) requirement that the Governor's Guards be filled by voluntary enlistments and (2) specific authorization that enlistments in the Governor's Guards may be made from the National Guard. Federal law (32 USC § 109(e)) prohibits simultaneous membership in a reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces, including the National Guard, and in a unit of a state defense force, such as the Governor's Guards ([PA 16-165](#), effective upon passage).

EXEMPLARY VETERANS EDUCATION PROGRAM

A new law requires the State Board of Education, in consultation with the Department of Veterans' Affairs, to award an exemplary veterans education program distinction to boards of education that offer programs providing students with opportunities to learn

about veterans' contributions or collaborate with local veterans organizations through classes, extracurricular activities, presentations, or symposiums, among other things ([PA 16-188](#), effective July 1, 2016).

LABOR DEPARTMENT RESOURCE NETWORK AND VETERANS' DEPARTMENT VISITATION, OUTREACH, AND TRAINING

A new law requires the labor commissioner to establish a special operations resource network as a clearinghouse for veterans and armed forces members who, as part of their military training, acquired knowledge, experience, or skills most compatible with certain professional opportunities.

Under the act, the veterans' affairs commissioner must require each nursing home and assisted living facility administrator in the state to notify the department every six months of new residents who are veterans or their family members and the advocacy and assistance unit must use the information to develop an annual schedule for veteran service officers to visit these facilities. The act also requires the unit to, among other things, (1) develop a written outreach plan for reaching veterans and their relatives to help them with claims for veterans' services and benefits and (2) conduct a training program for veteran service contact persons at least twice yearly rather than annually. It requires, rather than allows, anyone designated

by a municipality as a veteran service contact person to complete training within a specified time period ([PA 16-68](#), effective October 1, 2016).

LEASING MILITARY FACILITIES

A new law expands the following provisions pertaining to the leasing and use of the state's military facilities. It expands:

1. the definition of military facility to include state-owned or -controlled parcels of land;
2. the insurance requirement for leasing or using a facility to anyone applying, instead of just nongovernmental entities; and
3. the adjutant general's responsibility to include the security of all military facilities in addition to his current responsibility for the use, maintenance, and leasing of such facilities.

The act also, among other things, allows (1) the leasing of military facilities associated with the first and second companies of the Governor's Horse Guards in Avon and Newtown to anyone if it does not conflict with military purposes and (2) the adjutant general to change certain fees for leasing or using military facilities ([PA 16-52](#), effective upon passage).

MEDAL OF ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

A new law expands the Connecticut National Guard's medal of achievement award program, which gives awards to guard members who distinguish

themselves through outstanding achievement or meritorious service performing any state military service. The act allows the award to be made to any member of (1) the state's armed forces, instead of just Connecticut National Guard members; (2) the U.S. Armed Forces; or (3) another state's armed forces ([PA 16-166](#), effective upon passage).

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

A new law expands the Military Department's authority over building construction projects (e.g., remodeling, alteration, repair, or enlargement) by increasing, from \$500,000 to \$2 million, the amount the department can spend to alter, repair, or make additions to public buildings ([PA 16-110](#), effective upon passage).

MILITARY DEPARTMENT'S NONDISCRIMINATION LAWS

A new law broadens the scope of the law barring discrimination in the state's armed forces to more closely align with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities' antidiscrimination laws and federal policies relating to the armed forces ([PA 16-153](#), effective upon passage).

MINOR, TECHNICAL, AND CONFORMING CHANGES

A new law renames the "veterans' advocacy and assistance unit" as the "Office of Advocacy and Assistance" and

requires the commissioner to appoint a manager, rather than a unit head, to lead this office.

The act also conforms the law to practice by splitting the statutory definition of "Veterans Home" into the "Veterans Residential Services facility" and the "Healthcare Center" ([PA 16-167](#), effective July 1, 2016).

POSTHUMOUS AWARDING OF THE CONNECTICUT WARTIME SERVICE MEDAL

Under a new law, war veterans who died on or after November 12, 1918 (the day after World War I ended) and before January 1, 2000 are now eligible for the state's posthumous award for war service. Under prior law, the award, which may be a ribbon or medal, was available only to veterans who died on or after January 1, 2000 ([PA 16-164](#), effective upon passage).

PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION AND WAIVER

By law, wartime veterans and their surviving unmarried spouses are eligible for state-mandated property tax exemptions. A municipality's legislative body may authorize an additional property tax exemption to them if their income does not exceed a specified amount. A new law increases, from \$10,000 to \$20,000, the amount a municipality can provide as an additional exemption to nondisabled

veterans. It also allows municipalities to provide an additional exemption to disabled war veterans of at least \$3,000.

The act also requires municipalities to waive the interest on delinquent property taxes owed by certain active military members serving out-of-state, rather than only by those serving in Iraq or Afghanistan ([PA 16-191](#), effective October 1, 2016, and applicable to assessment years beginning on and after that date).

QUALIFICATIONS FOR ADJUTANT GENERAL

A new law modifies the qualifications for adjutant general of the Connecticut National Guard, requiring that at least 10 of the 15 currently required years of commissioned service in the U.S. Armed Forces be in the National Guard ([PA 16-111](#), effective upon passage).

VETERAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES

Under a new law, certain veteran-owned businesses will get up to a 15% price preference for certain Department of Administrative Services open market orders or contracts. To be eligible, these businesses must have a 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 ([PA 16-184](#), effective October 1, 2016).

VETERANS' HEALTH RECORDS

A new law prohibits certain health care providers and institutions from charging their patients, or authorized representatives, for copies of medical records necessary for supporting a claim or appeal relating to any provision authorized under the federal and state veterans statutes ([PA 16-109](#), effective upon passage).

WOMEN VETERANS

A new law requires the head of the Department of Veterans' Affairs veterans' advocacy and assistance unit to develop training on how to help and serve women veterans with regard to certain benefits and programs. The department must also publish on the Internet extensive and reliable data on women veterans and content dedicated to matters that concern them.

The act also allows the department to create and release noncommercial radio and television announcements to encourage veterans in the state to participate in surveys, provide data, or enroll in a department registry ([PA 16-192](#), effective October 1, 2016).

DC:bs