File No. 306

Senate Bill No. 447

Senate, April 2, 1998. The Committee on Government Administration and Elections reported through SEN. LEBEAU, 3rd DIST., Chairman of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the bill ought to pass.

AN ACT GRANTING VETERANS OF SERVICE IN THE MILITARY PEACE-KEEPING MISSIONS IN SOMALIA, HAITI AND BOSNIA WARTIME VETERAN STATUS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Subsection (a) of section 27-103 of the
2 general statutes is repealed and the following is
3 substituted in lieu thereof:
4 (a) As used in the general statutes, except
5 chapter 504, and except as otherwise provided: (1)
6 "Armed forces" means the United States Army, Navy,
7 Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Air Force; (2)
8 "veteran" means any person honorably discharged
9 from, or released under honorable conditions from
10 active service in, the armed forces; (3) "service
11 in time of war" means service of ninety or more
12 days except, if the war, campaign or other
13 operation lasted less than ninety days, "service
14 in time of war" means service for the entire
15 duration of the war, campaign or other operation,
16 unless separated from service earlier because of a
17 service-connected disability rated by the
18 Veterans' Administration, during the
19 Spanish-American War, April 21, 1898, to August
20 13, 1898; the Philippine insurrection, August 13,
21 1898, to July 4, 1902, but as to engagements in

22 the Moro Province, to July 15, 1903; the Boxer
23 Rebellion, June 20, 1900, to May 12, 1901; the
24 Cuban pacification, September 12, 1906, to April
25 1, 1909; the Nicaraguan campaign, August 28, 1912,
26 to November 2, 1913; the Haitian campaign, July 9,
27 1915, to December 6, 1915; the punitive expedition
28 into Mexico, March 10, 1916, to April 6, 1917;
29 World War I, April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918,
30 but as to service in Russia, to April 1, 1920;
31 World War II, December 7, 1941, to December 31,
32 1946; and the Korean hostilities, June 27, 1950,
33 to January 31, 1955; and shall include service
34 during the Vietnam era, December 22, 1961, to July
35 1, 1975; and shall include service while engaged
36 in combat or a combat support role during the
37 peace-keeping mission in Lebanon, September 29,
38 1982, to March 30, 1984; the invasion of Grenada,
39 October 25, 1983, to December 15, 1983; Operation
40 Earnest Will, involving the escort of Kuwaiti oil
41 tankers flying the United States flag in the
42 Persian Gulf, February 1, 1987, to July 23, 1987;
43 and the invasion of Panama, December 20, 1989, to
44 January 31, 1990; and shall include service during
45 Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert
46 Storm, August 2, 1990, to June 30, 1994; and shall
47 include service during such periods with the armed
48 forces of any government associated with the
49 United States; AND SHALL INCLUDE SERVICE WHILE
50 ENGAGED IN COMBAT OR A COMBAT SUPPORT ROLE DURING
51 THE PEACE-KEEPING MISSION IN SOMALIA, OPERATION
52 RESTORE HOPE, DECEMBER 12, 1992, TO MARCH 28,
53 1994; THE PEACE-KEEPING MISSION IN HAITI,
54 OPERATION UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1994, TO
55 APRIL 17, 1996; AND THE PEACE-KEEPING MISSION IN
56 BOSNIA, OPERATION JOINT ENDEAVOR, DECEMBER 1,
57 1995, UNTIL A DATE DETERMINED BY THE PRESIDENT OR
58 THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES OR ESTABLISHED
59 BY AN ACT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

60 PS COMMITTEE VOTE: YEA 22 NAY 0 JF C/R GAE
61 GAE COMMITTEE VOTE: YEA 17 NAY 0 JF

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"THE FOLLOWING FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND BILL ANALYSIS ARE PREPARED FOR THE BENEFIT OF MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SOLELY FOR PURPOSES OF INFORMATION, SUMMARIZATION AND EXPLANATION AND DO NOT REPRESENT THE INTENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OR EITHER HOUSE THEREOF FOR ANY PURPOSE."

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**FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT - BILL NUMBER SB 447**

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|---|---|
| STATE IMPACT | Indeterminate Cost, see explanation below |
| MUNICIPAL IMPACT | Minimal Grand List Reduction, see explanation below |
| STATE AGENCY(S) | Department of Veterans' Affairs, Office of Policy and Management (OPM), State Comptroller, Department of Higher Education, Soldiers' Sailors' and Marines' Fund |

EXPLANATION OF ESTIMATES:

STATE IMPACT: The bill expands wartime service to include service in Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia. This makes more people eligible for a variety of wartime service benefits which include state subsidized local property tax exemptions, credited service in state-sponsored pension systems and educational benefits. While the number of individuals qualifying for benefits as a result of this bill is not known by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, it is not anticipated to be large relative to the total number of Connecticut veterans.

The bill makes them eligible for a minimum property tax exemption of $1,500. The State reimburses municipalities for the loss associated with the additional exemption ($500 of the $1,500) resulting from PA 85-573. This property tax relief grant, administered by OPM, has a FY 1997-98 expenditure of $8,155,337. The average benefit resulting from the additional exemptions is approximately $35 per veteran.

Individuals covered under the bill who are also members of state-sponsored retirement systems (State Employees Retirement System (SERS), Teachers' Retirement System) are eligible to purchase credited service within those systems. The payments required cover half the actuarial value of the increase in benefits. The increase in the unfunded liability of any of the state-sponsored systems from a purchase is a function of the member's age, service, and final average salary. While the fiscal impact cannot be determined until the time of purchase, it is not expected to be significant. It should be noted that the bill does not provide a window for purchase for Tier I members of SERS.

Currently, tuition waivers are offered to wartime veterans attending the State's public colleges and universities. As the number of eligible individuals rises, the potential result could be increased tuition due to the fact that funding provided by paying students covers the cost of waived tuition. In addition, current law authorizes the State to reimburse higher education constituent units for tuition waivers beyond a certain percent of tuition revenues. Any significant increases in the number of eligible individuals may potentially result in costs to the State.

There are additional veterans that will be eligible to be patients and residents at the Veteran's Home and Hospital as a result of the passage of this bill. The State Veterans Hospital has 204 patients at the present time. The veterans' home, which supports a residential and rehabilitation program, has a total of 313 residents. There will also be additional veterans eligible for award payments from the Soldiers', Sailors' and Marines' Fund as a result of the passage of this bill.

MUNICIPAL IMPACT: Passage of the bill will result in an unknown increase in the number of veterans eligible for a minimum property tax exemption of $1,500. There are also increased exemptions for veterans with Veteran's Administration rated disabilities. These exemptions result in a minimal grand list reduction to municipalities. Additionally, the bill makes more people eligible for credited service in the Municipal Employees Retirement Fund (MERF) but does not provide a window for this purchase.

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**OLR BILL ANALYSIS**

SB 447

**AN ACT GRANTING VETERANS OF SERVICE IN THE MILITARY PEACE KEEPING MISSIONS IN SOMALIA, HAITI AND BOSNIA WARTIME VETERAN STATUS**

**SUMMARY:** This bill makes more people eligible for state and municipal veterans' wartime service benefits by allowing credit for combat or combat-support service during the military missions in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia. The benefits include a local property tax exemption, tuition waivers, state education aid, civil service examination preferences, medical service, and credited service in public employee retirement systems. But since separate definitions of wartime service, which the bill does not change, determine eligibility for burial in the state veterans' cemetery and aid from the Soldiers', Sailors' and Marines' Fund, Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia veterans will not be eligible for those benefits.

Because the bill does not extend expired purchase of service deadlines in state or municipal retirement laws, the following people will not be eligible for retirement credit for the additional wartime service: members of Tier I of the State Employees Retirement System (SERS) and veterans who, for more than one year, have been members of Tier II of SERS, the Probate Judges and Employees Retirement System, or the Municipal Employees Retirement Fund B (MERF)(though SB 482 opens MERF for purchase of military service).

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 1998

**FURTHER EXPLANATION**

**Service Dates**

The bill specifies the following service dates for the three missions:

Somalia: December 12, 1992 to March 28, 1994

Haiti: September 19, 1994 to April 17, 1996

Bosnia: December 1, 1995 to a date determined by the president, Congress, or the General Assembly.

By law, to be credited, service must last a minimum of 90 days or the entire duration of the operation, whichever is shorter, unless a person is separated from service because of a Veterans' Administration-rated, service-connected disability.

**Wartime Service Benefits**

**Property Tax Exemptions**. Wartime veterans (or qualified family members) who are state residents are eligible for a minimum of a $1,500 local property tax exemption. There are increased exemptions for veterans with Veteran's Administration-rated disabilities.

**Tuition Waivers**. Wartime veterans who are state residents when they are accepted for admission are exempted from paying tuition at the community-technical colleges, Connecticut State University, and UConn.

**State Education Aid**. Children between the ages of 16 and 23 of wartime veterans who were killed in action, died in accidents or from illness while on active duty, or are totally and permanently disabled receive state education aid, as long as the veteran was a state resident when he enlisted or was inducted. The child must attend an approved school. The amount of aid any child receives is based on need, up to a maximum of $400 per year.

**Civil Service Exam Preferences**. Veterans, and under certain conditions their spouses or widows or widowers, receive bonus points on initial state civil service exams. Wartime veterans receive five bonus points and disabled wartime veterans receive 10 bonus points as long as they meet minimum passing scores. The same bonus awards apply to initial municipal civil service exams, but spouses are not eligible for municipal exam bonus points.

**Medical Service**. Wartime veterans are eligible for admission to the Veterans' Home and Hospital or any other veterans' hospital for medical or surgical care and treatment. They must have been state residents when they enlisted or were inducted or have lived in the

state continuously for at least two years.

**Credited Service in Public Retirement Systems**. Veterans can obtain credit for wartime service towards their public pension benefits. Wartime military service can also be credited against the state's hazardous duty retirement program, under which certain state employees may retire after 20 years of service in a hazardous job.

**Soldiers', Sailors', and Marines' Fund**

This fund provides temporary assistance to wartime veterans who need short-term financial aid because of unemployment, sickness, and disability, among other things. Veterans must have been state residents at the time of enlistment.

**BACKGROUND**

**Related Bills**

SB 482, favorably reported by the Labor and Public Employees Committee, permits MERF members to purchase credit for military service until January 1, 1999.

SB 84, favorably reported by the Labor and Public Employees Committee makes the same change as this bill in the definition of war service.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Public Safety Committee

Joint Favorable Change of Reference
Yea 22 Nay 0

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable Report
Yea 17 Nay 0