
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 6442 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING MILITARY AFFAIRS IN CONNECTICUT.

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SUMMARY

This bill makes various changes to state law concerning veteran and military affairs, as described in the section-by-section analysis below.

*House Amendment "A" strikes the underlying bill, which made technical changes, and replaces it with the provisions below.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025, except the provisions on Veterans' Month and the dental services study are effective upon passage and the provision on the Borinqueneers license plate is effective January 1, 2026.

§ 1 — VETERANS' MONTH

Establishes the month of November as Veterans' Month

The bill requires the governor to proclaim November of each year as Veterans' Month in recognition of the service and sacrifice of individuals who have served in the armed forces to protect the U.S. and the state. Suitable exercises may be held in the State Capitol and elsewhere as the governor designates.

Background — Related Bill

HB 6723 (File 56), favorably reported by the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee, contains identical provisions.

§ 2 — WOMEN VETERANS' LICENSE PLATES

Requires the DMV commissioner, if requested by a woman veteran or servicemember, to register a motor vehicle and issue a special certificate of registration and a set of license plates commemorating the woman's service

The bill requires the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) commissioner, at the request of a woman who is a veteran or member of the armed forces, to register a motor vehicle and issue a special certificate of registration and a set of license plates commemorating the woman's service. To qualify, the motor vehicle must be owned or leased by the woman veteran or member for at least one year, including a motor vehicle used exclusively for farming purposes by a woman veteran or woman servicemember who is engaged in agricultural production as a trade or business. By law, veterans, armed forces members, or their surviving spouses can request a special registration certificate and license plates under the same circumstances.

Background — Related Bill

sHB 5074 (File 223), favorably reported by the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee, contains identical provisions.

Background — Veterans and Armed Forces

By law, a "veteran" is anyone honorably discharged or released under honorable conditions, or released with an other than honorable (OTH) discharge based on a qualifying condition, from active service in the armed forces (CGS § 27-103).

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).

By law, the "armed forces" are 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).

§ 3 — THE BORINQUEENERS LICENSE PLATES

Requires the DMV commissioner to issue commemorative license plates in recognition of "The Borinqueneers" and gives a portion of the fee to the Hispanic-American Veterans of Connecticut, Inc. for bilingual services to veterans and service members

The bill requires the DMV commissioner, beginning January 1, 2026, to issue commemorative license plates in recognition of the "The Borinqueneers" (the primarily Puerto Rican members of the 65th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army who served with distinction). Under the bill, the commissioner must determine the design of the plates in consultation with Hispanic American Veterans of Connecticut, Inc.

The bill sets a \$60 fee for this plate, in addition to the regular fees for registering a motor vehicle. Under the bill:

1. \$15 of the fee must be deposited in an account controlled by DMV for the cost of producing, issuing, renewing, and replacing the license plates; and
2. \$45 of the fee must be deposited in an account for Hispanic-American Veterans of Connecticut, Inc. to provide bilingual services and assistance to Connecticut veterans and armed forces members.

The plates must have numbers and letters selected by DMV, but the commissioner may charge a higher fee for license plates that have (1) the numbers and letters from a previously-issued plate or (2) letters instead of numbers or are low number plates, in addition to the fees set for these registrations by law.

The bill prohibits charging additional fees for (1) renewing this license plate or (2) transferring an existing registration to or from a registration with a “The Borinqueneers” plate.

The bill establishes the Hispanic-American Veterans of Connecticut commemorative account as a separate account in the General Fund to receive all of the fees other than the money designated for DMV’s costs and allows the Hispanic-American Veterans of Connecticut, Inc. to deposit private donations in this account. Under the bill, funds in the account must be distributed quarterly by the Office of Policy and Management secretary to Hispanic-American Veterans of Connecticut, Inc., which can use the funds as described above.

The bill allows DMV to adopt regulations to set standards and procedures for issuing, renewing, and replacing these license plates.

Background — Related Bill

HB 6724 (File 228), favorably reported by the Veterans’ and Military Affairs Committee, contains identical provisions.

§ 4 — PURPLE HEART LICENSE PLATES

Allows veterans and servicemembers who get a license plate commemorating the Military Order of the Purple Heart to be reimbursed for the cost of joining a chapter of the order

The bill allows veterans and members of the armed forces (see *Background – Veterans and Armed Forces* above) who get a license plate recognizing the Military Order of the Purple Heart on or after July 1, 2025, to apply to the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) commissioner for reimbursement of the cost of joining a chapter of the Military Order of the Purple Heart in order to get the license plate.

The bill (1) authorizes the commissioner to determine the application process for reimbursement and (2) requires him to notify the veteran or servicemember about his decision within 60 days after receiving the application and, if approved, reimburse the veteran or servicemember.

Background — Related Bill

HB 5787 (File 40), favorably reported by the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee, contains identical provisions.

§ 5 — VETERAN LICENSE AND IDENTIFICATION RENEWAL FEE WAIVERS

Requires DMV to waive, or provide vouchers for waiving, the driver's license or identity card renewal fee for veterans who attend a one-day Stand Down event hosted by DVA

The bill requires, instead of allows, the DMV commissioner to waive the driver's license or identity card renewal or duplication fee for veterans who attend a one-day event hosted by DVA, that offers services, supplies, or assistance to veterans (i.e. Stand Down events).

The bill also requires the commissioner to issue a voucher to veterans who apply for their renewals more than six months before their license or card expires. This voucher must waive the fee during the six-month period. (In practice, DMV cannot process renewal applications more than six months before a license's or identification card's expiration date.)

These provisions apply to veterans (see *Background – Veterans and Armed Forces* above) who are verified by the DVA.

By law, the fee for a renewed license is \$96 and \$32 for a renewed identity card if they are valid for eight years, but the fees are prorated if the commissioner issues renewed licenses and cards for shorter periods of time (CGS §§ 1-1h & 14-41).

Background — Related Bill

SB 1150 (File 252), favorably reported by the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee, contains substantially similar provisions, but is not limited to Stand Down events.

§ 6 — MILITARY AWARDS

Authorizes the adjutant general to establish awards or ribbons for members of the state armed forces

Under current law, state military medals, awards, ribbons, or other honors are generally established legislatively in state statute or authorized federally. Beginning July 1, 2025, the bill authorizes the adjutant general, within available appropriations, to establish awards or ribbons he may bestow on members of the state armed forces, as well as remove any awards or ribbons he creates on or after this date.

The bill specifies that the adjutant general cannot remove any state military award, ribbon, or other honor or decoration created by his office before July 1, 2025, or by the legislature.

Background — Related Bill

sSB 1153 (File 47), favorably reported by the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee, contains identical provisions.

§§ 7 & 8 — EDUCATION SERVICES FOR MILITARY-CONNECTED STUDENTS

Requires local and regional school boards to take steps to ensure a minimally disruptive transition of a military-connected student and allows a military-connected student to stay enrolled when a service member relocates on orders

The bill requires local and regional school boards to take steps to ensure a minimally disruptive transition of a military-connected student who (1) enrolls at a school after the school year begins and (2) has an individualized education plan (IEP) or 504 plan from a prior school (see *Background*). This applies when the student enrolls due to an armed

forces member's military orders or other document directing the servicemember to the state. For these students, the bill requires districts to at least (1) transfer records and evaluations; (2) perform a reevaluation; and (3) within 30 school days of the child's enrollment, hold a planning and placement team meeting or a meeting to establish a 504 plan.

Under the bill, an armed servicemember's child must be allowed to remain enrolled in a school until the end of the school year if the servicemember relocates on orders and remains in the armed forces; however, a child enrolled in grade 11 may continue to be enrolled in school for an additional school year, while the servicemember remains in the armed forces.

Background — Individualized Education Plans

Federal regulations require an IEP to include (1) measurable annual goals and how the child's progress toward the goals will be measured; (2) special education and related services the child will receive; and (3) supplementary aids and services the child will receive, which are supports provided in regular education classes and nonacademic settings (34 C.F.R. § 300.320(a)(4)). The included services must be based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable and be designed to help the child progress toward his or her annual goals, be involved and make progress in the general education curriculum, participate in extracurricular and nonacademic activities, and be educated with other children with and without disabilities.

Background — 504 Plans

Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects students with mental or physical disabilities from discrimination in public schools (29 U.S.C. § 794). Students who receive school accommodations under this law have them memorialized in a written plan, commonly known as "504 plans."

Background — Related Bill

sHB 7123 (File 322), favorably reported by the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee, contains substantially similar provisions.

§ 9 — STUDY OF DENTAL SERVICES FOR VETERANS

Requires the DVA commissioner to evaluate dental services provided to veterans

The bill requires the DVA commissioner to evaluate dental services provided to veterans (see *Background – Veterans and Armed Forces* above) in the state and identify areas for improvement (such as opportunities to expand access to these services and increase enrollment in U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (U.S. DVA) dental insurance program).

The commissioner must report on his evaluation, as well as any recommendations for legislation, to the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee by February 1, 2026.

Background — Related Bill

sHB 6765 (File 260), favorably reported by the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee, requires DVA to implement and administer a program, withing available appropriations, to give assistance vouchers to veterans for dental services at federally-qualified health centers, UConn School of Dental Medicine, and other institutions of higher education that provide dental services.

§ 10 — NURSING HOME WAITING LIST EXCEPTION

Requires nursing homes to admit qualifying veterans under certain conditions, regardless of the waitlist

The bill adds an exception to the requirement that a nursing home that accepts state funds to care for indigents admit people from its waiting list in the order that they submitted completed applications. The bill's exception requires a nursing home to admit a veteran regardless of the waiting list if the:

1. nursing home has a contract with the U.S. DVA to provide care for veterans and
2. veteran applicant (a) meets the U.S. DVA's service-connected and other applicable eligibility criteria and (b) is eligible for care at the nursing home.

As under current law, a nursing home does not have to accept an indigent on the waiting list under certain circumstances and must accept

certain transfers from a nursing home that is closed or closing, regardless of the list. If a nursing home skips over an applicant on the waiting list, it must, by law, make a dated notation on the list explaining the decision.

Background — Related Bill

HB 6910 (File 43), favorably reported by the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee, contains identical provisions.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 17 Nay 3 (02/18/2025)