

Comparison of Massachusetts HERO Act and Connecticut State Law

By: Matthew H. Frame, Associate Legislative Attorney
January 23, 2025 | 2025-R-0006

Issue

Compare the Massachusetts HERO Act with existing provisions of Connecticut state law.

Summary

In August 2024, Massachusetts adopted [the HERO Act](#), which made dozens of changes to state law concerning servicemembers, including on cemeteries, education and children, employment and licensing, legal rights and the judiciary, military and veterans recognition, state requirements, taxes, veterans' benefits, and working groups. Below, we summarize all the provisions of the HERO Act as well as provide notes on related Connecticut law or policy.

Although Connecticut offers many of the same services as Massachusetts, they may vary in structure, population served, or benefits. Massachusetts also has several unique programs, including a bonus program, veteran annuities, and veterans' employment hiring provisions. Therefore, many of the changes in the HERO Act are specific to Massachusetts and would require more significant changes to Connecticut law to be implemented.

Comparison of Provisions

Cemeteries

Section(s)	Summary of Provision	Related Connecticut Law
49	Gives the executive office of veterans' services authority over certain veteran cemeteries	The Connecticut commissioner of veterans affairs already has authority over state veteran cemeteries: CGS § 27-122a
125	Authorizes a veteran's spouse or a Gold Star family member to serve as veterans' graves officer if no qualified, willing, and able veteran seeks an appointment	Municipalities are required to appoint three citizens who are veterans to care for veteran graves in the municipality: CGS § 27-123

Education and Children

Section(s)	Summary of Provision	Related Connecticut Law
14	Specifies that military-connected students may serve on advisory councils to the board of elementary and secondary education	Connecticut has the Purple Star School Program to encourage schools to provide services, information, and contacts to military-connected students: CGS § 10-15m
15	Provides exemptions from state child care licensing requirements for childcare providers on military installations or those certified by a branch of the military	Connecticut has similar provisions (CGS § 19a-77, as amended by PA 23-29)
30	Requires public school districts to provide support services to military-connected students when a parent or guardian is called to active duty or was killed on active duty	Connecticut has the Purple Star School Program to encourage schools to provide services, information, and contacts to military-connected students: CGS § 10-15m

Employment and Licensing

Section(s)	Summary of Provision	Related Connecticut Law
18, 52 & 53	Extends the opportunity to purchase service time due to active duty military service from 180 days after the start of state service to 10 years after; requires retirement boards to give notice of potential benefits to all new employees; establishes a one-year period from the date of the signing of the law for current state and local government employees to buy back their military time if they previously did not	Connecticut has provisions allowing service to be purchased based on prior military service: CGS §§ 5-180 & 7-436b (Connecticut generally requires military service to be purchased within a year of starting state or municipal service)

Employment and Licensing (continued)

Section(s)	Summary of Provision	Related Connecticut Law
20	Allows public employees to continue to receive certain pay during their service in the armed forces of another state (previously, this only applied to service with the Massachusetts or U.S. armed forces) and prohibits impacts on seniority, leave, and overtime	Connecticut has similar provisions in state law: CGS §§ 5-259d, 7-461, 27-33, 27-33a & 27-34a
25-28	Increases, from \$2,000 to \$2,500, a tax credit for businesses hiring chronically unemployed or low-income veterans and extends the filing deadline for receiving the credit	Connecticut authorizes the JobsCT tax rebate which can be awarded for hiring from certain groups, including veterans: CGS § 32-7t
45 & 46	Establishes requirements for the Department of Health to make it easier for veterans and military medics to serve as emergency medical service (EMS) technicians	Connecticut requires the Department of Public Health to issue an EMS technician certification to veterans who present sufficient evidence of their qualifications: CGS § 20-206mm
148	Exempts certain professional service dog organizations from pet shop licensing requirements	Connecticut does not appear to provide this exemption: CGS § 22-344

Legal Rights and the Judiciary

Section(s)	Summary of Provision	Related Connecticut Law
22	Eliminates the National Guard's ability, in certain circumstances, to impose a commanding officer's non-judicial punishment if two years have passed since the punishable offense	Connecticut has a similar two-year statute of limitation but measures it from a different starting point: CGS § 22-185(c)
47	Makes it a consumer protection violation to receive compensation for assisting veterans in claiming their benefits if not accredited to provide these services, among other related prohibitions	Connecticut law does not address this issue, but it is generally illegal under federal law: 38 U.S.C. 5901
146	During child abuse investigations, requires consideration of the military status of the parent, guardian, or caregiver, and if applicable, the spouse's or intimate partner's status	Connecticut does not currently have this provision in its law: CGS § 17a-101g
147	Requires notice to the appropriate military authorities about allegations of child abuse by a person with military status; requires the state to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the federal Department of Defense's family advocacy program; implements other related requirements	Connecticut does not currently have provisions that require this, but the Department of Social Services may share records with military law enforcement for purposes of child abuse investigations: CGS § 17a-28(g)(9)

Military and Veteran Recognition

Section(s)	Summary of Provision	Related Connecticut Law
1	Requires flags be flown at half-staff (1) for the death of any military service member performing military duty under official orders and killed while on active duty, (2) for the return of the remains of a prisoner of war (POW) or member who was missing in action (MIA), and (3) on national POW/MIA recognition day	Connecticut provides the governor discretion of when to fly the flag at half-staff, including in the event of the death of a servicemember in the line of duty: CGS § 3-10f
4	Establishes May 22 as U.S. Merchant Marine Day and December 20 as United States Space Force Day	Connecticut does not statutorily recognize these days or days for any specific branch of service: CGS § 10-29a
9	Requires the governor to proclaim on Memorial Day in recognition of the sacrifices of Gold Star families; requires illuminating certain bridges in recognition of those lost	The governor is not statutorily required to implement these observances in Connecticut
21 & 39	Establishes a medal of liberty application process and notifies certain individuals they may qualify for the corresponding license plate	Connecticut does not have an exact equivalent to the medal of liberty

State Requirements

Section(s)	Summary of Provision	Related Connecticut Law
19	Establishes a military spouse liaison appointed by the adjutant general to conduct outreach to and advocate on behalf of military spouses, among other duties	Connecticut does not have this position, but does have several state-level veteran services officers and requires the appointment of a municipal veterans representative to serve each town: CGS §§ 27-102i & 27-135
71	Requires the secretary of veteran services to report to the legislature and the public on the activities of the office and data collected related to veterans	Connecticut has several similar reporting requirements for veteran services: CGS §§ 27-102n & 27-102p
75	Requires the secretary to create and distribute a veterans' benefits and services notice; requires most employers to post this notice	Connecticut does not have such a requirement
136	Requires the veterans' equality review board to evaluate awarding state benefits for servicemembers with (1) an other than honorable discharge based on sex, race, color, religious creed, national origin, age, genetic information, ancestry, marital status, or disability and (2) any U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs category eligible for a discharge upgrade, including, but not limited to, mental health conditions, military sexual trauma, and traumatic brain injury	Connecticut's review board is already required to do this for the second category, but not required for the first: CGS § 27-103

Taxes

Section(s)	Summary of Provision	Related Connecticut Law
23	Allows municipalities the option to double property tax exemptions for veterans and increases the annual property tax abatement amount based on inflation	Connecticut has several municipal option property tax exemptions and increases these based on increases in the town's grand list: OLR Reports 2024-R-0004 and 2024-R-0018
24 & 40	Adjusts eligibility for an exemption for motor vehicle excise tax as well as vehicle registration and license fee exemptions to apply to veterans determined by the U.S Department of Veterans Affairs to (1) have a combined service-connected disability rating of 100%, or (2) be individually unemployable due to their service-connected disability	<p>Connecticut has several applicable exemptions: CGS §§ 12-81c (specially-equipped vehicles for persons with disabilities) as well as others that apply to this veteran group (see OLR Report 2024-R-0003)</p> <p>The state also allows a fee waiver for veteran driver's licenses during certain events (CGS § 14-11k) or after a certain period after separating from the military (CGS § 14-50), as well as for registering certain vehicles owned by disabled veterans (CGS § 14-49(o))</p>
29	Expands vehicle sales tax exemption to disabled veterans with the Purple Heart specialty license plate	Connecticut does not offer a comparable exemption, but does exempt specialty equipment for motor vehicles for the use of a person with physical disabilities: CGS § 12-412(80)

Veterans Benefits

Section(s)	Summary of Provision	Related Connecticut Law
48	<p>Expands the definition of a veteran for state benefits to include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any person who served at least 90 days (either during wartime or peacetime) in the United States Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, or Space Force, as well as commissioned officers of the United States Public Health Service and National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration 2. Any person who received any discharge except dishonorable 3. Any person who is considered a veteran by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs 4. Any person awarded a service-connected disability during active duty or training, including as a reservist or member of the National Guard 	<p>Connecticut has a narrower definition: any person honorably discharged from, released under honorable conditions from, or released with an other than honorable discharge based on a qualifying condition from, active service in the armed forces (CGS § 27-103)</p>
56	<p>Broadens the definition of dependent to include children over the age of 18 who meet the criteria for emancipation and expands the pool of coverage by extending benefits to dependents who are mentally or physically unable to support themselves after reaching the age of 23</p>	<p>Connecticut does not have a statutory definition of dependent</p>
72	<p>Codifies certain veteran medical assistance and dental benefits; expands access to behavioral health treatment by allowing veterans receiving certain benefits to be reimbursed for visits to outpatient behavioral health providers</p>	<p>Connecticut does not offer a veteran-specific benefit comparable to this, but does offer several more general programs that provide similar services including residential programs and a skilled nursing facility</p>
73	<p>Provides a right of appeal of state veterans' benefits issues to the secretary of veteran services</p>	<p>Connecticut does not have a comparable provision</p>
88	<p>Eliminates the requirement to reside in the state for a certain period before receiving state veterans benefits</p>	
89	<p>Prohibits the loss of state veterans benefits during a year in which a cost-of-living adjustment for certain assistance programs would otherwise render the recipient ineligible</p>	
103	<p>Authorizes municipalities to disburse state veterans benefits by direct deposit, if certain conditions are met</p>	
115-117	<p>Increases the disabled veteran annuity from \$2,000 to \$2,500 and consolidates it into one annual payment</p>	

Working Groups, Commissions, and Task Forces

Section(s)	Summary of Provision	Related Connecticut Law
5-7	Increases the number of members on the commission on community behavioral health promotion and prevention	Connecticut does not have a comparable commission
149	Establishes a special commission to study post-traumatic stress disorder in the state	Connecticut has not done recent comparable studies
150	Establishes a working group to review alternative therapies for mental health treatments for veterans	
151	Establishes a study on property tax abatements and exemptions for veterans and surviving spouses	
152	Establishes a special commission to study and develop proposals for ways to improve the quality of life of veterans	

Other Changes

Section(s)	Summary of Provision
2, 3, 8, 10, 11, 13, 31, 32, 41, 42, 50, 51, 54, 55, 137, 141 & 142	Renames and reorganizes the Department of Veteran Affairs as the Executive Office of Veterans' Affairs
12 & 16	Adds the U.S. Space Force to existing statutes
17, 140 & 144	Technical changes regarding the location of the state veterans' home
33-38	Stricken from the bill
43, 44, 138 & 139	Makes technical changes to resolve a codification conflict
59, 60, 114 & 143	Eliminates duplicative definitions and outdated statutory references
57, 58, 61-70, 74, 76, 79-87, 90-102, 104-113, 118-124 & 126-135	Replaces gendered terms with neutral language
77, 78 & 145	Technical changes
153-156	Effective dates

MHF:co