

## U.S. Space Force

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June 4, 2025 | 2025-R-0057

### Issue

Provide an overview of the U.S. Space Force, including its creation, state benefits to its service members, and legislation incorporating the branch into Connecticut's laws.

### Summary

The U.S. Space Force was established by the United States Space Force Act in December 2019 ([Pub. L. No. 116-92](#), §§ 951-961). The Space Force's primary responsibilities are to conduct operations in space in order protect the interests and provide defense of the United States and its allies. Space Force members (called "guardians") are eligible for all the same federal benefits as Air Force members.

In 2023, the Connecticut legislature recognized the Space Force in state law, primarily by adding it to the definition of "armed forces" and its members to the definition of "members of the armed force" ([PA 23-71](#), § 1, codified in [CGS § 27-103](#)). In doing so, it made guardians eligible for all the same state benefits as other members and veterans of the armed forces.

### History of the Space Force

Prior to the establishment of the Space Force as the sixth branch of the armed forces, the U.S. Air Force established Space Command, later re-named Air Force Space Command (AFSC), in 1982. Headquartered at Peterson Space Force Base in Colorado, the primary responsibility of the AFSC was space surveillance and defense against anti-satellite technology employed by the Soviet Union.

In 2019, AFSC was [redesignated](#) as the U.S. Space Force and became the new branch's transitional headquarters. Though the Space Force was established under the Department of the Air Force, the Space Force consolidated all space-capabilities and technologies from the other branches of the armed forces. General John Raymond was sworn in as the first Chief of Space Operations on January 14, 2020. In May of that year, active-duty Air Force officers and enlisted personnel could begin submitting applications to transfer into the Space Force. A group of 2,400 from those volunteers became the [first servicemembers](#) of the Space Force.

The Space Force currently manages space launch [operations](#) on both the east and west coasts.

## **Federal Law**

By law, the Space Force must be organized, trained, and equipped to:

1. provide freedom of operation for the United States in, from, and to space;
2. conduct space operations; and
3. protect the interests of the United States in space ([10 U.S.C. § 9081](#)).

Under the law, the Space Force is established within the Department of the Air Force. However, it is a separate and distinct branch, similar to how the Marines Corps is organized under the Department of the Navy (U.S. Space Force, [Organization](#)).

According to their official website, the Space Force operates three field commands:

- [Space Operations Command](#). Responsible for providing the Space Force with combat power projections, intelligence, and logistics.
- [Space Training and Readiness Command](#). Develops space warfare doctrine, tactics, and strategy. Additionally, undertakes the education and training of Space Force personnel.
- [Space System Command](#). Manages the space acquisition budget for the Department of Defense and partners with industry, government agencies, and academic organizations in research and development for the Space Force.

A fourth field command, the Space Futures Command, was announced in 2024.

## ***Federal Benefits***

By law, a member of the Space Force shall be “treated as a member of the Air Force for the purpose of the application of any provision of law, including provisions of law relating to pay,

benefits, and retirement” ([Pub. L. No. 116-92 § 958\(1A\)](#), codified in [10 U.S.C. § 9081](#) as a “clarification of authorities”).

These [benefits](#) include tuition assistance, health insurance, and retirement savings plans.

## Connecticut Law

To align state law with federal law, in 2023, the legislature revised the primary definitions of “armed forces,” “members of the armed forces,” and other language germane to the branches of the armed services ([PA 23-71](#), amending [CGS § 27-103](#)). In doing so, it clarified that Space Force members and veterans are eligible for the same state benefits for which members or veterans of other military branches are eligible.

These benefits include:

- property tax exemptions (primarily [CGS § 12-81\(19\)](#));
- tuition waivers ([CGS §§ 10a-77\(d\)\(2\)](#), [10a-99\(d\)\(2\)](#), and [10a-105\(e\)\(2\)](#));
- points on civil service exams ([CGS §§ 5-224](#) and [7-415](#));
- free special plates and motor vehicle registrations ([CGS §§ 14-49\(o\)](#), [14-254](#), and [14-21d\(a\)](#));
- burial in the state veterans’ cemetery ([CGS § 27-122b](#));
- preference for state contracts ([CGS § 4a-59](#)); and
- waiver of certain licensing and registration fees ([CGS § 27-102a](#)).

According to records maintained by the Defense Manpower Data Center, there were no servicemembers from Connecticut serving in the Space Force as of 2024.

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