
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5406

AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS MEASURES HONORING THE HEROISM OF VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

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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.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026, except (1) provisions on the authorized representatives for veterans claims, study on nursing home contracts with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), and early-intervention system take effect July 1, 2026, and (2) the provision on the appointment of state military staff takes effect January 1, 2027.

§ 1 — AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES FOR VETERANS CLAIMS

Requires the state veterans affairs commissioner to conspicuously post certain plain language warnings and links on the DVA website

The bill requires the state veterans affairs commissioner, starting July 1, 2026, to conspicuously post on the department website a plain-language warning about:

1. people or entities acting as claims agents or attorneys without USDVA recognition (offering these services without this recognition is federally prohibited) and
2. sharing their USDVA account login or bank account login information with anyone (for example, usernames or passwords).

Under the bill, the commissioner must also post a link to a USDVA online tool that allows someone to:

1. report individuals who offer services without federal recognition;
2. search for recognized claims agents, attorneys, or entities; and
3. find final disciplinary decisions for unrecognized people or

entities.

§ 2 — QUALIFIED VETERANS' CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS LIST ON THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS WEBSITE

Changes the required documentation that charitable organizations must submit to the state DVA to be listed on the DVA website; changes the list's time requirement; permits the veterans affairs commissioner to temporarily or permanently remove organizations from this list with good cause

Existing law requires the veterans affairs (DVA) commissioner to publish a list of veterans' charitable organizations. The bill eliminates a requirement that organizations remain on the list for three years and then reapply for continued inclusion on the list. The bill allows the veterans affairs commissioner to remove organizations temporarily or permanently from this list with good cause.

The bill also changes the required documentation for organizations. Currently they must be charitable organizations that serve veterans and have been either a nonprofit corporation or federally tax exempt for three years. The bill instead requires organizations to provide a complete copy of their most recently filed Internal Revenue Service Form 990 (a tax form for tax exempt organizations) and proof of their status as a federally tax-exempt organization.

§ 3 — OFFICE OF ADVOCACY AND ASSISTANCE TRAININGS

Requires the OAA manager to add sections to existing training programs and compile a list of state and local resources

The bill expands the Office of Advocacy and Assistance (OAA) manager's annual training for veterans' service officers, members of municipal veterans advisory committees, directors of municipal veterans services, municipal veterans representatives, or certain public higher education institution representatives to cover all veterans, not just women veterans as currently required. It also adds a required portion on how to help and advise women veterans on issues unique to them. The bill also requires the training to include information on charitable or social service organizations that help with veterans' services or benefits.

The law already requires the manager to include in the training

information on community or nonprofit programs that help veterans.

The bill expands the twice annual training for members of municipal veterans advisory committees, directors of municipal veterans services, or municipal veterans representatives to include information on community or nonprofit programs and charitable or social service organizations that may help veterans. As under existing law, this training addresses state and federal services and benefits and assistance provided by municipalities and OAA. The bill also requires the (1) manager to make a list of state and local resources (for example, community or nonprofit programs and charitable or social service organizations) that may provide help to veterans in need and (2) office to add the list to the training program and post it on the DVA website.

Background — OAA

OAA is an office within the state DVA that serves veterans, their spouses, and eligible dependents and family members.

§§ 4 & 5 — VETERAN DENTAL CARE PROGRAM

Creates a Veteran Dental Care Program to help eligible veterans receive certain dental services, capped at \$3,500 a year per veteran

The bill creates a Veterans Dental Care Program, administered by the state DVA, to help eligible veterans get certain dental services. The bill requires DVA to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a state-wide dental organization to (1) identify dental providers to participate in this program and (2) coordinate the program's administration, including processing applications, making referrals, reviewing treatment plans, and notifying treatment plan providers.

Under the bill, eligible veterans must (1) be state residents, (2) have a service-connected disability rating of less than 100% and not already receive dental care from USDVA, and (3) have a household income of up to 400% of the federal poverty level.

Under the bill, a “provider” is a dental practice, dental clinic, or licensed dentist.

The bill sets an annual program cap of \$3,500 per eligible veteran for

covered services. Under the bill, if an eligible veteran exceeds this annual cap, the DVA commissioner must refer the veteran to the state-wide dental organization to discuss other sources of financial assistance.

Under the bill, the program must cover biannual examinations, fillings, root canals, crowns, prosthetics, and oral surgery.

Under the bill, the program does not cover implants, fixed bridges, orthodontics, cosmetic services (for example, whitening or veneers), or telehealth services.

Beginning on January 1, 2027, the bill allows eligible veterans to submit applications to DVA on a form created by the department. The bill requires the:

1. DVA commissioner to verify an applicant's eligibility and notify the applicant about the eligibility decision within 10 days after receiving the application (approval is valid for two years and requires a reapplication after that time);
2. DVA commissioner to refer eligible veterans to providers within 30 days of approval;
3. provider to state the dental services recommended for the eligible veteran in the treatment plan and submit it for the commissioner's review;
4. commissioner to approve or modify treatment plans and notify the provider about his decision within 10 days of receipt;
5. provider to begin services after receiving notification from the commissioner;
6. providers to either (a) bill DVA within five days of providing services or (b) bill an eligible veterans' dental insurance first, if applicable, to determine if certain services are covered, then bill DVA for the remainder; and
7. DVA to pay the provider within 30 days after receiving a bill and

notify the provider about the amount remaining on the veteran's annual benefit limit.

The bill requires the DVA commissioner, beginning by January 15, 2030, to annually consult with the state-wide organization with which it has an MOU and submit a report on the program's performance and any recommendations to the Veterans' and Military Affairs and Public Health committees.

The bill permits the governor to transfer money from the Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines Fund to DVA to fund the dental program, if the treasurer certifies on the governor's request that the transfer amount is not needed for other disbursements from the fund. By law, the governor already may transfer money between both the Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines Fund and the appropriation to DVA.

Background — Definition of a Veteran

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 (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).

A "qualifying condition" is a (1) post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury diagnosis by a licensed health care professional at a USDVA 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).

Background — Armed Forces

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).

§ 6 — STUDY ON INCENTIVIZING NURSING HOME CONTRACTS WITH USDVA

Establishes a task force to study ways to encourage nursing homes to contract with USDVA and provide care to eligible veterans

The bill establishes a task force to study ways to encourage Medicaid-certified nursing homes in the state to contract with the USDVA to increase the number of nursing homes providing care to eligible veterans. The task force must consider (1) financial incentives; (2) ways to supplement reimbursement for care; (3) tax credits; and (4) other ways of encouraging nursing homes to provide care to eligible veterans, covered by USDVA.

The bill requires the task force to include the DVA commissioner, or his designee, and one member appointed by each of the six legislative leaders (the House speaker, Senate president pro tempore, House majority and minority leaders, and Senate majority and minority leaders).

Under the bill, all appointed members may be legislators, and all initial appointments must be made by January 1, 2027. Any vacancies must be filled by the appointing authority.

The bill requires the House speaker and Senate president pro tempore to select the task force's chairpersons from among its members. The chairpersons must schedule and hold the first meeting by February 1, 2027, and the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee's administrative staff must serve in this capacity for the task force.

The bill requires the task force to report its findings and recommendations to the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee by January 1, 2029. Under the bill, the task force ends when it submits the report or January 1, 2029, whichever is later.

§§ 7-9 — DMV GRACE PERIOD EXTENSION AND WAIVER OF ORIGINAL LICENSURE AND IDENTITY CARD FEES FOR VETERANS

Increases the grace period for certain motor vehicle-related renewals or testing for certain armed forces members from 60 to 90 days from release from qualifying service and requires DMV to waive fees for the original issuance of a DVA-verified veterans' driver's license or identity card

The bill increases the grace period for certain armed forces members, from 60 to 90 days from release from qualifying service, for certain motor vehicle-related renewals or testing (driver's licenses, car registrations, and emissions testing). This applies to members of any state's armed forces or U.S. reserve called to active service in the armed forces of any state.

Under the bill, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) must also waive the fee for the original driver's license or identity card for any DVA-verified veteran (see *Background – Veteran Designation*). Previously, DMV could waive the identity card fee for a blind veteran.

Background — Veteran Designation

By law, the DMV commissioner must include a person's status as a veteran on his or her state driver's license or identity card (certain Hmong Laotian special guerilla unit members that served during the Vietnam era are also eligible for this benefit). To qualify, veterans, eligible reservists, or guerilla unit members must submit a request to the DVA to verify their veteran status or qualifying service to the DMV commissioner (CGS § 14-36h(e) & (f)).

§ 10 — BIRTH-TO-THREE PROGRAM

Requires the state early intervention system to take steps to provide a minimally disruptive transition of a military-connected child

The bill requires the state early intervention system (Birth-to-Three Program) to take steps to provide a minimally disruptive transition for a relocating armed forces member's child who was previously enrolled in the program in another state or territory with an individualized family service plan (IFSP) (see *Background – IFSP*). The bill requires the armed forces member to have been relocating due to new orders.

Under the bill, these steps include transferring records and prior

assessments, performing any reassessments, and holding a meeting within 45 days after the referral to create a written IFSP for the eligible child.

Background — IFSP

An IFSP is a written plan that describes (1) the services and supports an eligible child, under age three, will receive in the early intervention program; (2) how often they will receive these services; and (3) where this will occur.

Background — Armed Forces

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).

§ 11 — CONNECTICUT MILITARY STAFF

Changes provisions on appointment of the governor’s military staff

Current law requires the governor to appoint a military staff that includes the adjutant general, assistant adjutant generals, a chief of staff for the Air National Guard, and various aides-de-camp. The bill instead allows the governor to appoint a military staff and, if he does so, requires it to consist of the adjutant general, assistant adjutant generals, and other officers and senior enlisted noncommissioned officers as the governor deems necessary. The bill eliminates certain provisions about ranks of the staff and ex officio members from the Governor’s Foot Guards and Horse Guards.

It also permits the adjutant general, in addition to the governor, to appoint honorary staff to the National Guard.

§§ 12 & 13 — TRAINING FACILITY IN NIAN TIC

Renames the state military training facility in Niantic

The bill renames the state military training facility in Niantic as Camp Nett to follow Army facility naming conventions (currently named Camp Nett at Niantic).

§§ 14-16 — TECHNICAL CHANGES

Makes minor and technical changes to various veterans' and military affairs statutes

The bill makes minor and technical changes to various statutes affecting veterans' and military affairs, for example, eliminating the requirement that a specific separate, nonlapsing account be within the General Fund and a technical change to clarify that the National Guard includes the Army National Guard.

Background — Related Bill

sHB 5294, favorably reported by the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee, contains an identical provision on the National Guard.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 22 Nay 0 (03/10/2026)