

Recent New York State Laws & Initiatives FOR VETERANS

-- Driver's License Fees — NYS Department of Motor Vehicles now cannot require any payments for the duplication or alteration of an existing driver's license or non-driver's ID card prior to its renewal date, if the purpose of asking for the duplication or alteration is solely to add the distinguishing Veteran's mark on the card. This law became effective on December 7th.

-- Property Tax Exemption — New law increases the real property tax exemption from \$5,000 to \$7,500 for Veterans buying real estate with "eligible funds." "Eligible funds" under this law means money from a pension, bonus, or insurance (or dividends or refunds on an insurance policy), or payments received from the Federal government as POW compensation. This law goes into effect on July 1, 2015.

-- Temporary Hiring List — For temporary employment in public service positions in NYS, NYS must hire a qualified Veteran from a "Veterans Temporary Employment List" rather than going through a temporary employment agency. NYS Department of Civil Service must maintain this list of Veterans seeking temporary employment in a State public service position. This law is effective now.

-- Tax "Check-Off" For Homeless Veterans — NYS taxpayers can elect to contribute a monetary gift to a new "homeless Veterans assistance fund" when paying their State taxes. This gift is purely a gift, in that it does not reduce in any way the amount of State taxes that an individual owes. This law becomes effective with the taxable year beginning January 1, 2015.

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-- Supplemental Burial Allowance Changes — Previously, under the law governing the NYS Supplemental Burial Allowance program, a qualifying death had to actually occur inside the combat zone for the surviving family members to qualify for the benefit. Under the amended law, however, a servicemember who dies of wounds incurred in combat will be a “qualifying death” for the benefit, even if the actual death occurs outside of the combat zone. The new application is available on DVA’s website by following this link: <http://veterans.ny.gov/content/new-york-state-supplemental-burial-allowance>. This law goes into effect on February 14, 2015.

- In-State Tuition For G.I. Bill Recipients — Anyone who is not a NYS resident and is attending a State University of New York or City University of New York college using the G.I. Bill shall receive the in-state tuition rate, even though they are not NYS residents. This allows them to maximize their G.I. Bill benefits, and not have to pay the extra costs that would come from being charged the out-of-state rate. This law is effective now.

-- Professional Licenses For Military Spouses/Domestic Partners — The spouse or domestic partner of a servicemember who is licensed in another state to practice as a real estate broker or real estate salesperson, or to obtain a barber, esthetics, cosmetology, natural hair styling, or nail specialty license, and who moves to New York State with the servicemember, can receive the same professional license in NYS without re-applying. This law is effective now.

Of course, there are several other NYS programs that recognize a Veteran’s MOS or out-of-state professional license without making that Veteran jump through any more hoops to be licensed in NYS. For the current list of MOS and license programs granted recognition by the NYS “Experience Counts” initiative, see: <http://veterans.ny.gov/content/experience-counts>.

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Lifetime Liberty Pass — Veterans with a service-connected disability of 40% or higher can receive a pass for free admission to NYS parks and other State outdoor facilities for fishing, hunting, camping, etc. The Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation administers this program. The full guidelines and application form for this pass is available at this link: <http://nysparks.com/admission/lifetime-liberty-pass.aspx>. This program is effective now.

-- Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Act — NYS established a goal of awarding 6% of State governments to Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses. This program is being administered by a brand-new NYS Division of Service-Disabled Veterans' Business Development, operated by the NYS Office of General Services. If a business owner wants to apply as a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business, the application is available at this link: <http://ogs.ny.gov/Core/Docs/SDVOBCertificationApplication.pdf>. Applications are being accepted now.

Veteran Liaison Officers — Each NYS agency has appointed a "Veterans Liaison Officer" to coordinate initiatives affecting Veterans, servicemembers, and military families. This program is effective now.

-- No Income Limit For Gold Star Annuitants — Previously, NYS required an income cap for Gold Star Annuity Program eligibility. Now, there is no income requirement for Gold Star Parents to receive this Annuity from NYS. Gold Star Annuity application form is available at this link: <http://veterans.ny.gov/content/gold-star-parent-annuity-program>. This law is effective now.