

LEGISLATION 2021

HB 1290 (Mason/Cullerton): HB 1290 amends the Statute on Statutes and states that for determining eligibility for any veterans benefit available from the State, "honorable discharge" and "honorably discharged" would be defined to include a discharge under other than honorable conditions or general discharge under honorable conditions if the status is due only to a person's sexual orientation or gender identity (it would still not include a bad conduct discharge or a dishonorable discharge).

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 102-0382)

LEGISLATION -2022

HB 4998 (Luft/Turner): HB 4998 amends the Department of Human Services Act. It requires the Bureau of Homeless and Supportive Housing within the Office of Family Support Services to annually review and collect data on the number of military veterans receiving services or benefits under several of their programs. It also requires the Bureau to report on the Prince Home at Manteno. It specifies that the Bureau of Homeless Services and Supportive Housing within DHS may request and receive cooperation from IDVA. The Bureau must submit an annual report starting in December 2023 and every December thereafter.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 102-0961)

HB 5184 (Kifowit/Wilcox): HB 5184 amends the Counties Code, the Illinois Public Aid Code, and the Military Veterans Assistance Act. HB 5184 makes changes to the operation of veteran assistance commissions (VACs). HB 5184 establishes that there are three ways a VAC may derive its funding, and it states that the minimum funding a VAC may receive is the 0.02 % of the last known assessed value of the taxable property in the county, per Section 12-21.13 of the Public Aid Code.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 102-0732)

SB 1975 (Kifowit/Martwick): SB 1975 amends the Department of Revenue's Civil Administrative Code as well as the Property Tax Code. SB 1975 makes changes to the Homestead Exemption for Veterans with Disabilities, and it also makes additional changes to the Property Tax Code that are pertinent to the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR). For the provisions that affect veterans, this bill provides that veterans don't need to annually reapply for their property tax exemption if they are 100% disabled (permanent and total), it expands the definition of "surviving spouse" for spouses who would qualify for property tax exemption in three ways, and it requires IDOR to conduct a study on the impact of the veterans' homestead exemption on the property tax base in six different counties.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 102-0895)

HB 4682 (Swanson/Wilcox): HB 4682 is an IDVA initiative that stemmed from the Illinois Veterans' Advisory Council (IVAC). It amends the Illinois Lottery Law in two ways. First, it strikes "PTSD" and changes it to "behavioral health." This change allows IDVA to make grants to organizations that address veterans' "behavioral health" instead of being limited to PTSD alone. Second, it adds new language, creating a seventh category for "veterans' emergency financial assistance" so that IDVA can make grants for that as well.

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STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 102-0948)

SB 3762 (Hastings/Halpin): SB 3762 is an IDVA initiative emanating from IDVA's Veterans Education and Training Section. SB 3762 clearly identifies and aligns eligibility for the Children of Deceased Veterans Act (a secondary education program) and the MIA-POW Scholarship (a post-secondary education program). It also clarifies a 15-year consecutive year residency eligibility requirement by providing certain veterans do not have to wait an additional 15 years after separation from active duty, instead allowing them to begin meeting the requirement when they establish residency in Illinois while serving at their last duty station in Illinois.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 102-0855)

HJR 64 (Kifowit/Gillespie): HJR 64 is an IDVA initiative in conjunction with the sponsor. It declares June 12, 2022 "Women's Veterans Day" in Illinois.

STATUS: Adopted Both Houses

SJR 28 (Moeller/Harmon): SJR 28 designates the entire portion of U.S. Highway 20 in Illinois, beginning at the Illinois/Iowa border and ending at the Illinois/Indiana border, as the "Illinois Medal of Honor Highway" to honor current and future Medal of Honor recipients from Illinois. Illinois was one of a few remaining states along U.S. Highway 20 that had not been part of this initiative, and SJR 28 remedies this.

**Please note, U.S. Highway 20 in Illinois, specifically west of Elgin, already has a designation for Ulysses S. Grant. IDOT confirmed that multiple designations are allowed.*

STATUS: Adopted Both Houses

HB 5385 (Vella/Stadelman): HB 5385 amends the Department of Veterans' Affairs Act. It requires IDVA to serve as the State's principal assistance organization under the United States Department of Defense's Skillbridge program. It requires the Department to establish and maintain its Skillbridge certification for the program, educate businesses and organizations on Skillbridge and its benefits, assist businesses in obtaining approval for skilled workforce training curricula under Skillbridge, and to match transitioning servicemembers with training opportunities. It is subject to appropriation.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 102-1074)

HB 2369 (Kifowit/Wilcox): HB 2369 addresses oversight of county veterans assistance commissions (VACs). It is a trailer bill to HB 5184, now P.A. 102-0732. HB 2369 amends the Counties Code and the Military Veterans Assistance Act (Act that governs VACs). HB 2369 creates a process where local veteran service organizations can appoint delegates and alternates, with full voting rights, to oversee and vote on undertakings by VACs. It essentially allows for VACs to have more oversight from their peers (veteran service organizations), rather than being overseen solely by county boards. HB 2369 provides that a county can appoint a representative and that VACs need bylaws, policies and evaluations. HB 2369 permits the Attorney General to conduct investigations and commence civil actions to enforce the Act. Finally, HB 2369 preempts home rule so that the changes made to the Military Veterans Assistance Act apply to Cook County.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 102-1132)

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HB 2991 (Lilly/Harris): HB 2991 amends the Department of Veterans' Affairs Act. It provides that IDVA must contract for a market research analysis of field services in the state. The analysis must look at: availability of veterans assistance commissions, veterans service organizations, and IDVA staff services. It allows for the analysis to use census data, questionnaires, surveys, and town hall meetings to solicit input. It specifies that within 18 months of sufficient appropriations, IDVA must submit a report to the GO and General Assembly. The report must include a cost estimate for submitting its plan.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 102-0758)

HB 5078 (Kifowit/Ellman): HB 5078 amends the Illinois Vehicle Code. It provides that upon proper application, "the SoS shall issue proper application plates to any Illinois resident who is the surviving widow or widower, to each parent who is an Illinois resident, and to each Illinois resident who is a child, stepchild, child through adoption, brother, half-brother, sister, or half- sister." It makes corresponding changes throughout the Vehicle Code, and it provides a formal definition of "wartime" with specific dates and conflicts listed.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 102-0796)

HR 760 (Kifowit): HR 760 declares June 27, 2022, as Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day. It also declares June 2022 as Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Month. It urges the Departments of Public Health, Military Affairs, and Veterans' Affairs to continue working to educate victims of interpersonal violence, combat, life-threatening accidents, or natural disasters and their families, as well as the general public, about the causes, symptoms, and treatment of post-traumatic stress injury.

STATUS: Resolution Adopted

SB 257 (Kifowit/Munoz): SB 257 amends the Firearm Owners Identification Card Act, the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1963, the Illinois Domestic Violence Act of 1986, and the Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act. SB 257 allows military legal authorities to file military protection orders with Illinois courts, treating them like civilian protection orders, and it extends the authority of military orders beyond military locations. SB 257 also provides survivors with additional employment protections.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 102-0890)

HB 5175 (Kifowit/Hastings): HB 5175 amends the Higher Education Student Assistance Act by striking language in the definition of "qualified applicant." It provides that a veteran is eligible for an Illinois Veteran Grant if he or she received an honorable discharge after leaving federal active duty service, rather than after leaving "each period" of federal active duty service. It also amends the Public Community College Act. It adds new language to ensure that community colleges will change in-district tuition rates for students using any type of federal veterans' benefits. This tweak will help ensure that federal veterans' education programs are treated consistently and in accordance with federal regulations.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 102-800)

LEGISLATION –2023

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HB 2507 (Villanueva/Kifowit): HB 2507 is the Property Tax Omnibus bill. HB 2507 makes four major changes to the Homestead Exemption for Veterans with Disabilities section of the Property Tax Code. First, it changes the name of the "Homestead Exemption for Veterans with Disabilities" to the "Homestead Exemption for Veterans with Disabilities and Veterans of WWII", creating a property tax exemption for all WWII veterans, regardless of their disability ratings. Second, it provides that for taxable year 2024 and thereafter, for veterans that are rated 70% or higher, "the first \$250,000 in equalized assessed value of the property is exempt from taxation", regardless of the value of the property. Previously, the overall value of the property was taken into consideration. Third, it provides that for taxable year 2024 and thereafter, the definition of "veteran" no longer requires an "honorable discharge." Rather, the veteran must have a service-connected disability for which the veteran receives disability compensation. Fourth, it specifies that the Act cannot be used as the basis for a property tax appeal for previous tax years. The bill has an immediate effective date; however, many of the provisions do not take effect until taxable year 2024.

This bill addresses a few ongoing situations, specifically a lack of uniformity in how this benefit is administered.

This change and other changes to the Homestead Exemption for Veterans with Disabilities passed on HB 2507—a property tax omnibus bill. The bill is a 148-page bill, and only the first 14 pages relate to veterans.

STATUS: Passed Both Houses, Governor issued Amendatory Veto, will likely be revisited during Fall 2023 veto session. This is not a law yet.

HB 925 (Kifowit/Porfirio): HB 925 creates the "Veterans Service Organization State Charter Act." The Act creates a set of requirements that veterans service organizations must meet. Once an organization has met these requirements, and the organization's application has been approved by the Attorney General, the organization will be considered "state chartered."

HB 925 is the third legislative initiative put forth by the Illinois Association of County Veterans Assistance Commissions (IACVAC). It will work in conjunction with HB 5184 (102nd General Assembly) and HB 2369 (102nd General Assembly).

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 103-0405)

HB 1581 (Spain/Cappel): HB 1581 amends the Vehicle Code by adding a new section. The new section is titled "United States Submarine Veterans plates." The section is added to a long list of already existing specialty plates. These plates are intended for U.S. Navy Veterans who served as submariners. The bill is effective 1/1/2024.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 103-0130)

HB 1635 (Morgan/Morrison): HB 1653 authorizes the Executive Director of the Lake County Forest Preserve District to execute and deliver a quitclaim deed to certain real property located in Lake County to Fort Sheridan National Cemetery. This bill will allow Lake County to return this land to Fort Sheridan National Cemetery. This bill is effective immediately; however, the bill is just one of several steps in this process.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 103-0133)

HB 2475 (Guerrero-Cuellar/Joyce): HB 2475 is an Illinois State Police initiative that expands a list of military medals that allow one to waive the education requirements for cadet testing and eligibility. Under current law, collegiate educational requirements are met if a veteran has been honorably discharged and has been awarded a Southwest Asia Service Medal, Kosovo Campaign Medal, Korean Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, or Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal. Collegiate educational requirements are also met if one is an active member of the ILNG or reserves and has received one of these medals. HB 2475 adds the following medals to both of the existing lists for veterans and active members of the ILNG or reserves: Kuwait Liberation Medal (Saudi Arabia), Kuwait Liberation Medal (Kuwait), Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, or Inherent Resolve Campaign Medal. HB 2475 also provides that periods of State active duty and service as a peace officer for a police department allow candidates to meet the collegiate educational requirements.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 103-0312)

HB 2500 (Benton/Cappel): HB 2500 amends the Animal Welfare Act to provide that an animal shelter or animal control facility "shall" waive the adoption fee for a dog or cat if the person adopting the dog or cat does the following:

1. Presents a current and valid Illinois driver's license with the word "veteran" printed on its face, a current and valid Illinois Identification Card with the word "veteran" printed on its face, or an identification card issued under the federal Veterans Identification Card Act of 2015 and a valid Illinois driver's license or valid Illinois Identification Card.
2. Complies with the adoption policies of the facility. An animal shelter or animal control facility may limit the number of adoptions to one dog or cat per veteran in a two-year period.

**Please note, local animal shelters may not be familiar with this bill yet.*

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 103-0434)

HB 2856 (Swanson/Glowiak Hilton): HB 2856 amends the Vital Records Act. It provides that a death certificate may include or may be amended to include whether a military service-related injury contributed to the cause of death. This bill is effective 1/1/2025.

**This bill won't be effective until 2025 as IDPH is in the process of updating their system. The language in the bill and the eventual implementation is modeled after a tobacco question that is already asked on death certificates. Starting in 2025, there will be a question on whether a military service-related injury contributed to the cause of death, and the answer choices will be something to the effect of "yes", "likely" or "unknown." These options could change before 2025, but this is the general idea for the 2025 implementation.*

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 103-0406)

HB 3103 (Kifowit/Porfirio): HB 3103 amends the Firearm Owners Identification Card Act, the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1963, the Stalking No Contact Order Act, and the Civil No Contact Order Act. HB 3103 provides that no contact orders and civil no contact orders can only be filed with the victim's consent. It specifies that service members of the Illinois National Guard or any

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reserve military component who are victims of stalking and have received Military Protective Orders, as well as members of the Illinois National Guard filing on their behalf, may file a stalking no contact order or civil no contact order. This bill is effective immediately.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 103-0407)

SB 1072 (Rezin/Kifowit): SB 1072 amends the Flag Display Act. It creates a new section titled, "Honor and Remember Flag." The Honor and Remember Flag is produced by Honor and Remember Inc., a non-profit leading a national campaign for remembrance. It provides the flag "shall" be displayed on the following days:

1. Armed Forces Day
2. Memorial Day
3. Flag Day
4. Fourth of July
5. National MIA/POW Recognition Day
6. Gold Star Mother's Day
7. Veterans Day
8. Whenever there is a State military casualty.

This mandate applies to the State Capitol and other buildings where the United States national flag is displayed per sections 1, 2 and 3b of the Flag Display Act. These facilities include county court houses, penal and reformatory institutions, State educational institutions, State charitable institutions, city and village halls, village squares and the entrances of supervised public parks. This bill does not broadly apply to all State agencies/facilities. Additionally, the State will not reimburse these facilities for the flag or other costs associated with this mandate.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 103-0409)

SB 1376 (Turner/Hauter): SB 1376 amends the Homeless Family Placement Act. Under current law, a "referring agency" must consider seven factors when referring a homeless family to a shelter: potential for a child's academic and social success, a family history of domestic violence, the family's employment status, the family's job training opportunities, the proximity of other familial support, the availability of shelter resources appropriate to the family's needs and other social, psychological and health considerations. SB 1376 would add "military status" as an eighth factor. "Military status" would be added to determine the family's eligibility for State or federal benefits or other supportive services for homeless veterans and their families.

STATUS: Public Act 103-0086

SB 1595 (Plummer/Ladisch Douglass): SB 1595 amends the Vital Records Act. Under current law, "any applicant entitled to such a search" (named in will/next of kin) is able to request a search for the death certificate of an active duty service member or retired service member and receive one free certified copy of the death certificate, if found. SB 1595 replaces the term "retired service member" and changes the term to "honorably discharged veteran." It also changes "any" to "an" so that clerks and registrars are required to provide one free certified copy to "an" applicant, typically the NOK, but clerks and registrars are not required to provide one free certified copy to "any" applicant, possibly multiple individuals that are NOK. It's a minimum standard, and clerks and registrars can be more generous if they wish.

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Why was this change made? All retired service members are veterans; however, not all veterans are retired service members. SB 1595 is a trailer bill to a bill from the 102nd General Assembly that was drafted incorrectly. The language in SB 1595 meets the legislator's original intent. The bill is effective immediately.

STATUS: Signed into law (P.A. 103-0095)

SB 1705 (Kifowit/Porfirio): SB 1705 amends the Use Tax Act, the Service Use Tax Act, the Service Occupation Tax Act, and the Retailer's Occupation Tax Act. It creates an exemption for property that is sold to an active duty service member of the Armed Forces who presents a valid military identification and purchases the property using a form of payment where the federal government is the payor.

Status: Signed into law (P.A. 102-0384)
Effective 1/1/24

SB 1935 (Ellman/Hanson): SB 1935 amends the State Property Control Act. It adds qualified veteran-owned small businesses and minority-owned businesses to the list of entities that may receive preference in the disposition of transferable property. This bill is effective immediately.

Status: Signed into law (P.A. 103-244)
Effective 6/30/23

SB 2005 (Wilcox/Benton): SB 2005 amends the Housing Authorities Act by adding a new section. It requires housing authorities to develop and implement policies granting housing preferences to veterans who are homeless. It provides that such preferences shall be cumulative with any other preference allowed by a housing authority for which the veteran qualifies. It provides that nothing in the amendatory Act shall be construed to supersede any federal law or regulation.

Status: Signed into law (P.A. 103-247)
Effective 1/1/24