



2023 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF MINNESOTA
Approved by the Executive Committee on Oct. 27, 2022

Pass the Veterans and Military Omnibus Bill

It is important to us that our legislation is not lumped in with other bills in an effort to get other proposals through the Legislature. We feel this is best for both the veterans and for the lawmakers of Minnesota. It will allow Minnesota to stand as a shining example to other states.

Support the Hastings Veterans Home Campus Revitalization

This capital infrastructure project has a price tag of \$170 million. It would replace six of the nine buildings at the campus. A federal VA grant would pay two-thirds (\$111 million), but the state must commit to its one-third share (\$59.6 million).

Allocate state-dedicated funding to MDVA for veteran suicide prevention

The American Legion in Minnesota and nationwide has dedicated itself to suicide prevention. We have programs from our buddy checks to the Minnesota American Legion Suicide Prevention Coalition. We 100% support any effort by the state to help prevent the loss of life among our brothers and sisters in the veterans community.

Amend the Post-9/11 Service Bonus

The state Legislature last year approved this bonus, but in the campaign medals listed, it inadvertently left out Operation Inherent Resolve, the international military intervention against ISIS. These combat veterans surely deserve the bonus, too. Also, the legislation last year left out veterans who have moved to Minnesota and become residents. No other veteran benefits in our state say they must have entered the military in Minnesota. This provision is unfair to the many servicemembers who came to the Land of 10,000 Lakes and remained.

Amend 2 laws to help county veteran service officers

Change the language of 386.20 to say "uniformed services" so that DD214 discharge documents may be recorded at county courthouses. Presently, the clearly outdated statute only allows Army, Navy and Marines. Also, alter 197.63 to include county veteran service officers in the list of entities that can be issued documents with no charge.

Eliminate vehicle registration fees for Gold Star spouses and children, as well as 100% disabled veterans

Many states do not charge Gold Star spouses and children for vehicle registration fees (based on DD1300 Report of Casualty), and they do not charge veterans who have a VA rating of 100 percent permanent and total disabled. Let's bring that good idea to Minnesota. The loved ones of these people already have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Fix a property-tax exemption for Gold Star families

The present law says the surviving spouse must file within two years of the death and must live in the home at the time of the death.

This outdated law clearly discriminates against active-duty spouses and would help only Minnesota National Guard and Reserve spouses. Active-duty spouses from Minnesota likely would live out of state at the time of the death, and when they return to Minnesota, they find a state unwilling to give them the tax exemption. This is unfair. Let's fix it, and let's eliminate the two-year rule.

Provide a percentage-based change to Homestead Market Value Exclusion

The present level is \$300,000, but with home values rising, we ask that the Legislature brings this to \$400,000, and we ask that the Legislature set up a percentage-based relief starting at 50 percent with an inflationary-based formula. We support the removal of the equal or lesser value language for surviving spouses.

Eliminate the 2-year rule for DIC recipients

The current exclusion reads that the application for exclusion must be made by the surviving spouse within two years of the death of the veteran. This language doesn't allow for cases where the VA may take more than two years to make the proper decision for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). It also excludes the vast majority of surviving spouses made eligible by the recent changes to Blue Water Navy Vietnam veterans, who may have passed away while being denied all benefits.

Request approval of four new license plates

Jewish War Veterans, Air Medal Veterans, Purple Heart Medal, Retired Military by Branch

Increase the monthly allowance given to sheltered homeless veterans

Minnesota encourages homelessness by taking federal benefits income from veterans and others to pay for their wraparound shelter services. Presently, veterans can enter a

shelter and be left with just \$111 a month or remain homeless and keep their money.

Fixing this issue would reduce the number of homeless veterans. Last year, this bill was HF3568/SF3417, led by Catholic Charities. It has bipartisan support and should pass this year in the human services bill.

Provide 100% property tax relief for posts of veteran service organizations

State and county tax entities claim different interpretations of the property tax as laws. Meanwhile, posts are closing as a result of the heavy tax burden. Waite Park Post 428 is a recently example, closing as a result of \$60,000 in taxes. Zero taxes would remove any confusion. Considering all the good deeds these posts do, and the buildings themselves serving as community centers, this would be sound policy.

Reduce the cost of hunting, trapping and fishing licenses for disabled veterans

This likely would result in a net increase for DNR revenue. We are working with the Department of Natural Resources to bring this to fruition.

Administrative: Update the personal needs allowance at Minnesota Veterans Homes

No new law is needed for this matter, but The American Legion is working with the MDVA to increase the personal needs allowance for veterans in the Minnesota Veterans Homes. Presently, in a worst-case scenario, veterans are allowed to keep \$90 a month, and that has not changed in 30 years. For the sake of dignity, it's time to increase their allowance to reflect increases in the cost of living.

Charitable gambling: Preserve use of e-tab devices

The American Legion asks the state Legislature to preserve the use of e-tab devices in charitable gambling and to allow for its continued growth in popularity. Taking this away would hurt youth sports, veterans in need and many good causes. This issue was discussed in 2021, and the Gambling Control Board director at the time said his studies showed the revenue would be lost. People who go to their favorite bar would still go. He said it would not result in those people going to casinos. The 2021 House fiscal note said eliminating e-tabs would cut \$33 million a year in charitable giving and \$35 million in local wages. The 2012 Dayton administration agreement on e-tabs has been challenged in court, and twice the courts have said the agreement has not been broken. Please keep e-tabs in place.

Charitable gambling: Reduce tax burden on charitable gambling operations

Charitable gambling operations pay state taxes around 36-38 percent of the gross receipts, and some cities have additional taxes. And these operations pay taxes twice, because they pay taxes on games and other equipment needed to run a gambling operation. Plus, they have to pay provider fees, among other fees. Think of how much more vibrant our local communities could be if the operations could donate to more good causes. Food shelves, kids, families, homeless shelters, fire stations, city festivals, Fourth of July displays, people in need from all walks of life, they all would benefit.