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State of Minnesota

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NINETY-FOURTH SESSION

H. F. No. **3919**

03/02/2026 Authored by Cha
The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Veterans and Military Affairs Division
03/12/2026 Adoption of Report: Re-referred to the Committee on Transportation Finance and Policy
03/23/2026 Adoption of Report: Amended and re-referred to the Committee on Ways and Means

1.1 A bill for an act
1.2 relating to veterans affairs; modifying benefits available to veterans of the Secret
1.3 War in Laos; directing the commissioner of veterans affairs to establish an eligibility
1.4 process; making technical changes; appropriating money; amending Minnesota
1.5 Statutes 2024, section 171.07, subdivision 15; Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement,
1.6 sections 197.236, subdivision 9; 197.448, subdivisions 1, 2, by adding subdivisions.

1.7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

1.8 Section 1. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 171.07, subdivision 15, is amended to read:

1.9 Subd. 15. **Veteran designation.** (a) At the request of an eligible applicant and on payment
1.10 of the required fee, the department must issue, renew, or reissue to the applicant a driver's
1.11 license or Minnesota identification card bearing a graphic or written designation of:

1.12 (1) Veteran; ~~or~~

1.13 (2) Veteran 100% T&P; or

1.14 (3) SGU Veteran.

1.15 (b) At the time of the initial application for the designation provided under this
1.16 subdivision, the applicant must:

1.17 (1) be one of the following:

1.18 (i) a veteran, as defined in section 197.447; ~~or~~

1.19 (ii) a retired or honorably discharged member of the National Guard or a reserve
1.20 component of the United States armed forces; or

1.21 (iii) a veteran of the Secret War in Laos, as defined in section 197.448, subdivision 1,
1.22 paragraph (e);

2.1 (2) provide a certified copy of the applicant's discharge papers that confirms an honorable
2.2 or general discharge under honorable conditions status, ~~or~~ a military retiree identification
2.3 card, a veteran identification card, ~~or~~ a veteran health identification card, or an eligibility
2.4 certificate under section 197.448 if the applicant seeks the designation under paragraph (a),
2.5 clause (3); and

2.6 (3) if the applicant is seeking the disability designation under paragraph (a), clause (2),
2.7 provide satisfactory evidence of a 100 percent total and permanent service-connected
2.8 disability as determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

2.9 **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This section is effective June 1, 2027.

2.10 Sec. 2. Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement, section 197.236, subdivision 9, is amended
2.11 to read:

2.12 Subd. 9. **Burial fees.** (a) The commissioner of veterans affairs shall establish a fee
2.13 schedule, which may be adjusted from time to time, for the interment of eligible spouses
2.14 and dependent children and eligible veterans of the Secret War in Laos, as defined in section
2.15 197.448, subdivision 1. The fees shall cover as nearly as practicable the actual costs of
2.16 interment, excluding the value of the plot.

2.17 (b) Upon application, the commissioner may waive or reduce the burial fee for an indigent
2.18 eligible person. The commissioner shall maintain a policy, eligibility standards, and
2.19 application form for requests to waive or reduce the burial fee to indigent eligible applicants.

2.20 (c) No plot or interment fees may be charged for the burial of service members who die
2.21 on active duty or eligible veterans, as defined in United States Code, title 38, section 2402,
2.22 paragraph (a), subparagraphs 1 to 4 and 7.

2.23 Sec. 3. Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement, section 197.448, subdivision 1, is amended
2.24 to read:

2.25 Subdivision 1. **Definition.** ~~As used in~~ (a) For purposes of this section, the term following
2.26 terms have the meanings given.

2.27 (b) "Commissioner" has the meaning given in section 197.61, subdivision 2, paragraph
2.28 (c).

2.29 (c) "Department" has the meaning given in section 197.61, subdivision 2, paragraph (e).

2.30 (d) "VA" has the meaning given in section 197.61, subdivision 2, paragraph (g).

3.1 (e) "Veteran of the Secret War in Laos" or "SGU veteran" means a person who resides
3.2 in Minnesota and who:

3.3 (1) was naturalized as provided in section 2(1) of the federal Hmong Veterans'
3.4 Naturalization Act of 2000, Public Law 106-207; or

3.5 (2) is a person who the commissioner of veterans affairs determines served honorably
3.6 with a special guerrilla unit or with irregular forces that operated from a base in Laos in
3.7 support of the armed forces of the United States at any time during the period beginning
3.8 February 28, 1961, and ending May 14, 1975, and is a citizen of the United States or an
3.9 alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States.

3.10 Sec. 4. Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement, section 197.448, subdivision 2, is amended
3.11 to read:

3.12 Subd. 2. **Eligibility for benefits and privileges.** (a) A veteran of the Secret War in Laos,
3.13 as defined in subdivision 1, paragraph (e), clause (1), is entitled to the benefits and privileges
3.14 listed in paragraph (d) on July 2, 2025.

3.15 (b) A veteran of the Secret War in Laos, as defined in subdivision 1, paragraph (e),
3.16 clause (2), is entitled to the benefits and privileges listed in paragraph (d) after the
3.17 commissioner of veterans affairs verifies the person's veteran status. ~~The commissioner
3.18 must not begin accepting applications for verification under this paragraph until the legislature
3.19 enacts criteria and a protocol to determine:~~

3.20 ~~(1) which Minnesotans served in special guerilla units or with irregular forces in Laos;
3.21 and~~

3.22 ~~(2) which of the Minnesotans who served in special guerilla units or with irregular forces
3.23 in Laos are deserving of Minnesota veterans benefits.~~

3.24 (c) If the commissioner verifies a person's status as a veteran of the Secret War in Laos,
3.25 the commissioner must provide the person with a certificate of eligibility for the benefits
3.26 and privileges listed in paragraph (d) on a form developed by the commissioner for this
3.27 purpose. The commissioner must develop the form required under this paragraph no later
3.28 than September 15, 2025.

3.29 (d) The following statutory benefits and privileges available to a veteran, as defined in
3.30 section 197.447, are also available to a veteran of the Secret War in Laos: ~~section 171.07,
3.31 subdivision 15 (veteran designation on drivers' licenses and state identification cards);
3.32 section 43A.09 (civil service recruitment); section 43A.11 (veterans preference in state
3.33 employment); section 43A.111 (certain disabled veterans); section 197.23 (purchase of~~

4.1 grave markers); section 197.231 (honor guards); section 197.236 (state veterans cemeteries);
4.2 section 197.455 (veterans preference); section 197.4551 (permissive preference for veterans
4.3 in private employment); section 197.46 (writ of mandamus); section 197.48 (application);
4.4 section 197.481 (enforcement by commissioner); and section 197.63 (vital records, certified
4.5 copies); ~~section 197.65 (renewal of professional licenses, motor vehicle registration, and~~
4.6 ~~drivers' licenses); and section 197.987 (honor and remember flag).~~

4.7 Sec. 5. Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement, section 197.448, is amended by adding a
4.8 subdivision to read:

4.9 Subd. 3. **Eligibility determination.** (a) The commissioner must establish an application
4.10 process to determine a veteran's eligibility for the benefits in subdivision 2, paragraph (d).

4.11 (b) To establish eligibility, an applicant must submit a completed application for pre-need
4.12 determination of eligibility for burial in a VA national cemetery. County veteran service
4.13 officers and the commissioner must provide assistance to applicants filling out the application.
4.14 The commissioner must make copies of the application and any successor form available
4.15 on the department's website and at the department's offices.

4.16 (c) After the VA makes a determination on the application, the applicant must submit
4.17 the determination to the commissioner. If the VA determines that an applicant is eligible to
4.18 receive benefits under subdivision 2, paragraph (d), the commissioner must issue a certificate
4.19 of eligibility to the applicant for the benefits and privileges under subdivision 2, paragraph
4.20 (d).

4.21 Sec. 6. Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement, section 197.448, is amended by adding a
4.22 subdivision to read:

4.23 Subd. 4. **Special consideration.** (a) If the VA determines that an applicant is not eligible,
4.24 the applicant may request special consideration from the commissioner. The commissioner
4.25 must establish a process to request special consideration consistent with the requirements
4.26 of this subdivision. The commissioner must make applicable forms to request special
4.27 consideration available on the department's website and at certain department offices.

4.28 (b) An applicant seeking special consideration under this subdivision must submit the
4.29 following to the commissioner:

4.30 (1) documentation from the VA regarding the determination of ineligibility; and

4.31 (2) at least two different forms of documentation supporting the applicant's claim of
4.32 veteran status, which may include:

- 5.1 (i) original service-related documents;
- 5.2 (ii) an affidavit from a commissioned officer, noncommissioned officer, or other member
5.3 of the applicant's chain of command who has direct knowledge of the applicant's service;
- 5.4 (iii) two affidavits from individuals who served with the applicant in a special guerrilla
5.5 unit or irregular force and who have personal knowledge of the applicant's service; or
- 5.6 (iv) other appropriate and relevant proof of the applicant's service as determined by the
5.7 commissioner, including but not limited to:
- 5.8 (A) photographs taken during the applicant's service in Laos;
- 5.9 (B) newspaper articles featuring or citing the applicant's service in a special guerrilla
5.10 unit or irregular force;
- 5.11 (C) certificates of membership from a veteran's organization such as the Lao-Hmong
5.12 American Coalition; Lao Veterans of America; SGU Veterans and Families of USA, Inc.;
5.13 and Royal Lao Armed Forces and SGU;
- 5.14 (D) congressional recognition certificates;
- 5.15 (E) certificates of training;
- 5.16 (F) letters of commendation; or
- 5.17 (G) an affidavit from a case officer or former case officer in the United States intelligence
5.18 services.
- 5.19 (c) The commissioner must review an application for special consideration submitted
5.20 under this subdivision. The commissioner may request additional information from an
5.21 applicant to validate the contents of an application for special consideration. If the
5.22 commissioner determines that an applicant is eligible to receive benefits under subdivision
5.23 2, paragraph (d), the commissioner must issue a certificate of eligibility to the applicant for
5.24 the benefits and privileges under subdivision 2, paragraph (d).
- 5.25 (d) If an application for special consideration is denied by the commissioner, an applicant
5.26 may request a contested case hearing to challenge the commissioner's denial by filing a
5.27 request with the commissioner within 60 days of the date of the denial notice. The request
5.28 must state specific reasons for contesting the denial. A contested case hearing on a timely
5.29 and properly filed request must be conducted according to the procedures in sections 14.57
5.30 to 14.62.
- 5.31 (e) The deadline to submit an application for eligibility under this subdivision is December
5.32 31, 2030.

6.1 Sec. 7. **APPROPRIATION; SGU VETERAN DESIGNATION.**

6.2 \$141,000 in fiscal year 2027 is appropriated from the general fund to the commissioner
6.3 of public safety for the costs to implement the requirements under section 1. This is a onetime
6.4 appropriation.

6.5 **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This section is effective July 1, 2026.

6.6 Sec. 8. **EFFECTIVE DATE.**

6.7 Except as provided otherwise, this act is effective August 1, 2026.