

Subject Veterans and Military Affairs Finance and Policy Bill

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Overview

This bill contains appropriations to the Departments of Military Affairs and Veterans Affairs. The bill also contains a variety of policy proposals related to the two agencies.

Article 1: Appropriations (Veterans and Military Affairs)

This article contains appropriations to the Department of Military Affairs and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Section	Description – Article 1: Appropriations (Veterans and Military Affairs)
1	Appropriations. Provides general guidance on the appropriations in sections 2 and 3.
2	Military affairs. Subd. 1. Total appropriation. Appropriates \$26,872,000 the first year and \$27,081,000 the second year to the Department of Military Affairs. Subd. 2. Maintenance of training facilities. Appropriates \$10,067,000 the first year and \$10,067,000 the second year to maintain training facilities. Subd. 3. General support. Appropriates \$4,391,000 the first year and \$4,600,000 the second year for general support. Subd. 4. Enlistment incentives. Appropriates \$12,114,000 each year is for enlistment incentives. Subd. 5. Emergency services. Appropriates \$300,000 each year for emergency services.
3	Veterans affairs. Subd. 1. Total appropriation. Appropriates \$125,804,000 in the first year and \$126,847,000 in the second year to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Section Description – Article 1: Appropriations (Veterans and Military Affairs)

Subd. 2. Veterans programs and services. Appropriates \$25,617,000 the first year and \$25,494,000 the second year for veterans programs and services, which includes funding for:

- state veteran cemeteries;
- veterans service organizations;
- honor guards;
- the Minnesota GI bill;
- the Gold Star Program;
- County Veteran Service Officers;
- a comprehensive plan to prevent veteran suicides in Minnesota;
- veteran homelessness;
- the State Soldiers Assistance Program;
- higher education veterans assistance;
- the Claims and Outreach Office;
- Camp Bliss;
- the SGU Task Force;
- Metro Meals on Wheels;
- Hometown Hero Outdoors;
- Veterans on the Lake;
- Fishing with Vets;
- a veteran mentorship program for black youth;
- the CORE program;
- the LinkVet Call Center;
- the recently separated veterans program; and
- the Minnesota Military and Veterans Museum.

Subd. 3. Veterans health care. Appropriates \$100,187,000 the first year and \$101,353,000 the second year to veterans health care. Sets the base at \$98,137,000. Establishes sums that are to be transferred to the veterans homes special revenue account.

- Requires the commissioner to seek opportunities to maximize federal reimbursements of Medicare-eligible expenses.
- \$400,000 each year is for Veteran Community Health Navigators.
- \$1,650,000 each year is for the veteran suicide prevention program.
- Exempts the commissioner from performing annual cost of care calculations for certain veterans homes.

Article 2: Policy (Military and Veterans Affairs)

This article contains changes to statutes that relate to military and veterans affairs.

Section	Description – Article 2: Policy (Military and Veterans Affairs)
1	<p>Veterans affairs programs.</p> <p>Contains a conforming change related to the Department of Veterans Affairs' (MDVA) expanded read-only access to MAXIS for verifying eligibility for, and enroll veterans on, the Minnesota Homeless Veteran Registry. [H.F. 1662-2]</p>
2	<p>Officers.</p> <p>Contains a conforming change related to the proposal in section 4 to provide five percent of an officer's base pay as a pension offset for those activated for state active duty. [H.F. 2338]</p>
3	<p>Enlisted persons.</p> <p>Contains a conforming change related to the proposal in section 4 to provide five percent of enlisted servicemember's base pay as a pension offset for those activated for state active duty. [H.F. 2338]</p>
4	<p>Pension offset stipend.</p> <p>Adds five percent of servicemember base pay as a pension offset for those activated for state active duty. This proposal is intended to reward members of the National Guard for state active service days, which are currently not recognized for purposes of determining their federal pension. (Only federal active service days are credited towards a service member's pension.) [H.F. 2338]</p>
5	<p>State armory building commission, powers.</p> <p>Increases the maximum bonded indebtedness allowed for the State Armory Building Commission from \$15,000,000 to \$45,000,000. The last time the legislature increased the indebtedness ceiling was in 2000 when the ceiling moved from \$7,000,000 to \$15,000,000. [H.F. 1443]</p>
6	<p>Access to state database.</p> <p>Extends the Department of Veterans Affairs' (MDVA) read-only access to MAXIS, which is a computer system managed by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families that is used by state and county workers to determine eligibility for public assistance and services. The proposed expanded access to MAXIS is intended to streamline the process to verify eligibility for, and enroll veterans on, the Minnesota Homeless Veteran Registry. MDVA must have received informed consent from a data subject to access MAXIS data about that person. [H.F. 1662-2]</p>

Section Description – Article 2: Policy (Military and Veterans Affairs)

- 7 **Eligibility.**
Updates statutes governing veterans burial provisions. With the changes, state law will align with federal laws governing eligibility for burial in veterans cemeteries. **[H.F. 1445]**
- 8 **Burial fees.**
Updates statutes governing veterans burial provisions. With the changes, state law will align with federal laws governing eligibility for burial in veterans cemeteries. **[H.F. 1445]**
- 9 **Veteran of the secret war in Laos.**
Grants specified veterans benefits and privileges under Minnesota law to certain persons who served with secret guerilla units or other irregular forces in Laos. To be eligible under this provision, a person must be either: 1) naturalized under the federal Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 2000; or 2) someone who the Commissioner of Veterans Affairs determines served honorably with a special guerrilla unit or other irregular forces from a base in Laos in support of the United States Armed Forces and is now a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. Requires the legislature to enact criteria and a protocol for the commissioner to follow in determining who is a veteran of the secret war in Laos. **[H.F. 1845]**
- 10 **Definitions.**
Contains a conforming change related to the proposal in section 11 to allow surviving spouses of service members who die as a result of their military service to continue to be eligible to use the service member's education benefits even if the surviving spouse remarries. **[H.F. 2410]**
- 11 **Eligibility.**
Allows surviving spouses of service members who die as a result of their military service to continue to be eligible to use the service member's education benefits even if the surviving spouse remarries. Under current law, when a surviving spouse remarries, the spouse's eligibility for the deceased service member's education benefits is terminated. **[H.F. 2410]**
- 12 **Gold star and blue star families; memorial plaque.**
Requires the commissioner of administration to place a memorial plaque in the court of honor on the State Capitol grounds to recognize the service and sacrifices of Minnesota's Gold Star and Blue Star families. **[H.F. 2444]**

Section Description – Article 2: Policy (Military and Veterans Affairs)

- 13 Advisory task force established; veterans of secret guerilla units and irregular forces in Laos.**
- Establishes an advisory task force to develop criteria and a protocol for the commissioner of veterans affairs to determine a person's eligibility for status as a veteran of the secret guerilla units and irregular forces in Laos. **[H.F. 1845]**



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