

MILITARY ISSUES

Research Notes are prepared by Legislative Council Staff's nonpartisan research and committee staff. Research notes provide a summary of the bill, background information on the bill, and information on committee hearings and amendments adopted on the bill as it moves through the legislative process. Legislative Council Staff prepares final research notes for bills passed by the General Assembly as well as select bills that were considered but not adopted, and may be accessed through the links below. Research notes are provided for informational purposes only and should not be relied upon as an official record of action by the General Assembly.

Employment

HB 15-1030 *(Enacted)*
Employment Services for Veterans Pilot Program

Military Families

HB 15-1052 *(Enacted)*
Eligibility for Military Family Relief Fund

HB 15-1215 *(Enacted)*
In-state Tuition Dependents of Military Members

HB 15-1294 *(Enacted)*
Federal Law In-state Tuition for Veterans

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HB 15-1026 *(Enacted)*
Reserved Parking Disabled Military License Plates

Miscellaneous

HB 15-1045 *(Enacted)*
Veterans Entrance Fee State Parks

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Legislative Council Staff

Research Note

Bill Number: HB15-1294

Short Title: *Federal Law In-state Tuition For Veterans*

Prime Sponsors: Representatives Lee and Keyser
Senators Todd and Hill

Research Analyst: Lisa Gezelter (x3264)

Current Status

This research note reflects the final version of the bill, which was signed by the Governor and became effective on May 1, 2015.

Summary

This bill directs governing boards for all state institutions of higher education to adopt policies granting in-state tuition status to all "covered individuals" as defined in federal law and as determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

Covered individuals must be classified as in-state students if they:

- reside in Colorado while enrolled in an institution of higher education, regardless of the length of time the student resided in Colorado prior to enrolling;
- are enrolled in courses with educational assistance benefits pursuant to federal law; and
- continue to reside in Colorado and are continuously enrolled, regardless of whether or not the individual has exhausted his or her educational assistance benefits.

Beginning July 1, 2015, covered individuals are also eligible to receive stipends from the College Opportunity Fund.

Background

The Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 changed federal law, requiring public colleges to provide in-state tuition to veterans and eligible dependents in order for the school to remain eligible to receive education payments provided by the Veterans Administration (VA).

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House Action

House Education Committee (March 25, 2015). At the hearing, representatives of the Department of Higher Education and state institutions of higher education testified in support of the bill, as did veterans and representatives of veterans' groups.

The committee adopted amendment L.001, which made certain technical changes to the portion of the bill requiring schools to continue recognizing students as in-state for tuition purposes even after they have exhausted their education benefits from the VA.

House Second Reading (March 27, 2015). The House Committee of the Whole adopted the Education Committee report.

House Third Reading (March 30, 2015). The House adopted the bill on third reading with no further amendments.

Senate Action

Senate Education Committee (April 8, 2015). At the hearing, representatives of higher education institutions, the Department of Higher Education, veterans, and representatives of veterans' organizations spoke in support of the bill. The committee referred the bill, unamended, to the Senate Committee of the Whole with a recommendation that it be placed on the consent calendar.

Senate Second Reading (April 13, 2015). The Senate Committee of the Whole adopted the bill on second reading.

Senate Third Reading (April 14, 2015). The Senate adopted the bill on third reading with no amendments.

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Research Note

Bill Number: HB15-1215

Short Title: *In-state Tuition Dependents Of Military Members*

Prime Sponsors: Representative Priola
Senator Johnston

Research Analyst: Lisa Gezelter (x3264)

Current Status

This research note reflects the final version of the bill, which was signed by the Governor and became effective on May 4, 2015.

Summary

The bill repeals Section 23-7-108.7, C.R.S., which allowed the governing board of each institution of higher education to adopt policies granting in-state tuition status to dependents of active-duty members of the military if the student completed at least two years of high school in Colorado within five years of enrolling in higher education.

The bill raises the age limit for presuming that a child of a member of the armed forces is eligible for in-state tuition classification to age 23. It also allows the student 12 years after the member of the military was stationed in Colorado to attend a public college or university within the state and still qualify for in-state tuition.

Background

In 2008, Congress passed the Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Improvements Act which capped tuition assistance to veterans and active-duty servicemembers at the in-state rate for all public colleges and universities and allowed servicemembers to transfer their educational benefits to their dependents.

In 2014, Congress passed the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act, which

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requires public colleges to provide in-state tuition to veterans and eligible dependents in order for the school to remain eligible to receive G.I. Bill education payments. The law also expands scholarship funds to provide full Post 9/11 G.I. Bill benefits to spouses of servicemembers who died in the line of duty after September 11, 2001.

House Action

House Education Committee (March 4, 2015). At the hearing, no witnesses testified about the bill and no amendments were offered. The committee referred the bill, unamended, to the House Committee on Appropriations.

House Committee on Appropriations (March 13, 2015). At the hearing, no witnesses testified about the bill and no amendments were offered. The committee referred the bill, unamended, to the House Committee of the Whole.

House Second Reading (March 20, 2015). On second reading in the House, the House Committee of the Whole passed amendment L.001, which repealed section 23-7-108.7, C.R.S., changed the upper age limit for dependents of members of the military to receive in-state classification, and raised to 12 years the time after which a member was stationed in Colorado that his or her dependent could be classified as an in-state resident for tuition purposes. The House Committee of the Whole passed the amended bill on a voice vote.

House Third Reading (March 23, 2015). No amendments were offered. The House passed the bill on third reading.

Senate Action

Senate Committee on State, Veterans, and Military Affairs (April 13, 2015). No witnesses spoke about the bill. The committee referred the bill, unamended, to the Senate Committee of the Whole.

Senate Second Reading (April 16, 2015). No amendments were offered. The Senate passed the bill on a voice vote.

Senate Third Reading (April 17, 2015). No amendments were offered. The bill passed third reading in the Senate.

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Legislative Council Staff

Research Note

Bill Number: HB15-1052

Short Title: *Eligibility For Military Family Relief Fund*

Prime Sponsors: Representative Carver
Senator Todd

Research Analyst: Jessika Shipley (x3528)

Current Status

This research note reflects the final version of the bill, which was signed by the Governor on March 11, 2015, and became effective on August 5, 2015.

Summary

The bill eliminates the requirement that Colorado National Guard mobilization orders be involuntary in order for a Guard member to be eligible for Military Family Relief Fund (MFRF) grants. As a result, all members of the Colorado National Guard subject to active military duty for a minimum of 30 days may receive MFRF grants.

Background

Missions of the Colorado National Guard. The Colorado National Guard participates in active military duty in conjunction with other armed services of the United States. Mobilization orders may be either involuntary or officially voluntary in nature. In 2014, at least 200 members of the Colorado National Guard are expected to receive voluntary mobilization orders.

Military Family Relief Fund. Since its establishment in 2005 (Senate Bill 05-052), the MFRF has funded grants to members of the Colorado National Guard and their families through the Colorado National Guard Foundation. Approximately 30 to 35 grants are awarded annually based on current funding. MFRF grant eligibility was expanded by House Bill 14-1277, which authorized grants to Colorado National Guard members and the families of members who are called to state active duty by executive order of the Governor.

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House Action

House State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee (January 21, 2015). Representatives of The Home Front Cares and the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, as well as a private citizen testified in support of the bill. The committee referred the bill to the House Appropriations Committee without amendments.

House Appropriations Committee (January 30, 2015). The committee referred the bill unamended to the House Committee of the Whole.

House second reading (February 3, 2015). The bill passed on second reading without amendments.

House third reading (February 4, 2015). The House adopted the bill without amendments.

Senate Action

Senate State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee (February 10, 2015). A representative of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs testified in support of the bill. The committee referred the bill unamended to the Senate Committee of the Whole.

Senate second reading (February 13, 2015). The bill passed second reading without amendments.

Senate third reading (February 17, 2015). The Senate adopted the bill without amendments.

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Legislative Council Staff

Research Note

Bill Number: HB15-1045

Short Title: *Veterans Entrance Fee State Parks*

Prime Sponsors: Representative Ryden
Senator Crowder

Research Analyst: Jessika Shipley (x3528)

Current Status

This research note reflects the final version of the bill, which was signed by the Governor and became effective on May 27, 2015.

Summary

The bill requires the Parks and Wildlife Commission to promulgate rules allowing veterans and active duty service personnel free entrance to any state park or recreation area for the month of August each year. The free admission does not apply to campgrounds, yurts, or other amenities and services. The commission may set evidence standards for veterans and issue a sticker or other device identifying a person as a veteran for future entrance. If a sticker is issued, the commission may charge a fee for the direct and indirect costs of issuance. Finally, the commission is only obligated to offer free entrance to veterans if the General Assembly appropriates enough funds annually to implement such free entrance.

Background

Current state law. Under current law, disabled veterans with a valid Colorado disabled veteran license plate are allowed free entrance to any state park or recreation area, excluding campgrounds, on any day the park or area is open. Additionally, the commission is permitted to allow all other veterans and active duty service personnel free entrance to any state park or recreation area, excluding campgrounds, yurts, or other amenities and services, on one day each year. The commission may also choose to offer free entrance to Colorado's severely injured wounded warriors.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife policy. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) is the division of the Department Natural Resources that administers state parks and recreation areas and issues

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hunting and fishing licenses. CPW provides free entrance to state parks and recreation areas annually on Veterans Day (November 11) to all active duty service personnel and veterans, regardless of disability status. All other park fees are still charged. Disabled veterans with the proper license plate are admitted to state parks and recreation areas free of charge every day. Finally, CPW offers a variety of free and discounted hunting and fishing benefits to active duty service personnel and veterans, both disabled and nondisabled.

House Action

House State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee (January 26, 2015). Representatives of the United Veterans Committee and CPW testified in support of the bill. The bill was referred to the House Committee of the Whole unamended.

House second reading (January 29, 2015). The bill passed second reading without amendments.

House third reading (February 2, 2015). The House adopted the bill without amendments.

House consideration of Senate amendments (April 27, 2015). The House voted to concur with Senate amendments and repass the bill.

Senate Action

Senate State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee (February 25, 2015). Representatives of CPW and Legislative Council Staff testified about the bill. The committee adopted amendment L.003, which

- requires the commission to promulgate rules by January 1, 2016, to allow free veteran access to state parks and recreation areas for the entire month of August;
- allows the commission to promulgate rules concerning evidence standards for a sticker or other device indicating that an individual is a veteran;
- allows the commission to charge a fee for the sticker or device; and
- obligates the commission to offer free entrance to veterans only if the General Assembly appropriates enough funds annually to implement the bill.

The amended bill was referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Senate Appropriations Committee (April 17, 2015). The committee adopted amendments L.004 and J.002 and referred the bill to the Senate Committee of the Whole. The amendments:

- removed the date by which the commission must promulgate rules;
- added a safety clause; and
- added an appropriation of \$150,000 to the Department of Natural Resources for state park operations.

Senate second reading (April 23, 2015). The Senate Committee of the Whole adopted the

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State, Veterans, and Military Affairs and Appropriations Committee reports and passed the bill without further amendments.

Senate third reading (April 24, 2015). The Senate adopted the bill without amendments.



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Research Note

Bill Number: HB15-1030

Short Title: *Employment Services For Veterans Pilot Program*

Prime Sponsors: Representative Landgraf
Senator Crowder

Research Analyst: Jessika Shipley (x3528)

Current Status

This research note reflects the final version of the bill, which was signed by the Governor and became effective on May 27, 2015.

Summary

The bill establishes an employment services for veterans pilot program in the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (DLE). The program for up to 20 eligible veterans is required to provide the following services:

- job retention services;
- mediation services between the employer and the employee;
- job mentoring skills and guidance to employees;
- advice and support concerning career advancement; and
- other follow-along employment services as deemed appropriate by the DLE.

The department is required to use a competitive request for proposal process to contract with an in-state nonprofit agency that generates its own revenue and reinvests the proceeds in the growth and development of its programs to implement and operate the program. The selected agency must offer a variety of job training programs and other services that help people find work and achieve individual success with employment.

The bill requires the agency to report and evaluate the program's outcomes to the business committees of the House and Senate. Finally, the bill allows the department to use funding appropriated for the program for administrative costs and to pay the nonprofit agency for the implementation and operation of the program. The pilot program is repealed January 1, 2018.

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Background

The DLE operates workforce centers in locations across the state. Among the services offered through the centers, the DLE employs state veterans representatives, who provide priority service for employment, training, and placement services to veterans. With a federal grant of \$3 million in FY 2013-14, the state veterans representatives were able to serve 2,849 veterans at an average cost of \$1,070 per veteran. Federal guidelines preclude the use of this grant for services delivered by non-governmental agencies. The pilot program could potentially augment the services provided as a result of the federal grant for up to 20 veterans.

House Action

House State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee (January 26, 2015). The committee heard testimony in support of the bill from a private citizen and representatives of Discover Goodwill, the American Legion, and the United Veterans Committee. The bill was referred unamended to the House Appropriations Committee.

House Appropriations Committee (April 10, 2015). The committee adopted amendment J.001, which added an appropriations clause to the bill, and referred it to the House Committee of the Whole.

House second reading (April 17, 2015). The House Committee of the Whole adopted the Appropriations Committee report and passed the bill without further amendments.

House third reading (April 20, 2015). The House adopted the bill without further amendments.

Senate Action

Senate State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee (April 22, 2015). The committee heard testimony in support of the bill from a representative of Discover Goodwill and referred the bill unamended to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Senate Appropriations Committee (April 24, 2015). The committee referred the bill unamended to the Senate Committee of the Whole.

Senate second reading (April 24, 2015). The Senate Committee of the Whole passed the bill without further amendments.

Senate third reading (April 27, 2015). The Senate adopted the bill without further amendments.

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Version: *Final*

Relevant Research

Benefits for Military Veterans in Colorado (LCS issue brief, 2012):

<http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite?blobcol=urldata&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobkey=id&blobtable=MungoBlobs&blobwhere=1251829057469&ssbinary=true>

Map of Workforce Center Locations:

<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdle/wfc>

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Research Note

Bill Number: HB15-1026

Short Title: *Reserved Parking Disabled Military License Plates*

Prime Sponsors: Representative Roupe
Senator Todd

Research Analyst: Jessika Shipley (x.3528)

Current Status

This research note reflects the final version of the bill, which becomes effective on August 5, 2015, assuming no referendum petition is filed.

Summary

The bill replaces the current disabled veteran handicapped license plates with any of the 72 regular military or Colorado National Guard plates (regular and motorcycle) containing an additional identifying mark indicating that the owner is authorized to make use of parking spaces that are reserved for individuals with disabilities. It allows the Colorado Department of Revenue (DOR) to issue up to two such sets of license plates and one placard to each qualifying disabled active service member or veteran.

Background

The DOR currently issues 36 different regular plates and 36 different motorcycle plates to military service members and veterans. Disabled veteran handicapped plates, which allow the owner of the vehicle to park in designated handicapped parking spots, are available for any honorably discharged veteran who can demonstrate having a 50% or more permanent service-connected disability. Current law allows the issuance of one set of plates per individual at no additional fee over the regular registration fee.

House Action

House State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee (February 11, 2015). The

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committee heard testimony in favor of the bill from the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder and representatives of the Colorado Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities and the United Veterans Committee. The bill was referred unamended to the House Transportation and Energy Committee.

House Transportation and Energy Committee (February 18, 2015). The committee again heard testimony in support of the bill from the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder and a representative of the Colorado Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities, and referred the bill unamended to the House Committee on Finance.

House Finance Committee (February 25, 2015). The committee again heard testimony in support of the bill from the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder and a representative of the Colorado Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities, and referred the bill unamended to the House Committee on Appropriations.

House Appropriations Committee (March 6, 2015). The committee added an appropriations clause to the bill and referred it to the House Committee of the Whole.

House second reading (March 9, 2015). On second reading, the House Committee of the Whole adopted the Appropriations Committee report and passed the bill without further amendments.

House third reading (March 10, 2015). The House adopted the bill without further amendments.

House consideration of Senate amendments (April 27, 2015). The House voted to concur with Senate amendments to the bill and repassed it.

Senate Action

Senate State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee (March 18, 2015). The committee heard testimony in favor of the bill from the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder and representatives of the Colorado Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities, the Aurora Veterans Affairs Commission, and the United Veterans Committee. The bill was referred unamended to the Senate Finance Committee.

Senate Finance Committee (March 24, 2015). The committee heard testimony in favor of the bill from the United Veterans Committee and adopted amendment L.001. The amendment authorized the DOR to create a special persons with disabilities plate for each of the 72 regular military license plates and motorcycle license plates issued by the department.

Senate Appropriations Committee (April 17, 2015). The committee referred the bill to the Senate Committee of the Whole without amendment.

Senate second reading (April 21, 2015). The Senate Committee of the Whole adopted the Finance Committee report and passed the bill without further amendments.

Senate third reading (April 22, 2015). The Senate adopted the bill without further

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amendments.