

## **Pennsylvania Veterans & Reservist/National Guard Assistance & Benefits**

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District Office of Rep. Jake Wheatley

19th Legislative District



### **PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs**

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## **Veterans Organizations**

- **Veterans Leadership Program (VLP) of Western Pennsylvania**

The VLP provides essential housing, employment, and vital support services to eligible local Veterans, service members, and their families with the goal of improving their self-sufficiency, sustainability, and quality of life. (<http://www.vlpwpa.org>)

2934 Smallman Street

Pittsburgh, PA 15201

(412) 481-8200

[info@vlpwpa.org](mailto:info@vlpwpa.org)

Other organizations can be found at the [VA's 2013-2014 online directory](#).

## Counseling Services

- **Veterans Crisis Hotline**

Caring, qualified VA responders are standing by to provide free and confidential support — 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year — even if you're not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care. Responders will work with you to get through any personal crisis.

- a) Dial 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and press '1' at the prompt to be connected to a VA call center.
- b) To talk via SMS (text messaging), please text 838255.
- c) To chat online, click this [link](#).
- d) Support for [deaf and hard of hearing](#) individuals is available.

(<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>)

- **NVF Lifeline for Vets:** Call 1-888-777-4443 or visit the [National Veterans](#)

[Foundation](#) website for trained veteran to veteran assistance, whether it be medical treatment, substance abuse or PTSD counseling, VA benefits advocacy, food, shelter, employment training, legal aid or suicide intervention.

- **Contact your local VA Hospital** to see if you are eligible for free counseling services. (<http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/>)

- **Give An Hour**

It includes a network of 6000+ licensed mental health professionals who offer free support and treatment to military members, their families, and loved ones. After clients have finished their therapy, they are asked to participate in local community service and in turn offer their own valuable resources to others. (<http://www.giveanhour.org/>)

- **The Soldiers Project**

A 501(c) non-profit organization dedicated to providing free, confidential counseling services to military personnel who have served Post 9/11, as well as to their affected families, loved ones, and friends. In addition to Pennsylvania, they have chapters in Chicago, Sacramento, Long Island, Southern California, New York, Washington, and Wyoming. (<http://www.thesoldiersproject.org/>)

Contact Information: Email: [Pennsylvania@thesoldiersproject.org](mailto:Pennsylvania@thesoldiersproject.org) or Toll-Free: (877) 576-5343

## Education Assistance

- [Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency \(PHEAA\)](#)
  - [PA State Grant Program](#)

A Pennsylvania State Grant is based on financial need. Before you complete the form, learn what you will need to apply, and what the eligibility criteria are.
  - [PA National Guard Education Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#)

Together with the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, PHEAA administers a tuition assistance program for students who enter into a service commitment with the Pennsylvania National Guard for a period of 6 years.
  - [Special State Grant for Children of POW/MIA Soldiers](#)

PHEAA offers a special state grant to the children of any soldier in the U.S. Armed Forces who has been declared as a prisoner of war (POW) or missing in action (MIA).

## Employment Benefits

- **State Employee Leave of Absence for Military Duty:** State employees receive 15 days paid military leave per year. In addition, they are entitled to unpaid leave of absence from their respective duties without loss of seniority or efficiency rating on all days in excess of 15 days per year during which they shall be engaged in training or other military duty under orders authorized by Federal or State law. **Eligibility:** State employees that are members of the Pennsylvania National Guard or as members of any reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States on orders for Annual Training or active duty.
- **Re-employment following Emergency or Military Duty:** Upon completion of emergency or military duty, any member of the Pennsylvania National Guard or any other Reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces shall be restored by his/her employer to their previous employment position and status, or a position of similar seniority, status, and pay which was held prior to the Service member's deployment or mobilization. If the Service member is not qualified to perform the duties of such position due to disability sustained during mobilization or deployment, but otherwise qualified to perform the duties of any other position in the employ of his/her former employer, then a position in which

he/she is qualified to perform with like seniority and pay (or the closest approximation thereof consistent with the case) shall be offered. ([Learn more](#))

- **State Civil Service Preference:** Job Seekers who pass civil service examinations required for appointment to positions covered by the State's Merit System receive additional benefits in recognition of their military service. These benefits commonly are referred to as Veterans' preference. The authority for Veterans' preference in Pennsylvania government employment is contained in The Act of August 1, 1975 (P.L. 233, No. 92), as amended, in Title 51 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, "Military and Veterans Code." Those eligible will receive ten additional points on their final earned ratings, provided they pass the examination and have mandatory appointment preference over non-Veterans

**Eligibility:** Persons who served in an active duty capacity in the armed forces of the United States since July 27, 1953, including completion of basic training; completed their military service commitment; and, were honorably discharged; or, persons who served in an active duty capacity in the armed forces of the United States since August 2, 1990, including members of the National Guard and reserve components who were honorably released from active duty (other than active duty for training). Service must have included completion of basic training. Spouses of disabled Veterans, and Widows or Widowers of Veterans are also eligible.

Persons who take a civil service examination before being honorably discharged or released from active duty will not be entitled to receive an additional ten points added to that test score.

## **Recreation**

**Fishing License for Disabled Veterans:** Free fishing licenses can be obtained from county treasurers (listed within [Issuing Agents](#)), the Fish and Boat Commission's Harrisburg office or the six regional law enforcement offices (locations on [PFBC Directory page](#)).

**Eligibility:** To qualify for a free fishing license, an applicant must:

- Be a bona fide resident of Pennsylvania; and qualify one of the following:
- Have disability incurred in war or armed conflict consisting of
  - a loss of one or more limbs;
  - loss of use of one or more limbs; or
  - total blindness; OR
- Be 100% disabled as certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

**Exemption from Fishing License Requirement:** Certain active duty military personnel are exempt from Pennsylvania's fishing license requirement.

**Eligibility:** To be eligible for the military waiver, an angler must:

- be a bona fide Pennsylvania resident
- be on active duty
- be stationed **outside** Pennsylvania, and
- be here on authorized leave.

**Free Resident Disabled Veteran Licenses (Hunting and Furtaker):** (Issued by County Treasurers only.) This license is available to Pennsylvania resident disabled Veterans of any war or armed conflict whose disability consists of the loss of one or more limbs, or the loss of the use of one or more limbs or who presents a physician's certificate of total or 100% disability. This disability must be directly related to injuries incurred while on active duty during a war or armed conflict. Applicants must produce disability certification issued by the Department of Veterans Affairs stating that their disability is 100%. **Eligibility:** Under VA regulations, total disability ratings for compensation may be assigned where the injury rating is less than total, when the disabled Veteran is unable to secure or follow a gainful occupation as a result of

service-connected disabilities. In such cases the Veteran should have documentation that he is receiving 100% or total compensation. Since the U.S. Government has assigned a total disability rating for compensation for such a Veteran, the Game Commission will recognize the Veteran as a 100% disabled Veteran who qualifies for a free hunting license with proper documentation.

**Armed Forces (AF) Antlerless Deer Licenses:** (\$6.70) These licenses are issued by County Treasurers to eligible resident U.S. Armed Forces or resident U.S. Coast Guard personnel. Qualified applicants may apply to any County Treasurer for the WMU in which they desire to hunt. To qualify, applicants must be full-time active duty or within sixty (60) days of their honorable discharge. Applicants are not required to be stationed outside of Pennsylvania. Immediate Family members of qualified applicants and individuals serving in the Reserves or National Guard are not eligible for this license. If a resident applicant who normally serves in the Reserves or National Guard is called to serve in a Federal full-time active duty (generally referred to as Title 10) status prior to applying, this person could qualify for the license

## **Other Benefits**

**State Veterans' Homes:** Pennsylvania offers its eligible Veterans or surviving spouses six extended care facilities throughout the state. The level of care provided includes personal care, skilled nursing care, and dementia care. **Eligibility:** • Honorable Discharge • Served in the U.S. or PA Armed Forces • Resident at time of entry or current resident of Pennsylvania  
Application

For detailed instructions on how to apply, visit <http://www.dmva.pa.gov/stateveteranshomes>

**Pennsylvania Military Family Relief Assistance Program (MFRAP):** This program provides financial assistance in the form of grants to eligible Pennsylvania military Service members and their Families. The amount of a grant is based on documented financial need up to a maximum of \$3,500. Examples of such financial need include:

- A sudden or unexpected loss of income, real or personal property, assets, or support directly related to military service, or exigent circumstances affecting the Service member.

- Emergency need for Child care for which the applicant lacks financial resources.
- Natural or man-made disasters resulting in a need for food, shelter, or other necessities.
- The death or critical illness of a parent, Spouse, sibling, or Child resulting in immediate need for travel, lodging, or subsistence for which the applicant lacks financial resources.

Please refer to the [FAQ page](#), [guidelines](#), or the [application](#) for more information

**Real Estate Tax Exemption:** This program provides real estate tax exemption for any honorably discharged veteran who is 100% disabled, a resident of the Commonwealth and has a financial need. For more information and how to apply, please [click here](#).

**Blind Veterans Pension:** Provides eligible blind Veterans a pension of \$150.00 per month. For more information and how to apply, please [click here](#).

**Eligibility:**

- Served in the military honorably.
- Resident of Pennsylvania upon entering the military.
- Suffered a service-connected injury or incurred a disease which resulted in loss of vision:
  - Visual acuity with correcting lens is 3/60 or 10/200 or equivalent, or less normal vision in the better eye or,
  - Includes circumstances where the widest diameter of the visual field of the better eye has contracted to an angular distance of not greater than 20°.

**Amputee and Paralyzed Veterans' Pension:** Provides eligible amputee and paralyzed Veterans a pension of \$150.00 per month. For more information and how to apply, please [click here](#).

**Eligibility:**

- Served in the military honorably.
- Resident of Pennsylvania upon entering the military.

- Suffered a service-connected injury or disease resulting in the loss or loss of use of two or more extremities (arms/hands or legs/feet).
- At least a 40% disability compensation rating (or higher) in each limb as determined and certified by Veterans' Affairs.