



For over 200 years our veterans have gone to war to protect the United States and the freedoms we enjoy. Some have sacrificed their lives, some their health, and some a portion of their youth, often traveling to a distant country, to put themselves in harm's way so we can continue with our everyday lives risk-free.

I recognize the enormous sacrifices these men and women have made, including in the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The soldiers fighting in these wars have had to disrupt careers and families to serve. The General Assembly has passed a number of new laws designed to honor, protect and reward the dedicated and patriotic men and women who have put their lives on the line for all of us, now and in the past.

As you read this newsletter and learn more about these new laws, I hope you will take a moment to think about our servicemen and women who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as those who came before and those who will come after.

Elissa Wright • Representing Groton



Elissa Wright
State Representative

*Serving those who have
served America*

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**2007 Laws Affecting
Veterans**

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State Representative
Elissa Wright

Veterans Update

**41st District
Serving Groton**

National Guard Citizen-Soldiers Gain Right To Be Buried In State Cemeteries

A new law this year extends eligibility for burial in any of the state's three veterans' cemeteries to Connecticut National Guard members with at least 20 years of guard service or who were killed in action or died as a result of an accident or illness while on active duty. It is fitting to bestow this honor since the National Guard is the only military service the Governor can muster into state service should the need arise. The privilege extends to the guard member's spouse. Prior law limited burials to veterans honorably discharged or released from active service in the U.S. Armed Forces. Another measure increases the state contribution for funeral expenses of indigent veterans to \$1,800.



Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines Fund

This fund provides benefits for food, clothing, medical, surgical, and funeral assistance to needy wartime veterans who were honorably discharged. Previously administered by the State Treasurer, the American Legion now will be responsible for the fund.

Fraudulent Representation of Military Valor Awards and Increased Penalties for Discriminating Against Armed Forces Members

New legislation makes it a crime to falsely represent oneself as having been awarded medals or ranks of military valor and doubles the penalties for impersonating a member of the armed forces. Civil penalties are increased and criminal penalties established for discriminating against members of the armed forces based on their military status or uniform.

Disruption of Funerals

Honoring our fallen soldiers, the General Assembly acted to prohibit certain willful activities that disturb a funeral's peace and good order within 150 feet of the entrance to a funeral location. If their presence intentionally impedes the entrance or exit from the funeral location, demonstrators must stay 300 feet away. Violations are punishable by up to one year in prison, a fine of up to \$2,000, or both.



Improving Veterans' Healthcare

The Veterans' Affairs' Department is authorized to establish and maintain a registry of health data on armed forces members for use in analyzing the effects of environmental hazards on active duty military personnel, and to customize and coordinate healthcare services for them.

Service Bonus for Guard Members

In recognition of the sacrifices of Connecticut's brave citizen soldiers, many of whom are performing second tours in combat zones, the General Assembly established a service bonus of \$50 a month for current or former National Guard members called to active service, with a maximum \$500 bonus. The bonus for current or former National Guard members deployed to a war zone on or after September 11, 2001, is increased from \$500 to a maximum of \$1,200.

Protecting Careers of Those Who Serve

New legislation helps active-duty National Guard members and members of the U.S. Armed Forces to maintain certain professional licenses, certificates, permits and registrations by providing a one-year grace period to renew from the time of discharge from active service.

Improving Benefits for State Employees Serving in Operation Jump Start

State employees called to active military service in Operation Jump Start along the Mexican border will receive the same benefits already available to state employees on active duty in other conflicts such as the Afghanistan war, anti-terrorism activities within the United States, and the war against Iraq. Benefits include full state pay for 30 days of active duty service, the difference between state pay and military pay after 30 days, and continued state health insurance coverage.