

WHAT HAS THE AMERICAN LEGION HAS DONE TO HELP COLORADO VETERANS

For those veterans that are American Legion members or considering being members, that would like to know what their membership does to help veterans, the following is a summary of different State legislative actions that have become law. The American Legion through its legislative committee lobbied and promoted the passage of these bills to enhance the benefits of Colorado veterans.

- In-state tuition at public schools of higher education for members of the military, veterans, and their dependents – including legislation to assure that Colorado's statutes are in compliance with Post 9/11 GI Bill requirements.
- The transfer or continuation of professional licensure, certification or registration for members of the military, veterans and their dependents.
- A plan for the provision of academic credit for prior learning, including military experience, and for consideration of such learning and experience for professional licensure and certification.
- Expansion of eligibility and removal of barriers for enrollment in on line education at a 4-year public university – allowing active duty service members and veterans to earn a valued degree wherever they may be stationed or live.
- Increases in tuition assistance for members of the Colorado National Guard.
- Assuring that members of the military who are overseas or out of state are able to vote in a timely and confidential manner in all national, state and local elections.
- The creation and extension of a highly successful "transitional jobs" program targeting unemployed veterans and helping them achieve permanent jobs.
- Establishment of a requirement for a set-aside of state contracts to go to service connected disabled veteran owned businesses.
- Funding for the construction and ongoing services and needs of state veterans community living centers (formerly called "state veterans' nursing homes) around the state – and for the creation of state and local boards to assure quality of care.
- Passage of constitutional and statutory guarantees of veteran's preference in the hiring of state employees.
- Creation of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, establishing a central focal point for leadership on all military and veterans issues within state government.
- Creation of an ongoing appropriation of funds from the "Tobacco Settlement" to provide grants to veterans service organizations through the Veterans Trust Fund.
- Initial and ongoing funding, and permanent statutory authorization, for the Veterans Assistance Grant Program –providing \$1 million annually in services to veterans.

- Authorizing legislation and over \$600,000 in funding for the creation of "Veterans Courts" to assure that the special needs of veterans are addressed.
- Passage of a constitutional amendment for a property tax exemption for 100% disabled veterans, including an extension of that exemption to surviving spouses.
- Funding of mental health services to family members of military personnel and veterans, and creation of a State Commission to focus on suicide prevention.
- Establishment of a homeless prevention and rehabilitation program at Ft. Lyon, with a priority on serving homeless veterans.
- Strengthening handicapped parking statutes statewide to assure that all persons with mobility disabilities, including disabled veterans, can access needed services and participate fully and independently in their communities.
- Prohibiting insurance companies from denying or cancelling insurance policies because a person is a member of the military, or when a service member is deployed or on active duty.
- Adding over \$466,000 in state funding support for the County Veterans Service Officer Program, to make sure there are local experts and advocates in all areas of the state to assist veterans to receive the benefits to which they are entitled.
- Creating an opportunity for veterans to receive training and jobs in forest fire prevention and control.

Finally, the American Legion has been the leader in working with Colorado's Congressional Delegation and with the top leadership of the VA, to assure the completion of the new VA medical center in Denver. Also, the American Legion has a program called the "System Worth Saving" which has established a team of National Legion officers to visit VA medical centers in most of the 50 States to examine and assist that facility in utilizing resources, challenges and limitations. The team also meets with veterans served by those facilities and helps them with processing claims and specific issues with the facility.