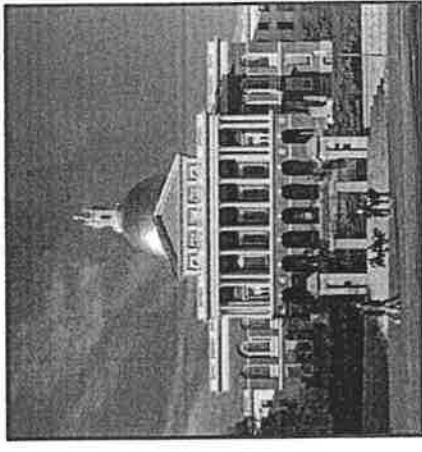


What is the HERO Act?

Formally known as “*An Act Honoring, Empowering, and Recognizing Our Servicemembers and Veterans*”, the HERO Act is the most comprehensive piece of veterans’ legislation in Massachusetts history. Signed into law by Governor Maura Healey on August 8, 2024, the bill features more than thirty spending and policy initiatives.



What does the HERO Act include?

The changes made effective by the HERO Act can be broken down into four major categories:

1. Benefit Expansion
2. Inclusivity & Representation
3. Modernization of Veterans Services
4. Honoring & Recognizing of Veterans



Benefit Expansion



Disabled Veteran & Gold Star Family Annuity

- Increases the EOVS disabled veteran annuity from \$2,000 to \$2,500.
 - February 2025 payment will be \$1,250
 - August 2025 payment will be \$2,500
 - Starting in 2026 there will be one payment of \$2,500 in August



RMV Benefits Expansion

- Allows veterans with the Purple Heart specialty license plate to qualify for a vehicle sales tax exemption for 1 vehicle owned and registered by the veteran for the personal, noncommercial use of veteran.
 - Effective 2/8/2025



RMV Benefits Expansion

- Allows 100% SCD veterans or veterans who are receiving VA compensation at the 100% SCD rate due to IU to qualify for an exemption of:

1. Excise tax for 1 vehicle registered in their name
2. Registration fee for 1 vehicle registered in their name
3. Drivers license fee



Disabled Veteran Property Tax Exemption

- Creates two new ways for municipalities to increase veteran property tax exemptions.
 - Both are local options that must be adopted at Annual Town Meeting.
 - Town does not receive any additional reimbursement from State.
1. Cost of living adjustment (22I)
 2. Increase exemption up to double current amount (22J)



Disabled Veteran Property Tax Exemption

- Directs EOVS to study property tax abatements and exemptions for veterans and surviving spouses. The study shall include:

- Veteran exemptions in other states
- Utilization of a sliding scale based on VA disability rating
- Determination of relation of abatement and exemption to VA disability rating
- Financial impact the abatements have on veterans with disabilities
- Any anticipated monetary cost exemptions may cause



Chapter 115 Benefits



- Ensures that veterans receiving federal benefits do not lose Chapter 115 benefits due to a cliff in COLA increases.
- Allows for veterans on Chapter 115 to be reimbursed for behavioral health care visits.
- Allows Chapter 115 benefits checks to be direct deposited upon recommendation of the VSO.

MASSVETS
FINANCIAL BENEFITS FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

Active Duty Service Buyback

- Lengthens the Active-Duty Service Buyback program timeframe from 180 days to 10 years, with a grace period.
- Allows a one-time opportunity for any veteran to buyback their military service for local or state government employment within 1 year.



Misc. Benefit Expansion

- Increases the tax credit for small businesses hiring veterans from \$2,000 to \$2,500.
- Requires public schools to provide support services for military-connected students when a parent or guardian is called to active duty.



Misc. Benefit Expansion

- Allows a state employee in National Guard or Reserves to receive normal pay without losing benefits while serving in military up to 40 days per federal fiscal year.
- Makes United States Space Force veterans eligible for GWOT Welcome Home Bonus.



Inclusivity & Representation



Inclusivity & Representation

- Broadens the Chapter 115 definition of a veteran to align with the federal definition, allowing more veterans to be eligible for annuity and benefits.
 - Veteran with no federal active duty other than for training, but has VA disability rating may be eligible for Chapter 115 benefits, if meets other requirements.



Veterans Equality Review Board

- Expands the scope of the Veterans Equality Review Board (VERB) to cover additional protected classes.



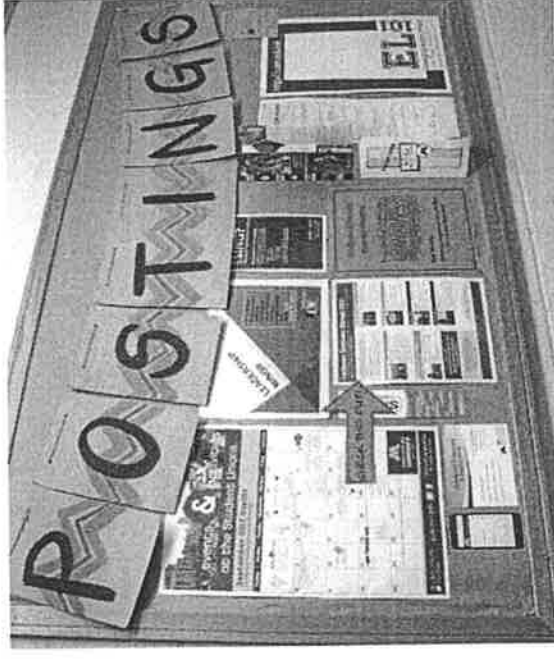
- Other than honorable discharge on the basis of sex, race, color, religious creed, national origin, age, genetic information, ancestry, marital status or disability.
- Any VA category eligible for a discharge upgrade, including, but not limited to, mental health conditions, military sexual trauma and traumatic brain injury.

Veterans Benefits & Services Notice

- Requires EOVS to create and distribute a veterans' benefits and services notice.
 - Contact and website info for EOVS and VA
 - Substance abuse and mental health resources
 - Educational, workforce, and training resources
 - Tax benefit resources
 - Info about obtaining veteran indicator on license or ID
 - Info about unemployment benefits
 - Legal services resources
 - Contact info for VA crisis line – 988 option 1

Veterans Benefits & Services Notice

- Requires employers with 50+ employees to post said notice in conspicuous location and distribute to all employees at start of employment and annually.

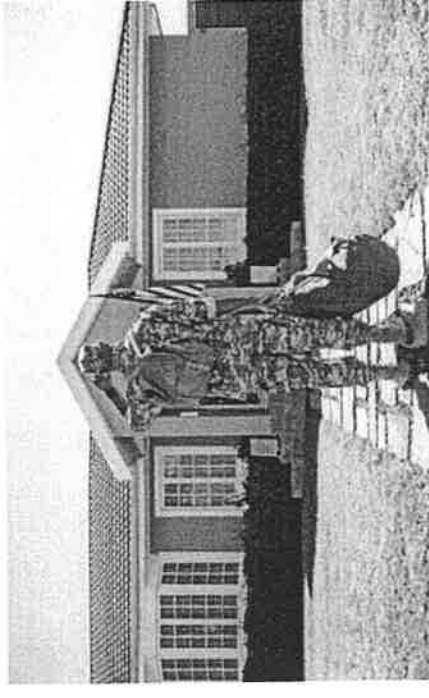


Modernization of Veterans Services



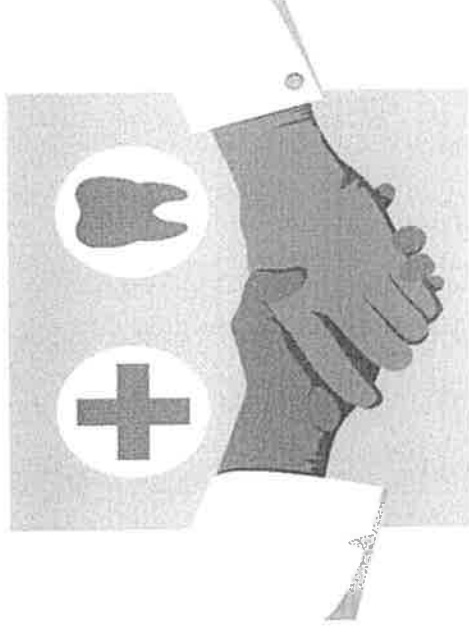
Modernization of Veterans Services

- Modernizes statutory language for inclusivity and standardization.
- Changes the veteran residential requirement length from 3 years to one day for Chapter 115 eligibility.



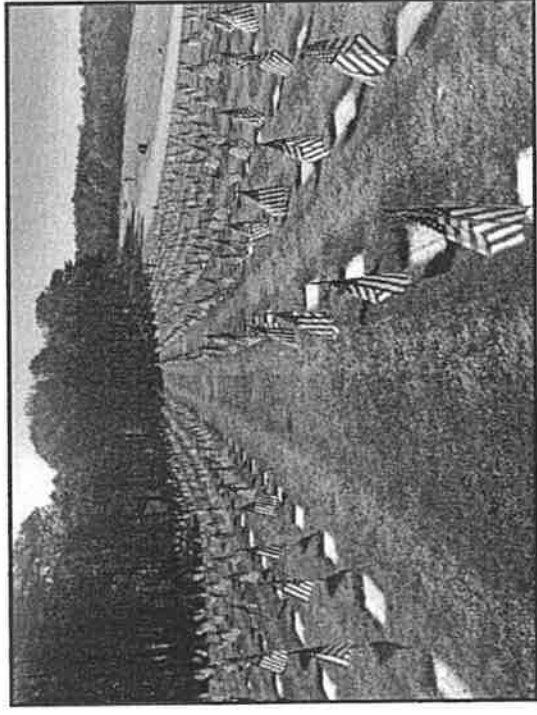
Modernization of Veterans Services

- Codifies EOVS's authority to provide certain dental and medical benefits.
- Studies the use of alternative therapies for mental health disorders among veterans.



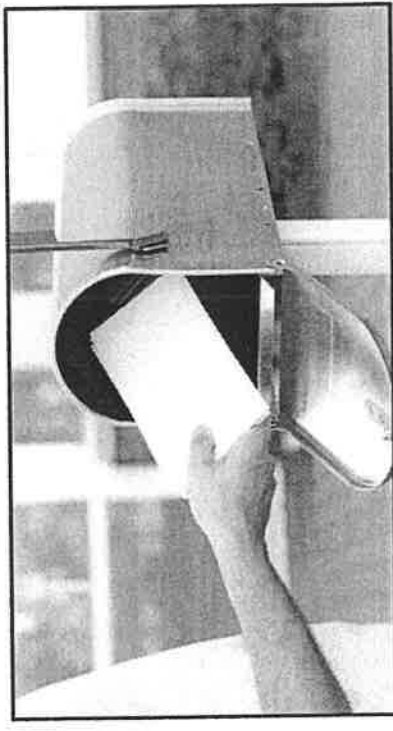
Modernization of Veterans Services

- Codifies EOVS's authority to operate both Massachusetts Memorial Veterans cemeteries.
- Creates a PTSD Commission within EOHHS.



Modernization of Veterans Services

- Establishes a commission to study challenges faced by veterans and make recommendations regarding improving quality of life.

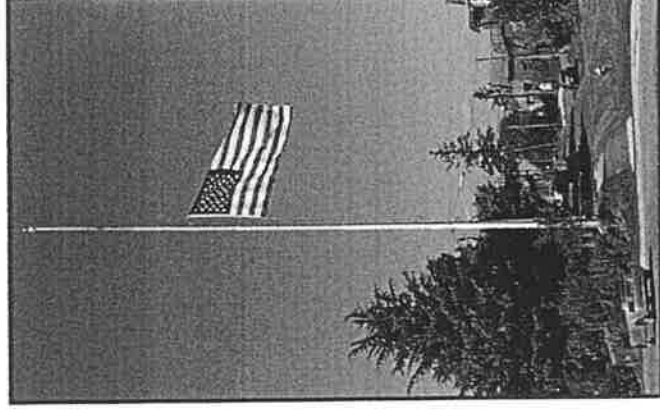


Honoring & Recognizing Veterans



Honoring & Recognizing of Veterans

- Requires that flags be flown at half-staff on National POW/MIA Recognition Day and from the day of death until the day of interment for any active service-member from MA who is killed while on active duty.



Honoring & Recognizing of Veterans

- Requires that the Governor issues a proclamation on Memorial Day and illuminates certain bridges in the color gold in recognition of Gold Star families.



Honoring & Recognizing of Veterans

- Establishes December 20th as U.S. Space Force Day and May 22nd as U.S. Merchant Marine Day.
- Amends the law to allow the spouse of a veteran or a Gold Star family member to be appointed as a grave officer – if no qualified, willing, and able veteran seeks appointment.

