

## Legislative Update

Below is Legislation affecting veterans that has been or will be introduced in the House or Senate and is under study by the PA War Veterans Council legislative committee. Legislation that the legislative committee agrees to support is brought to the full council with an explanation and recommendation to support. A vote of the full council is taken and if the vote is to support the legislation a letter of support on the War Council letterhead is sent to the chairman of the committee where the bill is assigned.

Bills from the Pennsylvania General Assembly under review by the legislative committee as of April 2013:

**DRAFT** – Amending the state Paralyzed Veterans Pension legislation to clarify the definition of paralyzed veteran - Due to a court ruling that opened eligibility to any veteran with 10 percent disability or more being able to qualify for the pension, costs are continuing to increase. The original intent was that only veterans with 100 percent disability would qualify. The amendment would restore the 100 percent requirement, as described by the VA, for any future eligibility. The legislative committee will be recommending language changes to the bill before it will support it.

**DRAFT** – Amendment to State Civil Service Commission legislation - Bill to be introduced to give DMVA the authority to hire, maintaining veteran's preference, medical professionals for the state's veterans homes such as nurses, doctors and clinical professionals that must maintain a state certification or license to perform their duties, without going through civil service hiring procedures that has resulted in losing applicants to other employers due to the extended time to complete the hiring process. The legislative committee is recommending changes to improve the language in the bill to allow it to support it.

**SB 302** – An amendment to the PA Consolidated Statutes describing the duties of the County Directors of Veterans Affairs. A most important requirement added is that to be eligible for appointment as a county director of veteran's affairs in any county, a person must maintain a VA accreditation and receive yearly training and recertification from DMVA. Appointees must complete accreditation within one year of being appointed.

**HB 290/ SB 390** – Small Games of Chance – The legislative committee has been working with the larger veteran’s organizations that have social clubs raising money for projects to correct portions of current legislation governing small games of chance. The current split of profits, 70 % to only 501c3 organizations and 30 % for expenses, is insufficient to pay current expenses. Language changes have been suggested and members of the larger organizations have attended hearings to educate legislators on the unique situation with their organizations. The organizations By Laws dictate the relationship between the Post and the Club, but they are the same organization. Tax requirements dictate that they are two separate entities and current law interpretation by the LCB considers the Club giving the Post profits money laundering. Also current law does not specifically state that a club/post can give money to an individual, such as a veteran that lost everything in a fire, while legislators feel it is permitted the language in the law states that only 501c3 organizations can receive the money. Other bills have appeared to include fire departments and the hope is to educate legislators and include needed changes to raise the amount for expenses and not restrict donations so other organizations and veterans in the community can receive funds. The legislative committee continues to work with the veterans’ organizations involved to make the needed changes in future bills.

**HB 676** – Service disabled veteran owned business participation goals - A bill has passed the general assembly giving preference to disabled veteran contractors on bids for the Department of General Services. HB 676 puts into place a procedure to encourage disabled veteran contractors to bid on contracts established by the Department of General Services. State agencies would appoint a state service-owned business advocate performing overall management of the program in each agency. The Dept. of Military and Veterans Affairs, DMVA, would appoint a state coordinator that would work with the agency advocates to provide guidance and work to ensure program goals were met.

**HB 398** – Disabled veteran resident license & fee exemptions – The bill would exempt resident disabled veterans, who have lost one or more limbs or the loss of the use of one or more limbs for whose physical disability is considered 40% or more, from paying for a black powder or archery license if they meet all other requirements. There is also a provision for senior citizens that purchase a senior resident hunting license or combination hunting and furtaking license would not pay a fee for a archery or

muzzel loader license. The legislative committee is neutral on this bill as it is a Fish and Game Committee bill and has no negative affects on veterans.

**US Congressional Letter** – The PA War Veterans Council voted to sent the PA delegation in Washington, DC a letter requesting that they support HR 1284 authorizing Blinded Veterans Travel payments for veterans blinded after service. Veterans blinded after service are covered under VA medical regulations for treatment at one of 13 VA Blind Rehabilitation Centers but the payment of travel expenses to these regional centers is only authorized for service connected blindness. HR 1284 would amend the law to include travel payments to non service connected veterans. Many have limited income and can not pay to travel to the VA treatment centers even though the treatment is covered by VA. The Blinded Veterans Association funds many veterans but many others do not get treatment. Veterans organizations and individuals are asked to contact your federal legislators to ask that they support HR 1284.