



Military and Veterans

During the 2020 legislative session, the General Assembly considered several measures related to military and veterans affairs, including bills addressing the National Guard, providing veterans' benefits, and clarifying laws concerning surplus military vehicles.

National Guard

Senate Bill 20-091 raises the minimum pay for National Guard members called into emergency service by the Governor. The previous minimum was \$20 per day, and the bill raises the rate to be equivalent to the pay of an enlisted person holding the rank of E-4 with over six years of service, estimated currently at \$88.80 per day.

Senate Bill 20-041 grants active National Guard members the ability to obtain a free Eagle annual pass to enter state parks. The bill is conditional upon funding from the General Assembly, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife is not yet offering the passes.

Senate Bill 20-082 modifies the types of awards given by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, including creating a Colorado Legion of Merit Medal, awarded to any individual who renders service in a clearly exceptional, unprecedented, or superior manner to the Colorado National Guard. The bill also adjusts eligibility criteria for certain awards and repeals duplicative awards.

Veterans Benefits

Colorado law grants disabled veterans free entry to state parks if they have a disabled veteran license plate issued by the Division of Motor Vehicles and are present in the vehicle when entering the park. Under *Senate Bill 20-069*, disabled veterans will be able to receive a free, transferrable annual state park pass, allowing them entry into a state park without having to obtain the license plate or travel in a particular vehicle.

House Bill 20-1051 permits a veterans' remains recovery organization, such as the Missing In America Project, to determine if unclaimed remains are those of U.S. military veterans or qualified family members. It also requires facilities that possess unclaimed veterans' remains to transfer the remains to a national cemetery or state veterans' cemetery for final interment.

Other bills concerning veterans benefits were considered but not adopted by the General Assembly in 2020. These include two bills addressing transportation benefits: *House Bill 20-1190*, which would have allowed a veteran with qualifying disabilities to be exempted from paying vehicle ownership tax and registration fees without being issued a disabled veteran license plate, and *Senate Bill 20-178*, which would have created a woman veteran disability license plate. Additionally:

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- *Senate Bill 20-122* would have established a grant program for nonprofit organizations to create mobile veteran support units;
- *House Bill 20-1220* would have directed the Colorado Department of Human Services to conduct a statewide needs assessment of services provided by veterans community living centers; and
- *House Bill 20-1222* would have allowed private employers to give qualified veterans a preference in hiring.

All of these bills were either postponed indefinitely or deemed lost during the shortened legislative session.

Surplus Military Vehicles

The General Assembly continued a debate from previous sessions over the proper titling and use of surplus military vehicles. Under *Senate Bill 19-054*, surplus military vehicles are off-highway vehicles that are built for the U.S. armed forces and purchased for nonmilitary use. They can be titled as off-highway vehicles for use and sale, but not registered for on-road use. *Senate Bill 20-056* exempts surplus military vehicles used by local governments and fire protection districts from this definition of an off-highway vehicle.

The following bills also address this issue but did not pass: *House Bill 20-1170*, *Senate Bill 20-115*, and *Senate Bill 20-132*.