



Dear Neighbor:

Michigan is home to more than 680,000 veterans — the 11th largest veteran population in the country. House Republicans are working hard to help each and every veteran in the Great Lakes State by ensuring they are treated with the respect and fairness they deserve.

Since 2010, House Republicans have made important changes to state law to allow military training and experience to count toward licensing requirements in many trades and professions; invested money into our veterans homes and armories; created veterans designations on Michigan driver's licenses and state IDs to make it easier for our heroes to get their benefits; and provided free Recreation Passports to state parks for disabled veterans, former POWs and Medal of Honor recipients.

The state also recently created the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency to ensure Michigan veterans have a one-stop-shop for information, benefits, assistance, and other opportunities across the state.

While our work will never be complete, House Republicans are continuing to fight for Michigan's veterans, who have earned a bright future by protecting our country and our rights for more than 200 years. From jobs and education to benefits and services, veterans are a priority in Michigan.



Sincerely,

**LARRY INMAN**

State Representative, 104th District



# 2015 VETERANS UPDATE

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# 2015 VETERANS UPDATE



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# LARRY INMAN

*Military and Veterans Affairs  
Appropriations Subcommittee Chair*

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# VETERANS UPDATE



## Easing the Transition into Civilian Life

Veterans acquire an incredible variety of skills and talents while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. But all too often they face serious challenges when translating that experience into the civilian workforce. Since 2011, the Legislature has enacted a series of laws waiving certain occupational licensing regulations if a veteran can demonstrate comparable levels of experience. For example, we just recently approved a bill to help veterans looking for work as boiler installers, repairers or inspectors (HB 4134), allowing military training to count toward civilian licensure.

The waivers are granted through the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs and are intended to reduce burdensome regulations that prevent servicemen and women from entering the civilian workforce.

## Bills Introduced to Protect Rights of All Veterans with Service Dogs

Bipartisan legislation will protect veterans' rights to have trained dogs accompany them in public settings. Trained service dogs play an important role in the lives of veterans experiencing service-related stress or injury, and these Michigan veterans need the freedom to bring their companions into every social situation. Current law grants this freedom to veterans suffering physical ailments, but the bills we are working on now will give similar relief for veterans with unseen war wounds.

## Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency

In 2013, Gov. Rick Snyder created the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency to connect those who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces, and their families, with the services and benefits they have earned. MVAA helps veterans alleviate short-term financial emergencies through the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund, connect with service providers in their communities and apply for federal VA benefits through partnerships with veterans service organizations and county departments of veterans affairs. MVAA also operates the Grand

## Veteran-Friendly Schools Announced

The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency recently announced the Michigan Veteran-Friendly School program. The program recognizes colleges, universities, community colleges and training facilities that go above and beyond to help Michigan veterans earn their college degree. Gold-, silver-, and bronze-level status is given to institutions that offer veteran-centric services and programs.

Criteria include:

1. On-campus veterans coordinator and/or staffed veterans center
2. Active student-operated veteran club/association
3. Established process for the identification of current student veterans
4. Evaluation and awarding of credit for military training and experience
5. Veteran-specific website/portal
6. Monitoring and evaluation of student veteran academic retention, completion and graduation rates
7. Monitoring and evaluation of student veteran job placement rates

Bronze level: Complete three of the above

Silver level: Complete four of the above

Gold level: Complete six or more of the above

Visit [MichiganVeterans.com/VetFriendlySchools](http://MichiganVeterans.com/VetFriendlySchools) for a list of schools and how they rank.

Rapids Home for Veterans and the Jacobetti Home for Veterans in Marquette, which offer skilled nursing, rehabilitation and long-term care to Michigan veterans.

In 2014, MVAA launched its Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center – a 24/7 hotline that is integrated with Michigan 2-1-1 services – allowing veterans to access state, federal and local resources any time day or night. Learn more at [MichiganVeterans.com](http://MichiganVeterans.com) or call 800-MICH-VET (800-642-4838).

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT VETERANS BENEFITS

### Q: WHO IS A VETERAN?

A: A veteran is any man or woman who has served in the United States Armed Forces.

### Q: WHAT QUALIFIES A VETERAN FOR BENEFITS?

A: The qualification process depends on a variety of factors including length of service, whether service occurred during war or peacetime, characterization of discharge and the type of service – active, reserve or National Guard. An accredited veterans service officer can help determine eligibility for benefits. Find your local service officer at [MichiganVeterans.com](http://MichiganVeterans.com).

### Q: WHAT MEDICAL BENEFITS ARE AVAILABLE?

A: Veterans are eligible for a full spectrum of health care services. Benefits include, but are not limited to, inpatient and outpatient, pharmacy, dental care and many others. By visiting [VA.gov/HealthBenefits](http://VA.gov/HealthBenefits), you can determine your level of eligibility and access the VA's Health Benefits Explorer. The VA regularly changes eligibility requirements for many medical benefits, so veterans are encouraged to explore available benefits even if they have been denied in the past.

### Q: ARE SPOUSES OR DEPENDENTS OF VETERANS ELIGIBLE FOR ANY BENEFITS?

A: Spouses may be eligible for benefits through the VA, including primary caregivers of Post-9/11 veterans. An active-duty soldier may also transfer his or her G.I. Bill benefits to a spouse or dependent.

### Q: WHAT BURIAL BENEFITS ARE AVAILABLE TO VETERANS AND THEIR SPOUSES?

A: Other than those dishonorably discharged, all veterans and their spouses are eligible for burial in a national cemetery. There are also burial allowances for wartime veterans, low-income veterans and those drawing veteran pensions or compensation. DD-214s, which are required for military honors, are available through the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency at 800-MICH-VET (800-642-4838).

### Q: WHAT FINANCIAL BENEFITS ARE AVAILABLE TO VETERANS OR THEIR SPOUSES?

A: There are many financial benefits available to veterans and their families, including educational benefits, VA home loans, disability compensation, property tax exemption, health care benefits and much more.

Please contact the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency for more information by visiting [MichiganVeterans.com](http://MichiganVeterans.com) or calling **800-MICH-VET (800-642-4838)**.

## BETTER SERVING THOSE WHO'VE SERVED OUR COUNTRY

As a part of the 2016 state budget, the state Legislature created the County Incentive Grant program. A total of \$250,000 was set aside to help fund new county departments of veterans affairs, hire additional accredited veteran counselors and upgrade or invest in new technology. These grants will help veterans throughout Michigan receive more of the federal benefits they have earned by making it easier and more convenient to meet with an accredited veterans service officer in the counties where they live. So far this year, a total of 14 county veterans service offices have received grants, covering 16 counties.



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