

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED

NOVEMBER 2013 — THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!



Dear Friend:

This month we pause to honor the sacrifice and service of our veterans.

Here in Michigan, more than 650,000 veterans call our great state home. We are proud of our veterans and committed to supporting those who answered our nation's call to duty.

I am writing to tell you about current legislation and new laws enacted to assist and keep veterans in our state. Along with legislative news, this report provides information on the revitalized Veterans Affairs Agency and Michigan's employment services for veterans.

As always, I hope you will contact me with any concerns or ideas on how we can better serve those who have served.

Sincerely,



STATE SENATOR

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NEW VETERANS AFFAIRS AGENCY TO UPGRADE SERVICE DELIVERY

The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (VAA) is now up and running and dedicated to improving customer service to the state's more than 650,000 military veterans.

Many Michigan veterans are unaware of the benefits they have earned – that's one reason the state has ranked low in federal VA money spent per-capita. There is a renewed urgency to do a better job and the new agency is charged with making sure our veterans know about, and receive, the assistance they need.

Along with working to better connect veterans to programs and services involving health care, education and employment, the VAA will continue to support the operation of the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund and Michigan's Homes for Veterans. Find more information at www.michigan.gov/veterans.

Contact Information: Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency

Phone: 517-284-5298 • Fax: 517-284-5295

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 30104, Lansing, MI 48909

GREEN SUPPORTS TAX RELIEF FOR DISABLED VETERANS

It's important that we never take for granted the sacrifice and service of our veterans.

Legislation passed by the Senate would provide disabled veterans and their spouses with some relief on the cost of owning their home. Under Senate Bill 352, veterans who have suffered total and permanent disability in service to our country would qualify for a full tax exemption for their homestead. The bill improves the current property tax exemption and guarantees this benefit to qualified veterans.

Michigan has thousands of veterans who could benefit from this legislation.

VETERAN DESIGNATION AVAILABLE NEXT YEAR

Starting next May, honorably discharged veterans will be able to request a veteran designation on their driver's license or state ID card. The designation will help veterans more easily access the special discounts offered to veterans and their families by many businesses. The veteran designation is not legal proof of prior military service and will not replace the DD 214 when a veteran applies for federal or state benefit programs.

GREEN BACKS BILL TO RECOGNIZE SACRIFICES MADE BY MANY VIETNAM VETERANS



Many of our veterans have made significant sacrifices to defend our freedom, including foregoing their education.

I supported legislation that would allow schools to award a high school diploma to honorably discharged veterans who served in the Vietnam War instead of completing high school.

Currently, Michigan allows school boards to award high school diplomas

to veterans of World War II and the Korean conflict. Senate Bill 389 extends that special recognition to veterans of the Vietnam War.

Under the bill, an application form for the diploma would be submitted to the school district the veteran was enrolled in at the time of enlistment and could be completed by the veteran or by a spouse, sibling, child or grandchild.



MICHIGAN SENATE REMEMBERS

I was pleased to welcome U.S. Army Sgt. Travis Mills from my district as the featured speaker for the 19th annual Michigan Senate Memorial Day service in May. He spoke about the importance of unity and honoring the fallen. Sgt. Mills was critically injured last year while on his third tour of duty in Afghanistan. The Vassar native is one of only five quadruple amputees from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to survive his injuries.

The solemn service honored the nine Michigan soldiers and sailors who were killed in action during the previous 12 months. Gold Star family members were also recognized by the Senate.

You can view the entire service and Sgt. Mills' remarks at www.youtube.com/user/MISenatorMikeGreen.

NEW LAWS EXPAND JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETS

Many businesses value the leadership skills of returning service members. Now more veterans in Michigan will be able to leverage their training and experience to find jobs in the private sector as well. New laws allow:

- Veterans with experience as military police to meet the criterion for licensure as a private security guard;
- Veterans with experience in certified military commercial motor vehicles to waive the driver's skill test to obtain a state-issued CDL; and
- Veterans with certain experience in the electrician and plumbing fields to meet the experience qualifications for journeyman licenses.

In addition, the Senate is considering bills to accept military experience and training as part of the licensing requirements for emergency medical technicians, mechanical contractors, residential builders and firefighters.

Our country's military training is first class. It just makes sense to cut the red tape so that veterans can transfer their military skills to the civilian world.

STATE JOB SITE FOR VETERANS

Michigan is ramping up efforts to help connect veterans with jobs. Vets can access a range of employment services at www.mitalent.org/veteran, including:

- Contact information for county Michigan Works! veterans employment specialists to help veterans and eligible spouses find the right job;
- Access to the Veteran Connect newsletter highlighting timely information on jobs, training programs, educational opportunities and other resources and services specifically for veterans; and
- Information on education and training, including the GI Bill benefits program.

More job assistance is also on the horizon. I supported a \$1.5 million state budget appropriation earlier this year to develop a program to link the federal Hero 2 Hired (H2H) software to the state's jobs program. When operational, it will be a more effective tool to better compare military and civilian employment skills and expand job opportunities.