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***If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?***

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# Texas State Veteran's Benefits

The state of Texas provides several veteran benefits. This section offers a brief description of each of the following benefits.

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- [Other State Sponsored Veteran Benefits](#)

## Texas Veteran Housing Programs

### Texas Veterans Land Board Programs

The Texas Veterans Land Board (VLB), a division of the Texas General Land Office, administers three veterans' loan programs:

The Land Loan Program, Veterans Housing Assistance Purchase Program, and the Veterans Home Improvement Loan Program. These loan programs provide low-interest loans to bona-fide Texas resident veterans who received an other-than-dishonorable discharge and served at least 90 days active duty.

### Texas Veterans Homes

The state of Texas maintains 8 veterans homes located in Amarillo, Big Spring, Bonham, El Paso, Floresville, McAllen, Temple, and Tyler. The homes are open to veterans who were not dishonorably discharged and their spouse, or unmarried surviving spouse. Gold Star parents are also eligible provided they meet the age and residency requirements above. Costs are based on income.

## Texas Financial Assistance Programs

### Tax Exemption for Veterans

Disabled veterans who meet certain requirements, their surviving spouses and the spouses and minor children of a person who dies on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces are eligible for property tax exemptions on the appraised value of their property. The exemption is mandatory and applies to taxes levied by all taxing authorities in the State. A veteran, whose service-connected disabilities are rated less than 10% by the Department of Veterans Affairs, or a branch of the Armed Forces, is not entitled to a property tax exemption.

## Texas State Veteran Education Benefits

### The Hazlewood Act

The Hazlewood Act is a State of Texas benefit that provides qualified Veterans, spouses, and dependent children with an education benefit of up to 150 hours of tuition exemption, including most fee charges, at public institutions of higher education in Texas. This does NOT include living expenses, books, or supply fees.

A Veteran must:

- At the time of entry into active duty the U.S. Armed Forces, designated Texas as Home of Record; or entered the service in Texas; or was a Texas resident;
- Have received an honorable discharge or separation or a general discharge under honorable conditions as indicated on the Veteran's Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (DD Form 214);
- Served at least 181 days of active duty service (excluding training);
- Have no federal Veteran's education benefits, or have no federal Veterans education benefits dedicated to the payment of tuition and fees only (such as Chapter 33 or 31; for term or semester enrolled that do not exceed the value of Hazlewood benefits;
- Not be in default on a student loan made or guaranteed by the State of Texas;

- Enroll in classes for which the college receives tax support (i.e., a course that does not depend solely on student tuition and fees to cover its cost), unless the college's governing board has ruled to let Veterans receive the benefit while taking non-funded courses; and
- Meet the GPA and excessive hour requirement of the institution's satisfactory academic progress policy in a degree or certificate program as determined by the institution's financial aid policy.
- Veterans who are granted their first Hazlewood Act exemption beginning fall, 2011 must reside in Texas during the semester or term for which the exemption is claimed. This requirement does not apply to the Veterans who either received the exemption prior to the 2011-2012 academic year, have reenlisted into active duty, or reside with a spouse who is on active duty.

### **Legacy Act (Child)**

Eligible Veterans may assign unused hours of exemption eligibility to a child under certain conditions.

### **Qualifications**

A child (legacy recipient) must:

- Be classified by the institution as a Texas resident;
- Be the biological child, stepchild, adopted child, or claimed as a dependent in the current or previous tax year;
- Be 25 years old or younger on the first day of the semester or term for which the exemption is claimed (unless granted an extension due to a qualifying illness or debilitating condition); and
- Meet the GPA and excessive hour requirements of the institution's satisfactory academic progress policy in a degree or certificate program as determined by the institution's financial aid policy.
- Legacy recipients will receive an exemption for the number of degree certified hours reported by the institution for that term or semester. Maximum degree certified hours awarded to the Legacy recipient will be dependent upon the degree or certificate program in which the student is enrolled for that term or semester and shall be consistent with the program length as defined within the school catalog as approved by the regional accreditation commission. \*If a child to whom hours have been delegated fails to use all of the assigned hours, a Veteran may re-assign the unused hours that are available to another child. Only one child will use Hazlewood Legacy benefits at a time.

### **Hazlewood Act for Spouse/Child**

Spouses and dependent children of eligible Active Duty, Reserve, and Texas National Guard who died in the line of duty or as a result of injury or illness directly related to military service, are missing in action, or who became totally disabled for purposes of employability as a result of a service-related injury or illness are entitled to each receive a 150 credit hours exemption.

### **Qualifications**

A spouse must:

- Be a spouse of a Veteran who, at the time of entry into the U.S. Armed Forces, be classified by the institution as a Texas resident, designated Texas as Home of Record, or entered the service in Texas;
- Be a spouse of a Veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces or the Texas National Guard who died as a result of service-related injuries or illness, is missing in action, or became totally disabled (100%) as a result of service-related injury or illness or is entitled to receive compensation at the 100% rate due to individual employability (IU) due to a service connected injury or illness;
- Have no federal Veterans education benefits, or have no federal Veterans education benefits dedicated to the payment of tuition and fees only (such as Chapter 33 or 31) for term or semester enrolled that do not exceed the value of Hazlewood benefits;
- Be classified by the institution as a Texas resident; and
- Meet the GPA and excessive hour requirements of the institution's satisfactory academic progress policy in a degree or certificate program as determined by the institution's financial aid policy. This requirement does not apply to the spouse of a MIA, KIA, or service connected deceased Veteran.
- A child must:
- Be a child of a Veteran who, at the time of entry into the U.S. Armed Forces, be classified by the institution as a Texas resident, designated Texas as Home of Record, or entered the service in Texas;

- Be a child of a Veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces, Texas National Guard, or Texas Air National Guard who died as a result of service-related injuries or illness, is missing in action, or became totally disabled (100%) as a result of a service-related injury or illness or is entitled to receive compensation at the 100% rate due to individual employability (IU) due to a service connected injury or illness;
- Have no federal Veterans education benefits, or have no federal Veterans education benefits dedicated to the payment of tuition and fees only (such as Chapter 33 or 31; for term or semester enrolled that do not exceed the value of Hazlewood benefits;
- Be classified by the institution as a Texas resident; and
- Meet the GPA and excessive hour requirements of the institution's satisfactory academic progress policy in a degree or certificate program as determined by the institution's financial aid policy. This requirement does not apply to the child of a MIA, KIA, or service connected deceased Veteran.

### **Dependent children of MIA / POWs**

#### **ELIGIBILITY:**

Dependent children of TX military personnel MIA or POW.

#### **BENEFITS:**

Exemption for payment of tuition and some fees at public colleges and universities. Exemptions from charges for continuing education courses is optional on the part of the institution.

#### **APPLICATION:**

Financial aid officer of the state-supported institution of choice.

### **National Guard State Tuition Assistance**

State Tuition Assistance (State TA) is a state funded tuition assistance program for active drilling members of the Texas Army National Guard (TXARNG), Texas Air National Guard (TXANG) and Texas State Guard (TXSG). It provides up to \$9,000 annually (\$4,500-Fall/\$4,500-Spring) in education benefits for college tuition and eligible fees at a Texas college or university.

#### **Eligibility Requirements**

- Active drilling members in "Good Standing" with TXARNG, TXANG or TXSG.
- Completed Basic Training. Members of the State Guard must complete BOT, RBOT or AIT.
- Enlisted (E1-E9), Officers (O1-O5) and Warrant Officers (WO1-CW3).
- Eligible school must be a Texas state college or university with headquarters in Texas as defined in Texas Education Code Section 61.003.
- AGR not eligible.
- Must be accepted to and registered in a qualifying institution for a minimum of 3 semester credit hrs.
- Expiration of Term of Service (ETS) or Mandatory Retirement Date (MRD) must occur after the official last day of class.
- Interstate Transfers must be complete prior to utilizing STRP.
- Applicants with Prior Service must complete enlistment process prior to utilizing STRP.
- ROTC Cadets who are utilizing the housing scholarship/option; Cadets using tuition option are not eligible.

### **Texas Veteran Employment Programs**

#### **Veterans Preference**

Wartime veterans have preference in employment with State agencies or offices, as do widows and children of those killed on active duty. State agencies must practice veterans' preference until they have reached 40% veteran employment. Non-retired veterans who are employed by the State of Texas are entitled to claim their active duty military time toward retirement, provided they present a proper request and pay to the Retirement System the specified amount of retirement contribution for up to 60 months' military credit. Such contribution is paid at the rate which was applicable at the time the employed veteran first was covered by the state Retirement System, plus any accrued interest. We have provided a link to the the State Law regarding veterans' preference laws.

Additionally, a veteran is entitled to reemployment rights with his last employer when he is released from the Armed Forces of the United States, providing his absence is not longer than four years. The right of reemployment is available regardless of whether the veteran was, prior to service, employed by the State, county or city government, or by private industry. Reemployment rights of veterans are now provided by both State and Federal laws. We have provided a link to the State Law regarding reemployment rights.

## **Other Texas State Veteran Benefits**

### **Texas State Cemetery Program**

The state of Texas has four state veterans cemeteries, they are located in Abilene, Corpus Christi, Killeen, and Mission. Eligibility for burial extends to all Texas veterans, eligible spouses & dependent children with no charge for veteran burial.

### **No-Cost Medical Records**

Under the Health and Safety Code, Chapter 161.201 Subchapter M, Medical or Mental Health Records, Texas veterans are eligible for no cost medical records when they are obtained to file a claim for a disability against the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA). The health care provider or health care facility is not required to provide more than one complete record for the patient or former patient without charge. Also, it should be noted, that some medical facilities will charge a small administrative fee for obtaining the records.

### **Free Drivers License for Disabled Veterans**

A Texas driver license or ID card may be provided free-of-charge to a veteran who is honorably discharged, with a service-connected disability of at least 60% or more.

### **Fishing and Hunting Licenses for Disabled Veterans**

The free Disabled Veteran "Super Combo" Hunting and All-Water Fishing Package is available at no cost to residents and non-residents qualifying as disabled veterans with 60% or greater service connected disability.

### **Fishing and Hunting Licenses for Active Duty TX Residents**

The "Super Combo" Hunting and All-Water Fishing Package is available at no cost to TX residents on active duty.

### **Free Park Admission for Disabled Veterans**

Free admission to Texas State Parks is available to any veteran who has a service-connected disability, which is rated 60% or more by VA, or a service-connected disability, which has resulted in the loss of a lower extremity. Application may be made at the headquarters office of any Texas State park by providing satisfactory evidence of service-connected disability. If such evidence is not readily available, it can be obtained from the VA regional office where the claims folder is located. The Texas State Parklands Passport is available to any veteran who meets the disability requirements, whether or not he or she resides in Texas. The Passport provides only free admission to the State parks, and does not exempt anyone from payment of other charges, such as camping fees, etc.

### **Free Recording of Discharges**

Under Texas State law, Local Government Code Sec. 0192.002, the County Clerk in each County is required to record, free of charge, the official discharge of each veteran who served in the Armed Forces of the United States of America. This free service is very important as it provides veterans with a ready source from which they can obtain a certified copy of their discharge whenever it is needed. **It is the veteran's responsibility to have the DD214 or Discharge recorded. Please also note that if you do record your DD214 with the County Clerk, it then becomes a public record. See "Safeguard Your Discharge (DD214)" in MS Word or Acrobat PDF.** Also note that the Texas Veterans Commission does not keep a record of your DD214 or Discharge.

### **Special License Plates**

Disabled Veterans, Former Prisoners of War, Pearl Harbor Survivors, Purple Heart and Medal of Honor plates are among the special license plates available to eligible veterans and their survivors for personal use on their automobile or light commercial vehicle of one ton or less. Disabled veterans must have a service-connected disability rating of 50% or more or 40% due to amputation of a lower extremity. Former prisoners of war are eligible if they were captured or incarcerated

by an enemy of the United States during a period of conflict with the United States and at the time of the capture, were citizens of the United States. Eligibility is for both former members of the Armed Forces and civilian U.S. citizens who were captured by an enemy of our government.

Visit the [Texas Veterans Commission](#) website for more information on any of these programs.