



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Joseph A.
PETRARCA

55TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

2016



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VETERANS UPDATE

Veterans may sign with state registry

A new online Pennsylvania Veterans Registry is available to help veterans better access valuable benefits, services and programs.

The registry is operated by the state Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. A person who registers will have his or her information shared with the county Veterans Affairs Office and other relevant state agencies to coordinate services.

In addition, veterans who register can opt in to receive newsletters, news releases and program updates.

The site can be accessed at <https://register.dmva.pa.gov>.

Persian Gulf bonus program extended

Originally due to expire last year, I supported the bill that became law to extend the state's Persian Gulf Conflict Veterans' Bonus Program through Aug. 31, 2018.

Anyone who served in the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserve component, or the Pennsylvania National Guard in the first Persian Gulf War between Aug. 2, 1990 and Aug. 31, 1991, may be eligible.

The program pays \$75 per month for qualifying, active-duty service members, up to a \$525 maximum. For those whose death was related to illness or injury received in the line of duty in the operations, an additional \$5,000 is available to the surviving family. Service members who were declared prisoners of war also may be eligible for an additional \$5,000.

I co-sponsored and voted for the legislation that created this program back in 2006 because I believed it was important to recognize those military men and women who sacrificed for us. I want to make sure everyone who qualifies knows about this program and applies.

The deadline to apply for this benefit is now Aug. 31, 2018. For detailed instructions on how to apply, please visit www.persiangulfbonus.pa.gov or contact one of my district offices.

Pennsylvania's Department of Military and Veterans Affairs also is asking veterans who might have previously been denied the bonus to reapply. New applications are required to reopen a claim.

Petrarca votes to protect veterans' access to valuable state programs

Many Pennsylvania veterans, including those who were blinded, lost a limb or were paralyzed as a result of their service, receive stipends from the state and federal government. These benefits were authorized by the legislature as a way to thank and honor them for their service and sacrifice.

Unfortunately, these payments also can push veterans over the income limit for Pennsylvania's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program, as well as the state's prescription-drug

assistance programs called PACE and PACENET.

I think it's unfair to exclude our veterans from these programs simply because they receive a few extra dollars due to their service to our country, and that's why I have supported these measures.

They have passed the House and I am hopeful the Senate will send them to Gov. Tom Wolf to be signed into law.

Bill would expand property tax relief to disabled veterans

A bill I support has been introduced, H.B. 1502, that would ease real estate tax burdens on disabled veterans, based on the degree of disability.

Currently, veterans classified as 100 percent disabled by the Veterans Administration are exempt from paying any real estate taxes on their primary home, provided they meet other program requirements.

Under this bill, if the Veterans Administration categorizes a veteran as 50 percent disabled, he or she would be entitled to a 50 percent reduction in real estate taxes owed. A veteran with a 20 percent disabled rating would earn a 20 percent reduction.

This bill is under review by the House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness Committee.



Making the transition from military to civilian life easier

Veterans deserve a smooth transition to the civilian workforce after their military service ends, but many have a hard time finding jobs because of the onerous and redundant certification and licensure requirements.

A law I voted for and was signed last year requires certain Commonwealth agencies to consider whether a veteran's military education, training and service experience may satisfy professional licensing or certification requirements.

Previously, this type of waiver had only been permitted for an EMS provider if he or she had been a medic in the Armed Forces. Now, more jobs with professional certification and licensing requirements are covered.

The new law helps make the transition from military to civilian life a little easier and faster.

Petrarca supports bonus program for the war on terror

Legislation is in the works for creating a Global War on Terrorism Veterans' Bonus Program to provide a \$500 bonus to veterans who served in that war.

This isn't unheard of: Pennsylvania has given bonuses to veterans of World War I and II, Korean, Vietnam and Persian Gulf wars.

This bill (H.B. 684) is in committee review.

Impersonating a vet: IT'S AGAINST THE LAW

Act 32 of 2015 makes it a misdemeanor crime to falsely claim to be a veteran when requesting a veteran's driver's license or ID card.

This has become an issue since Act 176 of 2012 permitted the inclusion of a veteran's designation on state driver's licenses and photo IDs. The purpose of that law was to make it easier for veterans to prove their status without having to carry valuable papers with them at all times.

People convicted of making a false veteran's representation under this new law can face a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or one year in prison.



Stolen valor bill in Senate

A bill that would protect the valor and integrity of America's veterans is under consideration in the Senate after the House passed the measure in June. It's a bill that I support and it came out of the committee I chair, the Judiciary Committee.

Under the bill, it would be a crime to fraudulently present oneself as a soldier or veteran or the recipient of a service medal or military decoration when it's done with the intention of obtaining money, property or other benefits.



Bridges named to honor veterans

On Veterans Day last year, I had the distinct honor to participate in the dedication of the Veterans Memorial Bridge, which carries state Route 56 over the Kiskiminetas River in Leechburg. It was my legislation that made the new name official, which I wrote at the behest of the Leechburg Borough Council.

Derry Borough Council, Chestnut Ridge Post 444 VFW and the Derry Area Revitalization Corp. asked me to write similar legislation for the bridge that's currently under construction. That bill became law in June, and the bridge that carries state Route 217 over the Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks and Second Street in Derry is the Derry Veterans Memorial Bridge. I expect the dedication to happen later this fall.

Naming these bridges in honor of our hometown heroes is a way for the communities and the state to recognize the men and women, past, present and future, for their service to our country.

The dedication ceremony for Leechburg's Veterans Memorial Bridge.





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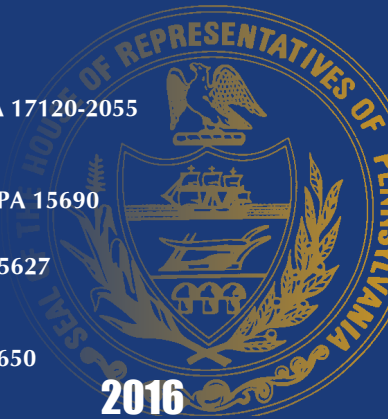
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MY OFFICE CAN HELP YOU WITH:

- Free notary service
- Car registrations, special tags, disability placards, titles and driver's license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Assistance in obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds
- Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
- Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
- Birth and death certificates
- Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions
- Problems or questions about the state lottery
- PACE cards for senior citizens
- Consumer complaints
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups



Sign up for email updates

Sign up to receive email alerts about my legislative activities in Harrisburg and state-related issues that affect your life. Visit my website at www.pahouse.com/Petrarca, click "CONTACT" and then "Sign up for emails" and fill out the form.