



Substitute Senate Bill No. 914

Public Act No. 21-51

**AN ACT CONCERNING MEMBERS OF THE HMONG LAOTIAN
SPECIAL GUERRILLA UNITS.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Section 14-20b of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2021*):

(a) The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, at the request of any veteran or member of the armed forces or the surviving spouse of such veteran or member, shall register any motor vehicle owned or leased for a period of at least one year by such person and shall issue a special certificate of registration and a set of number plates for each such motor vehicle, including a special certificate of registration and a set of number plates for any motor vehicle used exclusively for farming purposes by any such veteran or member of the armed forces, or the surviving spouse of such veteran or member, who is engaged in agricultural production as a trade or business. The plates shall expire and be renewed as provided in section 14-22. The commissioner shall charge a fee for such plates, which fee shall cover the entire cost of making such plates and shall be in addition to the fee for registration of such motor vehicle. As used in this subsection, ["member of the armed forces"] "armed forces" has the same meaning as provided in section 27-103 and "veteran" means any person (1) honorably discharged from, or released under honorable

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conditions from active service in, the armed forces, or (2) with a qualifying condition, as defined in section 27-103, who has received a discharge other than bad conduct or dishonorable from active service in the armed forces.

(b) (1) The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, at the request of any person who was a member of the Hmong Laotian special guerilla units, which units served in the United States secret war in the Kingdom of Laos during the Vietnam War, or the surviving spouse of such person, and after verification from the Department of Veterans Affairs as provided under subdivision (2) of this subsection, shall register any motor vehicle owned or leased for a period of at least one year by such person and shall issue a special certificate of registration and a set of number plates for each such motor vehicle, including a special certificate of registration and a set of number plates for any motor vehicle used exclusively for farming purposes by any such person, or the surviving spouse of such person, who is engaged in agricultural production as a trade or business. The plates shall expire and be renewed as provided in section 14-22. The commissioner shall charge a fee for such plates, which fee shall cover the entire cost of making such plates and shall be in addition to the fee for registration of such motor vehicle.

(2) Any person who was a member of the Hmong Laotian special guerilla units, or the surviving spouse of such person, may submit a request to the Department of Veterans Affairs to be listed as a veteran, based on such service, for the purpose of obtaining a special certificate of registration and a set of number plates under subdivision (1) of this subsection. Such person, or the surviving spouse of such person, shall provide to said department (A) an affidavit stating (i) when such person served, (ii) where such person served, (iii) the unit in which such person served, and (iv) the capacity in which such person served; (B) any available corroborating witness affidavits; (C) any available official documentation of service; and (D) any other documents supporting

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such person's or such surviving spouse's affidavit. Said department shall, not later than thirty days after receipt of such request, verify whether such person was a member of the Hmong Laotian special guerilla units and, if so, notify the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles of such request and verification.

[(b)] (c) Any such member of the armed forces who is dishonorably discharged shall return such plates to the commissioner not later than thirty days after such discharge. The commissioner shall not renew such plates for any motor vehicle owned or leased by any such member of the armed forces who is dishonorably discharged.

Sec. 2. Section 14-36h of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2021*):

(a) Each motor vehicle operator's license issued by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles in accordance with section 14-36 and each identity card issued by said commissioner in accordance with section 1-1h shall contain the following: (1) The person's full legal name; (2) the person's date of birth; (3) the person's gender; (4) the person's height and eye color; (5) the person's assigned operator's license or identity card number; (6) the person's address of principal residence in this state; (7) the person's signature; (8) the person's photograph or digital image; and (9) if applicable, the person's status as a veteran, as provided in [subsection] subsections (e) and (f) of this section.

(b) If any person does not reside in any state, territory or possession of the United States because such person is on active military duty with the United States Armed Forces, and such person's home state of record is Connecticut, as reflected in the records of the Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security or any department under which the United States Coast Guard operates, such person may obtain a Connecticut operator's license or identity card, provided such person: (1) Does not have an operator's license or identity card issued by another

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state, territory or possession of the United States, or surrenders any such license or identity card; (2) has a current APO or FPO mailing address; (3) designates such person's home address as 60 State Street, Wethersfield, CT 06161; and (4) meets all other requirements for obtaining an operator's license or identity card in this state.

(c) The commissioner shall provide that each such license or identity card document contains physical security features designed to prevent tampering, counterfeiting or duplication of the document.

(d) Each such document shall also contain one or more machine-readable technology feature or component, including, but not limited to, a bar code or magnetic strip.

(e) Any person who is a veteran may submit a request to the Department of Veterans Affairs to have his or her status as a veteran contained on his or her motor vehicle operator's license or identity card. Said department shall, not later than thirty days after receipt of such request, verify whether such person is a veteran and, if so, notify the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles of such request and verification. The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles shall indicate such person's status as a veteran on any motor vehicle operator's license or identity card issued to such person upon original issuance or renewal of a motor vehicle operator's license or identity card or upon issuance of a duplicate motor vehicle operator's license or identity card.

(f) (1) Any person who was a member of the Hmong Laotian special guerilla units, which units served in the United States secret war in the Kingdom of Laos during the Vietnam War, may submit a request to the Department of Veterans Affairs to be listed as a veteran, based on such service, on his or her motor vehicle operator's license or identity card. Said department shall, not later than thirty days after receipt of such request and the documents required under subdivision (2) of this subsection, verify whether such person was such a member and, if so,

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notify the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles of such request and verification. The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles shall indicate such person's status as a veteran on any motor vehicle operator's license or identity card issued to such person upon original issuance or renewal of a motor vehicle operator's license or identity card or upon issuance of a duplicate motor vehicle operator's license or identity card.

(2) Any such person who was a member of the Hmong Laotian special guerilla units shall submit to the Department of Veterans Affairs, in addition to the request under subdivision (1) of this subsection, (A) an affidavit stating (i) when such person served, (ii) where such person served, (iii) the unit in which such person served, and (iv) the capacity in which such person served; (B) any available corroborating witness affidavits; (C) any available official documentation of service; and (D) any other documents supporting such person's affidavit.

[(f)] (g) As used in this section: (1) "Full legal name" means the most complete version of the name that appears on a person's certificate of birth, official passport or other document or documents accepted by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles to verify the person's identity, unless the person presents a marriage license or certificate, a certificate of civil union, a divorce decree or an order of a court of competent jurisdiction pertaining to a permanent change of the person's name; and (2) "veteran" means (A) any person honorably discharged from, or released under honorable conditions from active service in, the armed forces, as defined in section 27-103, (B) any former member of the armed forces who is entitled to retirement pay under 10 USC Chapter 1223, as amended from time to time, or, but for age, would be so entitled, or (C) any person with a qualifying condition, as defined in section 27-103, who has received a discharge other than bad conduct or dishonorable from active service in the armed forces.

Sec. 3. Section 27-118 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2021*):

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(a) When any veteran or member, as defined in subsection (e) of this section, dies, not having sufficient estate to pay the necessary expenses of the veteran's or member's last sickness and burial, as determined by the commissioner after consultation with the probate court for the district in which the veteran or member resided, the state shall pay the sum of one thousand eight hundred dollars toward such funeral expenses, and the burial shall be in some cemetery or plot not used exclusively for the burial of the pauper dead, and the same amount shall be paid if the body is cremated, but no amount shall be paid for the expenses for burial or cremation unless claim therefor is made within one year from the date of death, except that in cases of death occurring abroad, such claim may be made within one year after the remains of such veteran or member have been interred in this country. No provision of this section shall prevent the payment of the sum above named for the burial of any person, otherwise entitled to the same, on account of such burial being made outside the limits of this state.

(b) Upon satisfactory proof by the person who has paid or provided for the funeral or burial expense to the commissioner of the identity of the deceased veteran, the time and place of the deceased's death and burial and the approval thereof by the commissioner, [said] the sum of one thousand eight hundred dollars shall be paid by the Comptroller to the person who has paid the funeral or burial expense or, upon assignment by such person, to the funeral director who has provided the funeral.

(c) (1) Upon satisfactory proof by the person who has paid or provided for the funeral or burial expense to the commissioner of the identity of the deceased member, the time and place of the deceased member's death and burial and the approval thereof by the commissioner, the sum of one thousand eight hundred dollars shall be paid by the Comptroller to the person who has paid the funeral or burial expense, or upon assignment by such person, to the funeral director

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who has provided the funeral.

(2) The person who has paid or provided for the funeral or burial expense shall provide to the commissioner (A) an affidavit stating (i) when the deceased member served, (ii) where the deceased member served, (iii) the unit in which the deceased member served, and (iv) the capacity in which the deceased member served; (B) any available corroborating witness affidavits; (C) any available official documentation of service; and (D) any other documents supporting the affidavit.

(d) Whenever the Comptroller has lawfully paid any sum toward the expenses of the burial of any deceased veteran or member and it afterwards appears that the deceased left any estate, the Comptroller may present a claim on behalf of the state against the estate of such deceased veteran or member for the sum so paid, and the claim shall be a preferred claim against such estate and shall be paid to the Treasurer of the state. The commissioner, upon the advice of the Attorney General, may make application for administration upon the estate of any such deceased veteran or member if no other person authorized by law makes such application within sixty days after such payment has been made by the Comptroller.

(e) As used in this section, (1) "veteran" means any person [(1)] (A) honorably discharged from, or released under honorable conditions from active service in, the armed forces, as defined in section 27-103, or [(2)] (B) with a qualifying condition, as defined in said section, who has received a discharge other than bad conduct or dishonorable from active service in the armed forces, and (2) "member" means any person who served in the Hmong Laotian special guerilla units, which units served in the United States secret war in the Kingdom of Laos during the Vietnam War.

Sec. 4. Section 27-122b of the general statutes is repealed and the

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following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2021*):

(a) As used in this section, "veteran" means any person (1) honorably discharged from, or released under honorable conditions from, active service in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force or Coast Guard or any women's auxiliary branch thereof, organized pursuant to an Act of Congress; (2) who has completed at least twenty years of qualifying service, as described in and computed under 10 USC Chapter 1223, as amended from time to time, in the Connecticut National Guard; or (3) who was killed in action, or who died as a result of accident or illness sustained while performing active service, in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force or Coast Guard or any women's auxiliary branch thereof, organized pursuant to an Act of Congress, or in the Connecticut National Guard.

(b) (1) Any veteran may, by letter or other communication addressed to the commissioner, or by will, request that upon his or her death his or her body be buried in a veterans' cemetery established pursuant to section 27-122a, or (2) the spouse or other next of kin may apply to the commissioner to have the body of such veteran buried in said veterans' cemetery, and in either case such request shall be granted.

(c) (1) Any member or former member of the armed forces, as defined in subsection (a) of section 27-103, who is a resident of this state and is entitled to retirement pay under 10 USC Chapter 1223, as amended from time to time, or would have been entitled to retirement pay under said chapter, but for the fact that the person is under sixty years of age, may by letter or other communication addressed to the commissioner, or by will, request that his or her body will be buried in said veterans' cemetery, or (2) the spouse or other next of kin may apply to the commissioner to have the body of such member or former member buried in said veterans' cemetery, and, in either case, such request shall be granted.

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(d) (1) (A) Any person who served in the Hmong Laotian special guerilla units, which units served in the United States secret war in the Kingdom of Laos during the Vietnam War, may, by letter or other communication addressed to the commissioner, or by will, request that upon his or her death his or her body be buried in a veterans' cemetery established pursuant to section 27-122a, or (B) the spouse or other next of kin may apply to the commissioner to have the body of such person buried in said veterans' cemetery, and in either case such request shall be granted.

(2) Such person who served in the Hmong Laotian special guerilla units, or the spouse or next of kin of such person, shall provide to the commissioner (A) an affidavit stating (i) when the person served, (ii) where the person served, (iii) the unit in which the person served, and (iv) the capacity in which the person served; (B) any available corroborating witness affidavits; (C) any available official documentation of service; and (D) any other documents supporting the affidavit.

[(d)] (e) The spouse of any veteran, or the spouse of any person who served in the Hmong Laotian special guerilla units described in subsection (d) of this section, shall, upon similar request or application made to the commissioner, be buried in said veterans' cemetery provided only one such request or application shall be granted.

[(e)] (f) The commissioner shall designate an area in said veterans' cemetery for veterans and any persons who served in the Hmong Laotian special guerilla units described in subsection (d) of this section who, for religious reasons, require burial in a consecrated area.

Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2021*) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 27-73e of the general statutes, the Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Adjutant General, shall award a ribbon and medal as described in said section to each member who is

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a resident of this state and who provides to the Department of Veterans Affairs (1) an affidavit stating (A) when such person served, (B) where such person served, (C) the unit in which such person served, and (D) the capacity in which such person served; (2) any available corroborating witness affidavits; (3) any available official documentation of service; and (4) any other documents supporting such person's affidavit. As used in this section, "member" means a person who served in the Hmong Laotian special guerilla units, which units served in the United States secret war in the Kingdom of Laos during the Vietnam War.