

April 15, 2015

Dear Sharon Resident:

Some United States Military Veterans may qualify to be awarded benefits from the U.S. Federal Government or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

An example of federal entitlement is medical care at a Veteran Administration (V.A.) facility for a disability related to active duty military service. Entitlement to receive medical care is not automatic. The V.A. must receive an application/claim using the form specifically published by the V.A. and submitted by the veteran. The claim must be specific as to disability as well as provide detail of the incident to allow the V. A. staff to research and obtain adequate documentation to determine the disability is a result of military service or occurred while on active duty.

Upon approval by the V. A. Adjudicator the veteran can receive medical care at a V.A. hospital for the specific disability. The V.A. medical staff, on a case by case basis may allow treatment for non-service related illness for veterans authorized to receive medical care. If provided non-related health care, the veteran is charged for the care. Pharmacy issued medication will only be prescribed by a V.A. staff doctor. Veterans cannot bring in prescriptions to the V.A. pharmacy from a non-V.A. staff doctor.

Another example of veteran entitlement is burial in a U.S. Veterans Administration Cemetery which still has lots available. The veteran and spouse may qualify for burial having completed the minimum period of active duty and having been discharged under honorable conditions.

Otherwise eligible individuals found to have committed federal or state capital crimes are barred from burial at a V.A. Cemetery as well as related benefits. Veterans wanting a Military Funeral, Burial at a V. A. Cemetery or marker need to have documentation on file. The funeral director can contact the V.A. to determine eligibility and clarify what the veteran is responsible to pay for the funeral and burial. The V.A. does not provide a pre-approved burial plot. Further information can be obtained at website [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov) or 1-800-827-1000

Federal entitlements are too varied and criteria is complex for some entitlement. Therefore I suggest you review the booklet Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents. The V. A. Web site [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov), also provides an overview. A single copy of the booklet with approximately 140 pages cost \$5.00. Call 1-866-512-1800 to order.

The Commonwealth allows some veteran benefits. Normally they are for specific situations and varied state agencies administer and approve the specific benefits for which they are responsible. An example of agency responsibility is obtaining a bonus for service during a war. Various acts authorized in varied years allow for specific veterans domiciled in Massachusetts immediately prior to entry in the armed forces to receive a bonus. Each war has a different dollar amount along with different continuous days of active duty requirements. Persian Gulf veterans must submit application to the Massachusetts Department of Veteran Services and all other war veterans apply to the Office of the Treasurer Commonwealth of Massachusetts. You must use state forms and complete with required supporting documents.

A small dollar amount is allowed by fiscal year (July-June) for residential property tax exemption when a veteran has a disability over 10% approved by the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs. Recipients of Congressional Medal of Honor; Distinguished Service Cross; Navy or Air Force Cross; Purple Heart, Gold Star Mother and Father as well as spouses of veterans who are qualified may qualify for Property Tax Exemption.

Application must be made annually to the Town Board of Assessors. Initial submission should be made when you have all needed documentation. Recurring annual submission must be made by March 1<sup>st</sup>. Again varied laws determine allowance for varied disability or awards. See [www.mass.gov/dor](http://www.mass.gov/dor)

Veterans or surviving spouses who have exhausted their savings and are not receiving income or benefits from government or non-government entities may qualify for limited financial assistance. The veteran has to be honorably discharged for service during a war and must meet the criteria of Chapter 115 Massachusetts General Laws. Application for Chapter 115 benefit is made to the Veteran Agent of the city or town in which the veteran is a resident. Approval is determined by the staff of the Secretary Veterans Services Commonwealth of Massachusetts. See [www.mass.gov/veterans](http://www.mass.gov/veterans)

Veterans who have been given a disability rating by the V.A. or receiving State Chapter 115 Benefits may qualify for a reduced utility rate for electricity or natural gas. Each utility company has different policies. Contact each customer service office for determination.

The Veterans' Laws and Benefits Booklet has been compiled by The Office of the Secretary of The Commonwealth. A copy of the booklet can be obtained by calling 1-800-392-6090. The staff of the Citizen Information Service located in Boston should be able to inform you as to the method of requesting and receiving the booklet which provides an overview of State of Massachusetts and some Federal veteran benefits. Each state has their unique veteran benefit laws and method of administering veteran programs. See [www.sec.state.ma.us/cis](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/cis)

Based on the above overview, you may appreciate the complexity of entitlement. Many veteran benefits have been reduced or eliminated since the veteran was discharged prior to the year 2009.

If you do not have all supporting documentation but want to save the current date for a claim, this can be done. You will have one year from date of submission of VA Form 21-0966 with attached honorable discharge document. In addition VA Form 21-22 is requested to obtain delegation for MA. Dept. of Veteran Services to represent you.

For a widow(er) death benefit claim, a copy of the marriage certificate must be included with the copy of honorable veteran discharge.

Suggest veterans and family members review the above references to determine if you qualify and intend to apply for an eligible entitlement.

Also use [www.MassVetsAdvisor.org](http://www.MassVetsAdvisor.org).

Very truly yours,  
Paul R. Bergeron  
Director Veteran Services