

Education

Federal. The federal government offers several programs for veterans seeking assistance for education or vocational training. Contact the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs at www.va.gov or call 800-827-1000. You can also contact the NYS Division of Veterans' Affairs at 1-888-838-7697 for more information.

In addition, if you meet the requirements of the GI Bill Fairness Act of 2011, you may be eligible for financial assistance if attending private colleges and universities in seven states: Arizona, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Texas. Log on to www.benefits.va.gov/gibill for more information.

State Veterans Tuition Awards. Eligible veterans are those who served in Vietnam, Afghanistan or the Persian Gulf, have earned an Expeditionary Medal and have received a discharge under honorable conditions. For the 2015 academic year, the awards are set at \$6,495 or the cost of tuition, whichever is less. These awards apply to full-time study

and part-time study for eligible veterans. Vocational students should contact the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) about tuition eligibility. In many instances, to establish eligibility, applicants must apply to HESC and must also apply for the state Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) and to the federal Pell Grant Program with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Call 1-888-697-4372 or visit www.hesc.ny.gov for information.

Operation Recognition. Awards high school diplomas to veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam who left school before graduating. GED recipients are also eligible. For more information, call 518-474-8940.

Children of Veterans (Regents) Awards. Provides eligible children of deceased veterans, those missing in action or prisoners of war, or those service-connected disabled veterans rated 40 percent or greater disability an annual, noncompetitive monetary award up to \$450 per year. The parent must be a New York State resident or must have been one at the time of death.

Military Service (MERIT) Recognition Scholarships. Available to certain dependents of military personnel killed, severely and permanently disabled or missing in action while serving in a combat zone or while engaged in hostilities or training for hostilities after Aug. 2, 1990.

Employment

Federal review of discharge. Military Boards of Review have authority to correct and upgrade most discharges based on facts presented for consideration. Call 1-800-827-1000 and ask for a DD Form 293 and a DD Form 149.

State career advancement. Under the Veterans' Bill of Rights for Employment Services, veterans are entitled to priority service at all New York State Department of Labor offices in job referrals, employment counseling, vocational testing and other services. Visit www.labor.ny.gov/vets/vetintropage.shtm for more information.

Civil Service

Federal benefits. On competitive exams, there is a 10-point preference for eligible disabled veterans and a 5-point preference for nondisabled honorably discharged wartime veterans. Some requirements may be waived and special priority given in particular job categories. Surviving, unmarried spouses, as well as certain spouses and mothers of disabled veterans, may also be eligible for preference.

State and local benefits. Credit preferences and retention rights are available for disabled and nondisabled veterans. Some competitive positions are filled by appointment for qualified wartime veterans with disabilities. For more

information, call 518-233-3118 or 866-297-4356.

Home loan guarantees

Veterans and unmarried surviving spouses may be eligible for GI loan guarantees for homes. This may reduce or eliminate the need for a down payment. Visit www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans. New York State provides low-interest mortgages through the State of New York Mortgage Agency – SONYMA. Visit www.nysmcr.org or call 800-382-4663.

Tax exemptions

Property. Municipalities have the option to grant an alternative exemption on a primary residence. This provides a property tax exemption of 15 percent of assessed value for veterans who served during wartime and an extra 10 percent for those who served in a combat zone. Disabled veterans are provided with an additional exemption equal to one-half of their service-connected disability ratings, multiplied by the assessed value of their property. Check with your local assessor to determine the maximum exemption limits in

your community. Veterans who have received the Armed Forces, Navy, Marine Corps or Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal and, under certain conditions, members of the reserves are eligible.

Municipalities that offer the alternative exemption may increase the limits imposed under the Real Property Tax Law. In 1997, municipalities were given the option to allow veterans residing in cooperative apartment buildings to apply for the exemption.

The eligible funds exemption is another benefit and provides a partial exemption where property owned by a veteran (or certain other persons designated in the law) has been purchased with funds, such as a pension, bonus or insurance monies, referred to as “eligible funds.”

There is a third exemption, known as the Cold War Veterans Exemption, available for residential property of veterans who served during the period covering Sept. 2, 1945, to Dec. 26, 1991, and who do not receive the eligible veterans’ real property tax exemption or the alternative veterans’ exemption.

Surviving spouses who have not remarried may also be eligible for these exemptions. A woman veteran, if married to a veteran, may combine her exemption with her spouse’s for even greater savings.

These exemptions are not automatic and are not provided by all municipalities. Veterans should contact their assessor’s office for information and an application or visit www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/exemption/vetexempt.htm or call 1-888-838-7697 for additional information.

Income. Military pay received for active service as a member of the United States Armed Services in an area designated as a combat zone is exempt from New York State, New York City and Yonkers income taxes. To learn more about these exemptions and to access the forms, visit www.tax.ny.gov/pit/file/military_page.htm.

Disabled veterans’ benefits

Automobile federal benefits. Certain disabled veterans may qualify for a one-time payment of up to \$20,235.20 that can be used toward the purchase of a new motor vehicle or other conveyance. Automobile adaptive equipment grants are also available. Visit www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-special-auto-allowance.asp.

Automobile state benefits. Eligible New Yorkers may have their status as a veteran designated on their New York State driver’s license. Those who qualify can have the word “Veteran” printed on the upper left corner of their newly issued license, learner permit or nondriver photo ID card at no additional charge. This identification shows proof of service, making it easier to access veteran programs, benefits and discounts. Apply by mail or in person at a New York State motor vehicle office. You will need to provide

verification that you received an honorable discharge from military service or were released from military service under honorable conditions.

Auto registration and Thruway permits are free to qualified, severely disabled veterans receiving VA adaptive vehicle grants. For auto registration go to www.dmv.ny.gov/armedforces.htm. For Thruway permits, go to www.thruway.ny.gov/ezpass/veterans.html or call 518-471-5848.

Blindness federal benefits.

Blindness need not be service-connected. Seeing-eye dogs and electronic and mechanical aids may be available. Visit www.ebenefits.va.gov for more information.

Blindness state benefits. An annuity is available to blind wartime veterans and qualified unremarried, surviving spouses, plus a percentage increase, if any, for compensation, and pension benefits administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in the previous year. The NYS Division of Veterans’ Affairs publishes by Feb. 1 of each year the amount of the annuity, as adjusted. Download and fill out a form at www.ny.gov by typing “veterans blind annuity” into the search bar.

Hearing aids. This is a federal benefit. A veteran first has to register with a VA Medical Center. Visit www.prosthetics.va.gov/hearing_aids.asp for eligibility requirements.

Wheelchair homes. Veterans who are totally and permanently disabled as a result of their military service may be eligible for grants to adapt a home to meet

their wheelchair needs. There are two grant programs available at www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/adaptedhousing.asp.

Compensation. Veterans may apply for compensation for a service-connected disability or disease at any time. The disability rating is based on the severity of the condition and the reduction in earning power. Visit www.benefits.va.gov/compensation to learn more.

Nonservice connected pension. A pension, based on a financial means test, may be available for eligible wartime veterans with permanent disabilities not connected with service. Visit www.benefits.va.gov/pension to learn more.

Licenses and permits.

Veterans with a 40 percent or greater disability rating are eligible for low-cost hunting and fishing licenses and free use of state parks, historic sites and recreational sites, with a park pass. Visit store.usgs.gov/faq or call 1-866-472-4332 to get yours.

Health care

Honorably discharged women veterans may be eligible for free or low-cost care through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, whether or not they served during times of war.

VA Medical Centers in New York State. VA Medical Centers are located in: Albany, Batavia, Bath, Bronx, Brooklyn, Buffalo, Canandaigua, Montrose, New York City, Northport, Syracuse and Wappingers Falls. Each has been directed to appoint a Women Veterans Program Manager to help develop the best possible medical care and provide support for women veterans.

Women may be entitled to VA benefits if they are veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps or Coast Guard), served in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASP) during World War II or in the Women's Reserve of the U.S. Navy (WAVES). Contact the NYS Division of Veterans' Affairs at 1-888-838-7697, which, in addition to directing you to federal benefits, can also tell you about its five New York State veterans' homes.

Gender-specific services. For gender-specific health care services, first enroll for VA health care by completing VA form 10-10EZ, which may be obtained by visiting, calling or writing any VA health care facility or veterans' benefits office. You can also access the form online at www.va.gov or call 877-222-8387. Ask for the Women Veterans Program Manager

upon calling or visit www.womenshealth.va.gov.

If you were involuntarily discharged from the military for pregnancy prior to 1974 and have questions about your eligibility for services, contact your nearest VA health care facility.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center Services.

Women can receive a whole host of comprehensive medical services, including health promotion; primary care; gender-specific health care, such as hormone replacement therapy, breast and gynecological care, maternity and limited infertility (excluding in-vitro fertilization); acute medical/surgical, telephone triage; emergency and substance abuse treatment; mental health; domiciliary; rehabilitation and long-term care. Treatment for Military Sexual Trauma (MST) experienced on active duty is also available. Every VA facility has a designated MST Coordinator who serves as a contact person and advocate for these issues.

Aid and Attendance and Housebound benefit.

Veterans and survivors who are eligible for a VA pension and require the aid and attendance of another person, or are housebound, may be eligible for additional monetary payment. These benefits are paid in addition to monthly pension, and they are not paid without eligibility to Pension. Go to http://www.benefits.va.gov/pension/aid_attendance_housebound.asp for more information.

Burial

Federal benefits. Financial assistance for burial and plot expenses is available for certain eligible veterans. Claims must be filed within two years after permanent interment. Burial in national cemeteries is available to veterans and certain family members. An American flag to drape the casket and to be given to the next of kin is available for deceased veterans. Call 1-800-827-1000 for more information.

State benefits. Burial expenses and the cost of headstones for indigent veterans and certain family members are authorized by the county of the veteran's residence. Call 1-888-838-7697 for more information.

Supplemental burial allowance. New York State authorizes a supplemental burial allowance of up to \$6,000 for certain military personnel killed in combat while on active duty in hostile or imminent danger zones on or after Sept. 29, 2003. Call 1-888-838-7697 for more information.

Survivors' benefits (federal)

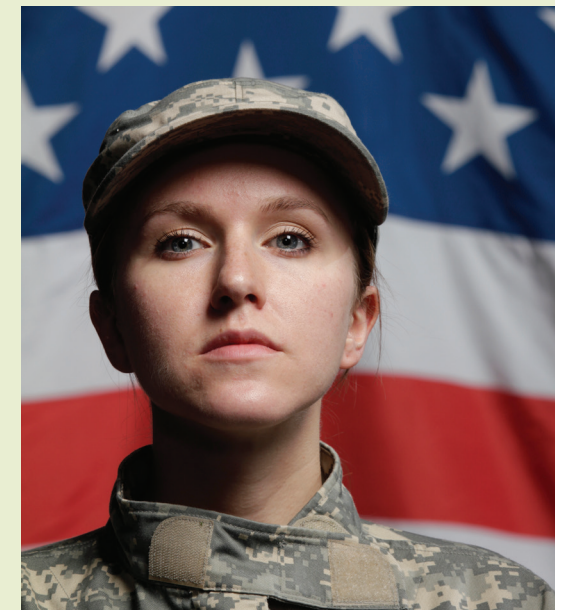
Surviving spouse pension benefits. Certain surviving spouses and unmarried children of deceased veterans with wartime service may be eligible for a nonservice connected pension based on need. Minor children may be eligible even if the surviving spouse remarries.

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation benefits (DIC). DIC payments are payable to eligible spouses, unmarried children under 18, certain children pursuing higher education,

certain helpless children, certain remarried surviving spouses and dependent parents of veterans who died of service-connected injuries or disease. Annual income of parents is an eligibility factor for parental DIC. Visit www.va.gov/survivors for more information.

Insurance

Designated beneficiaries of deceased persons covered by all forms of government insurance may submit their claims to the nearest counseling center of the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs. Visit www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/sgli.asp for details to convert an SGLI policy after discharge.



Readjustment counseling

Vet centers are located around the country to help veterans with readjustment. Women veterans are not immune to the issues that affect many of their male counterparts, yet they often don't seek help. Women veterans trying to cope with problems such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Military Sexual Trauma (MST) are encouraged to contact a federal veterans center. New York locations are listed below. You can visit www.veterans.ny.gov or www.va.gov/womenvet or call the state Division of Veterans' Affairs at 888-838-7697.


Albany	518-626-5130
Babylon	631-661-3930
Binghamton	607-722-2393
Bronx	718-367-3500
Brooklyn	718-630-2830
Buffalo	716-862-7350
Hicksville (Nassau)	516-348-0088
Middletown	845-342-9917
New York (Harlem)	646-273-8139
New York (Manhattan)	212-951-6866
Rochester	585-232-5040
Staten Island	718-816-4499
Syracuse	315-478-7127
Watertown	315-782-5479
White Plains	914-682-6250
Woodhaven (Queens)	718-296-2871

Women Veterans Hotline:

1-855-VA-WOMEN (829-6636)

Help for alcoholism, drug abuse or problem gambling call:

1-877-8-HOPENY (846-7369)



Benefits for women vets and their families

Courtesy of

Assemblymember Pamela J. Hunter



A Message to Veterans from

**Assemblymember
Pamela J. Hunter**



Are you a woman who served in the U.S. Armed Forces?

If so, you may be eligible for state and federal veterans benefits – hard-earned benefits available from a grateful nation and state.

With nearly 70,000 women vets in New York State, I want to make sure you have access to the resources you have so selflessly earned by serving our country.

This brochure provides a general overview of federal and state benefits available to all eligible veterans and their families. You should know that at each VA medical center nationwide, a Women Veterans Program Manager is designated to assist women veterans. She can help coordinate all the services you may need, from primary care to medical services to mental health and sexual abuse counseling.

Thank you for your service. Please contact me if I can assist you in this or any other matter.

Pamela J. Hunter
Member of Assembly

Albany Office:
Room 432
Legislative Office Bldg.
Albany, NY 12248
518-455-5383

District Office:
711 East Genesee Street, 2nd Floor
Syracuse, NY 13210
315-449-9536

Email: HunterP@nyassembly.gov