

Expansion of Pennsylvania's Disabled Veterans' Real Estate Tax Exemption

Since 1988, Chapter 89 of Title 51 (Military Affairs) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes provides certain military veterans with an exemption of real estate taxes. The current authorization requires a 100% permanent service-connected disability rating by the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA). This all or nothing approach seems unfair. The issue is that if you disabled at any rating other than 100%, you get no exemption whatsoever.

Recently, two bills have been introduced to change this injustice, one to the senate and one to the house. In April of this year, Pennsylvania Senate Bill 744 was introduced by Senator Daylin Leach representing the 17th Senate District and co-sponsored by eight other Senators. Additionally, Pennsylvania State Representative Pam Snyder of District 50 introduced House Bill 1502, mirroring the changes represented in the Senate Bill. HB 1502 has twenty-nine co-sponsors.

Both bills would provide a pro-rata exemption for disabled veterans' real estate taxes based on the disability rating established by the VA. For example, the VA considers you 50% disabled; you would get a 50% reduction on your property tax obligation. This will provide some relief for the many veterans who do not have a 100% rating but are nonetheless somewhat impaired in their ability to earn a living and in need of some property tax relief.

A bill identical to SB 744 expired in committee last year without action because no one took up the cause and urged their senators or representatives to investigate, support and vote on the bill. This year needs to be different. A call to action is needed. So, here is the call. Anyone that is an advocate of military veterans can participate. You need not be of voting age, from Pennsylvania, or know a disabled veteran. Everyone should participate. Spread the word.

Each of you, your friends, family, neighbors, and children need to engage with your Pennsylvania Senator and State Representative and ask them to support SB 744 or HB 1502, as appropriate. Social media, e-mail, word of mouth are all available to highlight this opportunity to support all disabled veterans of Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania should recognize the sacrifices that all disabled service members have made. All disabled veterans should receive real estate tax exemptions based on his/her percentage of disability, not just for 100% disabled.

You may find your Pennsylvania Senator and State Representative's information at www.legis.state.pa.us. The House will reconvene on Tuesday, August 25, 2015. The Senate will reconvene on Monday, September 21, 2015. We need their e-mail inboxes, post office boxes, and telephone messages regarding passing SB 744 and HB 1502 to overwhelm them upon their return.

DO NOT pass up this opportunity to engage with your elected officials and support all Pennsylvania Disabled Veterans. Use "Pass SB 744 and HB 1502" as a subject line on correspondence, if you can. You may freely copy, reproduce, and distribute this information physically and electronically as long as it is used for the positive endorsement of disabled veterans' benefits.

On Facebook too: www.facebook.com/passPASB744andHB1502.

Authored

Colonel Michael H. Belding, USMC, Retired
mikebelding@gmail.com

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