



# Minnesota Commanders' Task Force 2024 Legislative Priorities

Congressionally chartered veterans organizations in Minnesota working together to pass legislation on behalf of all veterans.





## Pass a clean Veterans Omnibus Bill

The 2023 session produced the second Veterans & Military Omnibus Bill, and this action to separate our legislation has become a Minnesota precedent. Let's not step backward. It ought to be a regular expectation, like an ag bill, tax bill or transportation bill.

## Modernize the Homestead Market Value Exclusion

Currently, there are two levels of property tax exclusions. The first one is a maximum exemption of \$150,000 for veterans rated by the VA 70 to 100 percent disabled. The second level of exclusion is for 100 percent permanent total and disabled veterans at \$300,000.

We need to accommodate more veterans to be eligible for this benefit. Provide an exclusion for veterans rated 50 to 100 percent disabled at \$200,000 off their property tax values, and provide market value exclusion of \$400,000 for 100 percent-rated veterans.

Also, it should provide an inflationary-based increase. We support the removal of the equal or lesser value language for surviving spouses.

## Amend a law to help our CVSOs receive important documents

Alter Statute 197.63 to include county veteran service officers in the list of entities of which "vital records" documents can be issued without a charge. This would save all kinds of "acting on behalf of" confusion at county recorder offices.

## Waive license fees on hunting, trapping and fishing for all veterans

We favor the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources waiving license fees for veterans (regardless of disability) for hunting, trapping and fishing licenses, and we favor resident rates for non-resident veterans from any state.

We advocate for the Minnesota Legislature to approve the result of this proposal, as it would likely increase net license revenue for the DNR and give veterans the health benefits that come from the great outdoors.



## For Gold Star spouses, let's fix a property-tax oversight and let's eliminate vehicle-registration fees

The present law, MS 273.13, Subd. 34(d), says the surviving spouse must file within two years of the death and must live in the home at the time of the death. The statute cites the DD-1300 Report of Casualty or the DD-2064 Report of Death as indicators.

This property tax exemption law discriminates against active-duty spouses and would help only Minnesota National Guard or Reserve spouses. Clearly, active-duty spouses highly likely live on or near out-of-state bases when their spouse dies in service to the country. When they return to Minnesota, they find they do not qualify for the Gold Star property-tax exemption. This is not in the spirit of our state's support for veterans and their families.

We also would favor changing the law to allow the spouse to remarry and retain the benefit.

Many states do not charge vehicle registration fees for Gold Star spouses (based on the DD-1300 or DD-2064) and sometimes for their children. Minnesota should follow suit.

These people have made deep sacrifices on behalf of our federal, state and local governments, and this would be the least our state could do to thank them.



## Give property-tax relief for veterans organizations

Many 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations received property tax exemptions after qualifying through their county assessor and going through a three-year assessment review.

We desire Minnesota to give 501(c)(4) and



501(c)(19) organizations access to the same nonprofit property tax exemptions. This would halt the disturbing trend of posts going under.

In that spirit, we desire congressionally chartered veterans organizations — because they have a federal requirement of reporting their volunteer and charitable efforts directly to Congress annually — to pay zero property taxes. There are a handful of states that provide this same benefit as a recognition of the good they do for their communities, and Minnesota ought to be among them.

As a side benefit, a zero-tax measure would clear up much of the confusion city and county assessors statewide have regarding veteran posts and tax laws.

## Allow counties to appropriate funding for Veterans Day

According to MS 375.35, counties may set aside funding in their budgets for Memorial Day ceremonies. We wish to expand the language to include Veterans Day ceremonies, too.



rather have money from any military/veteran-themed license plates directed to the SOT Plate Grant Fund. They often decline to purchase those plates because the funds aren't directed toward veterans.



## Other measures we favor:

### **Allocate proceeds from military and veteran license plates to the Support Our Troops License Plate fund**

Proceeds from sales of the Support Our Troops license plates go into a grant fund managed by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

However, proceeds from all the other kinds of license plates that recognize past military service, military decorations, veterans organizations or veteran status — there are about 40 total — go into the state's general fund.

Veterans tell the CTF organizations they would

### **Approve 7 new license plates**

- Jewish War Veterans. There are license plates for other congressionally chartered veterans organizations, but, strangely, not one for the JWV. It's time to fix this oversight.
- Military retirees. Minnesota ought to offer license plates denoting career retirees of any of the 6 service branches: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, Space Force.



### **Work with MDVA to update the Personal Needs Allowance**

For this one, no law needs to be passed, but we include it here for the sake of awareness and transparency. The CTF does wish for the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs to review its Personal Needs Allowance. We know the agency is working on it.

In a worst-case financial scenario, veterans in the homes are allowed to keep \$90 a month, and it has not changed for more than 30 years. For the sake of dignity and sound policies, it is time to increase their allowance and to make a Personal Needs Allowance policy that recognizes adjustments in the cost of living.