

Tennessee Veterans (TNVET)
P.O. Box 31863
Clarksville, TN 37040
<https://tnvet.org/>

January 29, 2025

Tennessee 114th General Assembly
425 Rep. John Lewis Way N.
Cordell Hull Bldg.
Nashville, TN 37243

Honorable Legislator,

TNVET, is a 501(C)(19) Veterans Organization. Our efforts are to unite, under one state legislative umbrella, the leadership and membership of Tennessee's individual veteran organizations to work on behalf of all state veterans (and active duty members stationed in Tennessee) in advancing services and/or benefits for all members; and, to provide a forum in which to present, discuss, debate and propose procedural and/or legislative solutions to inequities and issues affecting the veteran community and its active duty counterparts within the state of Tennessee. This work is performed in a nonpartisan manner.

This year the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Veterans Service Organization (VSO), and West TN Veterans Coalition joined TNVET, increasing our membership from 27,000 to over 50,000. TNVET now has the following twelve organizations: American Veterans (AMVET), Air Force Association (AFA), Buffalo Soldiers, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Farmer Veteran Coalition, Marine Corps League, Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Veterans Service Organization (VSO), Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), West TN Veterans Coalition, and Women Veterans of America (WVA).

On January 29, 2025, TNVET members will again visit the Capitol for our annual Veterans Day on the Hill (VDOH). Members will visit their legislators to brief and gain support of TNVET legislation. I ask for your support and action for the following 2025 TNVET priority legislation.

1. The disabled veteran property tax exemption/reimbursement.
2. Establishment of a state dedicated method or program that raises money dedicated to veteran needs/programs.
3. Changing the eligibility terms of the State of Tennessee sponsored "Helping Heroes Grant."
4. Exploring state support of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy for PTSD and brain injury for veterans it may benefit.

The disabled veteran property tax exemption/reimbursement

Changing state law calculations to stop penalizing 100% disabled qualify veterans for property tax relief based on yearly market value fluctuations. State law negatively affects the property tax exemption for disabled veterans. In Tennessee law, TCA 67-5-704 (a)(2) states "Such reimbursement shall be paid on the first one hundred seventy-five thousand dollars (\$175,000) of the full market value of such property." Full Market value is used to adjust (a percentage factor) the appraised value of the property and applied against the \$175K property tax exemption. Qualified veterans are having their exemption reduced based on a factor they have no control over. Depending on the county the qualified veteran lives in, the reduction can amount to hundreds of dollars. The term "Market Value" needs to be replaced with "appraised value" established within their county jurisdiction. THIS IS A CARRYOVER EFFORT FROM 2024

Establishment of a state dedicated method or program that raises money dedicated to veteran needs/programs.

TNVET executive board leadership has briefed and gained interest from State & Local leaders to pursue legislation to amend the Tennessee Constitution to create a fund for Veterans' Assistance, similar to the Tennessee Education Lottery. Establish funding grants and opportunities to include, but are not limited to, Veteran Service Organizations, Veteran County Service Officers, Mental Health, emergency assistance, outreach and training functions, and other needs/programs that will complement but not replicate existing Tennessee Veterans Benefits.

Amend the Tennessee Code to require the Tennessee Lottery Commission to create and operate an instant-ticket lottery game to benefit the "Tennessee Fund for Veterans' Assistance (TNFVA). The bill sets forth the commission's duties in operating the lottery game. It requires the commission to market and advertise the game in a manner intended to inform the public that game tickets are available and that proceeds are used to benefit all Tennessee veterans and their families.

Changing the eligibility terms of the State of Tennessee sponsored "Helping Heroes Grant"

Change to 49-4-938 (c)(3). To increase the possible veteran student pool from which to select, include any combat/heroism awarded medal (this would include the Purple Heart, Bronze Star, Soldiers Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Medal, Airman's Medal, Coast Guard Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross, Defense Superior Service Medal / Legion Of Merit, The Silver Star, Distinguished Service Medals (all services), Defense Distinguished Service Medal, The Distinguished Service Cross, (all services) and The Medal Of Honor)

Change to 49-4-938 (c)(5) and (6). To increase the number of educational institutions from which veteran students could select to include the Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATS) and their programs.

Increase Awareness of the Helping Heroes program. The state could strengthen its contact with the education and out-processing offices located at the military bases and veterans organizations and the Veterans County Service Offices could help give out info about this education opportunity.

Exploring state support of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy for PTSD and brain injury for veterans it may benefit

Urges Congress to enact legislation to expand and improve efforts to treat traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder among veterans. This bill, JHR001, is being sponsored by Rep, Reedy. Additional details and information may be found at <https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/BillInfo/Default.aspx?BillNumber=HJR0001&ga=114> . As more information becomes available, you will find it at the website.

I appreciate your consideration and please contact me for discussion. I await your decision with anticipation of a positive resolution.

Respectfully,

Howard French

Howard French
TNVET Chairman
hfrench29@yahoo.com
931-472-8778