

SNAPSHOT

State Benefits and Services for Veterans in Tennessee

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The Comptroller’s Office has produced a new comprehensive catalog of state benefits and services for veterans and their families. To create the catalog, the Comptroller’s Office contacted 48 state government agencies and ultimately identified 25 that provided such benefits and services.

Conclusions

State-provided benefits and services for veterans fall into two general categories: quantified and unquantified. Quantified benefits and services have a specific dollar amount associated with them, which is either a direct appropriation of state tax dollars or forgone (uncollected) state revenues.

Quantified benefits and services totaled \$45.5 million in fiscal year 2023-24. These benefits and services are spread across nine state departments and agencies.

Exhibit 1: Quantified state-provided benefits and services for veterans | FY 2023-24

State government agency	Benefit or service	Type of cost	FY 2023-24 (actual cost)	Nature of funds (recurring / nonrecurring)	Percent of total
Veterans Services	Departmental support systems for veterans	Expenditures	\$12,141,800	Recurring	26.7%
Comptroller of the Treasury	Property tax relief – veterans and spouses	Expenditures	\$27,245,271	Recurring	59.8%
Revenue	Veteran (and military) license plates	Forgone revenue	\$1,569,678	Recurring	3.4%
Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services	a. Veterans treatment courts	Expenditures	\$921,758	Recurring	2.0%
	b. Community mental health grant	Expenditures	\$700,000	Nonrecurring	1.5%
Higher Education Commission	a. Helping Heroes Grant program	Expenditures	\$324,500	Recurring	0.7%
	b. Veteran Reconnect program	Expenditures	\$308,506	Nonrecurring	0.7%
Treasury	Retirement system credit	Expenditures	\$276,787	Recurring	0.6%
TN Wildlife Resources Agency	Hunting, fishing and trapping licenses	Forgone revenue	\$1,877,150	Recurring	4.1%
Environment and Conservation	a. Discounted camping and golf rates	Forgone revenue	\$117,235	Recurring	0.3%
	b. Free day at state parks	Forgone revenue	1,286	Recurring	0.0%
Safety and Homeland Security	Handgun permit discounts	Forgone revenue	\$45,255	Recurring	0.1%
Total			\$ 45,529,226		100.0%

Note: Benefits for part-time or full-time active-duty service members are not included in these figures.
Source: OREA, based on data provided by the above state agencies.

Unquantified benefits and services provided by the state take the form of certain preferences, assistance, protections, promotions, recognitions, and exemptions of various forms. The Comptroller's new report also includes descriptions of unquantified benefits and services provided by the state.

Tennessee does not produce a comprehensive, regularly updated, and accessible guide to state-provided benefits and services for veterans. While some state agencies provide such information, the state does not currently produce a central, up-to-date guide to all benefits and services.

Policy option

The Department of Veterans Services could produce and regularly update a comprehensive and accessible guide to all state-provided benefits and services for veterans.

State agencies that provide such benefits and services could assist the department in this effort by regularly updating their related data and information and sharing it with the department for inclusion in the guide. Once produced, a link to the guide could be included on state agency websites in addition to any agency-specific information on benefits and services for veterans.

A comprehensive, regularly updated, and accessible guide would provide veterans with a central, up-to-date source for all state-provided benefits and services. Information on federal and local benefits and services could also be included in the guide. A description of certain benefits and services administered by the federal government and local governments is included in the Comptroller's new report.