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SDDVA Secretary Whitlock's June Column – New Laws Impacting Veterans

The 2024 Legislative Session is a wrap! There were 550 bills, commemorations, and resolutions introduced this year.

As an advocate for veterans, it is the responsibility of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs to review all bills that will impact veterans. This year, the department introduced two bills and monitored 29 pieces of proposed legislation.

Here's a look at veteran related legislation that was approved and will become law July 1:

- State tuition assistance benefit for the airmen and soldiers of the South Dakota National Guard was expanded to allow them to utilize this benefit at an in-state private, nonprofit post-secondary university;
- March 25 has been designated as a state Medal of Honor Recognition Day;
- Veterans that are eligible for a disabled veteran plate and the benefits that accompany the issuance of the plate, but do not wish to have to have the designation of being disabled, now have the option to receive the same fee schedule for regular plates on their vehicle;
- The exempt value of property tax relief for disabled veterans and surviving spouses was increased to \$200,000. This will apply for the 2025 assessment for taxes payable in 2026;
- A special motor vehicle license plate is now available for recipients of the Legion of Merit award;
- Residency requirements for admission to the State Veterans Home were removed; and,
- Counties and tribes who encounter prolonged veterans service officer vacancies can contract with the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs to provide those services.

As always, we encourage all veterans to visit their county or tribal veterans service officers (CTVSO's) to learn more about all benefits. These men and women have worn the boots, walked the trenches, conducted maneuvers, commanded troops, sustained missions, and protected our freedoms. Who better to have on your team? To locate the CTVSO nearest you visit:

<https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteransserviceofficers/locatevso.aspx>

Now, more than ever, we need to continue to deliver on our promise to take care of our veterans. We will keep our sleeves rolled up and work collectively to ensure our veterans have a successful journey after their service.

Greg Whitlock, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs