

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 358

(Delegate Conway)

Environmental Matters

Judicial Proceedings

Drivers' Licenses and Identification Cards - Notation of Veteran Status

This bill requires the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) to produce a document certifying veteran status; it also requires the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to ensure that the driver's license or identification card of an applicant who presents the MDVA certification, a specified military service discharge form, or other acceptable documentation includes a notation that the applicant is a veteran. Applications for driver's licenses and identification cards must allow applicants to indicate veteran status and to consent to being contacted by the State regarding eligibility for veterans' benefits. MVA is required to electronically transmit appropriate information about an applicant who consents to be contacted to any appropriate Executive Branch agency, subject to existing restrictions on public access to this information.

The bill takes effect January 1, 2013.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect State finances. However, workloads increase for MVA, MDVA, and minimally for other State agencies due to increased interagency communication; for MVA to reprogram various systems to ensure that the notation of veteran status can be produced; and for MDVA to the extent that a greater number of veterans visit or contact MDVA offices.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: Driver's licenses and identification cards are not currently required to designate veteran status. However, the contribution of veterans of the armed forces are recognized through several provisions within the Maryland Vehicle Law. Specifically, Maryland has exemptions from registration fees for veterans with certain disabilities and vehicles owned by national veterans' organizations as well as special registration plates for honorably discharged veterans, recipients of individually earned, combat-related, armed forces medals, and recipients of a U.S. Department of Defense Gold Star indicating status as a surviving spouse, parent, or next of kin of a member of the armed forces who lost his/her life in combat.

MDVA provides administrative services to veterans and their dependents through eight veterans' service centers, operates and maintains five veterans' cemeteries, maintains four veterans' war memorials, manages the Veterans Home, and conducts statewide outreach efforts. The mission of MDVA is to deliver services and programs to assist veterans and their families and survivors in obtaining federal, State, and local benefits provided by law in recognition of their service.

State Expenditures: MVA advises that the bill can be implemented within existing budgeted resources, assuming the notation of veteran status is accomplished through a word on driver's licenses and identification cards. To the extent that the notation is required to be conveyed as a symbol, Transportation Trust Fund expenditures increase, potentially significantly, to alter the driver's license and identification card templates.

In addition, MVA advises that wait times at MVA branches could increase by almost a minute if all 465,727 veterans in Maryland seek to obtain a new driver's license or identification card outside of the current renewal cycle. Legislative Services advises that this is unlikely as not all veterans will become aware of the eligibility for the notation in the same year, and because many will likely wait to obtain an updated license or identification card until the document is due for renewal.

Finally, to the extent that the bill results in an increase in veterans' awareness of MDVA benefits and services and other State programs designed to benefit veterans, general, special, and federal fund expenditures, as well as MDVA and other agency workloads, may increase.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 276 (Senator Mathias, *et al.*) - Judicial Proceedings.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 13, 2012
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