

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 161
(Senator Simonaire)
Education, Energy, and the Environment

Natural Resources - State Park Entry Fee - Exemptions

This bill expands an exemption from State park entry fees applicable to veterans by making the exemption also applicable to former Maryland National Guard members discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. The bill also clarifies the acceptable forms of identification that may be presented by a veteran to gain entry to State parks without paying a fee.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect State finances. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) indicates that the bill's changes are consistent with the department's current practice of allowing current and former members of the military and Maryland National Guard to enter State parks without paying a fee, with sufficient identification.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill establishes that a former Maryland National Guard member, that is discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable, may enter a State park without paying a day-use entry fee or per-vehicle fee if the individual presents identification accepted by DNR that establishes the holder's former Maryland National Guard status, similar to an existing privilege established in statute for veterans, active service members, and members of the Maryland National Guard.

The bill also clarifies the forms of identification that may be presented by a veteran to enter a State park without paying a day-use entry fee or a per-vehicle fee. Among other forms of identification – such as a driver’s license that indicates the license holder is a veteran – that are currently identified in statute as sufficient to enter a State park without paying a day-use entry fee or per-vehicle fee, the bill establishes that a State-issued license other than a driver’s license, or a State-issued identification card, that indicates the holder’s veteran status is sufficient to enter a State park without paying a day-use entry fee or per-vehicle fee. The bill identifies the acceptable forms of identification that may be presented by a veteran or former Maryland National Guard member as “accepted entrance documents.”

Current Law: Chapters 265 and 266 (Recreational Equality for Service Members Act) of 2025 established that a veteran may enter a State park without paying a day-use entry fee, and a vehicle of which a veteran is an occupant may enter a State park without paying a per-vehicle fee, if the veteran presents a valid veteran identification card, a driver’s license that indicates the license holder is a veteran, or any other form of identification accepted by DNR establishes the holder’s veteran status.

Chapters 265 and 266 created a similar exemption from State park entry fees for active service members and members of the Maryland National Guard, upon presentation of a valid uniformed services identification card.

The entrance fee exemptions do not exempt an individual from paying any other park facility use services fees.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources; Department of Legislative Services

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