

Maryland Military Coalition SB0161 Environment and

Uploaded by: DAVID Dragics

Position: FAV



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

March 23, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Request for **FAVORABLE Report** – SB0161 – Natural Resources – State Park Entry Fee – Exemptions

Dear Chair Korman and distinguished members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition¹ (MMC), I write to request a **FAVORABLE Report** by the Committee on **SB0161 – Natural Resources – State Park Entry Fee – Exemptions**, sponsored by Senator Bryan Simonaire. This bill would exempt from State Park Entry fees former Maryland National Guard members if that individual was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. **This bill was unanimously passed by the Senate.**

The MMC supports the intent of this bill. Members of the National Guard have served in uniform on weekends and at annual training, many for years beyond their initial commitment. The MMC believes they deserve this modest recognition and benefit.

The Maryland Military Coalition supports SB0161 and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report from the Environment and Transportation Committee.

The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization comprised of 22 prominent Maryland-based veteran and military groups. It represents over 150,000 service-connected individuals, including those currently serving, veterans, retirees and their families, caregivers and survivors. Visit our website at <https://mdmilcoalition.org/>.

We want to thank Senator Simonaire for sponsoring this legislation and supporting the uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,

David L. Dragics
COL (Ret), U.S. Army
Legislative Director

¹ See attached list of member organizations.



Member Organizations of the Maryland Military Coalition

Air Force Sergeants Association

American Military Society

American Minority Veterans Research Project

Association of the United States Navy

Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

Disabled American Veterans

Fleet Reserve Association of Annapolis

Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A

Maryland Air National Guard Retirees' Association

National Active and Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Military Officers Association of America

Military Order of the Purple Heart

Military Order of the World Wars

Montford Point Marines of America

National Association of Black Veterans

National Active and Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

Reserve Organization of America

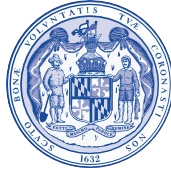
Society of Military Widows

Veterans of Foreign Wars

TAG Support Letter Senate Bill 161 Natural Resourc

Uploaded by: Janeen Birckhead

Position: FAV



WES MOORE
GOVERNOR
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

STATE OF MARYLAND
MILITARY DEPARTMENT
FIFTH REGIMENT ARMORY
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201-2288

JANEEN L. BIRCKHEAD
MAJOR GENERAL
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

March 30, 2026

Chair Marc Korman
Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Korman and Members of The Committee:

The Maryland Military Department is sending this letter to ask for a favorable report for Senate Bill 161 – Natural Resources – State Park Entry Fee – Exemptions.

Senate Bill 161 modifies the rules for free entry into state parks by expanding and clarifying who qualifies and what identification may be used. Under the bill, certain individuals—such as veterans and former members of the Maryland National Guard discharged under conditions other than dishonorable—may enter state parks without paying the standard day-use fee.

Too often, former Maryland National Guard veterans are not included in the benefits and services afforded to their active-duty counterparts. Senate Bill 161 helps close this gap by allowing former members of the Maryland National Guard to visit Maryland’s beautiful state parks without paying the standard day-use entry fee, provided they present acceptable identification verifying their service.

The point of contact for this letter is Dr. Tony Campbell, reachable at (443) 956-0108, or tony.campbell1@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janeen L. Birckhead".

Janeen L. Birckhead
Major General, Maryland National Guard
The Adjutant General

SB 161 Senator Simonaire_FAV_ENT.pdf

Uploaded by: Kara Contino

Position: FAV

BRYAN W. SIMONAIRE
Legislative District 31
Anne Arundel County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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11 Bladen Street, Room 320
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3658 · 301-858-3658
800-492-7122 Ext. 3658
Fax 410-841-3586 · 301-858-3586
Bryan.Simonaire@senate.state.md.us

The Senate of Maryland ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB 161 – State Park IDs for Veterans

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 161.

I worked with the *Department of Natural Resources* on this consensus legislation.

This bill does 2 main things:

- 1) Expands the veteran identification allowed to enter a state park free of charge, and
- 2) Allows former Maryland National Guard members free entrance into our state parks.

First, this bill expands the allowable identification forms used to allow veterans into state parks. With the recent passage of veteran notations on state professional licenses and identification cards, they will also be acceptable forms of identification, if this bill passes.

Secondly, under existing law, active-duty service members and all Maryland National Guard members are granted free access to State Parks.

To be clear, that means Maryland National Guard members who are not on active duty are granted free access as well.

However, the terminology used in the Veterans section excludes Maryland National Guard members if they didn't serve on active duty, even if they served Maryland and fulfilled their obligations.

The bill ensures parity and that we honor former Maryland National Guard members by granting them free access to state parks as well.

This lines up with current practice as well.

That is the bill and for all these reasons, I ask for your favorable consideration.

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Uploaded by: Lydia McPherson

Position: FAV



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

April 1, 2026

BILL NUMBER: **SENATE BILL 161 - THIRD READER**

SHORT TITLE: **NATURAL RESOURCES - STATE PARK ENTRY FEE - EXEMPTIONS**

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: **SUPPORT**

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION

The Department supports SB 161 as it is consistent with current practices. The Maryland Park Service day-use service charges are already waived for active duty military, veterans, and members of the National Guard. This bill does not expand day-use service charge exemptions or materially alter anticipated revenue streams for the Maryland Park Service, but rather serves to identify the exemption in the Natural Resource Article 5-1015 and offers clarified language. No fiscal impacts are anticipated.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Last year SB282/Chap. 265 added new sections 5-1014 and 5-1015 to the Natural Resources Article, which allow for additional forms of veteran verification to be used for fee entrance to state parks, and went into effect on October 1st of 2025. SB 161 further clarifies the types of acceptable veteran identification for free park entrance.

BILL EXPLANATION

This bill, SB 161, creates parity for all former Maryland National Guard members by clarifying the acceptable forms of identification that may be presented by a veteran to gain entry to State parks without paying a fee.

Contact: Lydia McPherson, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services
lydia.mcpherson1@maryland.gov ♦ 410-260-8113 (office) ♦ 443-875-7785 (cell)

SB161_Veterans.pdf

Uploaded by: Veterans Caucus Maryland

Position: FAV



MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
VETERANS CAUCUS

March 30, 2026

Delegate Marc Korman, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB161, Natural Resources – State Park Entry Fee- Exemptions
Hearing Date: April 1, 2026

Dear Chairman Korman,

Please let this letter serve as notice of the support of the Maryland General Assembly Veterans Caucus for Senate Bill 161.

After review by our respective legislative committee, the Veterans Caucus believes that the above-mentioned legislation would provide a valuable benefit to the veterans of the State of Maryland and requests a favorable report.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin E. Brooks".

Senator Benjamin Brooks
Senate Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike Rogers".

Delegate Mike Rogers
House Chair

cc: Senator Simonaire