

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation to Help Veterans More Easily Obtain Nursing Licensure While Addressing Critical Health Care Shortages

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Additional Bill Signed Into Law Honors Veterans' Sacrifices by Covering Burial Costs for More Veterans

TRENTON – As part of the Murphy Administration's ongoing efforts to support veterans and their families throughout New Jersey, Governor Phil Murphy today signed two bills into law to ease the path for veterans with certain medical training to become licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and to expand eligibility for veterans with limited incomes to have their funerals covered by the government.

"It is our duty as a State and as a society to support the veterans who have selflessly served in defense of our country," **said Governor Murphy**. "These new laws will allow us to honor their sacrifices and ease the burden on their families by expanding eligibility for funeral costs that are covered by county governments. Additionally, we are making it easier for other veterans to obtain civilian employment as licensed practical nurses by recognizing the medical training they received during their time in the military, which will also help bolster our statewide health care system."

"The first bill relieves a burden on low-income families who seek to preserve the memory of their loved one's life and service to our country," **said U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Lisa J. Hou, D.O., The Adjutant General of New Jersey and Commissioner of Veterans Affairs**. "The second piece of legislation is great news for the medical professionals within our services who are looking to apply their valuable skills outside the military."

Veterans who are unable to pay for their funerals may have the cost of their burial or cremation covered by the county government. To allow more veterans to qualify for this service, the first bill (A-2493) expands discharge classification eligibility criteria from veterans who were honorably discharged to any veteran who is discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

The bill also clarifies income eligibility for these veterans as not exceeding 200 percent of the federal poverty level. To further expand where eligible veterans may be buried, the bill adds national cemeteries as a permissible burial sites.

Sponsors of the bill include Senator Joseph Cryan and Assemblyman Wayne DeAngelo, as well as Senator Andrew Zwicker and Assembly members Cleopatra Tucker and Herb Conaway.

"Every veteran has earned the right to have a respectful and honorable burial, even if they had fallen on hard times or their families have limited financial resources," **said Senator Joe Cryan, Chairman of the Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Committee**. "Setting a uniform definition of an 'indigent veteran' will help remove barriers to interment in county and national veterans' cemeteries. Their service to our country during their lifetime shouldn't be lost or forgotten after their passing."

"We owe a great debt of gratitude to the men and women who have served our country," **said Assemblyman Wayne DeAngelo**. "Veterans in New Jersey deserve all of the support we can offer, especially when it comes to providing access to honorable burials for those without sufficient means to cover the expenses. We are doing the right thing by expanding eligibility to be buried in county veterans' cemeteries and ensuring more veterans in our State have access to a suitable resting place."

"This bill ensures that our veterans receive the respect and recognition they have earned," **said Assemblywoman Cleopatra Tucker, Chairwoman of the Assembly Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee**. "I believe it is our duty to do the best we can to offer a decent burial to these men and women who have sacrificed so much. I am grateful for the support of my colleagues and the Governor in making this bill a reality, and I am proud to see it become law."

"The VFW is glad this bipartisan bill is now going to be the law of the land for veterans who do not have the resources for a dignified burial," **said New Jersey State Commander Jay "Doc" Boxwell, Veterans of Foreign Wars**. "The VFW thanks the legislators and Governor for allowing our most disenfranchised veterans who served their country in life to now have their country honor them and care for them in death."

The second bill (A-2722) would ease the path to licensure as an LPN for honorably discharged veterans with applicable medical training from their time in the military. Veterans who completed the Army Practical Nurse Program or the Air Force BMTCP-4N051 with a 5 Skill Level or their equivalents will be eligible to apply for licensure in lieu of obtaining a diploma from a school of practical nursing.

This legislation recognizes the qualifications of veterans with medical training and makes it easier for them to obtain civilian employment after their military service while further expanding New Jersey's pool of LPNs.

Sponsors of this bipartisan bill include Senator Jon Bramnick and Assemblywoman Michele Matsikoudis, as well as Senator Vin Gopal and Assembly members Alex Sauickie and Carol Murphy.

"New Jersey desperately needs more nurses. We can fill some of the void with trained, capable veterans who can quickly be educated, certified, and prepared to step in to help," **said Senator Jon Bramnick**. "This new law offers a



perfect solution, fortifying the State's health care industry that has been hard-hit by the exodus of crucial workers since the pandemic while providing an attractive career path for qualified veterans."

"New Jersey veterans will now receive the credit they deserve for their valuable military training. By removing barriers to employment, we help veterans transition to civilian life and start to address critical shortages in the nursing field," said **Assemblywoman Michele Matsikoudis**. "This signing means our nation's heroes can more easily achieve rewarding careers as healthcare heroes. It is a win-win. I would like to thank the Governor for signing this common-sense measure into law, and recognize the work of the late Assemblyman Ron Dancer for his partnership on the bill while he was with us."

"The New Jersey Veterans Network is grateful to our legislative leaders and the Governor for signing A2722/S3191 into law," said **Michael D. Boll, Director of New Jersey Veterans Network**. "The enhanced licensure system will provide our nation's heroes with the opportunity to utilize their world class medical training to continue to give back to their communities as nurses in the civilian workforce here at home."

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