

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Supporting Veterans and Servicemembers

07/22/2021

Legislative Package Supports Veterans Seeking Higher Education, Expands Access to Disabled Veterans' Property Tax Exemption, and Establishes an Annual Grant Program for Institutions Offering Substantial Veterans Services

TRENTON – Governor Murphy today signed legislation (S-278, S-956, and S-961) which supports New Jersey veterans and servicemembers and grants them easier access to higher education, expands access to the disabled veterans' property tax exemption, and establishes an annual grant program within the Troops to College Program to recognize institutions of higher education that offer extensive veteran programs and services.

"Our veterans and servicemembers have put their lives on the line for their state and for their country," **said Governor Murphy**. "The least we can do for them is to make their lives easier by expanding access to higher education, broadening eligibility for the disabled veterans' property tax exemption, and encouraging higher education institutions to provide needed services. This legislation will doubtlessly help our veterans and servicemembers in their civilian lives and recognize their service properly."

"This trio of bills signed by the Governor affirms New Jersey's commitment to our Veterans," **said Brigadier General Lisa J. Hou, D.O., The Adjutant General and Commissioner of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs**. "One bill will provide grants to institutions of higher education that assist veterans with programs and services. Tenant shareholders in cooperatives and mutual housing corporations can finally use the property tax exemption that homeowners have used for years. Uniformed service members attending public colleges now have additional rights, such as extended registration time each semester, so they can continue their education while fulfilling their military obligations."

S-278 broadens the scope of existing law to benefit a wider military community that includes servicemembers who are unable to complete a course due to deployment, mobilization, reassignment, or other military obligation. The bill directs each public institution of higher education to establish policies and procedures to refund course tuition and fees and permit the late registration of students who are veterans or servicemembers affected by deployment, mobilization, reassignment, or other military obligation. Under the bill, the institution cannot charge a late fee or similar penalty on a registration submitted pursuant to the bill's provisions.

Primary sponsors for S-278 include Senators Tom Kean, Jr. and Sandra Cunningham, and Assemblymembers Sterley Stanley, Wayne DeAngelo, and Joseph Daniels.

"New Jersey is becoming more accommodating to the brave men and women who are willing to put their lives on the line to protect our freedoms," **said Senator Tom Kean, Jr.** "It is challenging enough to work and attend classes, but for those in the military, juggling schedules and managing deadlines is even more cumbersome. The new law will ease some of the burden of earning college credits for members of the military by offering them the flexibility when registering for classes or when military obligations conflict with course schedules."

"Our active duty military have already given so much, and it is only right we provide them the flexibility they need to pursue a degree," **said Senator Sandra Cunningham**. "This law will provide for late registration and allow service members to waive course fees if called to duty, making earning a degree that much more accessible for those in our armed forces."

"Our military members have to put their plans on hold when they are called to duty in service of this country," **said Assemblyman Sterley Stanley**. "We should honor their personal sacrifice by making sure the education they received before leaving to fulfill their military responsibilities was not in vain, by allowing them to receive an applicable grade or pick up where they left off upon their return."

"Students who cannot complete a semester because they have an unexpected, simultaneous obligation to the military deserve the opportunity to earn the educational credits they were working towards before being called away," **said Assemblyman Wayne DeAngelo**. "It is only fair we allow these service members to have their hard work recognized and any educational fees for services they did not actually get to use be returned to them by their university."

"This law will greatly benefit military members who are seeking a degree from one of New Jersey's schools," **said Assemblyman Joseph Daniels**. "Everyone deserves the opportunity to work towards achieving a higher education, which is why we must accommodate the unique needs of students who may have their semester interrupted in order to serve in our armed forces."

S-956 exempts from property taxes totally and permanently disabled veterans and their surviving spouses who occupy a unit in a cooperative or mutual housing corporation in which they are tenant shareholders. The bill requires the Division of Taxation to promulgate the necessary implementing regulations which will include provisions that would require cooperatives and mutual housing corporations to pass the full amount of the property tax exemption on to the tenant shareholder who qualified for the benefit.

Primary sponsors for S-956 include Senators Christopher Connors and Brian Stack, and Assemblymembers DiAnne Gove, Brian Rumpf, John Armato, and Vincent Mazzeo.

"For too long, certain disabled veterans were wrongly denied significant property tax relief they deserved due a legal technicality. That changes with the enactment of this bill that advanced with strong bipartisan support," **said Senator Christopher Connors, Assemblyman Brian Rumpf, and Assemblywoman DiAnne Gove, in a joint statement**.

"By extending the disabled veteran's property tax exemption to disabled veterans and their surviving spouses that are residents of cooperatives or mutual housing corporations, we can ensure that more of our veterans can reap this benefit," **said Senator Brian Stack**. "Our veterans put their lives on the line to protect our country, and this extension will be a valuable aid for many more living within our state."

"Cooperative and mutual housing corporations offer a less expensive alternative to homeownership than being the sole owner of a house, condo or apartment. With many disabled veterans facing significant financial challenges, affordable housing is a critical need that co-ops and mutual housing groups can fill," **said Assemblymen John Armato and Vincent Mazzeo in a joint statement**. "Since residents of these jointly-owned buildings must pay a share of the property tax, it's only fair disabled veterans in these residences receive the same tax exemption as fellow veterans living in more traditional homes."

S-961 creates an annual grant program within the Troops to College Program. The grant program will be developed by the Secretary of Higher Education in consultation with the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs. The Secretary will annually select up to three institutions of higher education, public or private, to receive a \$150,000 Troops to College Grant. In order to receive a grant, an institution must demonstrate that it is offering a comprehensive array of services, benefits, and programs to veterans attending the institution.

Primary sponsors for S-961 include Senators Troy Singleton and Nilsa Cruz-Perez, and Assemblymembers John Armato, Andrew Zwicker, and Anthony Verrelli.

"The benefits of this law are two-fold. It recognizes and supports those institutions of higher education in New Jersey that are working to make a college education more accessible to our veterans and most importantly it expands the services they are able to provide," **said Senator Nilsa Cruz-Perez**. "We owe these men and women a great debt of gratitude for their service to our nation. Expanding their education opportunities is good for them, good for our state and good for our society."

"Since the Post-9/11 GI Bill was enacted in 2008, New Jersey's premier colleges and universities have been doing a great job helping our veterans obtain a higher education, finish their degree programs, find employment upon graduation, and most importantly, transition into civilian life again. Yet, there is always more we can do," **said Senator Troy Singleton**.

"This law will expand upon the existing Troops to College Grant Program to further promote and bolster educational opportunities for the men and women who served our country honorably in the Armed Forces."

"The transition from military service to civilian life can be challenging for many veterans. Higher education can help provide a path forward for veterans as they pursue careers after they leave the service. However, it's critical for colleges and universities to be equipped with essential services to address the unique needs of veterans," **said Assemblymen John Armato, Andrew Zwicker and Anthony Verrelli in a joint statement.** "This law will strengthen the efforts of colleges participating in the Troops to College Program, including orientation programs, faculty training, veterans benefit counseling, adaptive learning technologies, and career planning services. This is another small way we can express our gratitude and appreciation for the service of New Jersey's brave soldiers."

Governor Phil Murphy

[Home \(/governor/\)](/governor/)

Administration

[Governor Phil Murphy \(/governor/admin/about/\)](/governor/admin/about/)

[Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver \(/governor/admin/lt/\)](/governor/admin/lt/)

[First Lady Tammy Snyder Murphy \(/governor/admin/fl/\)](/governor/admin/fl/)

[Cabinet \(/governor/admin/cabinet/\)](/governor/admin/cabinet/)

[Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency](/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml)

[\(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml\)](/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml)

[Boards, Commissions & Authorities \(/governor/admin/bca/\)](/governor/admin/bca/)

[Internship Opportunities \(/governor/admin/internship.shtml\)](/governor/admin/internship.shtml)

[Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket \(http://drumthwacket.org/\)](http://drumthwacket.org/)

Key Initiatives

[Economy & Jobs \(/governor/initiatives/#Economy\)](/governor/initiatives/#Economy)

[Education \(/governor/initiatives/#Education\)](/governor/initiatives/#Education)

[Environment \(/governor/initiatives/#Environment\)](/governor/initiatives/#Environment)

[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](/governor/initiatives/#Health)

[Law & Justice \(/governor/initiatives/#Justice\)](/governor/initiatives/#Justice)

[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

News & Events

[Press Releases \(/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news_archive.shtml)

[Photos \(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy\)](https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy)

[Public Addresses \(/governor/news/addresses\)](/governor/news/addresses)

[Executive Orders \(/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html\)](/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html)

[Administrative Orders \(/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

[Direct Appointments \(/governor/news/appointments\)](/governor/news/appointments/)

[Advice and Consent Appointments \(/governor/news/acappointments\)](/governor/news/acappointments/)

[Statements on Legislation \(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)

[Administration Reports \(/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)

[Transition Reports \(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)

[Press Kits \(/governor/news/press\)](/governor/news/press/)

Social

[Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/\)](https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/)

[Twitter \(https://twitter.com/GovMurphy\)](https://twitter.com/GovMurphy)

[Instagram \(https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/\)](https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/)

[Snapchat \(https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy\)](https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)

[YouTube \(https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice\)](https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice)

[TikTok \(https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?\)](https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?)

Contact Us

[Scheduling Requests \(/governor/contact/scheduling/\)](/governor/contact/scheduling/)

[Contact Us \(/governor/contact/all/\)](/governor/contact/all/)

Statewide

[NJ Home \(//www.nj.gov\)](http://www.nj.gov)

[Services A to Z \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html)

[Departments/Agencies \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/)

[FAQs \(//www.nj.gov/faqs/\)](http://www.nj.gov/faqs/)

[Contact Us \(//www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html)

[Privacy Notice \(//www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html)

[Legal Statement & Disclaimers \(//www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html)

[Accessibility Statement \(//www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html)

(//nj.gov/opra/)

(https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2023
Office of Governor PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000

(https://tech.nj.gov/)