



# Frank Burns

State Representative

72nd Legislative District



## VETERANS UPDATE

*Wishing you and your family a happy Fourth of July!*

As we observe this July 4th, let us remember the work done more than 200 years ago in this Commonwealth to create a nation dedicated to the highest ideals of humanity and to serve as a beacon of freedom and liberty around the world. It is an honor to participate in the democratic process laid out by the Founding Fathers as a representative in America's first independent legislative body.

Along with honoring the men and women who participated in our nation's founding, we also must recognize all those who came after who have risked their lives to continue that dedication to our country's ideals and freedoms.

I salute you on this Fourth of July!

### Veteran designation on Pa. driver's licenses



In 2012, Pennsylvania enacted a law, which Rep. Burns co-sponsored, to provide veterans with a special designation on their Pennsylvania driver's license – or state-issued identification card.

The designation is now available. The special license, which bears an American flag and the word "Veteran," will enable veterans to provide proof of military service without having to carry multiple IDs or discharge papers.

Qualified applicants for a veteran designation on their driver's license include those who have received a Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty/DD214 or equivalent for service in the U.S. Armed Forces, including a reserve component, or the National Guard.

There is no extra fee for the updated license, besides the normal fee for a new license. For more information about the new license or details on how to apply, contact one of Rep. Burns' offices.

Numerous other states, including Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, North Dakota, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and Utah, have enacted similar legislation.

### Veterans First Tax Credit proposed

Rep. Burns helped to pass H.B. 159, which, if passed by the Senate, would establish the Veterans First Tax Credit for small businesses.

The measure would provide a \$4,000-a-year tax credit to businesses with less than 100 employees to hire veterans who are currently unemployed. The bill is expected to create 12,500 jobs for state veterans who have been out of work for more than six months.

Please contact your state senator and ask for his support for this important bill.



# Honoring our service members' final wishes

Legislation to ensure that Pennsylvania respects the final wishes of our service members when they make the ultimate sacrifice was recently signed into law.

Act 45 recognizes the DD Form 93 as the formal mechanism for service members to determine who has the right to make decisions regarding the disposal of their remains.

Previously, state courts had to honor a will, even if it varied from a DD Form 93 that was

executed at a later date. Act 45 makes it legally clear that these decisions should be determined according to the wishes of the person in military service as authorized on their DD Form 93. This will help in instances where a will has not been updated and family members, including current and former spouses, are in conflict over the decision.

Pennsylvania had been one of a few states that did not recognize the document as an acceptable form for military personnel.

## New license plate available



Pennsylvania vehicle owners can show their support of veterans with the new "Honoring Our Veterans" license plate available through PennDOT.

The plate features images of the American flag and a bald eagle with the words "Honoring Our Veterans."

The plate is available for cars and light trucks. It costs \$35, and \$15 from each sale goes to the Veterans Trust Fund, which provides grants to veterans' service organizations and other organizations assisting Pennsylvania veterans.

That same law also creates a voluntary \$3 check off on driver's license and vehicle registration forms where people can donate to the veterans' service organizations that help our veterans.

Please call or stop by any of Rep. Burns' offices for a form to obtain the new plate or for help with any other PennDOT driver or vehicle service.

## Standardized training now required for county veterans affairs directors

Since the closing of the Governor's Veterans Outreach Assistance Centers across the state in 2009, it is more important than ever for a county director of veterans affairs to be effective.

A new law I supported sets training requirements and minimum standards for county veterans affairs directors to help ensure that veterans are working with full-time professionals who know how to connect them with every federal, state and county benefit they have earned through their service.

Directors of Veterans Affairs in each county often serve as the first and only point of contact for current members of the military and older veterans. However, the training and



resources given to these important gatekeepers varies. This new law changes that and better ensures veterans receive the time, attention and benefits they deserve.

## Law establishes state program for vet-owned small businesses

Veteran-owned small businesses are now included in the Department of General Services Small Diverse Business Program. Formerly known as the Small Disadvantaged Business Program, the program offers special assistance with state contracting opportunities to business owners who are women, disabled or minorities – and that now includes veterans.

The law was designed to encourage state agencies to contract with veteran-owned small businesses, and sets a statewide participation rate goal of 3 percent. The law also sets up regulations to deter and penalize businesses who claim they are veteran owned, but are not, in order to participate in the program.

For more information on this program, visit [www.smallbusiness.pa.gov](http://www.smallbusiness.pa.gov).

## Burns supports bills for discounted hunting, fishing licenses

Rep. Frank Burns voted for two bills that would provide \$1 hunting and fishing licenses for any disabled veteran who is eligible for disability compensation from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs at 60 percent or more.

Current law already provides free licenses to 100-percent disabled veterans and to those who have lost use of a limb.

The cost of the license would be \$1 plus any issuing agent fees.



## Military experience to be considered in licensing requirements under bill

Rep. Burns is supporting a bill that would require the state to determine whether a licensing or certification requirement has been met or can be waived because of a veteran's military education, training and service experience.

This would prevent the duplication of training and education of a veteran and get them into a civilian career faster.

The bill also would allow the state to issue a license, certification or registration to a military spouse so he or she may practice their profession, provided he or she meets certain requirements.

"We owe our veterans our support as they begin their transition into civilian life. This legislation should help to make that transition just a little bit easier," Rep. Burns said.

The bill passed the House and is now being reviewed by the Senate.

## 'COMBAT TO COLLEGE' ASSISTANCE PROPOSED

"For those who have given so much for our country, I think we should do everything we can to ensure that they receive a quality education," Rep. Frank Burns said. "We should make every effort to remove obstacles that affect veterans' ability to graduate and find employment. That's why I voted for a bill that would extend in-state college tuition assistance to all veterans, their spouses and dependents."

Currently, in-state tuition is provided to military personnel, their dependents and civilian personnel assigned to an active-duty station in Pennsylvania. However, individuals who complete active-duty enlistment obligations and want to move to Pennsylvania and attend a college are charged out-of-state tuition unless they take a year off to establish residency, which is often impractical.


In the past year, 20,644 veterans and eligible individuals used GI Bill benefits to pursue postsecondary training and education in Pennsylvania. Under H.B. 472, they now would be eligible for in-state tuition. Following House passage, the bill was sent to the state Senate for consideration.



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## Other veterans' bills Burns has sponsored

Rep. Frank Burns has also co-sponsored a number of bills designed to help veterans. All of these have been introduced and are currently awaiting action in committee:

**H.B. 120** – Would prevent municipalities from regulating or charging a fee for any kind of military funeral honors.

**H.B. 381 and H.B. 536** – Would increase the monthly pensions to \$200 a month for the Commonwealth's blind and paralyzed veterans. These pensions, for Pennsylvania veterans who suffered service-connected injuries or diseases that caused blindness, paralysis, or the loss of two or more extremities, have not been increased since 1999.

**H.B. 386** – Would exclude all veterans' benefits from the definition of income for the purpose of determining income eligibility for ALL Commonwealth programs, including any state benefit program, tax exemption or rebate.

**H.B. 1019** – Would establish the Office of Veteran's Mental Health Awareness to ensure the delivery of services and programs to veterans with cognitive mental disabilities and emotional trauma, including providing employment and support services, a list of health care providers, access to support services and programs, and information about mental disabilities, mental illness and trauma.

**H.B. 1390** – Would create uniform and equitable standards for determining eligibility of individual unemployability veterans.

**H.B. 2187** – Would allow the spouse of a disabled veteran to receive a real estate tax exemption should the veteran become deceased before being deemed fully disabled and eligible.

**H.B. 2191** – Would increase the base "minimum" state active-duty pay for National Guard personnel from the current \$75 per day to the rate of \$100 per day.