

Assembly Bill adds “Veteran” designation to State IDs

It can be difficult for military veterans to prove they served in the US armed forces, a designation that grants them access to a wide range of benefits to which they are entitled. A new assembly bill proposed by California Assemblyman Jim Frazier of Fairfield aims to fix this problem, simply by adding a “Veteran” designation to all state IDs.

The only Federally approved military ID cards issued today are military retiree ID cards, dispensed by the Veterans Administration (VA) for eligible veterans on a limited basis. Veterans who are ineligible for one of these ID cards are often left without an official form of proof they served in the military. In fact, only 36 percent of veterans have these types of ID cards – the other 64 percent are out of luck.

Some veterans get around this by carrying around a copy of their DD form 214, but this presents several issues. First and foremost, DD form 214 is not a photo ID, so many places won't accept it, and, it's bulky, making it difficult to carry in one's wallet. The form also displays the veteran's social security number, presenting an identity theft risk if it is lost or stolen.

Getting a veteran designated ID card will soon get a lot easier, thanks to California Assemblyman Frazer. His bill, AB 935, passed and signed by Governor Brown in 2014, initiated legislation to include a veteran's designation on their driver's license and state issued ID cards. Starting November 12, 2015, this bill would require the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and other departments to issue state ID cards with the word “VETERAN” on them.

The new ID cards will allow veterans to prove they are eligible to receive state and Federal veterans benefits without having to carry around and present a cumbersome form. Veterans may also take advantage of special discount incentives at participating retailers who give discounts to those who have served in our armed forces.

Applying for the new veteran ID cards is easy. Stop by the Solano County Veteran Services office today and pick up an application form. The application form certifies the person applying for the veteran ID card is a veteran from the active armed forces with a discharge that was issued under honorable circumstances.

Remember, one of biggest barriers to veterans gaining access to the benefits programs to which they are entitled is having proof of military service. Take care of that today by getting a veteran ID card. Secondly, many veterans don't know the types of benefits they qualify for or how to access them – my office can help you with that. If you have any questions about the new veteran ID cards, the application form or benefits, stop by and see us.

Ted Puntillo is Director of Veteran's Services for Solano County. Reach him at (707) 784-6590 or tepuntillo@SolanoCounty.com. The Solano County Veteran's Services Office, 675 Texas St. in Fairfield, is open from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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