

SENATE
STATE OF MINNESOTA
NINETY-FOURTH SESSION

S.F. No. 4807

(SENATE AUTHORS: PUTNAM)

DATE	D-PG	OFFICIAL STATUS
03/25/2026	6982	Introduction and first reading Referred to Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development
04/14/2026	8026a	Comm report: To pass as amended and re-refer to Finance
04/21/2026	8862a	Comm report: To pass as amended
	8868	Second reading
04/22/2026	8976	Special Order
	8976	Third reading Passed
05/05/2026	9894a	Returned from House with amendment
	9895	Senate not concur, conference committee of 3 requested

1.1 A bill for an act

1.2 relating to state government; modifying benefits available to veterans of the Secret

1.3 War in Laos; directing the commissioner of veterans affairs to establish an eligibility

1.4 process; modifying eligibility for burial in state veterans cemeteries; requiring a

1.5 report; making technical changes; appropriating money; amending Minnesota

1.6 Statutes 2024, sections 171.07, subdivision 15; 197.231; Minnesota Statutes 2025

1.7 Supplement, sections 197.236, subdivisions 8, 9; 197.448, subdivisions 1, 2, by

1.8 adding subdivisions.

1.9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

1.10 Section 1. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 171.07, subdivision 15, is amended to read:

1.11 Subd. 15. **Veteran designation.** (a) At the request of an eligible applicant and on payment

1.12 of the required fee, the department must issue, renew, or reissue to the applicant a driver's

1.13 license or Minnesota identification card bearing a graphic or written designation of:

1.14 (1) Veteran; ~~or~~

1.15 (2) Veteran 100% T&P; or

1.16 (3) SGU Veteran.

1.17 (b) At the time of the initial application for the designation provided under this

1.18 subdivision, the applicant must:

1.19 (1) be one of the following:

1.20 (i) a veteran, as defined in section 197.447; ~~or~~

1.21 (ii) a retired or honorably discharged member of the National Guard or a reserve

1.22 component of the United States armed forces; or

2.1 (iii) a veteran of the Secret War in Laos, as defined in section 197.448, subdivision 1,
 2.2 paragraph (e);

2.3 (2) provide a certified copy of the applicant's discharge papers that confirms an honorable
 2.4 or general discharge under honorable conditions status, ~~or~~ a military retiree identification
 2.5 card, a veteran identification card, or a veteran health identification card, or an eligibility
 2.6 certificate under section 197.448 if the applicant seeks the designation under paragraph (a),
 2.7 clause (3); and

2.8 (3) if the applicant is seeking the disability designation under paragraph (a), clause (2),
 2.9 provide satisfactory evidence of a 100 percent total and permanent service-connected
 2.10 disability as determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

2.11 **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This section is effective November 1, 2026.

2.12 Sec. 2. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 197.231, is amended to read:

2.13 **197.231 HONOR GUARDS.**

2.14 The commissioner of veterans affairs shall pay, within available funds and upon request
 2.15 by a local unit of a congressionally chartered veterans organization or its auxiliary, up to
 2.16 \$50 to the local unit for each time that local unit provides an honor guard detail at the funeral
 2.17 of a:

2.18 (1) deceased veteran;

2.19 (2) veteran of the secret war in Laos, as defined in section 197.448, subdivision 1; or

2.20 (3) member of a reserve component of the armed forces, and any member of the Army
 2.21 National Guard or the Air National Guard, as defined in section 197.236, subdivision 8,
 2.22 paragraph (b), clause (3).

2.23 If the local unit provides a student to play "Taps," the local unit may pay some or all of the
 2.24 \$50 to the student.

2.25 Sec. 3. Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement, section 197.236, subdivision 8, is amended
 2.26 to read:

2.27 Subd. 8. **Eligibility.** (a) For purposes of this subdivision, the following terms have the
 2.28 meanings given:

2.29 (1) "minor child" means an unmarried child under 21 years of age or under 23 years of
 2.30 age and pursuing a full-time course of instruction at an approved educational institution;

3.1 (2) "unmarried adult child" means an unmarried child who became permanently physically
3.2 or mentally disabled and incapable of self support before 21 years of age or before 23 years
3.3 of age and pursuing a full-time course of instruction at an approved educational institution;
3.4 and

3.5 (3) "willful misconduct" means an act involving conscious wrongdoing or known
3.6 prohibited action as described in United States Code, title 38, section 3.1, paragraph (n).

3.7 (b) Cemeteries must be operated solely for the burial of the following persons:

3.8 (1) service members who die on active duty, eligible veterans, and ~~their spouses and~~
3.9 ~~dependent children,~~ other persons as defined listed in United States Code, title 38, section
3.10 2402, paragraph (a), subparagraphs 1 to ~~5~~ 4 and 7;

3.11 (2) veterans of the Secret War in Laos;

3.12 (3) beginning January 1, 2027, members of a reserve component of the armed forces,
3.13 and any member of the Army National Guard or the Air National Guard when:

3.14 (i) the member completed at least one full term of service and received an honorable
3.15 discharge; or

3.16 (ii) the member's death occurs while in good standing with their assigned component
3.17 and was not due to their willful misconduct;

3.18 (4) spouses, surviving spouses, minor children, or unmarried adult children of a person
3.19 listed in United States Code, title 38, section 2402, paragraph (a), subparagraphs 1 to 4 and
3.20 7; and

3.21 (5) beginning January 1, 2027, spouses, surviving spouses, minor children, or unmarried
3.22 adult children of a person listed in clause (3).

3.23 For purposes of this section, a surviving spouse includes a surviving spouse who had a
3.24 subsequent marriage.

3.25 (c) An honorable discharge under this section does not include a general discharge under
3.26 honorable conditions.

3.27 (d) Applicants with convictions under United States Code, title 18, section 704, are
3.28 ineligible for burial in state veterans cemeteries. By January 1, 2027, the commissioner
3.29 must establish a process to verify that applicants for burial have not been convicted of stolen
3.30 valor.

4.1 Sec. 4. Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement, section 197.236, subdivision 9, is amended
4.2 to read:

4.3 Subd. 9. **Burial fees.** (a) The commissioner of veterans affairs shall establish a fee
4.4 schedule, which may be adjusted from time to time, for the interment of ~~eligible spouses~~
4.5 ~~and dependent children~~ qualified persons under subdivision 8, paragraph (b), clauses (2) to
4.6 (5). The fees shall cover as nearly as practicable the actual costs of interment, ~~excluding~~
4.7 ~~the value of the plot.~~

4.8 (b) Upon application, the commissioner may waive or reduce the burial fee for an indigent
4.9 eligible person. The commissioner shall maintain a policy, eligibility standards, and
4.10 application form for requests to waive or reduce the burial fee to indigent eligible applicants.

4.11 (c) No plot or interment fees may be charged for the burial of service members who die
4.12 on active duty or eligible veterans, as defined in United States Code, title 38, section 2402,
4.13 paragraph (a), subparagraphs 1 to 4 and 7.

4.14 Sec. 5. Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement, section 197.448, subdivision 1, is amended
4.15 to read:

4.16 Subdivision 1. **Definition.** ~~As used in~~ (a) For purposes of this section, the term following
4.17 terms have the meanings given.

4.18 (b) "Commissioner" has the meaning given in section 197.61, subdivision 2, paragraph
4.19 (c).

4.20 (c) "Department" has the meaning given in section 197.61, subdivision 2, paragraph (e).

4.21 (d) "VA" has the meaning given in section 197.61, subdivision 2, paragraph (g).

4.22 (e) "Veteran of the Secret War in Laos" or "SGU veteran" means a person who resides
4.23 in Minnesota and who:

4.24 (1) was naturalized as provided in section 2(1) of the federal Hmong Veterans'
4.25 Naturalization Act of 2000, Public Law 106-207; or

4.26 (2) is a person who the commissioner of veterans affairs determines served honorably
4.27 with a special guerrilla unit or with irregular forces that operated from a base in Laos in
4.28 support of the armed forces of the United States at any time during the period beginning
4.29 February 28, 1961, and ending May 14, 1975, and is a citizen of the United States or an
4.30 alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States.

5.1 Sec. 6. Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement, section 197.448, subdivision 2, is amended
5.2 to read:

5.3 Subd. 2. **Eligibility for benefits and privileges.** (a) A veteran of the Secret War in Laos,
5.4 as defined in subdivision 1, paragraph (e), clause (1), is entitled to the benefits and privileges
5.5 listed in paragraph (d) on July 2, 2025.

5.6 (b) A veteran of the Secret War in Laos, as defined in subdivision 1, paragraph (e),
5.7 clause (2), is entitled to the benefits and privileges listed in paragraph (d) after the
5.8 commissioner of veterans affairs verifies the person's veteran status. ~~The commissioner~~
5.9 ~~must not begin accepting applications for verification under this paragraph until the legislature~~
5.10 ~~enacts criteria and a protocol to determine:~~

5.11 ~~(1) which Minnesotans served in special guerilla units or with irregular forces in Laos;~~
5.12 ~~and~~

5.13 ~~(2) which of the Minnesotans who served in special guerilla units or with irregular forces~~
5.14 ~~in Laos are deserving of Minnesota veterans benefits.~~

5.15 (c) If the commissioner verifies a person's status as a veteran of the Secret War in Laos,
5.16 the commissioner must provide the person with a certificate of eligibility for the benefits
5.17 and privileges listed in paragraph (d) on a form developed by the commissioner for this
5.18 purpose. The commissioner must develop the form required under this paragraph no later
5.19 than September 15, 2025.

5.20 (d) The following statutory benefits and privileges available to a veteran, as defined in
5.21 section 197.447, are also available to a veteran of the Secret War in Laos: ~~section 171.07;~~
5.22 ~~subdivision 15 (veteran designation on drivers' licenses and state identification cards);~~
5.23 section 43A.09 (civil service recruitment); section 43A.11 (veterans preference in state
5.24 employment); section 43A.111 (certain disabled veterans); section 197.23 (purchase of
5.25 grave markers); section 197.231 (honor guards); section 197.236 (state veterans cemeteries);
5.26 section 197.455 (veterans preference); section 197.4551 (permissive preference for veterans
5.27 in private employment); section 197.46 (writ of mandamus); section 197.48 (application);
5.28 section 197.481 (enforcement by commissioner); and section 197.63 (vital records, certified
5.29 copies); ~~section 197.65 (renewal of professional licenses, motor vehicle registration, and~~
5.30 ~~drivers' licenses); and section 197.987 (honor and remember flag).~~

6.1 Sec. 7. Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement, section 197.448, is amended by adding a
6.2 subdivision to read:

6.3 Subd. 3. **Eligibility determination.** (a) The commissioner must establish an application
6.4 process to determine a veteran's eligibility for the benefits in subdivision 2, paragraph (d).

6.5 (b) To establish eligibility, an applicant must submit a completed application for preneed
6.6 determination of eligibility for burial in a VA national cemetery. County veteran service
6.7 officers and the commissioner must provide assistance to applicants filling out the application.
6.8 The commissioner must make copies of the application and any successor form available
6.9 on the department's website and at the department's offices.

6.10 (c) After the VA makes a determination on the application, the applicant must submit
6.11 the determination to the commissioner. If the VA determines that an applicant is eligible to
6.12 receive benefits under subdivision 2, paragraph (d), the commissioner must issue a certificate
6.13 of eligibility to the applicant for the benefits and privileges under subdivision 2, paragraph
6.14 (d).

6.15 Sec. 8. Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement, section 197.448, is amended by adding a
6.16 subdivision to read:

6.17 Subd. 4. **Special consideration.** (a) If the VA determines that an applicant is not eligible,
6.18 the applicant may request special consideration from the commissioner. The commissioner
6.19 must establish a process to request special consideration consistent with the requirements
6.20 of this subdivision. The commissioner must make applicable forms to request special
6.21 consideration available on the department's website and at certain department offices.

6.22 (b) An applicant seeking special consideration under this subdivision must submit the
6.23 following to the commissioner:

6.24 (1) documentation from the VA regarding the determination of ineligibility; and

6.25 (2) at least two different forms of documentation supporting the applicant's claim of
6.26 veteran status, which may include:

6.27 (i) original service-related documents;

6.28 (ii) an affidavit from a commissioned officer, noncommissioned officer, or other member
6.29 of the applicant's chain of command who has direct knowledge of the applicant's service;

6.30 (iii) two affidavits from individuals who served with the applicant in a special guerrilla
6.31 unit or irregular force and who have personal knowledge of the applicant's service; or

7.1 (iv) other appropriate and relevant proof of the applicant's service as determined by the
7.2 commissioner, including but not limited to:

7.3 (A) photographs taken during the applicant's service in Laos;

7.4 (B) newspaper articles featuring or citing the applicant's service in a special guerrilla
7.5 unit or irregular force;

7.6 (C) certificates of membership from a veteran's organization such as the Lao-Hmong
7.7 American Coalition; Lao Veterans of America; SGU Veterans and Families of USA, Inc.;
7.8 and Royal Lao Armed Forces and SGU;

7.9 (D) congressional recognition certificates;

7.10 (E) certificates of training;

7.11 (F) letters of commendation; or

7.12 (G) an affidavit from a case officer or former case officer in the United States intelligence
7.13 services.

7.14 (c) The commissioner must review an application for special consideration submitted
7.15 under this subdivision. The commissioner may request additional information from an
7.16 applicant to validate the contents of an application for special consideration. If the
7.17 commissioner determines that an applicant is eligible to receive benefits under subdivision
7.18 2, paragraph (d), the commissioner must issue a certificate of eligibility to the applicant for
7.19 the benefits and privileges under subdivision 2, paragraph (d).

7.20 (d) If an application for special consideration is denied by the commissioner, an applicant
7.21 may request a contested case hearing to challenge the commissioner's denial by filing a
7.22 request with the commissioner within 60 days of the date of the denial notice. The request
7.23 must state specific reasons for contesting the denial. A contested case hearing on a timely
7.24 and properly filed request must be conducted according to the procedures in sections 14.57
7.25 to 14.62.

7.26 (e) The deadline to submit an application for eligibility under this subdivision is December
7.27 31, 2030.

7.28 **Sec. 9. APPROPRIATIONS.**

7.29 (a) \$59,000 in fiscal year 2027 is appropriated from the general fund to the commissioner
7.30 of veterans affairs for the purposes of this act.

- 8.1 (b) \$141,000 in fiscal year 2027 is appropriated from the driver and vehicle services
8.2 operating account in the special revenue fund to the commissioner of public safety for the
8.3 purposes of this act. This is a onetime appropriation.