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March 3, 2021

Comptroller's Office Reviews State Veterans' Benefits

The Tennessee Comptroller's Office has released a report detailing more than 40 benefits, services, and protections for veterans and their families that are provided by state agencies.

For each benefit or service, the Comptroller's Office of Research and Education Accountability included data, when available, on the number of veterans receiving the benefit, and the state expenditures to provide the benefit or the state revenue forgone when state fees are waived or discounted for veterans.

A number of Tennessee agencies provide benefits to veterans including the Tennessee Departments of Veterans Services, Revenue, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Treasury, Safety and Homeland Security, and Environment and Conservation, as well as the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Tennessee State Veterans' Homes, and the Tennessee Comptroller's Office, among others.

In fiscal year 2019-20, recurring state-funded veterans benefits and services of at least \$30.3 million and nonrecurring benefit costs of at least \$1.1 million were identified for veterans services for which costs could be calculated.

The largest recurring state cost that year was the state's expenditure for disabled veterans' property tax relief. At \$20.9 million, it had a larger state fiscal impact than the remaining recurring benefits and services combined. The next largest cost was the approximately \$6.2 million in state appropriations for the Tennessee Department of Veterans Services. The main duties of the department are to provide information and assistance to veterans through its local offices and to maintain and operate the state's veterans cemeteries.

Other veteran-related state expenditures are nonrecurring, such as capital appropriations used as matching funds to qualify for federal nursing home construction grants or for land acquisition for nursing homes or state veterans cemeteries.

All states offer a variety of benefits and services to their veterans. At least three-fourths of other states offer benefits similar to many of those offered by Tennessee, including: a state-level department for veterans services; cemeteries and nursing homes for veterans; property tax relief; veteran specialty license plates and designations on driver licenses; state job hiring preferences; out-of-state tuition exemptions; and discounted rates on hunting and fishing licenses and camping fees.

To view the report, please visit the Comptroller's OREA website at: tncot.cc/orea.

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