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Comptroller's Office Updates Review of State Benefits and Services for Veterans

The Tennessee Comptroller's Office has released an updated report detailing state-provided benefits and services available to veterans and their families.

The report, prepared by the Office of Research and Education Accountability, identifies both benefits that can be quantified in state dollars and those that cannot. Quantified benefits include direct state spending as well as state revenue forgone when fees are waived or discounted for eligible veterans.

For fiscal year 2023-24, the report identified approximately \$45.5 million in quantified state-provided benefits and services for veterans. Of that amount, about \$27.2 million was attributable to the Comptroller's Property Tax Relief program for disabled veterans and their surviving spouses, making it the largest single state-funded veterans benefit.



The next largest recurring cost was approximately \$12.1 million in state appropriations for the Tennessee Department of Veterans Services, which assists veterans in accessing federal and state benefits and operates the state's veterans cemeteries.

Other quantified benefits include funding for veterans' treatment courts, higher education grants such as the Helping Heroes Grant and Veteran Reconnect program, retirement service credits, free or discounted hunting and fishing licenses, discounted camping and lodging at state parks, handgun permit fee discounts, and other programs administered by multiple state agencies.

The report also highlights several notable updates since 2021, including changes to the Tri-Stars and Stripes Council, funding for the opening of the Tennessee Wings of Liberty Museum in Clarksville, growth in property tax relief payments, and increases in the issuance of disabled veteran hunting and fishing licenses.

In addition to quantified benefits, the report catalogs numerous unquantified services and protections, such as state employee hiring preferences, higher education tuition waivers and exemptions, business tax exemptions for certain disabled veterans, veterans housing assistance, and other agency-specific programs.

The report notes that Tennessee does not currently produce a comprehensive, regularly updated public guide to state-provided veterans benefits and services. As a policy option, the report suggests that the Department of Veterans Services could develop and maintain such a guide to help veterans more easily identify available resources.

The full report and summary Snapshot is available on the Comptroller's website at tncot.cc/orea

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