



Rensselaer County Veterans Newsletter

Rensselaer County
Unified Family Services
Veterans Service Agency
1600 Seventh Avenue
Troy, NY 12180
Phone: (518) 270-2760
FAX: (518) 270-2956
www.rensco.com

STEVEN F. McLAUGHLIN
County Executive

PETER K. GOEBEL
Director

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Social Security Retirement Benefits:

Special Extra Earnings for Military Service

From 1957 through 2001, if you had military service earnings for active duty (including active duty for training), you may have extra Social Security wage credits added to your earnings record.

These extra earnings credits may help you qualify for Social Security or increase the amount of your Social Security benefit.

How You Get Credit for Special Extra Earnings

Special extra earnings credits are granted for periods of active duty or active duty for training. Here's how the special extra earnings are credited on your record:

- From 1957 through 1977, you are credited with \$300 in additional earnings for each calendar quarter in which you received active duty basic pay.
- From 1978 through 2001, for every \$300 in active duty basic pay, you are credited with an additional \$100 in earnings up to a maximum of \$1,200 a year.

In January 2002, Public Law 107-117, the Defense Appropriations Act, stopped the special extra earnings that have been credited to military service personnel.

If you enlisted after September 7, 1980, and didn't complete at least 24 months of active duty or your full tour, you may not be able to receive the additional earnings.

NOTE: In all cases, we add the additional credit for military service to the earnings that we average over your working lifetime, not directly to your monthly benefit payment amount.

How Social Security Credits Military Wages

When you apply for benefits, we automatically verify your military service. If your military service increases your benefit and we cannot get proof of your service, we will ask for your DD-214 or other proof of service before we process your application. In all cases, we add military wage credits to your earnings, not directly to your monthly benefit payment.

Van Transportation...

- * *Don't drive* and need to get to the Stratton VA Medical Center?
- * We offer complimentary van transportation to and from the VAMC for *most morning* medical appointments.

For more information please call (518) 270-2760.



VETERANS CRISIS LINE

1-800-273-8255
PRESS 1

Confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net or text to 838255
TTY service 1-800-799-4889

Confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, for veterans and their loved ones

Agent Orange exposure and VA disability compensation

The VA has added 3 more presumptive conditions related to Agent Orange exposure. This expands benefits for Veterans and survivors with these presumptive conditions:

- Bladder cancer
- Hypothyroidism
- Parkinsonism

If the VA denied your claim for any of these conditions in the past, they'll automatically review your case again. You don't need to file another claim. They'll send you a letter to let you know they're re-viewing your case.

A Message from the Veterans Service Agency Director

Congratulations and best wishes to all our re-elected and newly elected officials; I know that the unwavering commitment to our County's Veterans which exists currently will continue, and will only grow stronger.

Another Northeast winter is in full swing, so please remember to help out your neighbor Veterans who may be in need of assistance. All Veterans should have their DD-214's or discharge documents in their possession. Please get them registered at the Rensselaer County Clerk's Office. Honorably Discharged Veterans can get their Return-the-FAVOR card at the County Clerk's Office at 105 Third Street, Troy, New York or call them at (518) 270-4080. Please join your local Posts.

Remember to find those deceased Veterans that the Rensselaer County Honor-A-Deceased Veteran Committee can honor with our monthly ceremony. Everyone at our County Veterans Posts and every Veteran out there should know at least one Veteran that the Committee can remember in the monthly ceremony. Each Post and Veteran should also contact their Rensselaer County Legislators to honor all our living Veterans. The Legislatures phone number is (518) 270-2880 and their email address is: Renscoleg@rensco.com. This is a straight forward process and takes little time.

Spring will be here soon and so will Memorial Day when we honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our Nation, the last, best hope for mankind; a bright shining beacon on a hill, the best Nation on earth!

Sincerely,

Peter K. Goebel

Upcoming Events:

January 17th...Martin Luther King Jr. Day—OFFICE CLOSED

February 14th...Honor-A-Deceased Veteran Ceremony-County Legislative Chambers at 8:15 am:

Richard P. Jansson-USN, SN-Vietnam Era

Alternative veterans exemption: overview

The Alternative veterans exemption is available on a veteran's primary residence (includes cooperative apartments where jurisdiction adopts local option to exempt).

Benefits

- 15% reduction in assessed value to veterans who served during a time of war
- additional 10% reduction in assessed value to veterans serving in combat zones (includes recipients of expeditionary medals)
- additional reduction in assessed value to veterans who incur service-connected disabilities, equal to one-half of their service-connected disability ratings (regardless of whether such veterans served in combat zones)

percentage-level benefits are subject to maximum dollar limits set by each taxing jurisdiction

Application form

Use [Form RP- 458-a, Application for Alternative Veterans Exemption from Real Property Taxation](#). (For instructions see, [Form RP-458-a-I, Instructions for Form RP-458-a Application for Alternative Veterans Exemption from Real Property Taxation](#).)

File the form with your municipal assessor.

Required documentation

You must attach to your application either:

Proof that you were discharged or released from service under honorable conditions (usually Form DD-214; see the complete listing of [Acceptable Military Records for Veterans Property Tax Exemption](#)), or

A letter you received from the [New York State Division of Veterans' Services](#) (DVS) stating that you now meet the character of discharge criteria for all of the benefits and services listed in the [Restoration of Honor Act](#).

You must also provide proof of the times and places served in active duty, if not already included on the documentation described above.

Submit U.S. Veterans Administration documents for service-connected disability rating to receive disability benefits portion of exemption.

You only need to apply once

There is no time limit on the duration of the exemption - once you file, you will continue to receive the exemption in future years.

If you move or your veterans service-connected disability rating changes, you will need to re-file [Form RP- 458-a, Application for Alternative Veterans Exemption from Real Property Taxation](#).

Cold War veterans exemption: Overview

The Cold War veterans exemption is available on a veteran's primary residence

Benefits include:

- 10 or 15% reduction in assessed value (as adopted by the taxing jurisdiction) additional reduction for veterans who incur service-connected disabilities, equal to one-half of the service-connected disability rating Cold War period

Notes:

- Percentage-level benefits are subject to maximum dollar limits set by each taxing jurisdiction.
- The exemption is limited to 10 years in duration unless the taxing jurisdiction has acted to make it indefinite; the disability exemption benefit portion has no time limit.

To apply:

Complete [Form RP-458-b, Application for Cold War Veterans Exemption from Real Property Taxation](#). (For instructions see [Form RP-458-b-1, Instructions for Form RP-458-b Application for Cold War Veterans Exemption from Real Property Taxation](#).)

File the form with your municipal assessor.

Annual exemption renewal is not necessary, except in instances where veteran's service-connected disability rating changes.

Required documentation

You must attach to your application either:

Proof that you were discharged or released from service under honorable conditions (usually Form DD-214; see the complete listing of [Acceptable Military Records for Veterans Property Tax Exemption](#)) or

A letter you received from the [New York State Division of Veterans' Services](#) (DVS) stating that you now meet the character of discharge criteria for all of the benefits and services listed in the [Restoration of Honor Act](#).

You must also provide proof of the times and places served in active duty, if not already included on the documentation described above.

Submit U.S. Veterans Administration documents for service-connected disability rating to receive the disability benefits of the exemption.

You only need to apply once

There is no time limit on the duration of the exemption — once you file, you will continue to receive the exemption in future years.

If you move or your veteran's service-connected disability rating changes, you will need to file Form [Form RP-458-b](#).