plates may park free of charge at a parking meter operated by a governmental authority other than the federal government. The vehicle must be driven by or for the transportation of the person who registered the vehicle. Other fees for parking garages and lots are governed by local governments who have the option of passing ordinances for the exemption of fees for a disabled veteran. Vehicles displaying license plates issued by another state of the United States that indicate the owner or operator of the vehicle is a disabled veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces is authorized to be parked for an unlimited period in a parking space or area designated for the disabled. For further information, contact either the nearest vehicle title registration office or your county tax office. Application forms can be obtained by calling Texas Department of Transportation at 512-374-5010 or by visiting www.dot.state.tx.us.

FREE DRIVERS LICENSE FOR DISABLED VETERANS
Texas drivers licenses may be furnished free of charge to Veterans who have service-connected disabilities rated 60% or more by VA or by a branch of the U. S. Armed Forces. Application must be made prior to the time the present drivers license expires. Application forms may be obtained from Department of Public Safety's license examining offices located throughout the State. Proof of the veteran's disability rating must accompany the application.

FISHING & HUNTING LICENSES
A disabled veteran who has a service-connected disability rating of 60% or higher, or has the loss of use of a lower extremity, can receive hunting & fishing licenses at a reduced cost. Reduced cost hunting and fishing licenses can be obtained anywhere such licenses are sold. The veteran must provide proof of the service-connected disability rating at the time of purchase of the license.

NO COST MEDICAL RECORDS
Under the Health and Safety Code, Chapter 161, Subchapter M, Medical Records or Mental Health Records, Texas Veterans are eligible for no cost medical records when they are obtained to file a claim for a disability against the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The health care provider or health care facility is not required to provide more than one complete record for the patient or former patient without charge. Also, it should be noted, that some medical facilities may charge a small administrative fee for obtaining the records.

CONCEALED HANDGUN LICENSE FEES
Concealed handgun license fees for the issuance of an original, duplicate, modified, or renewed license is waived for members of the U.S. Armed Forces, including a member of the reserves, national guard, or state guard. Fees are also waived for a veteran who, within 365 days preceding the date of application, was honorably discharged from the branch of service in which the person served. Fees are reduced by 50% for a veteran who, more than 365 days preceding the date of the application, was honorably discharged from the branch of the service in which the person served.

STATE PARK ADMISSION
The State Parklands Passport provides free admission to Texas State parks for any veteran who has a service-connected disability rating of 60% or higher, or a service-connected disability that resulted in the loss of use of a lower extremity. Application for the State Parklands Passport can be made at the headquarters office of any Texas State Park by providing evidence of the service-connected disability rating. The State Parklands Passport is available to any veteran who meets the requirements, whether or not the veteran resides in Texas. Veterans will only receive free admission to State parks; the Passport does not exempt Veterans from payment of other charges, such as camping fees. For information, contact the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department at 1-800-792-1112 or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

"TAPS FOR VOUCHERS" PROGRAM
The Texas Veterans Commission has established a program to encourage students in grades 6 through 12 or at post-secondary educational institutions to sound "Taps" on a bugle, trumpet, or cornet as part of the military honors funerals held in Texas for deceased Veterans. A student, in exchange for sounding "Taps" at a military funeral, will be issued a voucher in the amount of $25 to be exchanged for an exemption from the payment of tuition and required fees in that amount at a State of Texas public institution of higher education. There is no limit to the number of vouchers a student can accumulate. These vouchers may be used by the student at any time for tuition and fees and are not transferable.

PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION
Disabled Veterans, their surviving spouses and the spouses and minor children of a person who dies on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces are eligible for property tax exemptions on the appraised value of their property. The VA rating in effect on January 1 of each year determines the exemption for that entire year. Veterans who are rated 100% due to service connected disability or in receipt of 100% compensation due to a grant of individual unemployability are entitled to an exemption from taxation of the total appraised value of the veteran's residence homestead. Adjustments to an exemption for ad valorem taxation of the residence homesteads of certain totally disabled Veterans and to the amount from ad valorem taxation to which a disabled veteran is entitled are based on the disability rating by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or a branch of the Armed Forces. Eligible Veterans must have a minimum 10% serviceconnected disability rating. Veterans with a rating of 0% are not entitled to a property tax exemption.

Disability Rating		Tax Exemption
At least	*but less than*	
10%	30%	First $ 5,000 of appraised value
30%	50%	First $ 7,500 of appraised value
50%	70%	First $ 10,000 of appraised value
70%	100%	First $ 12,000 of appraised value
100%		100% of appraised value

A veteran who has a disability rating between 10% and 90% and who is 65 years or older is entitled to a tax exemption for the first $12,000 of the property's appraised value. The surviving spouse of a person who dies on active duty is entitled to exemption of the first $5,000 of the appraised value of the spouse's property. A surviving child of a person who dies on active duty is exempt on the first $5,000 of appraised value of the property, as long as the child is unmarried and under 21 years of age. The surviving spouse of a deceased veteran, who at the time of death had a compensable disability and was entitled to an exemption, is also entitled to that exemption if the surviving spouse is unmarried but currently NOT at 100% of the appraised value.

In these cases the Tax Exemption caps at the 70% to 100% of the first $12,000 of appraised value. Applications for the exemption must be completed between January 1 and April 30. To apply, obtain an application from the local appraisal district office for your county.

In May 2011, the Legislature unanimously passed measures that, if approved by Texas voters on November 8, 2011, will extend the 100 percent property tax exemption to totally disabled or unemployable veterans to their surviving spouses.If approved by voters, the legislation would entitle the surviving spouse to the 100 percent property tax exemption if:

- The property was the surviving spouse's homestead when the veteran died;
- The property remains the surviving spouse's homestead, and
- The surviving spouse has not remarried since the death of the disabled veteran.

The spouse is not obligated to remain in the original home so long as the new home is designated a homestead and the spouse does not remarry. If passed by Texas voters, the new exemption would take effect on January 1, 2012.

TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

The Texas Veterans Commission is a State agency created to serve Texas Veterans, their dependents or survivors in all matters pertaining to veterans benefits and rights.

STATE OF TEXAS BENEFITS

Over 250 skilled counselors in 75 cities provide one-on-one guidance to Veterans and their families to ensure they get the maximum benefits they have earned.

Assistance is provided to Veterans in obtaining state and federal benefits such as disability compensation, pension, employment, education and training.

For information about how the Texas Veterans Commission can help you and your family go to www.TexasVeteransCommission.org.

Contact Information
State Headquarters
PO Box 12277
Austin, Texas 78711-2277
(512) 463-5538
info@tvc.state.tx.us

Claims Representation & Counseling
(512) 463-6564
info@tvc.state.tx.us

Veterans Employment Services
(512) 463-5538
VetJobs@tvc.state.tx.us

Veterans Education Program
Toll Free: 877-898-3833
Local: (512) 463-3168
VetsEd@tvc.state.tx.us

Fund for Veterans' Assistance
(512) 463-6564
grants@tvc.state.tx.us

Rev. June 2011

Benefits & Services for Veterans, Dependents & Survivors

TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

Texas Veterans Commission
CLAIMS REPRESENTATION & COUNSELING
As the State of Texas agency designated to represent its Veterans before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Texas Veterans Commission is nationally recognized for its expertise in helping Veterans get the most benefits they are entitled to.

We are not the VA. However, we have more than 75 claims counselors across the state located in VA facilities that provide one-on-one assistance to Veterans and their families during every aspect of the VA claims process. This includes the initial filing of a claim; compiling additional evidence or documentation required by VA; appealing a VA decision; and if necessary, providing representation at a VA hearing.

It's important to know that benefit eligibility requirements are general and there may be additional factors that affect eligibility. Also, each case is unique and there are exceptions for every rule. Finally, completing forms completely and correctly will affect the outcome of your request. Texas Veterans Commission claims counselors are experts who can review your specific situation, help determine your eligibility, and assist you in completing any paperwork to get the best results possible. Go to www.TexasVeteransCommission.org to find the claims office closest to you.

Texas Veterans Commission
VETERANS EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
The Texas Veterans Commission offers employment services to Texas Veterans and helps employers find qualified Veteran job applicants. The goal of these services is to match Veteran job seekers with the best employment opportunities available.

Over 190 Texas Veterans Commission employment representatives provide a full range of employment services. They are located in more than 75 cities throughout Texas and offer one-on-one assistance to Veterans with job applications, resume preparation, plus job matching and searches. Additional intensive services are provided to disabled Veterans and Veterans with other barriers to employment, especially homeless Veterans.Counselors are located at workforce centers. Ask for the Texas Veterans Commission by name. Go to www.TexasVeteransCommission.org to find the workforce center closest to you.

Veterans can self-register for employment services via the internet by visiting the Work-in-Texas website at www.workintexas.com and completing the online registration.Work-in-Texas will match the Veteran's skills and experience to the job postings in any area of the state and notify the Veteran when a suitable match has been found.

Texas Veterans Commission
VETERANS EDUCATION
(GI Bill Educational Benefits)
The mission of the Texas Veterans Commission is to ensure that every military veteran and family member eligible for federal or state Veterans' educational benefits has the opportunity to pursue whatever educational endeavor they choose. To accomplish this, the Texas Veterans Commission reviews, evaluates, approves and oversees the quality programs of education and training for Veterans and other eligible persons under the Chapter 30, 33, 35, 1606, and 1607 programs administered by the VA.

Most Texas public and many nonpublic, postsecondary schools have approved training programs. Public schools include universities, junior/community colleges, hospitals, police/fire academies and technical institutions. Nonpublic schools include cosmetology/barber, bible, flight, and other vocational schools.

Veterans may also use their GI Bill benefits to earn additional money while in an employer's apprenticeship or on-the-job training program and earning a wage.

For information about institutions and employers with approved educational, training and OJT programs and more information about GI Bill education benefits visit www.TexasVeteransCommission.org.

(Hazlewood Act Educational Benefits)
The Texas Hazlewood Act is an education benefit providing eligible Veterans with up to 150 credit hours of tuition exemption at a state-supported college or university. To be eligible, a veteran must:

- Have been a Texas resident upon entry into the military, entered into active federal duty in the State of Texas, or declared Texas as his or her home of record at the time of entry into the armed forces as documented on his or her DD Form 214;
- Have a military discharge of honorable or general, under honorable conditions;
- Not be in default on a federal education loan or student loan made or guaranteed by the State of Texas.

The Hazlewood Act benefit is also extended to the dependent children and spouses of eligible Veterans who died in the line of duty or as a result of injury or illness directly related to military service, are missing in action, or who became totally disabled for purposes of employability as a result of a service-related injury or illness.

The Hazlewood Legacy Program allows an eligible veteran to transfer any unused Hazlewood hours to a child who is a resident of Texas and 25 years or younger (up to the maximum 150 semester credit hours).

For more information about eligibility for the Hazelwood Act and Legacy Program see the "Hazelwood Act Frequently Asked Questions" brochure or go to www.TexasVeteransCommission.org. Any veteran claiming this benefit must contact the registrar or the veteran's office of the school he or she plans to attend.

(Expansion of Eligibility for In-State Tuition Senate Bill 297):
In-state tuition rates are extended to Veterans who are eligible for federal Veterans benefits (inclusive of member, spouse, and children, including stepchildren). The veteran must provide the school a letter of intent to make Texas home, and reside in Texas while attending school. Additionally, a tuition exemption may be granted to dependent children whose parent(s) is a Texas resident and member of the U.S. armed forces deployed on active duty for the purpose of engaging in combative military operations outside the U.S. The dependent child must be a Texas resident or entitled to pay the resident tuition rate.

Texas Veterans Commission
FUND FOR VETERANS' ASSISTANCE
The Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance is a program that makes grants to eligible charitable organizations, local government agencies, and Veterans Service Organizations that provide direct services to Texas Veterans and their families.

The grants address a broad range of needs, including transportation to medical facilities, counseling for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), housing assistance for homeless Veterans, and family and child services.

The Texas lottery scratch-off games, *Veterans Cash* and *Veterans Winnings*, have been the primary source of funds for Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance. Since their introduction on November 11, 2009, sales of Veterans Cash and Veterans Winnings scratch-off tickets have provided over $6 million to the fund.

For more information about the Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance visit www.TexasVeteransCommission.org.

VETERAN'S PREFERENCE & MILITARY SERVICE CREDIT
Veterans have preference in employment with State agencies or offices, as do widows/widowers and children of those killed on active duty. State agencies must practice veteran's preference until they have reached 40% veteran employment. Non-retiree Veterans who are employed by the State of Texas are entitled to claim their active-duty military time toward retirement, provided they present a proper request and pay to the Employees Retirement System the specified amount of retirement contribution for the time spent in the military. Such contribution is paid at the rate which was applicable at the time the employed veteran first was covered by the State Retirement System. All Veterans may also use their military time toward retirement if they are members of the State Teachers Retirement System.

CONTRACT PREFERENCES
All state agencies, when purchasing goods, including agricultural goods, shall give preference to goods produced or offered by a Texas bidder. A Texas bidder that is owned by a service-disabled veteran who is a Texas resident shall be given a first preference and goods produced in this state or offered by other Texas bidders shall be given second preference, if the cost to the state and quality are equal.

All state agencies procuring services shall give first preference to services offered by a Texas bidder that is owned by a service-disabled veteran who is a Texas resident and shall give second preference to services offered by other Texas bidders if the services meet state requirements regarding the service to be performed and expected quality and the cost does not exceed the cost of other similar services of similar expected quality that are offered by a bidder that is not entitled to a preference.

FREE RECORDING OF DISCHARGES
Under Local Government Code, Sec. 192.002, the county clerk in each county is required to record, free of charge, the official discharge of a veteran who served in the U.S. Armed Forces. The veteran must take his/her DD Form 214 (discharge papers) to the county clerk to have it filed, at which point the DD Form 214 will become a confidential record for 75 years from the file date. This free service is very important as it provides Veterans with a ready source from which they can obtain a certified copy of their discharge whenever it is needed.

TEXAS VETERANS LAND BOARD PROGRAMS
(A division of the Texas General Land Office)
Land, Housing & Home Improvement Loan Programs
The Texas Veterans Land Board (TVLB) offers typically below-market interest rate loans:

- Land Loans - Up to $80,000, one-acre minimum
- Housing Loans - Up to $325,000
- Home Improvement Loans - Up to $25,000

Texas State Veterans Cemeteries
The Texas State Veterans Cemetery Program seeks to supplement the four VA National Cemeteries in Texas by providing state-managed perpetual shrines for Veterans near family and friends. Currently, the TVLB operates three cemeteries: the Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery in Killeen; the Rio Grande Valley State Veterans Cemetery in Mission; and the Texas State Veterans Cemetery in Abilene. An additional cemetery is set to open in Corpus Christi in late 2011.

Texas State Veterans Homes
The David A. Gloier Texas State Veterans Homes Program offers affordable, long-term nursing care to Texas Veterans, their spouses and Gold Star Parents. The homes are located in Amarillo, Big Spring, Bonham, El Paso, Floresville, McAllen, Temple and opening in Tyler in 2011. Claims preparation assistance is available at each of these facilities. Further information concerning any of the Texas Veterans Land Board programs may be obtained by contacting them toll-free on the Veterans HOTLINE: 1-800-252-VETS or by visiting www.texasVeterans.org.

SPECIALITY LICENSE PLATES
Disabled Veteran, Former Prisoner of War, Pearl Harbor Survivor, Purple Heart and Medal of Honor plates are among the special license plates available for personal use on an automobile or light commercial vehicle of one ton or less. Disabled Veterans must have a service-connected disability rating of 50% or more, or at least 40% due to amputation of a lower extremity. Former military and civilian prisoners of war are eligible if they were captured or incarcerated by an enemy of the U.S. during a period of conflict with the U.S. and were U.S. citizens at the time of capture. For further information, contact either the nearest vehicle title registration office or your county tax office. For fee schedule, applications or further information, visit www.dot.state.tx.us; or in Austin call (512) 374-5010 or your local Texas Department of Transportation office.

PARKING PLACARDS & REGISTRATION OF VEHICLES FOR DISABLED VETERANS
You may apply for Disabled Veteran license plates for your car, light truck or motorcycle if you are certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to have a 50% or higher service-related disability, or at least 40% due to amputation of a lower extremity. An annual $3 fee is collected for the first set of plates but no regular registration fee. You may receive an additional set of plates, but you are required to pay the regular registration fee and other applicable fees. Persons entitled to license plates for disabled Veterans may also elect to receive a standard license plate at the same cost in lieu of the first set of disabled veteran plates.

PARKING PRIVILEGES FOR CERTAIN VETERANS
When a vehicle with disabled veteran plates is being operated by or for the disabled veteran, the disabled veteran may use any parking space or area that is designated specifically for persons with physical disabilities. Vehicles that display Disabled Veteran, the Air Force Cross, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Army Distinguished Service Cross, the Navy Cross, Pearl Harbor Survivor, Purple Heart, Prisoner of War or Congressional Medal of Honor license