

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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May 30, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to inform you of a recent change to the requirements for the veteran designation on California Driver Licenses and California Identification Cards. After careful consideration, CalVet is updating the criteria for eligibility for who may receive the designation. This benefit is now expanded to individuals who served in the National Guard or Reserves. The requirement for an Honorable or General (under honorable conditions) discharge still remains.

The Veteran Designation Program, started in 2015, is an incredibly effective way to get veterans, who would otherwise not do so, through your doors. To date, your tremendous efforts have resulted in 104,000 veteran designations on California Driver Licenses and Identification Cards. Best of all, it is your hard work on behalf of these individuals that resulted in 32,000 claims filed – totaling \$34,000,000 in retroactive benefits and \$63,000,000 in monthly annualized benefits – that has made this an overwhelming success. This is an incredible program and my team and I are sincerely grateful for your dedicated work on behalf of veterans and their families.

You may be wondering why CalVet is implementing this change. Over the years, we have received significant amounts of feedback about the program from veterans, and stakeholders in the public, the legislature, and the Governor's Administration. The number one concern is that eligibility should be expanded to recognize and honor the important military service of an individual, regardless of their active duty or part-time status, and to more closely align with the current definitions used by the USDVA's ID card program. California seeks to recognize the military service in all of its forms. The veteran designation program is a great way to do so, while still maintaining the integrity of benefits eligibility for other USDVA and state program requirements.

Attached you will find the new criteria information which will be used to qualify veterans in your county for the program. If you have further questions, please contact Keith Boylan, Deputy Secretary, Veterans Services Division.

I sincerely appreciate your attention to this matter and thank you for the work you do!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Vito Imbasciani MD".

VITO IMBASCIANI MD
Secretary

CA Driver License Veteran Designation Program

Eligible veterans may now have their service to our country recognized by the placement of the word “VETERAN” on their California Driver License or California Identification Card. The designation provides veterans the opportunity to receive discounts offered at many stores, businesses, and restaurants. Veterans will no longer need to provide military discharge documents or share sensitive personal information to merchants in order to receive veteran- specific discounts.

Note: The California Driver License or California State Identification Card Veteran Designation does not qualify the card holder for any other benefits or compensation provided by the United States Department of Veteran Affairs or the California Department of Veteran Affairs (CalVet).

Who Is Eligible and Required Documentation

An individual may be eligible if they meet both of the requirements listed below.

- Served on active duty, in the Reserves, or in the National Guard and
- Received an Honorable or General discharge (under honorable conditions)

If an individual received an Other Than Honorable, Bad Conduct, or Dishonorable character of discharge, they are not eligible for a veteran designation on their California Driver License or California Identification Card.

If they have an uncharacterized or unknown discharge status, the CVSO will verify eligibility before approving the application.

Applicable required documentation for proof of service includes:

- Reserves – Forms DD 256 or DD 257.
- National Guard – Form NGB 22.

Information About How to Apply

Contact your local County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) to apply for the program.

To locate the CVSO office closest to you, call 844-737-8838. Enter your zip code when prompted and your call will be transferred.

You may also visit www.cacvso.org. Click on Contact Us and then click on your county of residence to view a list of CVSO locations, hours of operation, and contact information.

For additional information, please visit: <https://www.calvet.ca.gov/Veteran-Designation>