

## **NEW LAWS AFFECTING VETERANS AND THE ARMED FORCES**

By State Representative Marilyn Giuliano

During the 2007 regular and special sessions, a number of new laws affecting veterans and those serving in our armed forces were enacted.

Effective immediately, the Department of Motor Vehicles is required to issue a special license plate upon the request of a spouse, parent, sibling or grandparent of any Connecticut service member killed in the line of duty. The plate must bear the words "Gold Star Family" and be approved by a committee established by the DMV commissioner. To assist armed forces members who are renewing their licenses, the commissioner of DMV can renew licenses without a personal appearance when the license holder is a member of the armed forces.

A newly enacted law expands the number of people eligible for burial in Connecticut veterans' cemeteries. Eligibility is extended to any Connecticut National Guard member who has completed a minimum of 20 years of Guard service; or who was killed in action or died as a result of an accident or illness sustained during active service in the Guard. One spouse of any qualified member can also be buried in any veterans' cemetery. A new law prohibits disruptions at military funerals or memorial services.

New legislation permits the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish and maintain a registry of health data on service members who have completed a tour of active duty. This new law applies to members of the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, reservists, and National Guard members performing under federal law. The intent of this health registry is to use the data collected to study the potential short and long-term effects of environmental hazards on members, and to coordinate health care services to them.

Effective upon passage, the administration of the Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Fund is transferred from the state treasurer to the American Legion.

A new law increases civil penalties and establishes criminal penalties for discrimination against members of our armed forces based on their armed forces membership. This new legislation creates a criminal fine for wearing a uniform without authorization, and makes it a criminal offense to falsely represent oneself as the recipient of an armed services badge or medal.

These are some highlights of recently passed legislation affecting veterans and members of our armed forces. For more complete information on any of these or other bills affecting veterans, please call my Hartford office at 1-800-842-1423.

*State Representative Marilyn Giuliano represents the 23<sup>rd</sup> House Assembly district of Lyme, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook and coastal Westbrook.*