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| |  | | --- | | Eligible military veterans seeking a commercial driver’s license (CDL) in Michigan no longer are required to take the driving skills test under a new law that adds to a growing list of employment benefits for veterans in the state.    Under the “Even Exchange” law, the Michigan Secretary of State can waive the driving test for veterans who have the requisite experience through specific Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) in the past year. In essence, this applies to those veterans who were trained to drive military fifth-wheel truck tractors and semitrailers, “pintle hook” truck-trailer combinations and single vehicles with a gross combined weight rating 26,001 or more pounds.    Michigan already waives the knowledge skills portion of the CDL for these eligible veterans. By now waiving the driving skills test, Michigan becomes one of fewer than 20 states to waive both tests for eligible veterans, according to the latest available data from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.    There are some 257,000 CDL holders in Michigan, yet a shortage of long-haul truckers, bus drivers and other commercial operators continues across the state and nation. The American Trucking Association estimated the nationwide truck driver shortage hit a historic high of 80,000 drivers in 2021 and will rise to more than 160,000 drivers in 2030. The Biden administration is also spearheading a [push](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..2XWRP-DUfp2CDpFDFGQ3-_nHx3mfOH5uHOFGGOzyu5Y/s/1018038920/br/127014574200-l) to encourage more veterans to pursue a career in the trucking industry.    By making it easier for veterans to get their CDLs in Michigan, the new law can help fill the gap for commercial drivers and bolster veteran employment with good-paying jobs, said MVAA Director Zaneta Adams.    Veterans can access the [Michigan Application for Military Waiver Even Exchange](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..BYopwcLYtrBoyOqpFQTYr9JxiSjYTxVSPT6IQWw2EDo/s/1018038920/br/127014574200-l) or call the MVAA at 1-800-MICH-VET (1-800-642-4838) for more information.    The CDL waiver is latest move to benefit veterans and their families. Among the benefits supported by the MVAA, Michigan recently [expanded its veterans’ preference program](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..LblxwsiyUF0Vrc01bn2F-ApNtu0K2xcfCWPjQv9o828/s/1018038920/br/127014574200-l) for state employment, [removed professional licensing barriers](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..a7JYjbNFV9KuC4Ham7l5sYWRfWamXFvlz4ybPh82GnQ/s/1018038920/br/127014574200-l) for veterans, and [bolstered a veteran entrepreneurship program](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..MoFkt6sWypbd5KbAt_fvgUOS2pyai6uFXlCQ_q0F_kQ/s/1018038920/br/127014574200-l) housed at Grand Valley State University.    Read more at [michigan.gov/MVAA](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..cWb7eWksldsfbeVXBB_rb-ivGjc3otQ5niLRg-d3QDU/s/1018038920/br/127014574200-l). First-ever Michigan Women Veterans Conference set for June 10-11 in Lansing Michigan Women Veterans Conference save the date  Save the Date! We are so excited to announce our first ever Michigan Women Veterans Conference! Join us June 10-11 in Lansing to celebrate the 47,000+ women veterans who live, work and play in Michigan and learn about advocacy for yourself and your community. You’ll learn:   * How to advocate for your mental and physical health. * How to advocate for others by learning how to run for office in your local community or apply for a commission or board. * How to advocate for yourself in your job and get that raise or promotion.   More details and ticket information will be announced at a later date. MVAA launches new county benefits counselor search tool You asked and we listened! We’re rolling out a new county benefits counselor search tool to help better connect Michigan veterans to resources.    When you visit [Michigan.gov/mvaa](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..T9lHFFsuVhnpoy7ng9X4Flw3xQM4y-6VkKaQdKXyaYU/s/1018038920/br/127014574200-l), you’ll see our new and improved search tool offering a quick and easy way to connect with the Veteran Service Officers serving your county. When you filter locations by your county of residence, you’ll be able to view the locations on a map to see which is closest to you. This valuable resource lists all of the available VSOs serving your county. The new tool utilizes best practices in search functionality to show VSOs in relation to your location.    Coming soon, you’ll also be able to see all non-county specific VSOs who can serve you when you select your county of residence.    You can also call us 24/7 at 1-800-MICH-VET (1-800-642-4838) to get connected to a Veteran Service Officer, inquire about available benefits and emergency assistance, locate your DD-214 discharge papers or get help with any other veteran-specific issue. As a state agency, all of our services are complimentary and confidential.  [Lean on us](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDcsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMjAyMjMuNTM4NTE4NzEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5taWNoaWdhbi5nb3YvbXZhYSJ9.MqBI1keEPFgwYZQHlHiHu1Zx2sCGC99AgP0_XNP1GgI/s/1018038920/br/127014574200-l) Navy, Marine veterans with PTSD to have discharge upgrade cases reexamined Navy and Marine Corps veterans who were suffering the effects of trauma related to their service when they were involuntarily separated from service — and who later tried and failed to have their discharges upgraded — will have their cases reevaluated.    Under terms of the final settlement of the class-action lawsuit Manker v. Del Toro, the Navy has agreed to review the discharges of veterans with other than honorable or general characterizations of service due to behavior connected to post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, military sexual trauma and other mental or behavioral conditions.    The Navy will automatically review discharge-status-upgrade decisions from the Naval Discharge Review Board from March 2, 2012, to Feb. 15, 2022, for cases where the sailor or Marine didn’t receive an upgrade to honorable discharge and was diagnosed with, or displayed evidence of, one of those conditions.    Sailors and Marines whose upgrade decisions were issued between Oct. 7, 2001, and March 2, 2012, are eligible to reapply for an upgrade to honorable.    Read more in [Navy Times](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.navytimes.com%2Fnews%2Fyour-navy%2F2022%2F02%2F17%2Fsailors-and-marines-with-ptsd-or-other-trauma-to-have-their-discharge-upgrade-cases-reexamined%2F%3Futm_source%3DSailthru%26utm_medium%3Demail%26utm_campaign%3DEBB%252002.18.2022%26utm_term%3DEditorial%2520-%2520Early%2520Bird%2520Brief&data=04%7C01%7Cheniona%40michigan.gov%7Cb0006a33c7e14cf613d408d9f639a243%7Cd5fb7087377742ad966a892ef47225d1%7C0%7C0%7C637811549665914508%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=P5sDFsOX1n9dVyLfh656VgJC78cobL72pX2dYMoNyLU%3D&reserved=0). Burn pit exposure bill advances in Congress The Senate took a significant step in recent days to help former military service members suffering from toxic burn pit exposure by passing a bill to expand access to health care for post-9/11 combat veterans.    According to [CNN](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..hhc-GpiM--TycFp8oU_b0smsmQyul9eNSYMcSmc62aQ/s/1018038920/br/127014574200-l), It's not yet clear though when burn pit legislation might get to the President's desk to be signed into law, and advocates say more still needs to be done for veterans to address the issue of toxic exposure.    Burn pits were used to incinerate and burn waste, hazardous material and chemical compounds at military sites throughout Iraq and Afghanistan. A 2020 member survey by the advocacy organization [Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..V6qj10D1S5zKwvqZS9a2eb0EHr17T9Lc4hC2dup8Ej8/s/1018038920/br/127014574200-l) found that 86 percent of respondents were exposed to burn pits or other toxins.    The bill passed by the Senate Feb. 16 would expand the window of eligibility for health care for post-9/11 combat veterans from five to 10 years after discharge from military service, and provide a one-year open enrollment period for any post-9/11 combat veterans who are outside that 10-year window.    Among other provisions, the bill would also require the VA to implement clinical screenings for veterans to look for potential exposure to toxic substances and symptoms commonly associated with exposure. | |
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