

From Sea to Shining Sea: State-Level Benefits for Veterans

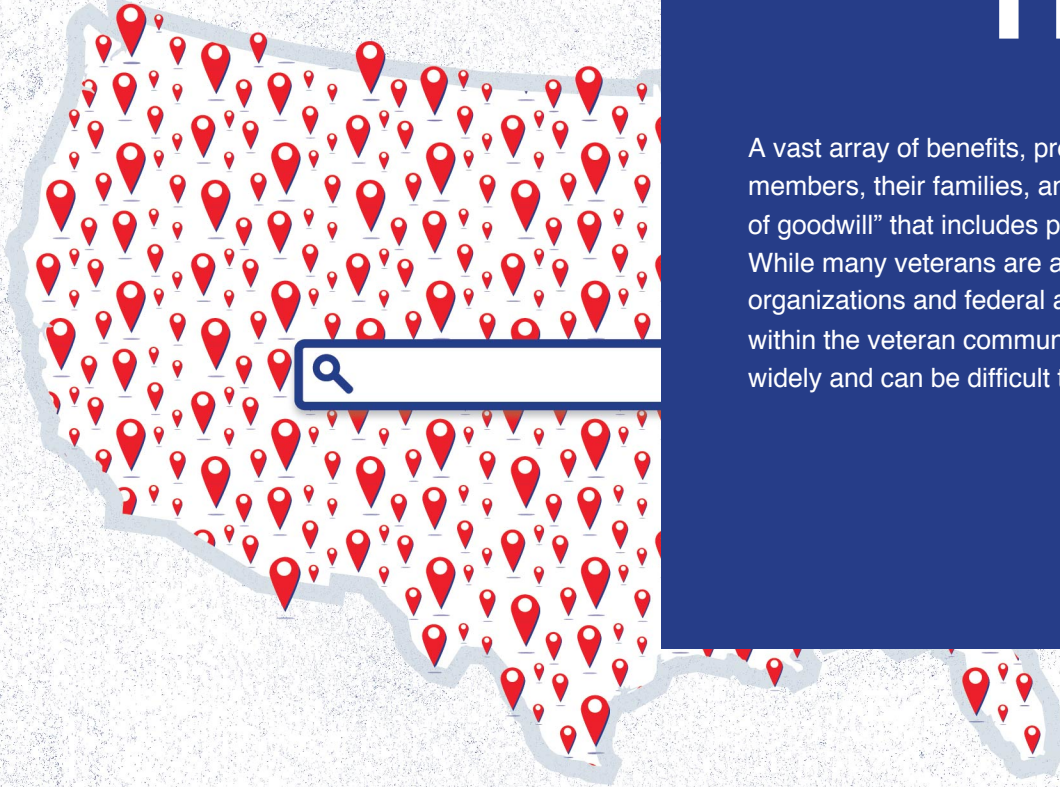
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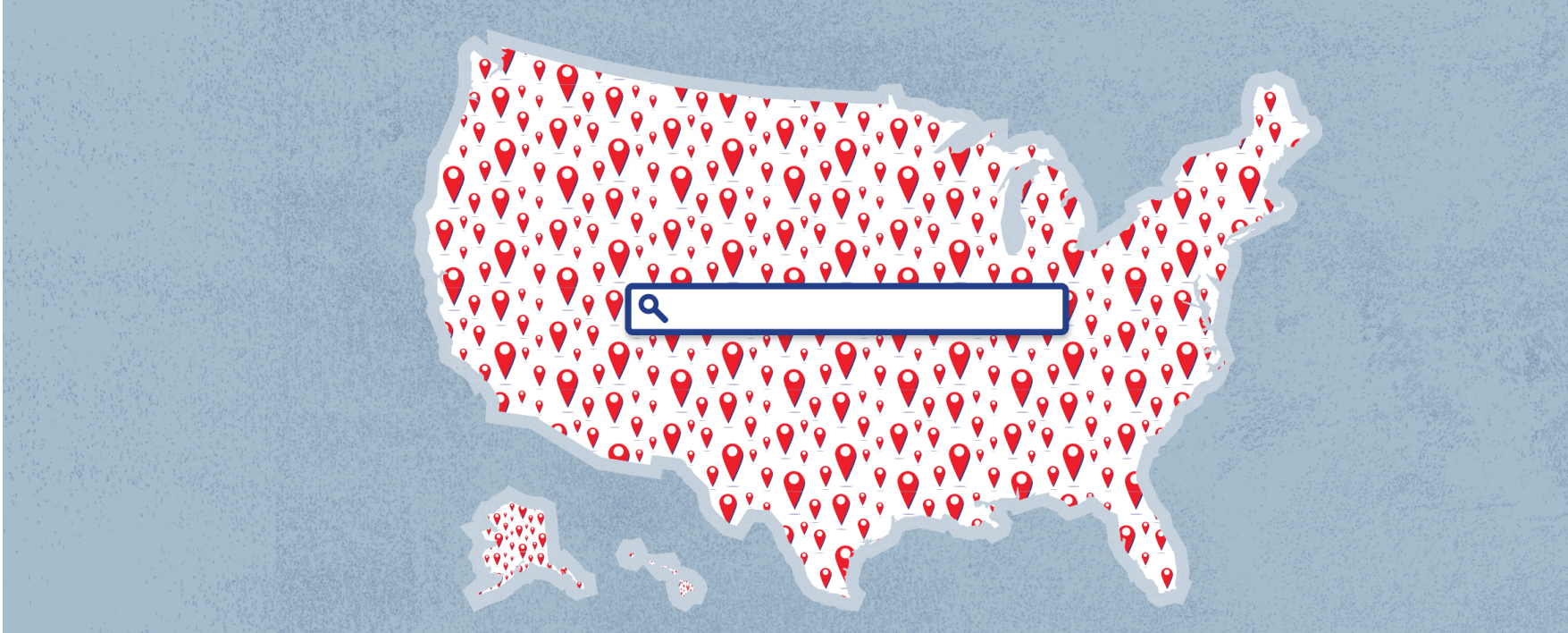
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The Gap

A vast array of benefits, programs, and services supporting veterans, service members, their families, and survivors has emerged in the post-9/11 era: a “sea of goodwill” that includes players in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. While many veterans are aware that there are services offered by nonprofit organizations and federal agencies, benefits at the state level remain little known within the veteran community. These state-level benefits, though extensive, vary widely and can be difficult to identify, compare, and access.



State Veteran Benefit Finder



Benefit Categories



Beneficiary



Benefit Subcategories



State



Results...

1814 records found

The lack of a comprehensive and searchable reference for veteran benefits at the state level has made it difficult for veterans to identify benefits to which they are entitled and has hindered policymakers, legislators, and advocates in assessing the distribution of benefits nationwide.

Veteran Benefit Finder

With this State Veteran Benefit Finder, CNAS makes information about 1,814 identified benefits easily searchable. This tool allows users to filter state-level veteran benefits by type of benefit, beneficiary, and state to identify benefits for which they may be eligible, providing a unique and invaluable reference.

Benefit Categories —

- ☐ Business
- ☐ Death
- ☒ Education
- ☐ Employment
- ☐ Financial
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Legal Advocacy and Assistance
- ☐ Memorial
- ☐ Recreation
- ☐ State Government Services
- ☐ Tax



Beneficiary



Benefit Subcategories +



State



Selected Filter(s):

Education x

CLEAR ALL

Results...

256 records found

Benefit Categories +

Beneficiary +

Benefit Subcategories +

State +

Selected Filter(s):

Education x

Dependents x

Maine x

CLEAR ALL

Results...

2 records found

State Council - Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Maine | Primary/Secondary School Assistance

N/A or not disclosed

State National Guard/Reserve, Active Duty, Dependents

Veterans Dependents Educational Benefits

Maine | Scholarship/Tuition-Assistance

100% covered

100% Disabled, POW/MIA, Killed/Died (Service-Connected), Dependents, Survivors

Benefit Categories +

Beneficiary +

Benefit Subcategories +

State +

Selected Filter(s):

Tax x

Income Tax x

CLEAR ALL

Results...

68 records found

Combat Pay Income Tax Exemption

Alabama | Income Tax

No income tax

State National Guard/Reserve, Active Duty

Military Retiree Income Tax Exemption

Alabama | Income Tax

No income tax

Retired

Military Retirement State Income Tax Exemption

Arizona | Income Tax

Up to \$2,500 per year are exempt

Retired

Results from the Finder

5

Methodology

To identify every discrete benefit offered to veterans in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, research information was collected from state government websites or those websites that played a role in managing or overseeing state-administered or -supported programs.

DVAs

Starting point for resources; benefits specific to other agencies are often listed on those websites: DMV, DP&R, DoL, DoE

Aggregation sites: Military.com, the American Legion

Coding 1,814 benefits by category

CAVEATS

Federal benefits not included;

Benefits available to qualifying individuals as well as veterans (SNAP, CHIP) not included;

Not a definitive list;

Benefits can change any time

CODING THE BENEFITS

12 Benefit Categories: business, death, education, financial, government and state services, health, housing, legal advocacy and assistance, memorial, recreation, tax, employment

71 subcategories

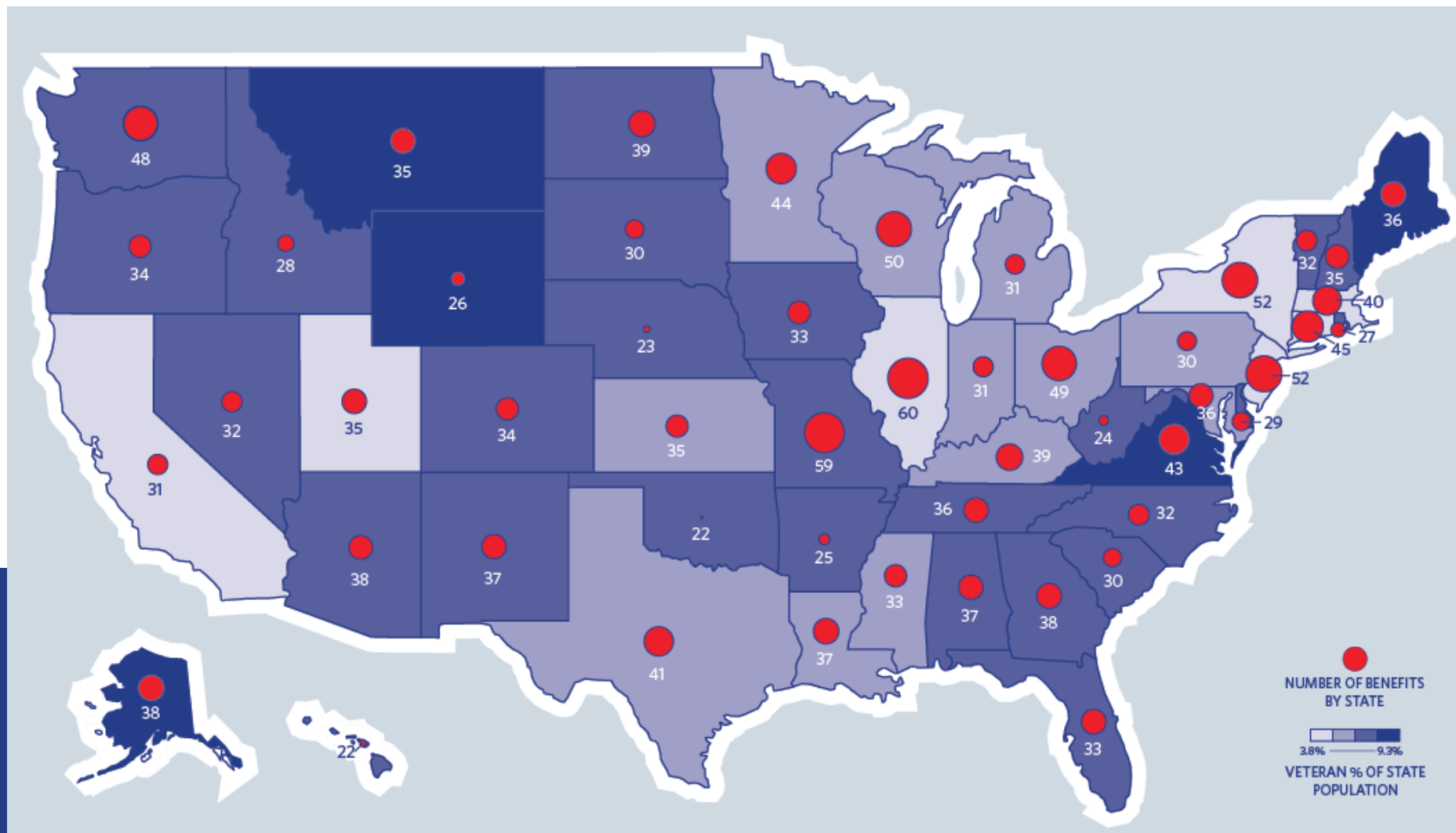
22 Beneficiaries

50 States and Washington, D.C.

Territories being added next month



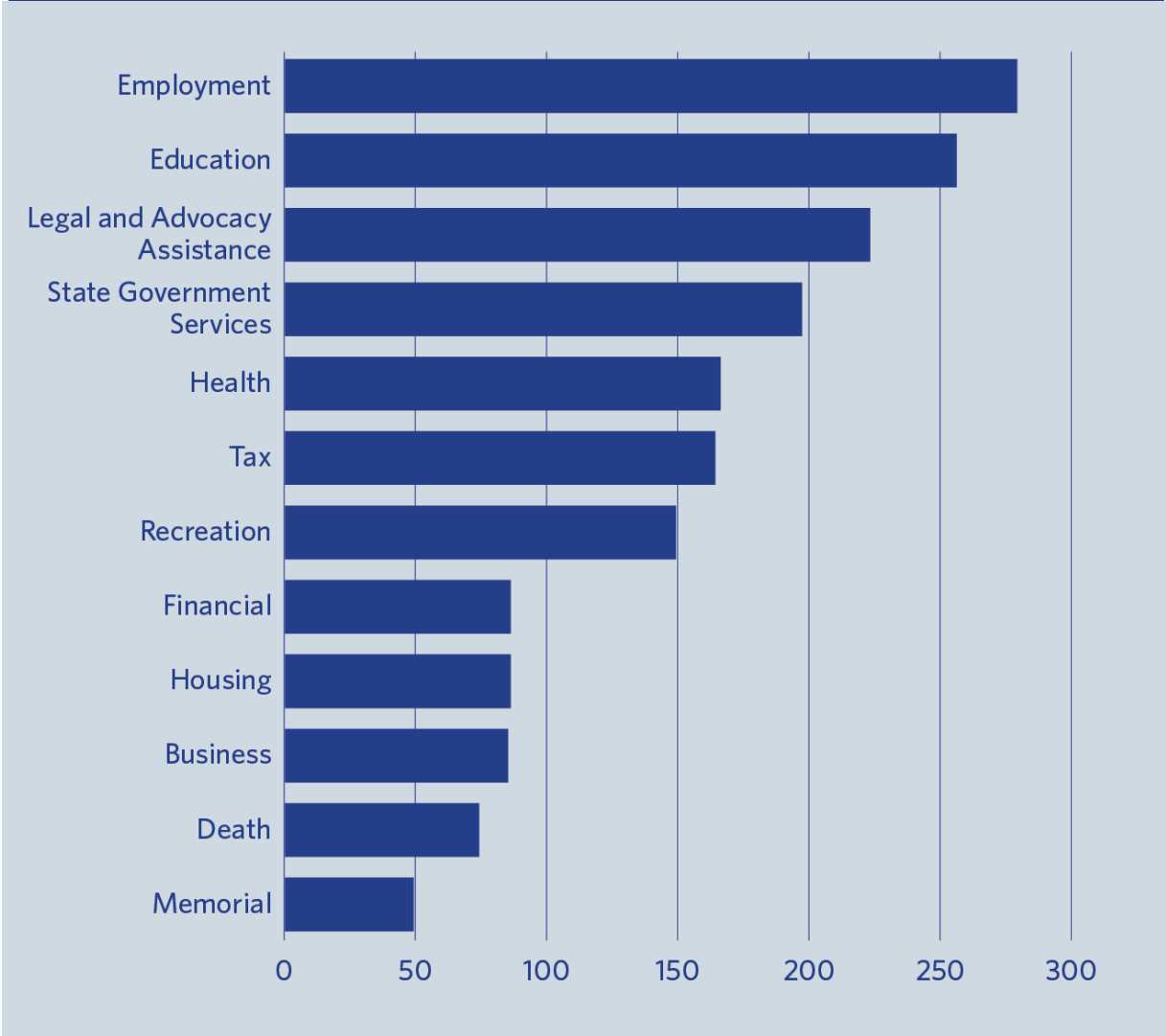
Findings

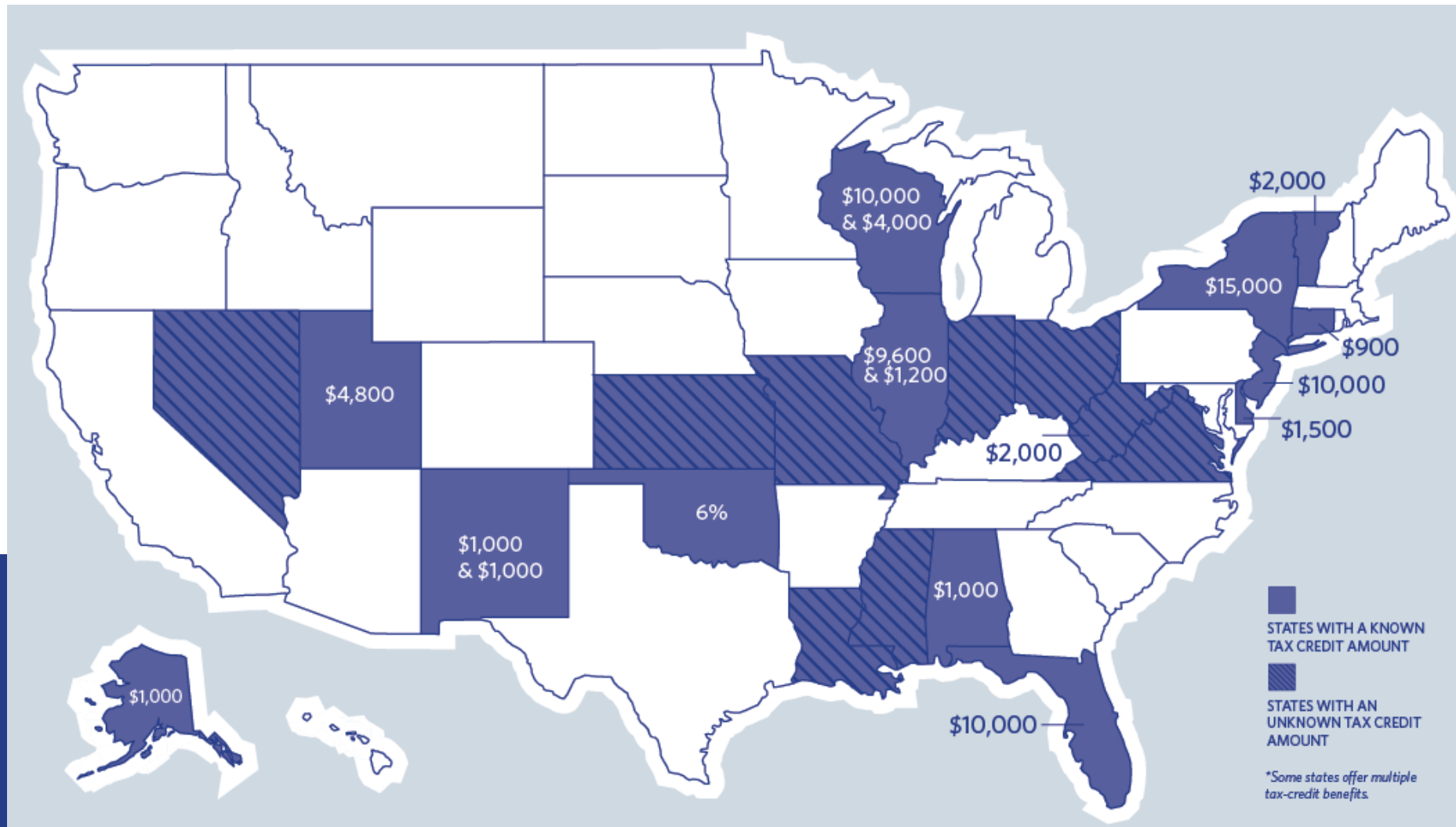


Number of Benefits by State

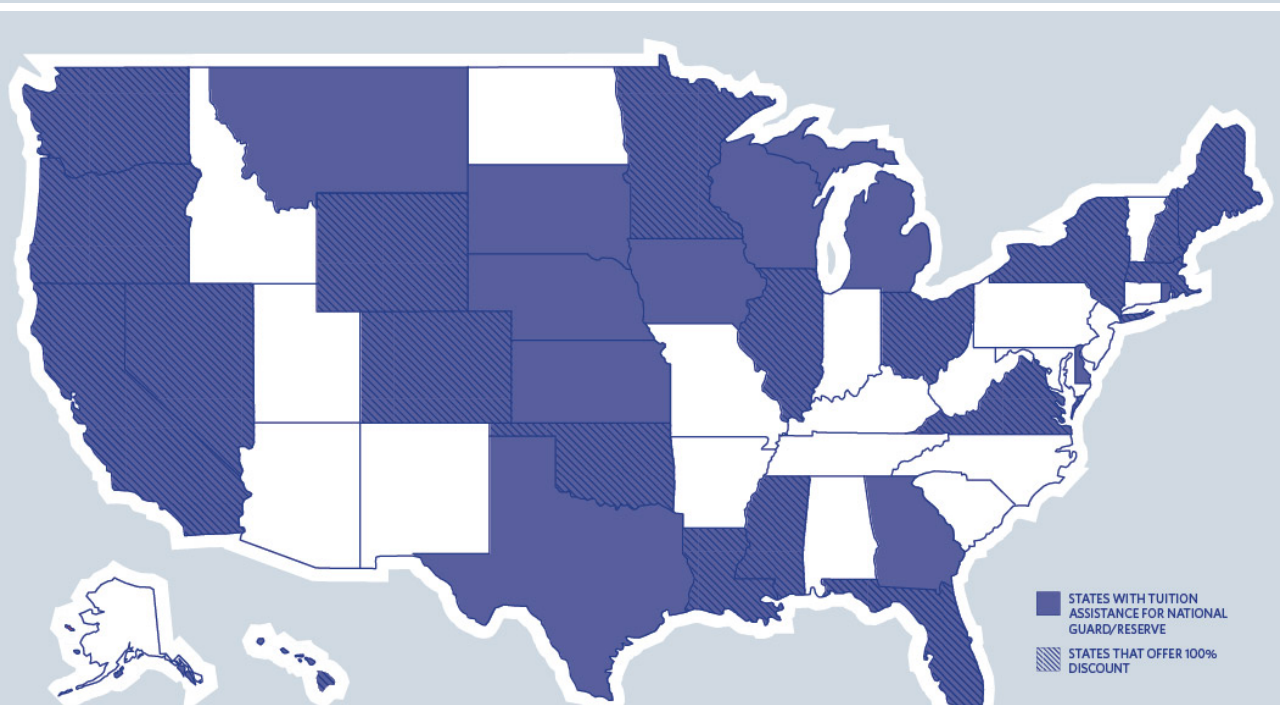
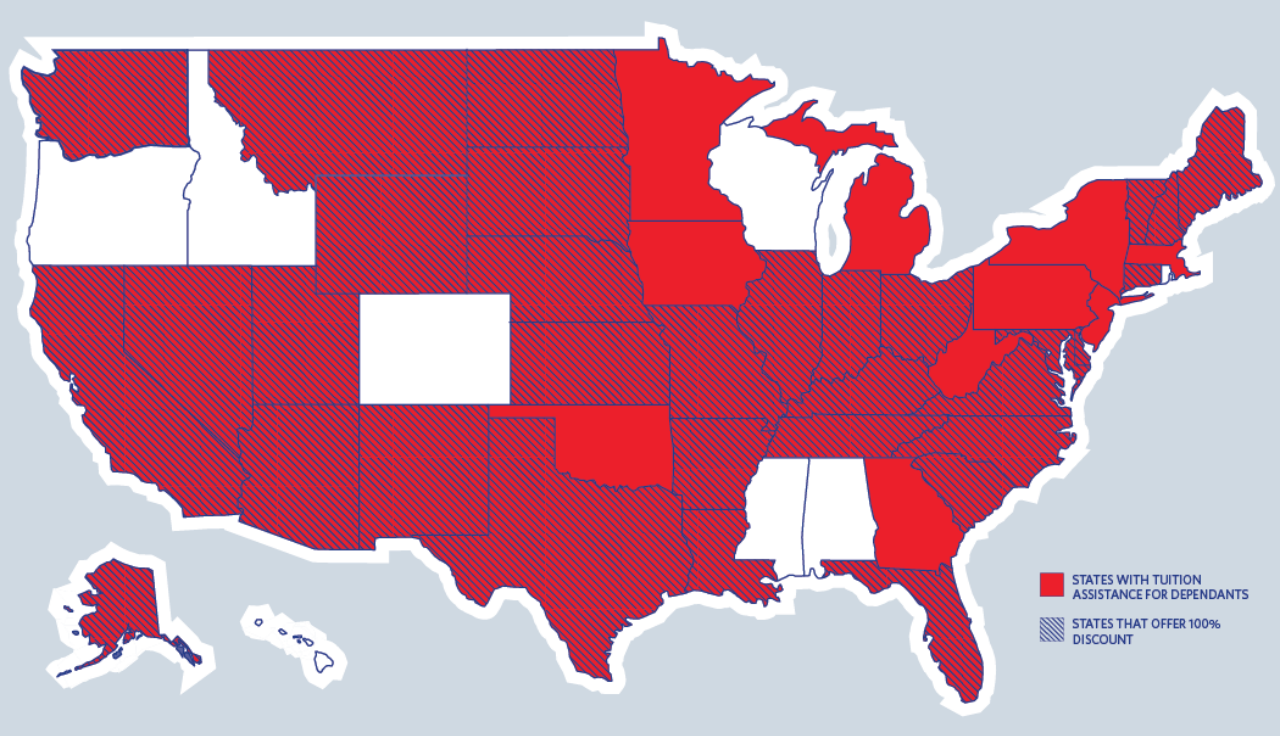
Number of Benefits by Category

At least one benefit within each category existed across all the states: Employment, education, and state services were present across all 51 when including Washington, D.C.; some states offer a prevalence of benefits in a certain category.





Tax-Credit Benefits to Private Sector Businesses that Hire Veterans



Tuition Assistance

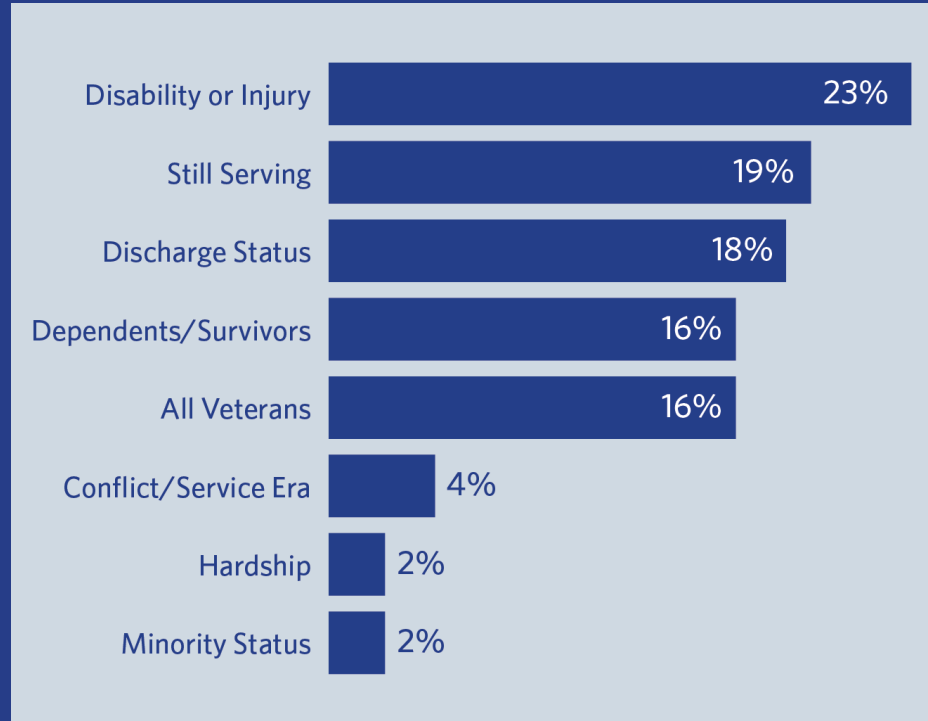
The most common education subcategory is Scholarship and Tuition Assistance, with 109 distinct benefits distributed across 48 states. There was significant frequency of this subcategory, which accounted for 43 percent of education benefits. However, there is a great deal of variation within this subcategory

At least 42 states provide tuition assistance to some veteran dependents or survivors. These benefits vary in terms of eligibility criteria, as shown in Figure 4, but also tend to be generous.

Recreation Benefits Offered by State

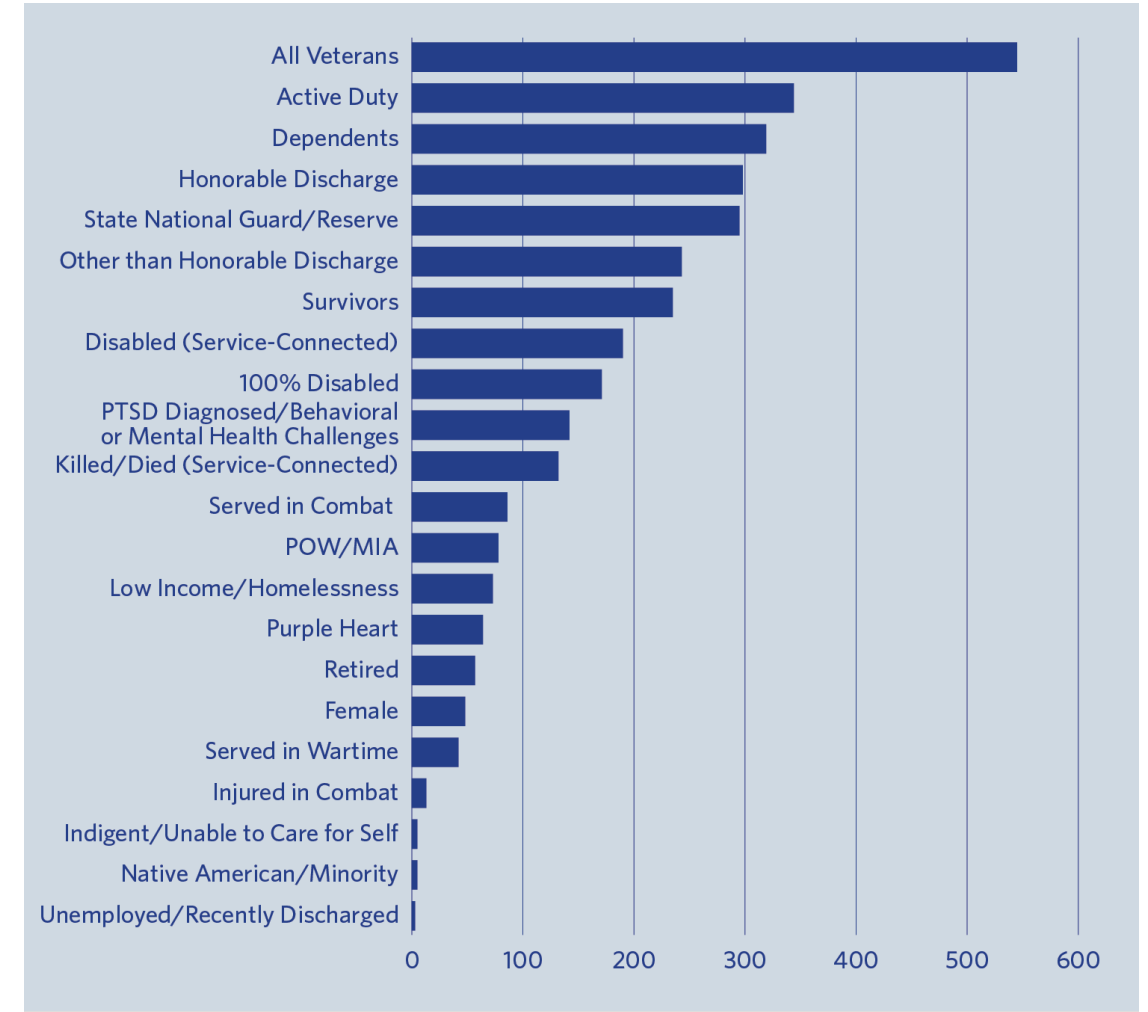
Hunting and fishing licenses was the fourth most common benefit subcategory (86) while other recreation benefits are widely offered.





Beneficiaries

Not all benefits are offered to all types of veterans. Of the 1,814 benefits, fewer than 1 in 3 (545) appear to be available to all veterans.





Recommendations

Recommendations

FOR RESEARCHERS

- How widely used are state-level benefits for veterans?
 - Does usage vary by state, region, benefit category, beneficiary type, accessibility of information, or other variables?
 - How do state benefit usage rates compare to national benefit usage rates?
- What are the outcomes related to these benefits?
- Do available benefits map to the actual needs of veterans and their demographics within states?
- What is the cost of providing these benefits? What is the estimated ROI?

FOR DVAS

- Improve websites and other digital content to enhance the user experience by making them more comprehensive, clear, and easy to navigate:
 - Website links should remain relative static once established;
 - Benefits should be easily identified and searchable with relevant keywords.
- Make it easier to apply for benefits with seamless navigation;
- Improve outreach about availability of benefits:
 - Provide information about state benefits to military installations and request it be available to service members, military families, and those transitioning off active duty.

Recommendations (continued)

FOR STATE LEGISLATORS / GOVERNORS

- Appoint a veterans' task force, commission, or working group to review current benefits and propose updates. This review should consider the total suite of benefits being offered and assess:
 - How they compare to federal benefits.
 - How well they are positioned to meet the needs of the veteran population as it is projected to change.
 - How the benefits align with goals for meeting the needs of constituents.
- Mandate that such a review be undertaken on a regularly scheduled periodic basis.
- Use the power of the purse to drive change by appropriating resources to support research and implementation of DVA recommendations.
 - Consider additional sources of funding (ex: Texas Lottery benefits Texas Veterans Commission Fund).

FOR VETERAN SUPPORTERS

- Learn about the vast array of state benefits nationally and locally.
- Inform veterans about those that would benefit them and their families locally and assist with the application process if needed.
- Advise veterans to research and consider state benefits if they are planning to move.
- Urge state legislatures and governors to expand benefits that would be useful to those you serve.
- Encourage state DVAs and state workforce agencies to enhance accessibility of benefits.

Recommendations (continued)

FOR VETERANS

- Research which states provide the type of benefit that would be most helpful for you, given your beneficiary status and type of needs.
 - Disabled veterans with children concerned about how to support themselves and their families financially on a fixed income, for example, may put primacy on states with property tax exemptions and education benefits for dependents.
 - Carefully research benefits and confirm current eligibility requirements as these can change.
- Consider whether any of these benefits are significant enough to factor into your decisions.
 - If possible, consult with a financial advisor for expert advice.
 - Bear in mind that intangible benefits such as proximity to supportive relatives may also be important as your circumstances change.
 - When assessing variations in state-level benefits, remember to balance these against the cost of living, which may outweigh those benefits.
- Use the benefits state legislators have chosen to make available in your state to enhance your quality of life.
- Share knowledge about state-level benefits with those in your personal network.
 - Many veterans are completely unaware that these benefits exist, and information from personal contacts is highly trusted in military and veteran communities.



THANK YOU

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