
Air Force News Service (Washington, DC); Tuesday, January 15, 2013

HEADLINE: DOD official lauds veterans commercial license effort

Byline: Cheryl Pellerin

WASHINGTON (AFNS) -- Maryland has joined 33 other states in agreeing to waive the skills test for veterans and service members who have military training that would entitle them to a commercial driver's license, a senior Defense Department official said today.

Frank C. DiGiovanni, director of training, readiness and strategy in the office of the deputy assistant secretary of defense for readiness, joined Maryland Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown and officials from the Maryland Department of Transportation, veterans' organizations, and federal, state and local offices to announce two new services available to veterans through the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration, or MVA.

"This initiative is extremely important for the Department of Defense," DiGiovanni said. "It sets a great benchmark and will greatly assist our veterans as they plan for their future."

Along with the departments of Labor, Transportation and Veterans Affairs, DOD is working with national credentialing agencies, states and other stakeholders to address the complex challenges of certification and licensure for veterans.

DOD's Credentialing and Licensing Task Force was established to help service members in high-demand fields gain industry-recognized, nationally portable credentials to increase their competitiveness in the private sector after separation from the military.

Most states require drivers to demonstrate their skills before issuing a commercial driver's license. Now, 34 states will waive the skills test, but not the written test, for eligible veterans and service members. More states are considering such a waiver, according to a DOD spokeswoman.

A provision of the commercial learner's permit rule gives state driver licensing agencies the authority to substitute two years of commercial motor vehicle safe-driving experience in the military equivalents of commercial motor vehicles for the skills-test portion of the commercial driver license.

The rule applies to active duty, Reserve, Guard and Coast Guard members, and veterans within 90 days of separation.

Starting this month, Maryland's MVA is offering a veteran indicator on driver's licenses and identification cards to help veterans identify themselves to access services and resources and is implementing a streamlined process for veterans to obtain commercial driver's licenses as allowed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

DiGiovanni said that in fiscal 2011, more than 63,000 service members had occupations whose skills involved driving trucks -- 28,247 on active duty and 35,080 in the Guard or Reserve.

"There are also tens of thousands of service members who are truck drivers as an additional duty," DiGiovanni said, "so this particular authorization is extremely important to the employability" of service members as they depart from the service."

Military truck drivers bring outstanding experience and training to the commercial trucking sector, he added.

"I had an opportunity to speak to a veterans group, and I asked them what [they] learned during their service to the military that would be useful in the private sector," DiGiovanni recalled.

The first thing they cite is leadership, he added, and then working as a team and making decisions in a very complex environment.

"So I think it's really important what these veterans bring to the table, particularly the commercial trucking sector," he said.

DiGiovanni closed his remarks by challenging the state of Maryland and veterans service organizations to continue to find ways to support our veterans.

Aves Thompson | Executive Director | Alaska Trucking Association | www.aktrucks.org

Office 907 276-1149 | Mobile 907 240-0114 | Fax 907 274-1946