



Veterans Group

For more information, go to www.nalc.org/member-benefits/military-veterans

Retirement: More from OPM's Vet Guide

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) administers entitlement to veterans' preference as well as other statutory requirements relating to employment of veterans. OPM publishes the *Veterans Employment Initiative Vet Guide*. The guide offers detailed information about a host of rights available to veterans and their families, including prior to, during and after employment with the federal government.

The Veterans Group column in the May issue of *The Postal Record* highlighted some information in OPM's *Vet Guide* that may be useful to veterans. This column expands on that previous column by highlighting additional information.

Service credit for leave accrual rate

Annual leave is an important benefit for working letter carriers. It can also be important to retiring letter carriers, because saved annual leave is paid out in a lump sum at the pay rate on the date of retirement. Plus, the days of saved annual leave are projected into the future, and if any holidays are scheduled within the projected time, the lump-sum payment will include pay for the holidays in addition to the annual leave.

Military service can increase the amount of annual leave that a letter carrier earns. Full-time career letter carriers earn four, six or eight hours of annual leave for each full bi-weekly pay period. A carrier's leave accrual category (four, six or eight) is based on years of creditable service. Letter carriers with less than three years of service earn four hours of annual leave each pay period, adding up to 104 hours per leave year. Carriers with three to 15 years of service earn six hours of annual leave each pay period, adding up to 160 hours per leave year. Carriers with more than 15 years of service earn eight

hours of annual leave each pay period, adding up to 208 hours per leave year. See *ELM* 512.3.

Full credit for military service is given at the time of appointment to a career letter carrier position for the purpose of leave accrual. For example, a newly hired career letter carrier who has three years of prior military service begins immediately earning six hours of annual leave each pay period, instead of four. A newly hired career letter carrier who has, for another example, 14 years of prior military service also begins immediately earning six hours of annual leave each pay period, and would graduate to earning eight hours each pay period after one year of postal service because he or she would then reach the necessary 15 years of service.

No deposit for, or "buy back" of, military time is required for crediting military service for annual leave accrual. The only requirement is that the military service be performed under

honorable conditions. However, the credit is substantially limited for veterans receiving retired military pay. If a veteran is receiving military retirement pay, credit is available for leave accrual only for periods of actual service in a war or campaign (for which a campaign badge is authorized), or all active duty when retirement was based on disability incurred as a direct result of armed conflict or caused by an instrumentality of war and incurred in the line of duty during a period of war. (Note that receipt of a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability rating does not in any way limit credit of military time for the purpose of the Postal Service's leave accrual rate.)

OPM's *Vet Guide* can be accessed online here: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/veterans-employment-initiative/vet-guide/>

If you do not have online access, call NALC Headquarters at 202-393-4695 to request a mailed copy.

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Veterans Employment Initiative

VET GUIDE

On June 26, 2013, the Supreme Court ruled that Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) is unconstitutional. As a result of the Supreme Court's decision, the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will now be able to extend certain benefits to Federal employees and annuitants who have legally married a spouse of the same sex, regardless of the employee's or annuitant's state of residency. OPM is currently in the process of updating and revising the website to reflect this change, and will be updating this information as soon as possible. Please check back in the coming weeks for updates.

Introduction

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) administers entitlement to **veterans' preference** in employment under title 5, United States Code, and oversees other statutory employment requirements in titles 5 and 38. (Title 38 also governs Veterans' entitlement to **benefits** administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).)

Both title 5 and title 38 use many of the same terms, but in different ways. For example, service during a "war" is used to determine entitlement to Veterans' preference and service credit under title 5. OPM has always interpreted this to mean a **war declared by Congress**.

But title 38 defines "period of war" to include many non-declared wars, including Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf. Such conflicts entitle a veteran to VA **benefits** under title 38, but not necessarily to **preference or service credit** under title 5. Thus it is critically important to use the correct definitions in determining eligibility for specific rights and benefits in employment.

For additional information, including the complete text of the laws and regulations on Veterans' rights, consult the references cited.

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