

**SENATE, No. 802**

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**221st LEGISLATURE**

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2024 SESSION

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator ANTHONY M. BUCCO**

**District 25 (Morris and Passaic)**

**SYNOPSIS**

Authorizes free admission to State parks and forests for certain veterans, military personnel, first responders, and police.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 AN ACT concerning admission to State parks and forests and  
2 amending P.L.1983, c.324.

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4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State  
5 of New Jersey:

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7 1. Section 12 of P.L.1983, c.324 (C.13:1L-12) is amended to  
8 read as follows:

9 12. a. The department shall not charge an admission fee for  
10 entrance into a State park or forest by any person who is:

11 (1) a resident of the State of 62 or more years of age or who is  
12 totally disabled [or who is] ;

13 (2) an active member of the New Jersey National Guard who has  
14 completed Initial Active Duty Training ;

15 (3) an active member of any branch or department of the Armed  
16 Forces of the United States, or reserves component thereof;

17 (4) a veteran; or

18 (5) a first responder who is a resident of New Jersey .

19 b. The department shall prescribe by regulation the types of  
20 evidence that may be used to qualify persons for the benefits of this  
21 **[subsection]** section.

22 **[b.]** c. The department shall not charge a disabled veteran a fee  
23 to obtain, replace, or renew a permit to operate a motorized vehicle  
24 on a State park beach.

25 d. Any immediate family member of a person who qualifies for  
26 free admission to a State park or forest pursuant to paragraph (2),  
27 (3), (4), or (5) of subsection a. of this section shall also be entitled  
28 to free admission, provided the person qualifying for free admission  
29 pursuant to paragraph (2), (3), (4), or (5) of subsection a. of this  
30 section is physically present with the immediate family member.

31 **[c.]** e. As used in this section:

32 “Disabled veteran” means any resident of the State who has been  
33 honorably discharged or released under honorable circumstances  
34 from active service in any branch of the Armed Forces of the United  
35 States and who has been declared by the United States Department  
36 of Veterans Affairs, or its successor, to have a service-connected  
37 disability of any degree.

38 “First responder” means a State, interstate, county, or municipal  
39 law enforcement officer, paid or volunteer firefighter, paid or  
40 volunteer member of a duly incorporated first aid, emergency,  
41 ambulance, or rescue squad association, or any other individual  
42 who, in the course of employment, is dispatched to the scene of a  
43 motor vehicle accident or other emergency situation for the purpose  
44 of providing medical care or other assistance.

**EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.**

**Matter underlined thus is new matter.**

1       “Immediate family member” means a spouse, child, step child,  
2 father, mother, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandmother,  
3 grandfather, or grandchild living in the same household with the  
4 person qualifying for free admission pursuant to paragraph (2), (3),  
5 (4), or (5) of subsection a. of this section.

6       "Initial Active Duty Training" means Basic Military Training,  
7 for members of the New Jersey Air National Guard, and Basic  
8 Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training, for members  
9 of the New Jersey Army National Guard.

10       “Veteran” means any resident of the State who has been  
11 honorably discharged or released under honorable circumstances  
12 from active military service in any of the Armed Forces of the  
13 United States, or reserves component thereof, or any honorably  
14 discharged member of the American Merchant Marine who served  
15 during World War II and is declared by the United States  
16 Department of Defense to be eligible for federal veterans' benefits  
17 and any officer, soldier, sailor, marine, airman, nurse or army field  
18 clerk, who has served in the active military or naval service of the  
19 United States and has or shall be discharged or released therefrom  
20 under conditions other than dishonorable.

21 (cf: P.L.2019, c.398, s.2)

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23       2. This act shall take effect immediately.

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#### STATEMENT

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28       This bill would expand upon current law to provide that the  
29 following persons also would be entitled to free admission to State  
30 parks and forests: (1) an active member of any branch or  
31 department of the Armed Forces of the United States, or reserves  
32 component thereof; (2) a veteran; (3) a first responder who is a  
33 resident of New Jersey; and (4) any immediate family member of a  
34 person who qualifies for free admission to a State park or forest.

35       Under the bill, a “first responder” is defined as a State, county,  
36 or municipal law enforcement officer, paid or volunteer firefighter,  
37 paid or volunteer member of a duly incorporated first aid,  
38 emergency, ambulance, or rescue squad association, or any other  
39 individual who, in the course of employment, is dispatched to the  
40 scene of a motor vehicle accident or other emergency situation for  
41 the purpose of providing medical care or other assistance. In  
42 addition, an “immediate family member” is defined as a spouse,  
43 child, step child, father, mother, mother-in-law, father-in-law,  
44 grandmother, grandfather, or grandchild living in the same  
45 household with the person qualifying for free admission, pursuant  
46 to paragraph (2), (3), (4), or (5) of subsection a. of the bill.

47       Current law already provides free admission to State residents  
48 who are active members of the New Jersey National Guard, totally

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- 1 disabled, or 62 or more years of age. This bill would expand that
- 2 eligibility to the categories of persons described above.