

WV-2013-LV¹

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Paid Military Leave for Public Employees in West Virginia

By CAPT Samuel F. Wright, JAGC, USN (Ret.)²

1.18: USERRA and Other Laws

2.0: Paid Leave

West Virginia Code, Section 15-1F-1 provides as follows concerning paid military leave for employees of the state and its political subdivisions:

(a) Any officer or employee of state, county or municipal government hired for permanent employment who is a member of the National Guard or armed forces reserve, is entitled to a military leave of absence from his or her respective office or employment without loss of pay, status or efficiency rating, on the days during which he or she is ordered, by properly designated authority, to be engaged in drills, inactive duty training, parades, funeral details, service schools or other duty, during business hours, field training, annual training or other full-time National Guard duty pursuant to Title 10

¹ I invite the reader's attention to www.roa.org/lawcenter. You will find approximately 1500 "Law Review" articles about the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and other laws that are especially pertinent to those who serve our country, along with a detailed Subject Index, to facilitate finding articles about very specific topics. The Reserve Officers Association (ROA) initiated this column in 1997. I am the author of about 1300 of the articles. In our "state laws" section, we have an article for each state about the state laws that grant paid military leave and other benefits, over and above USERRA, to employees of the state and (often) to employees of the state's political subdivisions.

² BA 1973 Northwestern University, JD (law degree) 1976 University of Houston, LLM (advanced law degree) 1980 Georgetown University. I served in the Navy and Navy Reserve as a Judge Advocate General's Corps officer and retired in 2007. I am a life member of ROA. I have dealt with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and the Veterans' Reemployment Rights Act (VRRRA—the 1940 version of the federal reemployment statute) for 35 years. I developed the interest and expertise in this law during the decade (1982-92) that I worked for the United States Department of Labor (DOL) as an attorney. Together with one other DOL attorney (Susan M. Webman), I largely drafted the proposed VRRRA rewrite that President George H.W. Bush presented to Congress, as his proposal, in February 1991. On 10/13/1994, President Bill Clinton signed into law USERRA, Public Law 103-353, 108 Stat. 3162. The version of USERRA that President Clinton signed in 1994 was 85% the same as the Webman-Wright draft. USERRA is codified in title 38 of the United States Code at sections 4301 through 4335 (38 U.S.C. 4301-35). I have also dealt with the VRRRA and USERRA as a judge advocate in the Navy and Navy Reserve, as an attorney for the Department of Defense (DOD) organization called Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), as an attorney for the United States Office of Special Counsel (OSC), as an attorney in private practice, and as the Director of the Service Members Law Center (SMLC), as a full-time employee of ROA, for six years (2009-15). Please see Law Review 15052 (June 2015), concerning the accomplishments of the SMLC. My paid employment with ROA ended 5/31/2015, but I have continued the work of the SMLC as a volunteer. You can reach me by e-mail at SWright@roa.org or by telephone at 800-809-9448, ext. 730. I will provide up to one hour of information without charge. If you need more than that, I will charge a very reasonable hourly rate. If you need a lawyer, I can suggest several well-qualified USERRA lawyers.

or Title 32 of the United States Code, or active service of the state, for a maximum period of thirty working days, not to exceed two hundred forty hours in any one calendar year.

(b) Any officer or employee of state, county or municipal government hired for permanent employment ordered or called to active duty for a mobilization or deployment under Title 10 of the United States Code or in support of a contingency operation as defined in 10 U.S.C. § 101(a)(13) by the properly designated federal authority is entitled to a military leave of absence from his or her respective office or employment without loss of pay, status or efficiency rating for a maximum period of thirty working days, not to exceed two hundred forty hours for a single call to active duty: Provided, That an officer or employee of state, county or municipal government called to active duty who has not used all or some portion of the thirty working days of military leave of absence granted by subsection (a) of this section is entitled to add the number of unused days from that calendar year to the thirty working days, not to exceed two hundred forty hours granted by this subsection, up to a maximum of sixty days for a single call to active duty: Provided, however, That none of the unused days of military leave of absence granted by subsection (a) of this section may be carried over and used in the next calendar year.

(c) The term “without loss of pay” means that the officer or employee shall continue to receive his or her normal salary or compensation, notwithstanding the fact that the officer or employee may have received other compensation from federal or state sources during the same period.³

Further Explanation⁴

The West Virginia Attorney General also released an opinion briefly explaining how this provision works:

Creation of two categories of reservists. —

The statute, as amended, creates two categories of benefits for military reservists; the first category gives non-active reservists thirty working days of paid leave for drills, parades, or other non-active duty during a calendar year, however, if called or ordered

³ W. VA. CODE ANN. § 15-1F-1 (LexisNexis 2022).

⁴ This section is written by First Lieutenant Tara Buckles. Tara, a life member of ROA, is a First Lieutenant in the Marine Corps. Tara holds a B.S. in Business Administration with a second major in Public Policy from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She graduated cum laude from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law in May 2022 and sat for the Texas bar exam. After passing the bar exam, she will go on active duty in the Marine Corps. Military title is used for identification only. The views expressed in this article are the views of the author, and not necessarily the views of the Marine Corps, the Department of the Navy, the Department of Defense, or of the U.S. Government.

to active duty by the President of the United States, the second category entitles such activated reservists to an additional twenty-four working days of leave with pay.⁵

Access the West Virginia Code on Your Own

We do our best to keep these state law articles up-to-date and provide the most relevant sections of the applicable statute for you to review. Nonetheless, we still recommend you consult the most recent version of the law to make sure nothing has changed from what we discussed in this article. You can find a public version of the entirety of the West Virginia Code for yourself online, for free, at <https://code.wvlegislature.gov/>. In order to access section 15-1F-1 discussed in this article, click the drop down menu to “Chapter 15 Public Safety” → “Article 1F Privileges and Prohibitions” → “§15-1F-1 Leave of absence for public officials and employees for drills, parades, active duty, etc.”

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This article is one of 2,300-plus “Law Review” articles available at www.roa.org/lawcenter. The Reserve Officers Association, now doing business as the Reserve Organization of America (ROA), initiated this column in 1997. New articles are added each month.

ROA is more than a century old—it was established on 10/1/1922 by a group of veterans of “The Great War,” as World War I was then known. One of those veterans was Captain Harry S. Truman. As President, in 1950, he signed our congressional charter. Under that charter, our mission is to advocate for the implementation of policies that provide for adequate national security. For almost a century, we have argued that the Reserve Components, including the National Guard, are a cost-effective way to meet our nation’s defense needs.

Through these articles, and by other means, including amicus curiae (“friend of the court”) briefs that we file in the Supreme Court and other courts, we educate service members, military spouses, attorneys, judges, employers, DOL investigators, ESGR volunteers, congressional and state legislative staffers, and others about the legal rights of service members and about how to exercise and enforce those rights. We provide information to service members, without regard to whether they are members of ROA, but please understand that ROA members, through their dues and contributions, pay the costs of providing this service and all the other great services that ROA provides.

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⁵ Op. Att’y Gen., July 16, 1991.

⁶ Congress recently established the United States Space Force as the 8th uniformed service.

National Guard, or the Reserve. If you are eligible for ROA membership, please join. You can join on-line at www.roa.org or call ROA at 800-809-9448.

If you are not eligible to join, please contribute financially, to help us keep up and expand this effort on behalf of those who serve. Please mail us a contribution to:

Reserve Organization of America
1 Constitution Ave. NE
Washington, DC 20002⁷

⁷ You can also contribute on-line at www.roa.org.