

**CHARLIE BAKER**  
GOVERNOR



**KARYN POLITO**  
LT. GOVERNOR

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CONTACT  
Elizabeth Guyton  
[elizabeth.guyton@state.ma.us](mailto:elizabeth.guyton@state.ma.us)



## **Governor Baker Signs Bills Supporting Veterans and First Responders Into Law**

*State park fees waived for Purple Heart recipients; new penalties for destruction of war memorials, "stolen valor"*

**BOSTON** – Today at the State House, joined by active duty members and veterans of the Armed Services, Secretary of Veterans' Services Francisco Ureña and members of the legislature, Governor Charlie Baker signed five pieces of legislation supporting members of the Armed Services, veterans, first responders and their families, including bills making "stolen valor" a crime punishable by imprisonment and/or fine and granting Purple Heart recipients free access to state parks.

"The brave men and women and their families who sacrifice so much for our freedom and safety at home and abroad deserve our support and gratitude," **said Governor Baker**. "I thank the legislature for taking these important steps to ensure our first responders, veterans and active duty military receive the utmost respect and dignity."

"These laws are yet another example of how Massachusetts continues to lead the nation when it comes to treatment of those who have served and truly sacrificed," **said Veterans' Secretary Ureña**. "It is important that the integrity of our benefits, programs and services remains accountable for all veterans and their families. The honorable service of our veterans should never be exploited by individuals falsifying service for personal gain. No veteran should have their valor stolen."

**The five bills signed into law by Governor Baker are:**

- **An Act relative to the false representation of military status ([H.B. 1641](#))**, making it a crime, punishable by imprisonment for not more than 1 year, a fine of \$1,000 or both, for any person to fraudulently represent themselves as an active member or veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces, including through the unauthorized use of military gear, regalia or honors with the intent to obtain money, property or any other tangible benefit.
- **An Act providing free access to certain parks and recreation areas to Purple Heart recipients ([H.B. 3243](#))**, adding recipients of Purple Hearts to the list of persons exempt from admission fees at state recreation areas and parks, under section 2D of chapter 132A of the General Laws.
- **An Act providing further penalties for intentional loss or damage to a gravestone or other grave marker ([H.B. 1600](#))**, requiring any person convicted of willfully damaging a war memorial, gravestone, or veteran's gravemarker to pay restitution to property owners in addition to existing provisions imposing imprisonment and fines.
- **An Act relative to the removal of commemorative flag holders from the graves of veterans and certain police and fire personnel ([H.B. 3173](#))**, adding the American Flag, commemorative flag holders, and other emblems memorializing service by veterans, police officers, and firefighters to the list of objects protected from theft or destruction under MGL Chapter 272 Section 73.
- **An act relative to grave markers to commemorate the grave of a veteran, police officer or firefighter ([H.B. 1306](#))**, making it a crime to buy or sell stolen grave markers, headstones and monuments honoring veterans, police officers and firefighters.

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