



Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

October 17, 2019

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Driver & Vehicle Services
1101 S. Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17103

Dear PennDOT:

We have been contacted by one of our members, a Pennsylvania resident who wants to have the “veteran” designation added to his driver’s license. He is retired from the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS), and under federal law (42 U.S. Code § 213) he and other persons who have served in the USPHS are veterans. Here’s what the statute says:

“(d) Active service deemed active military service with respect to laws administered by Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Active service of commissioned officers of the [US Public Health] Service shall be deemed to be active military service in the Armed Forces of the United States for the purposes of all laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs”

The US Department of Veterans Affairs recognizes USPHS officers as veterans, according them all the rights and privileges of federal veterans, including the right to be buried in a VA cemetery. Retired USPHS officers are entitled to military retired pay and all military benefits.

Our member cannot produce a DD-214 because officers in the USPHS are not issued that form, which originates within the Defense Department. He has his own discharge paper that indicates his service. We are confident that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania would not knowingly discriminate against anyone who has served our country in one of the seven federal uniformed services.

For your information, we ran into this same situation with the State of North Carolina, and when we presented the case to them, they immediately acceded, and USPHS officers in NC can now get the “veteran” designation on their driver’s licenses. I am confident that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania will do no less. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Col. James T. Currie, USA (ret.)
Executive Director