

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

I introduced H.555 because how we structure everyday systems, like parking, says a great deal about who we accommodate and whose service we meaningfully recognize.

Disabled veterans live with the lasting impacts of their service long after they take off the uniform. These impacts are not always visible. They can include chronic pain, respiratory illness, hearing loss, traumatic brain injury, PTSD, or mobility limitations that fluctuate from day to day. These service-connected disabilities affect how veterans move through the world and how easily they can access basic services, medical care, employment, and civic life.

Parking may seem small, but for disabled veterans, proximity and predictability matter. Paying for a parking meter repeatedly to attend medical appointments, access government buildings, or simply complete daily tasks is an access issue. And for veterans living on fixed incomes or disability compensation, the cumulative cost and stress adds up quickly.

Under current law, Vermont allows individuals who possess a state-issued disabled parking placard or disabled license plate to park in metered spaces without charge. However, not all disabled veterans are captured by that framework.

Many veterans have a VA-determined, service-connected disability but: do not meet the medical criteria for a traditional disabled placard, have non-visible disabilities that still significantly impact daily functioning, have not applied for a placard due to stigma, lack of information, or a belief that others “need it more”, or do not identify as “disabled” in the way civilian systems often define it.

As a result, a disabled veteran may be legally recognized by the federal government as disabled due to their service but still be required to pay at every parking meter in Vermont because they do not possess a state-issued disabled placard or plate.

H.555 recognizes disabled veterans as a distinct group, whose disabilities are directly tied to their service, and ensures they are not excluded simply because their disability does not fit neatly into the existing civilian parking framework.

This bill does not diminish or replace Vermont’s current disabled parking system. Instead, it creates a veteran-specific pathway to the same practical accommodation: parking in metered spaces without charge.

H.555 can be implemented using existing systems, without creating unnecessary confusion for municipalities or enforcement officers.

Possible approaches include:

- Recognizing Disabled Veteran license plates as sufficient proof for meter exemption

- Allowing veterans with a qualifying VA disability determination to obtain a simple, state-recognized permit
- Or using a hybrid approach, where a disabled placard, disabled veteran plate, or veteran-specific permit would all qualify

In each case, the guiding principle is the same: eligibility is verified once through an established authority, and enforcement relies on visible credentials, just as it already does for disabled parking today.

H.555 aligns Vermont with policies already in place in many other states, it has minimal fiscal impact, and it delivers a tangible benefit to disabled veterans by making our communities more accessible and more respectful of their service.

For these reasons, I believe H.555 is both necessary and right, and I respectfully ask for the committee's consideration.

Thank you,

Rep. Mary-Katherine Stone

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