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**Lt. Governor Gilchrist Announces Michigan Veterans to Receive Free Lifetime State Park Access Under New Proposal**

*Michigan would be the third state in the country to offer benefit to veterans, service members*

**LANSING, Mich.**—Today, Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist celebrated Veterans Day with a new proposal that will give Michigan veterans free lifetime access to a state park.

“Michigan’s veterans are the best of us, and we can never do enough to live up to the sacrifices they have made,” said **Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II**. “In next year’s budget proposal, we plan to give every one of Michigan’s 530,000 veterans free lifetime access to a state park. Our state parks are full of incredible natural resources and offer mental and physical benefits to visitors, which is why Governor Whitmer and I have worked hard to help more Michiganders get outdoors and explore all our state has to offer. We are proud of this step forward to better serve veterans and we will continue making Michigan the best place to be a veteran.”

The partnership between the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and the Department of Natural Resources will make Michigan the third state in the country to offer this benefit, after Oklahoma and Maine. The program will also apply to current active-duty service members. It builds on the work the Whitmer Administration has done to help more Michiganders from every community get outdoors and enjoy Michigan’s stunning natural resources, including Nature Awaits, which gives every 4<sup>th</sup> grader a free field trip to a state park or recreation area. The new proposal will be included in next year’s budget recommendation.

“In the Michigan National Guard, we continue to work to improve the overall quality of life for those that choose to serve and the families that make it all possible,” said **U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Paul D. Rogers, adjutant general and director of the Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs**. “With free lifetime access to a state park for military members and veterans, Michigan continues to strengthen its national profile as a great place for the military, veterans, and their families to live, work, and retire.”

**Investing in Michigan’s Military Families**

Governor Whitmer has made significant investments to grow economic opportunity, access to health care, and more for Michigan’s veterans, service members, and their families.

- Signed legislation lowering costs for families of disabled veterans by eliminating red tape and ensuring spouses can maintain property tax exemptions.

- Expanded the National Guard tuition assistance program to cover spouses and dependents, lowering the cost of higher education for military families.
- Removed barriers for veterans to get commercial driver's licenses and signed a bill to help service members, veterans, and their dependents enter a licensed profession.
- Expanded veterans preference program to benefit veterans and service members looking to join state government.
- Reinvigorated the Michigan Veteran Friendly Schools program to highlight educational institutions that support military-connected students.
- Launched the statewide outreach and advertising campaign "I Served. I Am a Veteran," to engage veterans, collect their stories, and connect them to benefits.

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