

COMMISSARY PRIVILEGES

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EXPANDING ACCESS TO COMMISSARIES, MILITARY EXCHANGES AND RECREATION FACILITIES

The Department of Defense is expanding commissary, military exchange, and morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) retail privileges on U.S. military installations as specified in the *Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018*, included in the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019.

Starting January 1, 2020, access will expand to include all veterans with service-connected disabilities, veterans who are Purple Heart recipients, veterans who are former prisoners of war, and individuals approved and designated as the primary family caregivers of eligible veterans under the *Department of Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers*. While this expansion will extend eligibility to over 4.1 million new patrons, the Department expects little to no impact on current patrons in most locations. There may be some impact in areas with a high cost of living, but the Department is pre-paring to accommodate all new patrons.

"These new privileges recognize the service and sacrifice of these veterans and those that care for them," A.T. Johnston, deputy assistant secretary of defense for Military Community and Family Policy, said. "If you or some-one you know might be eligible for these privileges, share the message," Johnston said. "Please help us ensure these veterans and caregivers receive the privileges they've been granted."

New patrons eligible solely under this authority should be aware that the law requires the Defense Department charge them a small user fee to offset the increased expense incurred by the Department of the Treasury for processing commercial credit or debit cards used for purchases at commissary stores.

The Department of Defense is finalizing the details for these new privileges with the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security and the Treasury. Information will be announced soon regarding installation access and the authentication process for these privileges.

The following information is from the official factsheet on the program:

The Department of Defense is proud to expand commissary, exchange and morale, welfare and recreation retail eligibility to:

- Purple Heart recipients
- Former prisoners of war
- All veterans with service-connected disabilities
- Individuals approved and designated as the primary family caregivers of eligible veterans under the *Department of Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers*