

TEN-YEAR SERVICE- CONNECTION PROTECTION



After ten years, the protected status is service connection, not the assigned percentage.

CLOCK STARTS
Service-connection effective date

PROTECTED
Service-connected status

NOT FROZEN
The evaluation percentage

RULE FILE

Service connection in force for ten or more years generally cannot be severed. The protection extends to disability and death benefits, but the regulation preserves two narrow exceptions.

RULE 01 | WHAT IS PROTECTED

THE TEN-YEAR RULE IN THREE PARTS

STATUS

Service connection remains

VA generally cannot remove the legal finding that the disability or death is service connected.

RATE

Percentage can change

A lawful reduction can still lower the evaluation if another regulation permits it.

DATE

Use the status effective date

Measure from the effective date of VA's service-connection finding to the effective date of the severance decision.

RULE 02 | EXCEPTIONS

TWO EXCEPTIONS MUST BE STATED

FRAUD

Original grant based on fraud

The ten-year protection does not preserve a grant established through fraud.

SERVICE

Requisite service or discharge

Military records may clearly show that the person lacked the required service or qualifying character of discharge.

NOT THIS

Ordinary disagreement

A later disagreement about medical evidence or severity is not itself one of the ten-year exceptions.

RULE 03 | EXAMPLE

SERVICE CONNECTION AND EVALUATION ARE SEPARATE

Service connection granted

The condition has remained service connected for more than ten years.

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Severity later improves

VA may consider a lower percentage using the applicable reduction rules.

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Status can remain

The condition can remain service connected at a lower evaluation, including zero percent.

PROTECT THE RIGHT THING

Ten years is a shield against severance, not a promise that the percentage or combined payment will never change.

