

**Testimony by Chris Grohs in favor of Raised Bill 58-68, AAC Recruiting in High Schools
March 10, 2008**

Members of the committee, my name is Christopher Grohs. I served for four years as a medic in an infantry battalion of the Eighty Second Airborne Division. I am a veteran of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. I am here in support of the bill introduced by Representative Fleishman.

I was recruited out of high school, beginning when I approached the Torrington area Army recruiter at sixteen years old. I ended up joining the army over a year later in January of 2001. I cannot say that my recruiters were entirely dishonest with me. I did not allow them enough leeway to be so, I did thorough research and when it came time to sign my contract, I actually read the entire document and made sure that the two schools I desired to attend, medic school and airborne school were both in my contract. I had wanted to leave for the army in the summer after I graduated high school. I did not turn eighteen until the following September. When I told my recruiter Sargent Williams this, he agreed to set up a meeting with my parents to attempt to convince them to sign me away. My mother abhorred the military at the time, but was finally convinced that if this was the path I wanted to take than she would sign for me. In the course of this conversation Sargent Williams said to my mother; "Mrs. Grohs, we won't send your son into harms way." My father, a Vietnam veteran immediately protested that Sargent Williams did not know what he was talking about. My father refused to sign for me. His justification in not signing was that he could not bear the burden of having signed if I was to be killed or maimed in the course of my service. I would have to wait until I turned eighteen.

Most people who are recruited do not have the advantages of having access to someone who has been through the experience of having served in the military. This puts them at a serious disadvantage when dealing with recruiters. As the only person they have who can tell them about what they will be doing in the service is the person who is motivated entirely by getting people to join the military. I do not wish to imply that recruiters are bad people, or even that all of them mislead people, but the institution is set up simply to get people to sign up. The pressures put on the men and women who serve as recruiters are great, with the current conflicts, less people are willing to join the military because of the risk it entails.

Over the past eight years I have heard alot about people's experience with military recruiters. Nearly everyone I have talked to about the subject spoke of how their recruiters had misled them. There are so many examples of dishonesty by recruiters that I have witnessed that I do not have time here today to discuss all of them. A friend of mine has served in the Connecticut Army National Guard for the past six years, she out processes less than a month from now. She was recruited and joined the guard at seventeen years old. Because she was slightly overweight, the recruiter urged her to exercise to the point of exhaustion while wearing garbage bags over her clothing. She told me several stories of soldiers from her unit who had had a negative recruitment experience. There was even a soldier who was obviously autistic. The recruiter would have known this simply by talking to the person, yet they still recruited them into the National Guard.

I particularly support section six of the bill. Recruiters should not have access to information about an individual, without that individuals foreknowledge and approval. A friend of mine recently told me that he started receiving calls from recruiters after he signed up for classes at Manchester Community College. The recruiters learned a great deal from the college about my friend, including what classes he was taking and what previous degrees he had, they even shared that he was an eagle scout, all without my friends approval. As a resident of Connecticut I find this extremely disturbing, and urge you to recommend this bill for approval.

Military recruiters