



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
MILITARY DEPARTMENT
360 BROAD STREET
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06105-3706



February 19, 2009

Written testimony to the Select Committee on Veterans Affairs in support of House Bill #6394
AN ACT CONCERNING THE MILITARY FAMILY RELIEF FUND

I am Russell J Bonaccorso Jr, the program manager for the Military Family Relief Fund and representing the Connecticut Military Department and the Adjutant General, Major General Thaddeus Martin.

The Military Family Relief Fund was established in 2005 by Public Act 05-3 in the June special session of the Connecticut General Assembly of that year. The fund was established to assist military families in Connecticut who are experiencing a financial hardship related to their military service.

As passed in 2005, the current eligibility requirements are that the family member must:

- a. reside in Connecticut
- b. be an immediate family member of a service member
- c. have a quantifiable financial hardship related to the deployment of the service member

and

d. the service member must currently be serving on federal active duty, known as Title 10 status.

The proposed change would eliminate the fourth requirement that I stated, opening the fund to families experiencing a financial hardship that was caused by the military service of the loved one, but is no longer serving on Title 10 active duty. The fund will now be available to families of service members who have been injured on active duty, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or any other circumstance that has put an additional financial burden on the family.

The proposed change would also bring the program into alignment with the Department of Defense's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, which was enacted as part of the 2008 Defense Authorization Act. The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program was designed to assist the growing number of veterans who have been having difficulty readjusting to life after serving in combat zones. The Military Family Relief Fund is not required to be a part of the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, but the proposed change would ensure that family members are afforded the availability of the monies in the Military Family Relief Fund to assist them while their service member is meeting the challenges of reintegrating to civilian life.

Understanding that these are difficult financial times for the State of Connecticut, it is important to assess the impact programmatic changes would affect. The Military Family Relief Fund was initially sourced with \$500,000.00 by Public Act 05-3. Since then, the taxpayers of Connecticut have been contributing to the fund by donating part or all of their state income tax refund on line F in the **Contributions to Designated Charities** section of the various state 1040 forms.

The following is a breakdown of the past three fiscal years since the inception of the fund:

Fiscal Year	Contributions	Grants	Difference
2006	\$47,223.06	\$33,877.86	\$13,345.20
2007	\$69,245.90	\$50,812.97	\$18,432.93
2008	\$77,347.03	\$11,950.38	\$65,396.65
TOTAL	\$193,815.99	\$96,641.21	\$97,174.78

As you can see, we have had twice as much in contributions as we have had in grants approved. Combined with the initial funding of \$500,000.00, the balance in the Military Family Relief Fund was \$597,174.78 at the beginning of the current fiscal year. It is important to note that the grants have a correlation with the number of National Guard units deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism with 2007 being the high water mark and 2008 being the low point since the start of the war. Current deployment projects show 2010 to be almost as busy as 2007 for the National Guard.

Pending your questions, this concludes my testimony.

Sincerely,



Russell J Bonaccorso Jr
Military and Family Assistance Programs
(860) 524-4910
(860) 524-4904 (fax)
russell.j.bonaccorso@us.army.mil