



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

MILITARY DEPARTMENT
THE WILLIAM A. O'NEILL ARMORY
360 BROAD STREET
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06105-3795

ora
February 19, 2008 ⁹

Honorable Andrew M. Maynard
Honorable Ted C. Graziani
Chairpersons
Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Room 509A, Capitol
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: Senate Bill 860, "An Act Concerning False Representation of Military Status"
Senate Bill 861, "An Act Concerning Retirement from Military Service"
House Bill 6410, "An Act Concerning the Use of Hand-held Mobile Telephones by
Members of the Armed Forces while Operating a Motor Vehicle"
House Bill 6409, "An Act Concerning the Military Family Relief Fund" (Governor's Bill)

The Connecticut Military Department (CTMD) supports the passage of these four bills. CTMD requested the Select Committed on Veterans Affairs raise these bills as each facilitates equitable and efficient military operations. The bills, once passed into law, would have nominal fiscal impact but would correct weaknesses in the manner in which CTMD current conducts certain operations. I ask for your favorable consideration and for the passage of these bills.

Senate Bill 860 seeks to correct a technical deficiency in our state "Stolen Valor" statute, a law that criminalizes the unauthorized wear of and claim to military medals and decorations. The bill clarifies that the unauthorized wear or claim to military rank is also a wrongful act. Unfortunately, we have had instances where members of our community pin on medals and rank to which they are not entitled. To members of the armed forces, veterans and patriotic citizens, this behavior is highly offensive, as we know the dedication and sacrifice that is inherent in obtaining rank. This bill ensures that those who wear rank without authorization do so at their own peril and risk prosecution.

Senate Bill 861 clarifies the process an officer of the armed forces of the state must use to request promotion upon retirement. Additionally, it extends the retirement promotion consideration to our enlisted members. The fact that officers can get promoted upon retirement but enlisted members cannot is an inequity that has existed for decades. In the interests of equity, if officers can be promoted into retirement, so should enlisted members. With our lack of authorizations for senior officer and enlisted ranks, many qualified and well deserving members of our armed force cannot be promoted during their military careers. This provision of law would provide some relief to allow a state retirement promotion ("honorary"), without the benefit of receiving the associated compensation or benefits. Such recognition upon promotion for deserving members of the armed forces of Connecticut is merited.

House Bill 6410 corrects a deficiency in the restriction on use of a mobile phone by vehicle operators. CTMD has raised this issue to the General Assembly in the past. Our members are emergency response personnel, who, when conducting operations or training therefore, may have to utilize a hand-held communication device while operating a vehicle. Although we are largely assured that our members would not likely be prosecuted for this activity while conducting operations, we, as good Soldiers and Airmen, do not want to run afoul of the law – or expose ourselves to prosecution – when the law can be modified to protect us. This bill will allow our military operations to be conducted without risk of our members violating the law relative to the use of cell phones while operating a vehicle.

House Bill 6409 provides equitable relief to family members of qualified members the armed forces who, due to military service, encounter financial hardship by providing access to the Military Family Relief Fund (MFRF). Over the last three years of operation, the MFRF has provided a safety net to ensure our families do not suffer unduly as a result of the military service of a family member. The fund has provided nearly \$100,000 in grants and is primarily funded through charitable giving by our state income tax filers. The fund highlights Connecticut's dedication to and recognition of our service members and military families.

The CTMD is thankful for the SCVA's support of our legislative initiatives and welcomes the opportunity to answer any questions the committee may have concerning these bills. My legislative liaison Major Timothy Tomcho is available to discuss these bills with you. He may be contacted at (860) 548-3203 or via email at timothy.tomcho@us.army.mil.

Sincerely,


THADDEUS J. MARTIN
Major General
The Adjutant General