

3 March 2009

Testimony in regards to Raised Senate Bill 901

Senator Maynard, Representative Graziani, and members of the Select Committee on Veterans Affairs, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present testimony before you today. My name is Michael Perina. I am a noncommissioned officer in the Connecticut Air National Guard, an undergraduate student and Central Connecticut State University, a four-time graduate of Manchester Community College, and a graduate of the Community College of the Air Force. I hope to make the overemphasis on my educational background clear, momentarily.

Due to the high tempo deployment cycles our Guardsmen are facing, many personnel are not able to complete an entire, regular session, semester at their local Community College, State University, or at the University of Connecticut. Courses offered during the abbreviated winter intersession, summer sessions, or other accelerated schedules are fee based classes only and do not carry a charge for tuition that can be waived under current statutory law. Raised Senate Bill 901 is a generous step towards completing a package of benefits for serving members of the Connecticut Army and Air National Guard.

I am not an entirely uneducated person. I have the great honor to thank every educator in the Simsbury Public Schools for my K-12 primary learning. I may not have enjoyed it at the time but they never gave up on me. I also have the distinct pleasure of being a graduate of Manchester Community College with a certificate in Computer Aided Design and Drafting and Associate of Science degrees in General Studies, Technology Studies, and Manufacturing Engineering Technology, all with cum laude standing (3.4 GPA) or better. The tuition waiver provided to qualifying guardsmen is how I've funded the majority of my three years of education at Manchester. I have decided to continue my education at Central Connecticut State University, in the hopes of graduating with a Bachelors of Science in Manufacturing Engineering Technology. I am doing so in a part-time status in order to continue my internship with United Technologies, gaining valuable industry experience that cannot be taught in a classroom. This is where my pain begins.

Unfortunately, as needed as this bill is, Raised Senate Bill 901 does not address the issue of how the General Statutes are interpreted by the various system offices it will affect. Currently, the Connecticut State University (CSU) System, bound under 10a-99, is in violation of 10a-26(b) as states "*...tuition shall be charged...for each full-time student or shall be prorated in the case of a student carrying less than seventy-five per cent of the credit hours defined as full-time load by the institution....*" At this time, the CSU System places all part-time students into the Department of Continuing Education where they are only charged fees, not tuition. The fees collected are directed into the Extension fund rather than the General fund, where tuition charges and their 2.5% reimbursements are legally meant to be placed.

The distinction between fees and tuition is pivotal to having Raised Senate Bill 901 succeed in the effect intended by this committee. Currently, individuals who fall under 10a-99(d), while in part-time attendance of a CSU System school, are denied their legal benefit to a tuition waiver.

These beneficiaries generally include:

1. Dependent children of prisoners of war and those declared missing in action after January 1, 1960
2. Any veteran covered under 27-103 and the 2006 Attorney Generals determination of Title 10 and Title 32 being of equal status in the state of Connecticut
3. Connecticut residents age 62 or older
4. Connecticut State Police Academy courses accredited through the state university
5. Qualifying Connecticut Army and Air National Guardsmen
6. Dependent children of police officers, firefighters, and municipal employees killed in the line of duty
7. Dependent children and surviving spouses of state residents who are specified terrorist victims
8. Dependent children of state residents killed in a multivehicle crash in the vicinity of the intersections of Routes 44 and 10 and Nod Road in Avon on July 29, 2005
9. Any resident of the state who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a person killed in action while performing active military duty on or after September 11, 2001

In addition to all this, delaying the effective date until 1 October 2009 will not allow members of the Connecticut Army and Air National Guard to utilize this benefit for the Fall semester. Please consider accelerating the effective date to 1 September 2009. This change will allow guardsmen to utilize these benefits in a timely manner rather than waiting until January 2010 to see the great work this committee is doing for them.

The goal of Raised Senate Bill 901 is admirable, welcomed, and will not go to waste. Please help my fellow soldiers and airmen become the educated leaders of tomorrow.

Senator Maynard, Representative Graziani, and members of the Select Committee on Veterans Affairs, thank you for your time and consideration.

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University General Fee, which supports a variety of operations including athletics, student centers, security measures, student employment opportunities and a growing number of parking garages.

For 2008-09, the University General Fee rate increases will range from 5.1 at Central to 17.3 percent at Western. Central is the only school with a University General Fee growth rate below ten percent. Eastern's rate is 9.6 percent following a 14.6 percent increase in 2008. The increase is proposed to cover on-going expenses plus the additional costs associated with the opening of the expanded Student Center as well as to fully fund the cost of the parking garage debt service. Western's increase to the University General Fee is 12.9 percent to cover on-going expenses and the cost of the Westside student center. This follows a 19.0 percent increase in 2008. These are substantial and worrisome increases that have continued at or near double digits for at least seven years. The issue of the size and use of the funding from this fee at the four campuses and the extent to which tuition-related costs are included needs to be resolved. Staff suggests a discussion of unbundling this fee at the four campuses be undertaken with the specific goal of meeting the tuition-related costs to tuition, in accordance with standing board policy. The University General Fee can then be considered an auxiliary fee as is the General University Fee at the University of Connecticut.

Among the remaining fees, the University Fee will increase 3.5 percent, which is the amount required to cover the future debt service payment, and the Information Technology Fee will increase 7.8 percent at Eastern only. Housing and food services fee increases are dependent on marketplace food service rates and internal cost demands related to new housing, and range from a low of 5.0 percent for housing at Southern to a high of 7.8 percent for food service, at Western. Most are in the five to six percent range.

At the graduate level, the Connecticut State University maintains differential tuition for five programs. They are the MBA and Master of Library Science programs at Southern, the Ed.D. programs at Central, Southern and Western, Data Mining at Central, and the Master of Fine Arts at Western. The Ed.D. program at Western plans no increase and the others are in the five percent range. In addition, the OnlineCSU undergraduate and graduate rates for residents will increase five percent.

Educational Extension Fees (tuition paid by part-time students) will not increase at Western, but will increase 4.4 percent at Central, 5.0 percent at Southern and 7.3 percent at Eastern. *The Board of Governors continues to urge the State University, as the cost of attendance is reviewed, to replace its current tuition and fee system which differentiates between full- and part-time student status with a system that charges all students prorated tuition and fees. Such a system provides equity and is consistent with Connecticut statutes as well as the other units' policies and practice.* Discussion of these issues could consider a phased approach.

Tier II fees will remain relatively constant with 2007-08 levels with the exception of housing cancellation fees and excess credit fees. Housing cancellations will increase in the five to seven percent range and excess credit fees will increase five percent at Central and Southern and 7.5 percent at Eastern.

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