



National Guard Association of Connecticut
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Feb. 10, 2011

Testimony in Favor of Proposed Senate Bill 371, Proposed House Bills 5058, 5272, Raised Senate Bill 854 and Committee House Bill 5273

Good Morning Sen. Maynard, Representative Hennessy and members of the Select Committee on Veterans Affairs. I am Debbi Newton, Legislative Chair of the National Guard Association of Connecticut (NGACT). I have served in that position for seven years and have been a member of the Connecticut National Guard for 31 years.

I am here today to speak in favor of several bills currently before you.

Proposed Senate Bill 371, An Act Concerning Identification Cards for Veterans is something that would be of very little cost to the state but would reap dividends for our Veterans. Not all Veterans remain in the military service long enough to retire and receive the Retiree ID cards. Several stores, restaurants and other businesses offer discounts to Military members, Veterans and Retirees, but without a photo id identifying someone as a Veteran, they are not able to take advantage of these discounts. It may be a small thing, but it is a big thing to our Veterans to let them know they are still appreciated for the sacrifices they and their families have made.

Proposed House Bill 5058 is a piece of proposed legislation that has been before you several times in varying degree. This particular bill would provide waiver of payment of fees for summer courses taken by Veterans who served during time of war. While it does not give all military members the waiver, we feel it is a step in the right direction and Veterans who may have had their education disrupted due to their service should be able to continue their degree work at the smallest cost to them possible.

Again, **Proposed House Bill 5272** has been before you many times. In fact, I have heard some of you say you thought the Act Providing Free Admission To State Parks and Forests for State Residents who Serve in the Military had, in fact, already been passed. It has not. Cost of entrance to the State Parks and Forests is minimal. Parking fees range from \$6 on weekdays to \$15 on weekends or holidays. Allowing Service Members and their families the ability to enjoy our state parks and forests without charging them is a very nice way of saying thank you for their service and of exposing people to our wonderful resources. In fact, I see it having a positive affect on potential revenue. If you go to a movie or restaurant and enjoy it, you tend to tell other people who then go based on what you've told them. The same would hold true with the parks and forests. If I go to a park I have not been to before because I can get in free and I tell my three brothers

and they take their families someplace they might not have before, there are now three people paying admission.

Raised House Bill 854 is another way of easing the burden on the members of the military service in Connecticut by waiving the vehicle registration fee operator's license fees. It also serves as a way of saying thank you. Personal vehicles are often used in the conduct of military work, either getting them from one training location to another or in getting them to emergency call-outs in the middle of the night. A resident of Connecticut who chooses, especially during a time of war, to serve his or her state and nation should be entitled to benefits such as this.

Finally, **House Bill 5273** is also a bill you have had before you numerous times. This is An Act Exempting Military retirement Pay from the State Income Tax. Several years ago, the Legislature passed an Act that exempted 50% of such pay from the state income tax. Many states, including Massachusetts already exempt 100% of military retirement pay from the state income taxes. We have several Connecticut Guardsmen that I know of who have purchased homes in Massachusetts so when they retire, they can get that exemption. They are still able to work their civilian jobs in Connecticut and are still close to family and friends, but we are losing good citizens, consumers and taxpayers to another state because they offer what we don't.

I thank you for your time and for what you do for the Veterans, Military Members and Retirees of Connecticut and their families. This concludes my testimony and I am available for any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

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