



**Connecticut Veterans & Military Coalition**  
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## **Testimony in Favor of Proposed Senate Bill 371, Raised House Bills 5273 and 6259**

Good Morning Sen. Maynard, Representative Hennessy and members of the Select Committee on Veterans Affairs. I am Debbi Newton, Legislative Liaison for the newly formed Connecticut Veterans & Military Coalition. The CVMC is an organization of about 20 groups such as the National Guard Association of Connecticut, the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, The Military Order of the Purple Heart, The Marine Corps Association, Association of the US Army and ESGR to name but a few. We held our first meeting in December and have organized to provide one voice here at the State Legislature as well as on Capitol Hill in Washington. We represent more than 400,000 Veterans, Retirees, Servicemembers and their families and survivors.

I am here today to speak in favor of three of the bills 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. Many individuals within our member organizations would benefit from passage of this bill.

**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. Many of the individual members of our member organizations are retirees and we fully support passage of this bill. We do realize that times are tough economically for the state, but so are they for the residents of this state.

Finally, **Raised House Bill 6259**, An Act Concerning a State Identification Card Fee Waiver for Blind Veterans is a concept the CVMC brought to you this year and we thank you for raising it and bringing it to public hearing. Our blind Veterans have given up driving licenses, not because they wanted to, but because they have lost their eyesight, many as a result of their service to our state and country. They may have been given waivers of drivers license fees, but now that they have lost their eyesight and still need a government issued id, they are required to pay for those ids. Coupled with the fact that right now, there are no id cards issued for Veterans that may not be retired from the service, our blind Veterans now have no way of identifying themselves as Veterans and also have to pay for government issued identification. We believe they have sacrificed enough, given enough, and should be given the state identification cards at no cost to them.

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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