



Gary E Waterhouse
Legislative Chair & Judge Advocate
3rd District Veterans of Foreign Wars
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Select Committee on Veterans Affairs Public Hearing



Good morning Chairman Maynard, Chairman Hennessey and distinguished members of the Select Committee on Veterans Affairs, my name is Gary E Waterhouse, I am a proud Vietnam Veteran, I served with "H" Company Ranger, 75th Infantry assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division, and I am pleased to offer testimony this morning supporting legislation that is good for veterans.

SUPPORT- Proposed S.B. No. 371 AN ACT CONCERNING IDENTIFICATION CARDS FOR VETERANS.

Allowing a veteran to obtain a State of Connecticut issued document or veteran status recognition on existing state documents may help veterans obtain all the rights, privileges and benefits for which they are entitled. In my experience, many veterans are unaware they are eligible for VA Health Care, non-service connected pension benefits, Aid & Attendance benefits and spousal death benefits.

Commissioner Schwartz of the Department of Veterans Affairs has proposed in the past that an alternative identification program currently in use in several states would allow current members of the Armed Forces and veterans to receive a distinguishable mark or symbol- such as a "V" for veteran or U.S. Flag on their driver's licenses. This proposal is reasonable and beneficial to veterans and organizations that support veterans.

SUPPORT- Proposed S.B. No. 374 AN ACT CONCERNING THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS.

Every veteran I know is proud of the terrific advances Commissioner Schwartz and the Department of Veterans Affairs have made in recent years. Veterans organizations strive to be non-partisan and apolitical, the current process of applying to the Governor, president pro tempore of the Senate, the speaker of the House of Representatives, the majority leader of the Senate, the majority leader of the House of Representatives, and the minority leader of the Senate and the minority leader of the House of Representatives is very much a political process. I believe the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Disabled American Veterans and Vietnam Veterans of America will proudly nominate eligible veterans to serve on the Board of Trustees.

SUPPORT- Proposed H.B. No. 5058 AN ACT CONCERNING COLLEGE TUITION AND FEE WAIVERS FOR VETERANS.

OLR Report 2008-R-0091 says in part that: Over the past 10 years, required fees for in-state undergraduate students have increased approximately **72% at UConn, 128% at the Connecticut State University System (CSUS), and 67% at the community-technical colleges (CTCs)**. Distance learning course fees at **Charter Oak State College have increased almost 88% in 10 years**. The fee increases from 2000 to 2006 appear in line with those of the schools' peer institutions. UConn and the CSUS have a number of required student fees that fund numerous student services and activities. They also support debt service on residence halls, dining halls, and student parking garages. UConn HAS NINE MANDATORY FEES. The general university, infrastructure maintenance, and student government fees apply to students at all UConn campuses. The other fees apply only to students at the Storrs campus. The Board of Governors of Higher Education annually reviews and makes recommendations on tuition and fees for all of the higher education constituent units. Most recently, it approved increases for the 2008-2009 academic years.

The increased reliance on ever increasing fees is a barrier to veterans seeking higher education.