

Raised Bill No. 198- AN ACT CONCERNING DESCECRATION OF WAR OR VETERANS' MEMORIALS
Testimony submitted 28 FEB 2012 by Patrick Henri, 16 Harris Road, Ansonia, Connecticut

On behalf of the American Legion Gordon-Viselli Post 50, Ansonia, Connecticut, I would like to thank the committee and all those involved in creating the proposed bill and in setting up this public hearing. We support any endeavor that would help to protect our cherished memorials.

The American Legion was founded on the principal of 4 Pillars: Veterans' Affairs, National Security, Patriotism, and Children & Youth. Under these broad headings, Ansonia American Legion Post 50 deems it well within its duty to have input into these hearings today. Our members feel that they have been victimized by the theft and desecration of Veterans' Memorials throughout the Naugatuck Valley, as if the items were taken from our own homes.

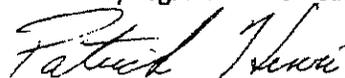
At the time the crimes had been committed in August 2011, I was serving in Afghanistan on active duty with the Navy Reserve. I read of the accounts in the Valley Independent Sentinel, an online local news publication that covers Ansonia and its surrounding towns. As I read the article, my heart sank and I was angered. I could hardly believe it. There was a distinct feeling of being betrayed. That someone would stoop so low as to take plaques with names of those who put themselves at risk in our nation's armed forces was sickening. This sort of irreverent behavior falls in line with other vile acts such as knocking over grave markers, robbing the elderly and flag burning. Not only should the perpetrators be punished for their obvious crimes, they should be punished for their blatant disrespect. These offenses are a slap in the face to all veterans that should be answered with a strong kick in the teeth. The ante for such crimes must be upped well above that of "usual" stolen goods when memorial artifacts are involved.

To that end, to enhance the deterrent of such future crimes and to aid convicted offenders in feeling a deeper and more substantial pain, I respectfully offer the following recommendations:

- 1) Institute additional penalties for selling stolen memorial artifacts. Remember, these are not just hunks of scrap metal; they represent honor, service, valor, sacrifice, and remembrance. They are part of the fabric and spirit of our communities. The victims of these crimes are many, including those who are no longer with us.
- 2) Institute additional penalties for the buyers. Make them vigilant. It may be obvious to scrap dealers that something is amiss when an unaffiliated individual brings in something that is ground-down, shredded, melted, or in other ways altered from a recognizable item. Let's give those dealers the tools and inspiration to exercise more scrutiny when making purchases.
- 3) Implement seizure and confiscation policies pertaining to buyers' and sellers' vehicles, homes and businesses; similar to drug related crimes.

Let's put out a strong message to those who would commit such offenses in Connecticut that we are determined to protect and preserve our memorials with a sacred fervor, and violators of our laws, our history and our heritage will be intensely regretful when caught.

Thank you and God bless you.



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