

State of Connecticut

SENATE DEMOCRATS

STATE CAPITOL

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

Testimony of

Senator Donald E. Williams, Jr.
Senate President Pro Tempore

Senator Martin Looney
Senate Majority Leader

Tuesday February 28, 2012

Select Committee on Veteran's Affairs

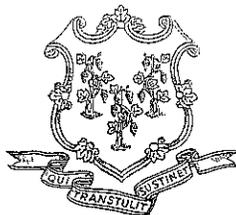
Senator Leone, Representative Hennessy, members of the Select Committee on Veteran's Affairs, thank you for allowing us to testify today on S.B. 251, An Act Concerning Veteran's Jobs.

Simply put, we are deeply troubled by the unemployment problem that plagues many of our veterans, both in Connecticut and nationally. While Connecticut figures sorted by veterans' age are not available, the national unemployment statistics for returning soldiers between the ages of 18 and 34 are both staggering and shameful. As of this past December, it was widely reported that Bureau of Labor Statistics data showed that, throughout the country, *over 30% of returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans between the ages of 18 and 24 were unemployed*. The unemployment figures for those aged 25-34 were better, but still well above the national average.

Here in Connecticut, while exact figures by age are not available, our younger veterans certainly face an unacceptably high level of unemployment. The Department of Labor believes the unemployment levels in Connecticut for these younger returning veterans are *likely almost double the state unemployment rate* of 8.2%, and possibly even higher than that. The department feels the problem is likely to get worse going forward, as over the next 6 months more than 6000 combat veterans are due to return back from Iraq to their homes in Connecticut.

To help ameliorate this unacceptable situation, S.B. 251 proposes a new Unemployed Armed Forces Member Subsidized Training and Employment Program in the Department of Labor. In this **“Step-Up for Veterans” initiative**, we are proposing that *any Connecticut-based business, that hires an unemployed combat Veteran who has returned from Iraq or Afghanistan and resides in Connecticut, is eligible to receive a grant of up to 6 months of that Veteran’s salary and training costs, up to a limit of \$12,000 per soldier.* We are also proposing \$10 million of bonding to fund these critical efforts.

Thank you for drafting S.B. 251. We urge you to support this legislation and look forward to working with you on it. Surely, our returning combat veterans need, and richly deserve, our assistance.



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SENATE

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HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

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Testimony

In Support of SB 198, AAC Desecration of War or Veterans' Memorials Special Committee on Veterans Affairs February 28, 2012

Good morning Chairmen Leone and Hennessy, Ranking members Adinolfi and Welch.

I am Senator Kevin Kelly of the 21st district covering the towns of Stratford, Shelton, Monroe and Seymour. I am testifying today in support of **SB 198, AAC Desecration of War or Veterans' Memorials**.

Let me start by saying thank you for raising this very important bill, this issue hits very close to home for me.

Last year, during Memorial Day weekend, vandals struck Veterans Park in Shelton. They turned American Flags upside down, sprayed graffiti on the sidewalks, and sprayed more on the monuments themselves. It happened two nights in a row, leading up to the Memorial Day ceremonies that are held at the park every year.

I was disgusted and appalled that these vandals had absolutely no respect for the veterans who are represented in that park. They have no respect for those men and women who put their lives on the line every day to ensure the free world that we live in. They have no compassion for these places to gather and remember those who made the supreme sacrifice for our country so we can enjoy the liberties that we do today.

This bill would impose harsher penalties on those who vandalize war or veteran's memorials. It would require that they pay out of pocket for the damages they caused and would impose stiffer fines if convicted.

The cornerstone to democracy is free speech. However, embodied in our First Amendment, there are limits to that freedom. We need to do everything we can to protect the veterans who provide service over our country, ensure our rights, and deserve our respect.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,

Kevin C. Kelly
State Senator – 21st District



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
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**Testimony of Stephen N. Ment
Select Committee on
Veteran's Affairs Public Hearing
February 28, 2012**

Senate Bill 114, An Act Concerning Pretrial Diversionary Programs

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Judicial Branch in regards to **Senate Bill 114, An Act Concerning Pretrial Diversionary Programs**. This bill alters eligibility requirements for veterans seeking to take advantage of Accelerated Rehabilitation more than once and makes changes specific to veterans for two other programs already in use – Supervised Diversion Program and the Pretrial Drug Education Program.

Currently, veterans who have entered the criminal justice system may participate in these programs if they qualify. While the Judicial Branch takes no position on section two of the bill, which allows veterans to apply for the Accelerated Rehabilitation program more than once, we would respectfully suggest that language mandating the Branch's Court Support Services Division (CSSD) to consult with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), or the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) in determining an applicant's eligibility for the Psychiatric Accelerated Rehabilitation program is unnecessary.

CSSD personnel have the necessary resources to determine whether a person is amenable to treatment and appropriate for admission into the applicable pretrial diversion program. This additional hurdle of coordinating program eligibility with