

# VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF CONNECTICUT



STATE LEGISLATIVE OFFICE

STATEMENT OF

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STATE LEGISLATIVE CHAIRMAN  
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

WITH RESPECT TO PENDING VETERANS' BENEFITS LEGISLATION  
FEBRUARY 19, 2013  
HARTFORD, CT

Senate Chairman Leone, House Chairman Hennessey, and members of the Committee on Veterans Affairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the following veterans' legislation. The more than 18,500 members of the Department of Connecticut, Veterans of Foreign Wars greatly appreciate the voice you give them at these hearings that are critical to their well-being as veterans and citizens of the great State of Connecticut.

1. Proposed S.B. No. 70 AN ACT RESTORING BENEFITS TO VETERANS DISCHARGED UNDER "DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL". (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation with the conviction that all honorably discharged veterans should be afforded the benefits due them for their honorable service in our nation's armed forces.

2. Proposed S.B. No. 71 AN ACT CONCERNING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERANS AND SPOUSES OF ACTIVE MILITARY PERSONNEL. (VA)

The VFW supports the proposed legislation as it will serve veterans and their spouses to ease their re-entry into the workforce.

3. Proposed S.B. No. 152 AN ACT CONCERNING A MUNICIPAL PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION PROGRAM FOR ONE HUNDRED PERCENT DISABLED VETERANS. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation. Our one-hundred percent disabled veterans face many challenges throughout the course of their lives most citizens will never experience, with reduced income-earning potential laying in the forefront of the challenges they face as civilians. Relieving these honored citizens of their property tax burden will certainly ease some of the unique stresses they endure as a function of their disability.

4. Proposed S.B. No. 185 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PREFERENCE IN THE AWARD OF STATE CONTRACTS FOR VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESSES. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation. Veterans face unique challenges when re-entering the workforce, let alone starting and operating a business. This act will afford some modicum of parity with the veterans hiring preference for municipal and state employment.

5. Proposed S.B. No. 384 AN ACT CREATING A SET-ASIDE PROGRAM FOR DISABLED VETERAN CONTRACTORS. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation much as it does for proposed S.B. No. 185, with appreciation for the Committee's sensitivity to the additional challenges our disabled veterans face as business owners.

6. Proposed S.B. No. 385 AN ACT EXCLUDING START-UP FARMERS WHO ARE VETERANS FROM THE SALES AND USE TAX. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation.

7. Proposed S.B. No. 647 AN ACT CONCERNING VOTING BY MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY SERVING OVERSEAS. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation which will certainly ease the process of absentee voting for electors who serve overseas on active-duty in the military, their spouses, and/or their dependent (s). We appreciate the steps the Committee is taking to ensure that every Connecticut serviceman/-woman who elects vote may do so expediently, and will have their vote counted.

8. Proposed S.B. No. 649 AN ACT CONCERNING REDUCED FARES ON THE METRO NORTH RAILROAD. (VA), AND Proposed H.B. No. 6167 AN ACT CONCERNING FARES FOR DISABLED VETERANS WHO USE MASS TRANSPORTATION. (VA)

The VFW supports these pieces of proposed legislation.

9. Proposed H.B. No. 5131 AN ACT CONCERNING UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION BENEFITS FOR SPOUSES OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES WHO ARE DEPLOYED OR TRANSFERRED. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation in principle.

10. Proposed H.B. No. 5188 AN ACT PROVIDING FREE ADMISSION TO AND PARKING AT STATE PARKS FOR CONNECTICUT VETERANS. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation, not only for the recreational benefits it stands to afford our veterans, but for the peaceful setting it stands to provide to those in our ranks who currently suffer from the effects of Post-Traumatic Stress.

11. Proposed H.B. No. 5386 AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING ASSISTANCE FOR VETERANS. (VA), AND Proposed H.B. No. 5755 AN ACT CONCERNING AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES. (VA)

The VFW supports these pieces of proposed legislation in principle, as they should afford our returning veterans a means of securing a safe, affordable domicile until they fully reintegrate into civilian life.

12. Proposed H.B. No. 5387 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE USE OF MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TRAINING AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR STATE LICENSING REQUIREMENTS. (VA)

The VFW heartily supports this proposed legislation which should ultimately lead to legislation that will accelerate the return to the civilian workforce by many of our State's skilled veterans. The current process for licensing these already well-trained men and women is expensive, arduous, and degrading for many who return with a skill-set superior to the minimum requirements for licensing.

13. Proposed H.B. No. 5388 AN ACT REQUIRING MUNICIPALITIES TO DESIGNATE A VETERANS SERVICE CONTACT. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation in principal. The VFW endorses it with the hope that further steps will be taken to ensure quality time is afforded the veteran(s) in need, and that such a position is not treated as a secondary responsibility of low priority.

14. Proposed H.B. No. 5753 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION FOR VETERANS WHO SERVED IN TIME OF WAR OR ARE DISABLED. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation. Relieving these honored citizens of a share of their property tax burden pays honor to the quality of their service to our nation during a time of war or conflict. In the case of those veterans are less than one hundred percent disabled, relieving them of some of their property tax burden will certainly ease some of the unique stresses they endure as a function of their disability.

15. Proposed H.B. No. 5754 AN ACT CONCERNING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation in principal. The VFW holds high the mental health of veterans as one of its signal issues requiring our attention at both the national and state levels. We remain concerned that treatment must include alternative methods beyond long-term medication therapy for mental health issues such as Post-Traumatic Stress. The VFW believes all veterans should have the means to completely, functionally reintegrate into civilian life by any reasonable means.

16. S.B. No. 835 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING MILITARY LEAVE FROM EMPLOYMENT. (VA)

The VFW thanks the Committee for recognizing our comrades in the various armed forces of the state should be afforded the same employment protections as our active duty military when they are called upon to act on their oaths and fulfill their obligations.