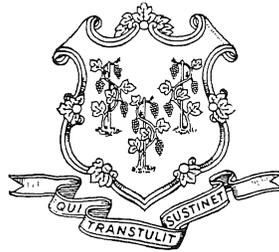


SENATOR JOSEPH J. CRISCO, JR.

*Seventeenth District*

CHIEF DEPUTY PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE  
FEDERAL RELATIONS LIAISON



**State of Connecticut**  
**SENATE**

Senator Joe Crisco  
Remarks to the PRI Committee  
Tuesday, October 1, 2014

*Chair*  
Insurance & Real Estate Committee

*Vice Chair*  
Banks Committee  
Commerce Committee

*Member*  
Appropriations Committee  
Executive & Legislative Nominations Committee  
Legislative Management Committee

Co-Chairs Kissel and Mushinsky, members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak today regarding the interim report on the Veterans' Home at Rocky Hill.

You know, we've got about 228,000 veterans living in Connecticut, according to the 2012 Census.

I don't have to tell you what veterans mean to us, to all of us. That's why we've got that new Connecticut State Veterans Memorial under construction right now, right outside this building.

That's why, right down the corridor, in the concourse, we have statues memorializing World War Two and the Vietnam War... and a bronze plaque of Connecticut Medal of Honor recipients... and the flags of our Armed Forces... and our "Wall of Honor," photos of the men and women who were killed in Iraq and Afghanistan... including Army Private First Class Eric Soufrine from my hometown of Woodbridge... killed by an IED in Afghanistan when he was just 20 years old...

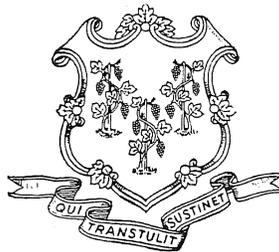
I think you know Connecticut has always honored our veterans. Going all the way back to 1864, when Fitch's Home for Soldiers and Their Orphans opened in Darien. It was the first home of its kind in the country.

We've got a very large facility now in Rocky Hill, but as the report notes, most of the 40 buildings there are 80 years old, they were built in the late 1930s, when Franklin Roosevelt was president. That's a long time ago.

10 years ago a consultant looked at those buildings and determined that they needed "extensive restoration and/or replacement," including "accessibility

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upgrades, fire safety upgrades, toilet and shower renovations....and interior finish upgrades.”

Obviously the state Department of Veterans Affairs has been hit by budget cuts and staff layoffs like most state agencies.

But making those upgrades would add to the veterans’ “quality of life.”

“Quality of life.” That’s a phrase I want you to keep in mind as the PRI staff concludes its report on the Veterans Home in the next few months.

The areas that need focus have been identified, and I want to reiterate a few of them:

- Does the model of the Veterans Home match what today’s veterans are seeking? That’s a very important question to answer, perhaps the core question.
- Why is the domicile occupancy rate so low, if we have so many homeless veterans in Connecticut? Should we be doing more outreach?
- A similar question: Why are so many veterans staying in the domicile for five to 10 years, if the goal is to move them out into the community within three years?
- Are staffing levels adequate?
- And finally, why were so many off-campus recreational trips cancelled last year? We know the answer to that – unreliable buses. Let’s find out how much it costs to fix that; it’s the least we can do.

This Committee does very important work, and your focus on ensuring the quality of life for so our state veterans is absolutely essential if we as a state, as a people, are going to show the appropriate levels of respect and thanks to those who made it back home after putting their lives at risk for our peace and our safety as a nation.

Thank You.