

**Testimony in Favor of the Governors Proposal to transfer the Solders, Sailors,
and Marines Fund management, investment responsibility and associated
operational costs to the American Legion**

Good Afternoon Senator Leone, Representative Hennessy and members of the Veterans Affairs Committee. I am Gary Schaff, Lt. Col. USAF (Ret.).

I am here today to present testimony in behalf of James L. Bement Sr. who has been involved with the Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Fund for more than 50 years.

There is hardly anybody better known or better respected in the CT veterans' world than Jim Bement. Jim is a WWII combat veteran. He will be 91 years old this summer. Jim has dedicated his life to serving veterans and has been on both sides of the Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Fund...the receiving end and the giving end.

Jim's first experience with the fund was when his company was on strike in Torrington in 1963. His strike income was \$25/week. Both his wife and daughter were in Waterbury Hospital for major surgery. He couldn't make ends meet. A friend directed him to the American Legion in Harwinton, where he hooked up with the local Funds representative who helped him fill out the forms for financial assistance. The Fund assistance helped get Jim through this crisis which lasted for eight months.

Five years later, in 1968, the Fund rep asked Jim to fill in for him while he (the rep) went into the hospital for some unspecified illness. Jim did so. As it turned out, the rep was diagnosed with leukemia and passed away. So in 1968 Jim took over as Harwinton's SSMF rep and today, 46 years later, Jim is still filling that role. I venture to say there are few people in this state that can match Jim's knowledge of this fund's history and his commitment to this fund.

I asked Jim to summarize his position on the fund and the proposed handoff to American Legion management. His response: "I have a lot of faith in the Fund...it has done a lot of good...it is worth its weight in gold. I'm 100% on board with the transition of this fund to American Legion control. It will benefit both the state and veterans."

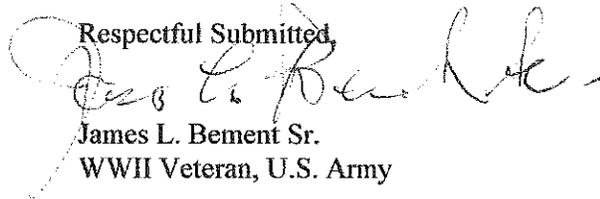
On behalf of the Jim Bement and myself, we thank you for your time to express our support for the transfer of the Solders, Sailors, and Marines Fund to the American Legion Department of Connecticut.

Respectful Submitted,



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Respectful Submitted,



James L. Bement Sr.
WWII Veteran, U.S. Army