



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

MILITARY DEPARTMENT  
WILLIAM A. O'NEILL ARMORY  
360 BROAD STREET  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06105-3795

March 3, 2015

Honorable Mae Flexer, State Senator  
Honorable John "Jack" F. Hennessy, State Representative  
Co-Chairs, Veterans' Affairs Committee  
Hartford, CT 06106

## **IN RE Raised Bill 1016, "AAC the Digitization of Military Records"**

I write to express the Military Department's opposition to Raised Bill 1016, "AAC the Digitization of Military Records." The opposition stems from the perspective of resources and expertise. This bill assigns an archiving role to the Military Department, which is not staffed and not equipped to provide such service. Specifically the bill requires the Military Department to establish and maintain a searchable electronic database located on the Military Department's internet web site for the purposes of providing public access to military records of veterans of the Connecticut National Guard. This undertaking would require the assignment of significant additional resources to the Military Department, including full-time personnel and equipment to digitize and enter data. The Military Department does not have the resources or expertise to implement this program within existing staffing and funding.

The assignment of this mission to the Military Department is not only duplicative but outside of its operational sphere. The Military Department is a unique dual-status agency, having both federal and state missions. The federal mission is to maintain properly trained and equipped National Guard units for prompt federalization in the event of war, domestic emergencies or other emergencies. The state mission is to coordinate, support and augment federal, state and local authorities in emergency response, to provide emergency response planning and to provide military support to communities, including outreach and ceremonial missions. The Military Department prides itself on our rich history, lineage and honors. The archiving of which is a mission better suited to the State Library.

The Connecticut State Library possesses the expertise necessary to properly archive, digitize and make available to the public its extensive military archives. Moreover, it has the resources to properly undertake such an important mission. The State Library developed and operates a digital archive, replete with many collections that highlight Connecticut's military history (see <http://cslib.cdmhost.com>). The Connecticut State Library has performed this mission with panache and aplomb. To be sure, it has made great progress in digitizing our state's military history. However, much work is still required to fully realize our history in a digital format. Any revisions to the state statutes to mandate the continued archiving and presentation of our state's history, in a digital format or otherwise, should be properly ensconced with the State Library.

One must also recognize that digitizing personnel records and making such information available to the public digitally raises issues of privacy and identity theft. Although the proposed bill provides some consideration of protecting personally identifying and protected medical information, the privacy rights of our veterans is a matter that must be closely considered. Much of the information contained within military service records is protected by the federal Privacy Act (5 USC 552a). Any presentation of these records to the public in a searchable digital format should be under the control of professional librarians and archivists who are especially cognizant of information management. If the State of Connecticut undertakes this historical project, we should insist upon it being done with the expertise that resides in the staff of the Connecticut State Library.

On behalf of Connecticut's nearly 5,000 currently serving citizen soldiers and airmen, the members of our states armed forces, their families and our veterans, I ask the Veterans' Affairs Committee to take no favorable action on this bill as currently drafted. Alternately, if the bill must move forward this session, I would ask the Committee to move forward with a substitute bill that completely eliminates Section 2 of the bill and includes specific language relative to protecting the privacy rights of our veterans. Elimination of Section 2 would remove the Military Department from the proposed digitization project. Such substitution would ensure our State Library continues to lead the way in preserving our state's history, professionally, within existing agency resources and with specific language to protect the privacy rights of our veterans.

Should you desire to discuss the Military Department's opposition to this bill as currently drafted or other matters concerning military/veteran legislation, please contact my legislative liaison, Lieutenant Colonel Timothy J. Tomcho, Judge Advocate, at (860) 548-3203 or via email at [timothy.j.tomcho.mil@mail.mil](mailto:timothy.j.tomcho.mil@mail.mil).

Sincerely,



THADDEUS J. MARTIN  
Major General  
The Adjutant General

Enclosure:  
Raised Bill 1016

Copy Furnished:  
Governor's Office



General Assembly

January Session, 2015

**Raised Bill No. 1016**

LCO No. 4202



Referred to Committee on VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Introduced by:  
(VA)

***AN ACT CONCERNING THE DIGITIZATION OF MILITARY RECORDS.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 11-6 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2015*):

3 (a) The State Library shall maintain a collection of war records,  
4 which shall include classifications and indexes of all available material  
5 relating to Connecticut participation, public or private, in the First and  
6 Second World Wars. The collection shall be as complete and  
7 comprehensive as possible and cover not only the activities of the state,  
8 its subdivisions and agencies, but also of Connecticut agencies of the  
9 federal government, of organizations of private persons and of those  
10 individuals who were direct participants in said wars, whether as  
11 soldiers, sailors, aviators or otherwise.

12 (b) The State Librarian shall establish and maintain a searchable  
13 electronic database located on the State Library's Internet web site for  
14 the purposes of providing public access to military records of  
15 Connecticut veterans. Such database shall be searchable by the  
16 surname of any such veteran and shall include military records from  
17 the Revolutionary War through the present within the State Librarian's

18 possession. For the purposes of this section "military records" means  
 19 (1) individual service records, including, but not limited to, dates of  
 20 service, unit assignments and awards; and (2) records relating to the  
 21 unit in which such individual served, including, but not limited to,  
 22 after action reports and written narratives.

23 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2015*) The Military Department  
 24 shall establish and maintain a searchable electronic database located on  
 25 the Military Department's Internet web site for the purposes of  
 26 providing public access to military records of veterans of the  
 27 Connecticut National Guard. Such database shall be searchable by the  
 28 surname of any such veteran and shall include military records from  
 29 the Revolutionary War through World War II within the Military  
 30 Department's possession. For the purposes of this section, "military  
 31 records" means (1) individual service records, including, but not  
 32 limited to, dates of service, unit assignments and awards; and (2)  
 33 records relating to the unit in which such individual served, including,  
 34 but not limited to, after action reports and written narratives. The  
 35 Military Department shall redact from such records (A) Social Security  
 36 numbers; (B) date of birth; (C) home address; and (D) any personally  
 37 identifiable information if such disclosure would constitute a violation  
 38 of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, as  
 39 amended from time to time.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>October 1, 2015</i>	11-6
Sec. 2	<i>October 1, 2015</i>	New section

**Statement of Purpose:**

To require the State Librarian and the Military Department to establish a searchable online database containing the military records of Connecticut veterans.

*[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]*