

February 17, 2015

## **Testimony in Favor of Proposed Senate and House Bills**

Good afternoon Senator Flexer, Representative Hennessy and members of the Veterans Affairs Committee. I am Dan Thurston, Chairman of the Connecticut Veterans and Military Coalition (CVMC). The CVMC is a coalition of Veterans Service Organizations and Military Service Organization in Connecticut that work together to serve and assist the military and veterans of Connecticut.

I am here today to speak in favor of several bills before you.

**Proposed Bill No. 520**, An Act Concerning Military Retirement Pay is supported by the Connecticut Veterans & Military Coalition. Several years ago, the Legislature passed an Act that exempted 50% of Military Retirement Pay from State Income Tax. This bill, which would exempt 100% of military retirement pay, has come before you numerous times. Many states exempt 100% of military retirement pay and enacting this legislation would not only benefit retired military but also be a benefit to Connecticut by creating favorable incentives for retired military to remain in the state.

The Connecticut Veterans & Military Coalition backs the National Guard Association of Connecticut in their supports the following bills:

**Proposed Bill No.524**, An Act Exempting State Active Duty Pay from the Income Tax

**Proposed Bill No.526**, An Act Providing an Income Tax Exemption to Members of the Armed Forces and Veterans

**Proposed Bill No.529**, An Act Increasing State Active Duty Pay

**Proposed Bill No. 531**, An Act Concerning Tuition Fee Waivers for Members of the Connecticut National Guard

**Proposed Bill No. 532**, An Act Concerning Tuition Waivers for Charter Oak State College

Our National Guard has been called into service to protect and defend our nation and in response to natural emergencies. They have proved to be a vital asset in meeting these challenges. These bills will provide financial relief as well as incentive to provide for the future of our state and nation by providing incentives to peruse higher education. We consider these bills a benefit not only to our men and women that have and are now serving, but also to the future of our state.

**Proposed Bill No. 5334**, An Act Providing Property Tax Relief to Veterans would return the property tax exemption as it was intended. When the \$1,000 exemption was originally enacted property values were much less and the exemption would have been around 10% of the value of a house at that time. Today the \$1,500 exemption is more in the range of 0.5%-1.0% of houses in Connecticut. This bill would correct a long overdue benefit for our veterans.

Additionally many of the bills address tax benefits and active duty, retired military and veterans. The CVMC supports the proposals for tax relief.

On behalf of the Connecticut Veterans and Military Coalition member organizations, I thank you for your time to allow us to express support for our Military and Veterans and for your commitment to the Veterans and Citizens of Connecticut. This concludes my testimony and I am available for any questions you may have.

Respectful Submitted,



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