

THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF CONNECTICUT
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
K. ROBERT LEWIS , CHAIRMAN

Written Testimony on selected Proposed Bills, Acts and Resolutions before
the Connecticut General Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee on
February 14, 2019

Good morning. I am K. Robert Lewis, Chairman of The American Legion Department of Connecticut Legislative Committee and I am pleased to share our perspective on certain measures being raised and discussed in Public Hearing today.

Proposed Bill No. 543 – AN ACT REQUIRING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR EQUINE THERAPY FOR VETERANS: Equine therapy has proven to be a successful program where instituted and delivered by compassionate individuals and wonderful equine therapy animals to veterans who may have received little or no benefit from other therapy programs and realize the healing bond between human and horse. The American Legion Department of Connecticut supports this Proposed Bill that requires health insurance coverage in this setting.

Proposed SB No. 777 -AN ACT REQUIRING A STUDY OF VETERANS TAX ABATEMENTS:

The American Legion supports measures that benefit the lot of veterans, their families and their survivors. Tax abatement is one measure that local municipalities use to recognize the service and sacrifice of wartime veterans. The American Legion supports the proposed study and thereby supports passage of this Bill. The American Legion will comment on the results of said study at the appropriate time after it has been completed.

Proposed H.B No. 5563 : AN ACT CONCERNING POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER ISSUES IMPACTING VETERANS INVOLVED IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM: The American Legion is concerned about the intersection of PTSD and the criminal justice system and wholeheartedly supports this Bill (5553) that requires an informed judiciary. Veterans and the community at large will benefit in treatment and/or sentencing of veterans when Judges are knowledgeable about the impact that PTSD and how it effects and impacts veterans in Connecticut.

Proposed Bill No. 5570:AN ACT CONCERNING THE SALE AND SERVICE OF FOOD BY VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS:

This measure would allow VSO's to engage in Pot Luck's where individual members prepare a food dish at their home and transport it to the location where a meal is to be shared. The sale of such food items benefit the programs of the individual veteran service organization Post Home and thereby the community at large. The American Legion supports passage of Bill 5570.

Proposed H.B No.6775- AN ACT CONCERNING MILITARY FAMILIES AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS: Being a military child can be daunting, most especially when the military member is activated and deployed. There are numerous state, private and non-profit programs and benefits designed to provide assistance and enhance the lives of military families, This proposed legislation places the resource point of contact closer to military children and their families. The American Legion is strongly in favor of proposed H.B 6775.

Proposed H.B. No 6977-AN ACT CONCERNING ANNUAL FEES FOR VETERANS' CHARITABLE ORGNIZATIONS : The American Legion supports HB# 6977. Its passage and implementation recognizes the good works that VSO's do in the community and across Connecticut.

Proposed S.J. No. 3- RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF RECOGNIZING WOMEN IN THE CADET NURSE CORPS DURING WORLD WAR II AS VETERANS: The American Legion proudly supports and endorses this resolution to bring overdue recognition to the women who answered their nation's Call during WWII and served with distinction. Proper recognition as veterans by Congress is warranted.

S.B. No. 801 (Raised) AN ACT EXPANDING CERTAIN VETERANS ACCESS TO PUBLIC ASSITANCE PROGRAMS: The American Legion supports legislation that improves the lot of America's veterans and therefore supports SB# 801 without equivocation. The legislation exempts the amount veterans and survivors may receive from awards of Federal non-service connected pensions, survivors pension, and the Aid and Attendance and Housebound benefits. These programs are designed to maintain recipients resources at a level often below subsistence levels in Connecticut. Offsetting other benefits deprives recipients of self worth and consigns them to near poverty. Implementation of SB# 801 corrects , in some measure improves their lot.

H.B 7064 (Raised) - AN ACT CONCERNINGMUNICIPAL VETERANS' REPRESENTATIVES: The American Legion supports the changes to the current legislation proposed by HB7064 and therefore supports its passage.

S.B. No 802 (Raised) AN ACT PROVIDING FOR DISCOUNTED FISHING LICENSES FOR CERTAIN VETERANS: This is a benefit to the veterans concerned and the American Legion supports implementation of that benefit.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the perspective of the American Legion Department of Connecticut Legislative Committee.

All the Best,

K. Robert Lewis Past Department Commander, Legislative Committee
Chairman,