

**VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**PUBLIC HEARING 7 MARCH 2019**

**S.B. No. 863 (RAISED)**

**OPENING REMARKS BY COL JAMES RIDLEY, SR,  
COMMANDER, CT WING, CIVIL AIR PATROL, USAF AUXILIARY**

Distinguished members of the committee, my name is James Ridley Jr., the current commander of the Connecticut Wing of the Civil Air Patrol, the United States Air Force Auxiliary.

Accompanying me today is Major General (Retired) James Skiff, former commander of the Pennsylvania National Guard and currently on staff at the New England Disaster Training Center in Windsor Locks, as well as a staff training officer for the CT Wing.

We are here today in support of Proposed Bill 863 extending certain employment protections to members of the Civil Air Patrol.

With your permission I wish to read into the record a prepared statement in that regard, after which I would be pleased to respond to any questions.

**SEE ATTACHED STATEMENT: "BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION"**

## **Background and Justification**

The Civil Air Patrol is the official auxiliary of the United States Air Force. Founded in 1941 as the nation's first civil defense/homeland security agency it was made a part of the United States Air Force in 1947 as a separate non-profit civilian organization. The Civil Air Patrol consists of 52 Wings in every state and including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. CAP has approximately 60,000 members, utilizes nearly 600 official aircraft over 4000 volunteer aircraft: and more than 1000 vehicles. It is engaged daily in search and rescue, homeland security and disaster relief support efforts through the direction of the First Air Force of the United States Air Force Air Combat Command (ACC) headquartered at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida.

CAP also is a party to numerous memorandums of understanding (MOU) and agreements of understanding (AOU) with federal, state and local agencies such as the United States Coast Guard, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, Border Patrol, Red Cross, state emergency management departments and state and local police departments. Under these agreements CAP provides qualified aircrews, ground search teams and incident command personnel to supplement and support the efforts of these agencies in time of crisis and need. CAP helps to save hundreds of lives nationwide each year.

In Connecticut, the state wing of CAP has twelve squadrons with approximately 400 seniors officers and approximately 375 cadets. Active units are located in Middletown, East Granby, Waterbury, Meriden, Stratford, Danbury, Plainville, Torrington, Hartford, East Haven, Danielson, Groton, and New Fairfield.

Under current Connecticut law, employers may provide their employees with various types of paid and unpaid leave as part of their overall compensation packages, including vacation time, personal leave and sick leave. Some federal laws such as Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) require covered employers to provide employees with leave in certain situations.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) is a Federal law that establishes rights and responsibilities for uniformed Service members and their civilian employers. The law prohibits employers from discharging, discriminating or denying benefits to an employee who undertakes unpaid leave to perform military duties.

Connecticut has passed legislation regarding employee leave recognizing military and national guard duty. This law does not include Civil Air Patrol members who are called to engage in official Air Force, Department of Homeland Security, or State Emergency Management missions or official training exercises.

Currently the following states include Civil Air Patrol members in their military leave statutes for active duty and training: California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Washington and Wisconsin.

The proposed statute would add Connecticut to this list of states recognizing the important contributions of the volunteer members of Civil Air Patrol actively engaged in emergency services, homeland security and disaster relief efforts.