

**PA12-038**

SB0198

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**CONNECTICUT  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS  
2012**

**VOL.55  
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5507 – 5828**

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Necessary for Passage	73
Those Voting Yea	144
Those Voting Nay	0
Those Absent and Not Voting	7

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The bill as amended passes.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar Number 464.

THE CLERK:

On page 3, Calendar 464, Substitute for Senate Bill 198, AN ACT CONCERNING DESECRATION OF WAR OR VETERANS' MEMORIALS, favorable report of the Committee on the Judiciary.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Jack Hennessey, you have the floor, sir.

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I move acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The question is acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

Will you remark?

Representative Hennessey.

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REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this bill increases penalties for people guilty of interference with a war or veterans' memorial or monument, if they intentionally deface, mutilate or destroy or remove any of the objects from its official location, a person is guilty of unlawful possession, purchasing or selling a war or veteran's memorial.

This bill both makes it a crime of a Class D felony, which is punishable for up to five years in prison and a fine up to \$50,000, or both.

I move acceptance.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Will you care to remark further on the bill before us?

Representative Adinolfi. Good to see you. You have the floor, sir.

REP. ADINOLFI (103rd):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to be here this afternoon. It's a little quieter than yesterday. I am 100 percent in favor of this bill. I think it's long overdue.

The desecration of war memorials, we have them

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all our towns, usually in front of the town halls or in town center, and a lot of these memorials are made of copper, bronze or brass and are subject to, you know, people stealing them and selling them as scrap.

So I think by putting the penalties in place for doing such an act is -- is a good thing. It's the right time to do it. Probably should have done it many years ago, but I'm very happy that we're doing it now, and I urge my colleagues here to support this bill.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, sir.

Will you care to remark further on the bill before us?

Representative Greene, Jr., you have the floor, sir.

REP. GREENE (105th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I also rise in strong support of this bill. Each one of us in this Chamber has in our communities many places where veterans are honored. Oftentimes, as Representative Adinolfi alluded to, they consist of bronze or metal plaques that are put

in place that people can come and visit, remember their loved ones, their friends that may not have come home.

So you can imagine the horror that we felt in the lower Naugatuck River Valley. Three different communities late last year were pillaged by people, we presume, were trying to steal the scrap metal or steal the metal from these war memorials to sell for scrap.

We had the City of Derby, the City of Ansonia and the City of Shelton, all were victimized by this callus act. And the irreverent behavior in these particular cases affects not only the veterans and their families but the community as a whole.

Madam Speaker, this bill attempts to address that discrepancy there. It pulls an act such as this away from the desecration or vandalism of another piece of property, it pulls it out and singles it out and makes it a much stronger crime in recognition of the fact that these crimes are committed against the community entirely.

In addition, Madam Speaker, this bill also attempts to address the larger problem that we seem to be facing throughout the State of Connecticut in the black market scrap metal dealers that are -- that are

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not complying with current law. So in an attempt to incentivize or disincentivize the -- the purchase and sale of these scrap metal -- of these plaques, this bill will actually increase the penalties and hopefully will serve as a deterrent for future -- future acts.

So, Madam Speaker, I stand in strong support of this, and I urge its adoption.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, Representative Green from the valley.

Will you care to remark further on the bill before us?

My seatmate from Griswold, Representative Steve Mikutel.

REP. MIKUTEL (45th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It seems the poor economic times that we are in have led to a vast increase in the number of thefts. And it's unfortunate that these thieves are now just not only keep stealing copper from homes and all that, but they're stealing the valuable metal statues that are in town parks and town greens honoring our veterans. So it is right and proper that we should be

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increasing the penalties.

I have a question for the proponent of the bill.

Under the --

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Please proceed, sir.

REP. MIKUTEL (45th):

-- under the bill, will the increased fines, will they go to the towns so that they can replace the stone or damaged war memorials?

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessey.

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Through you, Madam Speaker.

I'm not really -- yeah -- the -- the funds aren't being diverted. Whatever the structure is in place is where the funds go.

Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Mikutel.

REP. MIKUTEL (45th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I just want to conclude by saying that our veterans' memorials and monuments are powerful reminders of the sacrifices that generations of

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Americans have made for our peace and freedom, so I stand in strong support of this bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, Representative Mikutel.

Will you care to remark further on the bill before us? Will you care to remark further?

Representative Nicastro, you have the floor, sir.

REP. NICASTRO (79th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Good afternoon to you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Good afternoon, sir.

REP. NICASTRO (79th):

Madam Speaker, Bristol, the town I represent, the city I represent, has the fifth largest veterans' population in the state. I'm -- I'm setting something up here I want to explain to you.

If you were to drive into our city on Memorial Boulevard, it's about three-quarters of a mile long. All the monuments on the southerly side are for all the men and women who gave their lives, World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and right now, Afghanistan and Iraq.

All the monuments on the north side are for all

the men and women who served during all of these conflicts but -- but survived, but they have the names there. And what's happening is people are looking to make money.

We have The Hiker, which was built in 1920, right after World War ended. The Hiker was a monument that people admired for years and years. Somebody came and cut it up and chopped it up into pieces. It was over -- it was over 70 years old, and they cut it into pieces and destroyed it. Nothing happens as far as penalties.

Then we had another incident where they came and they cut an eagle off the top of a monument. Nothing happens. Then we had another -- a third incident where they spray-painted all the monuments of all the men and women who lost their lives.

That's total disrespect and disregard for the men and women of our armed forces, and this bill will go a long way in stopping something like that. We need to get tough. In tough times, we need to get tough, and this bill will do it, Madam Speaker, and I strongly support it. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, sir.

Will you care to remark? Will you care to  
remark?

Representative Linda Gentile, you have the floor,  
Madam.

REP. GENTILE (104th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise in strong support of this bill. As one of  
the previous representatives stated, both of my  
communities were hit by vandals and thieves last year.  
And I can tell you that it was devastating to the  
community.

In fact, one of those is a little neighborhood  
memorial that honors all the veterans who are deceased  
from one particular neighborhood. And there are  
generations of families on that -- on that war  
memorial. And I know that the mayor of the City of  
Ansonia was really impacted by that because his  
father's name and his uncle's names were on that  
memorial.

So I rise in strong support. This will go a long  
way in preventing things like this. Our -- our  
veterans' memorials should be sacred and not touched

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at all, and I am -- I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, Representative.

Will you care to remark further?

Representative Davis of the 57th.

REP. DAVIS (57th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And it's really truly rather sad that we even have to take up this bill here today, but it is something that is ongoing throughout the state. And as someone who was an early supporter of this concept, I want to thank the Veterans' Committee and Chairman Hennessey and Chairman Leone and the representatives from the Naugatuck River Valley that really pushed this bill through this year, because I think it's very, very important that we protect these war memorials for those who serve and also their families that -- that really treat these memorials with the respect that they -- that they deserve.

So thank you, Madam Speaker. And I encourage all of my colleagues here today to support this bill.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

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Thank you, sir.

Will you care to remark further?

Representative Coutu, you have the floor.

REP. COUTU (47th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I strongly support and urge my colleagues to vote for this piece of legislation. We all know what these memorials -- what these brass plaques mean to the families, their friends, soldiers who have served, lost their lives or have been injured on foreign soil or in America. We have to protect them.

Time and time again, lately, people are stealing everything from copper piping to these bronze plaques. And the problem is, while you may be able to raise \$5,000 to replace the plaque, it may have been from World War II. It may be 50 years old. You can't replace that plaque, the one where people bowed, kneeled, prayed for those soldiers, their friends, their family members they lost.

So I urge my colleagues, vote for this legislation. It's important to send a message that if you mess with these memorials, you steal a plaque, you touch the plaque and abuse it, you will be punished to

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the strongest degree.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, Representative.

Will you care to remark further on the bill before us? Will you care to remark further on the bill before us?

If not, staff and guests, please come to the well of the House. Members, take your seats. The machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll call. Members to the Chamber. The House is taking a roll call vote. Members to the Chamber, please.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted?

Please check the board to determine if your vote has been properly cast. If so, the machine will be locked, and the Clerk will take a tally, please.

And the Clerk will please take a tally.

THE CLERK:

Senate Bill 198 in concurrence with the Senate.

Total Members Voting

142

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Necessary for Passage	72
Those Voting Yea	142
Those Voting Nay	0
Those Absent and Not Voting	9

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

The bill passes in concurrence with the Senate.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar Number 373.

THE CLERK:

On page 44, Calendar 373, Substitute for House  
Joint Resolution Number 40, RESOLUTION GRANTING THE  
CLAIMS COMMISSIONER AN EXTENSION OF TIME TO DISPOSE OF  
THE CLAIM OF WILLIAM PETTAWAY, favorable report by the  
Committee on the Judiciary.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Fox.

You have the floor, sir.

REP. FOX (146th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I move for the acceptance of the joint  
committee's favorable report and adoption of the  
resolution.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The question is on the joint favorable adoption

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military morale, welfare and recreation programs.

The Adjutant General must spend the funds to operate these programs and this is, in effect, sort of a technical change. They are doing the services already. It was a way to establish a fund in order to spend down the money.

Through you, Madam Governor.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

If not --

SENATOR LEONE:

If not, I would offer this on Consent as well.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection so ordered, sir.

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On page 14, Calendar 350, Substitute for Senate Bill Number 198, AN ACT CONCERNING DESECRATION OF WAR OR VETERANS' MEMORIALS, favorable report of the Committee on Judiciary.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Leone, this is the trifecta.

SENATOR LEONE:

Well hopefully three is a charm, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

I hope so.

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SENATOR LEONE:

I move acceptance of the Joint Committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

On acceptance and passage, please proceed, sir?

SENATOR LEONE:

Thank you, Madam President.

This is a -- AN ACT CONCERNING DESECRATION OF WAR OR VETERANS' MEMORIALS, basically self-explanatory. This is to -- this bill will define two crimes concerning war veteran -- war or veteran memorials or monuments and sets the corresponding penalties for them.

So if -- if anyone were to desecrate a war memorial or a veterans memorial, it would be a Class D felony or five years in prison or -- or both. So this is in response to an actual event. We want to ensure that it never happens again and with that I would urge passage.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark? Will you remark?

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, Madam President.

I -- I just want to make sure I -- I'm clear on what the bill does and I -- and I -- I take umbrage to the -- the fact I remember watching on television during the unfortunate passing of some of our military personnel where protestors were across the street holding signs and chanting and -- and I think that's despicable.

And through you, Madam President, would -- would this bill prevent them from doing that because I know the whole other side of the argument is going to be of free speech? So giving this scenario the -- the

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hypothetical I gave you, Madam President, would --  
would this law apply to those situations?

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE:

Through you, Madam President, no I don't believe it  
would. This is basically for the desecration of a --  
of a memorial and current law for anyone that -- for  
free speech I believe they have to stand a certain  
distance away from the event before any action would  
be taken.

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you.

And the -- anybody who is responsible for I guess  
maintenance of -- of a cemetery and sometimes people  
have intent to do good service -- to do good will they  
may see some small flags that are -- are worn or  
tattered and -- and maybe they didn't get permission  
but they feel that maybe shouldn't adorn the -- the --  
the graves of -- of those soldiers any longer because  
they're -- they're -- they want to replace them and  
they went to just remove those to do a good service.  
Would they be held liable for this?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE:

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Thank you, Madam President.

Through you, I do not believe so. That is not the intent of this bill. The -- it was -- it's more in line with someone actually physically destroying or desecrating a memorial. The takings of a flag in -- in -- basically in memorance of -- for that person I would propose or suppose I don't think that would be the course for this -- for this bill.

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, Madam President.

I just wanted to put that on the record for Legislative intent.

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, sir.

Will you remark further?

SENATOR LEONE:

Thank you, Madam President.

With that I would put this on Consent.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection so ordered.

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On page 27, Calendar 83, Substitute for Senate Bill Number 263, AN ACT CONCERNING LIABILITY OF ZONING

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Bill 5096; on page 9, Calendar 3 -- 312, Senate Bill Number 114; page 11, Calendar 327, Senate Bill Number 378; page 13, Calendar 344, Senate Bill Number 143. Also on page 13, Calendar 343, Senate Bill 116; page 14, Calendar 350, Senate Bill Number 198; page 26, Calendar 74, Senate Bill Number 196. On page 27, Calendar 83, Senate Bill Number 263. On page 31, Calendar 184, Senate Bill Number 94; page 31, 1 -- Calendar 166, Senate Bill Number 62. Also on page 31, Calendar 167, Senate Bill 64; page 32, Calendar 185, Senate Bill 190; page 33, Calendar 220, Senate Bill 351.

THE CHAIR:

Are those all the bills on the -- oh, Agenda 3, sir. The last one on Agenda 3. I think it --

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Just wanted to -- just to reconfirm that the item from Senate Agenda Number 3 --

THE CHAIR:

Was not called.

SENATOR LOONEY:

-- is on the Consent Calendar that we had taken up under suspension, substitute House Bill Number 5445.

THE CLERK:

Yes, sir.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Are there any questions?

If not, Mr. Clerk, I will call for a roll call vote. Will you call for a roll call vote and I'll open the machine for the Consent Calendar.

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THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.  
Senators please return to the Chamber.

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

Have all members voted? Have all members voted. The machine will be closed. And, Mr. Clerk, will you call the tally on the Consent Calendar, please.

THE CLERK:

On today's Consent Calendar,

Total number voting	35
Necessary for Passage	19
Those Voting Yea	35
Those Voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	1

THE CHAIR:

Consent Calendar passed.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, would move for a suspension for immediate transmittal to the Governor of Substitute House Bill Number 5445, AN ACT CONCERNING SUPPLEMENTAL PAYMENTS UNDER THE CONNECTICUT ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, which was just adopted as part of our Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

**JOINT  
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changes are not meant to indicate that we don't support the bill. Just that we sort of fine tune it.

SENATOR LEONE: Great. Thank you.

I know there's many issues with the fine details. I just wanted to make sure that we keep our eye on the ball. And I know there are other members here with sort of the -- helps spark the interest for this. And hopefully you can work with them as well. Because at the end of the day, we want to be collaborative and make sure that we don't put anyone in harm's way as we try to address the situation.

Great. Thank you.

Next on the list for elected official, we probably have one or two more within the hour and then we'll switch back and forth to the public. Next on the list Representative Gentile.

Good afternoon.

REP. GENTILE: Good afternoon, honorable chairs, ranking members and distinguished committee members. I've submitted written testimony to you regarding Senate Bill 198. So I will not -- I will save you the pain of having to read it word for word. But I just wanted to express some -- some concerns -- some issues that I really feel strongly about.

Ordinarily, I don't come before committees to give verbal testimony, because I feel it's important to hear from the public in this building. But this is a very -- an issue that is very, very important to me. And it is

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intensely personal. As you can see from my testimony, we had several war monuments and memorials that were -- that were defaced and -- and the metals and the bronze were stolen from the plaques.

And to me this is the most despicable best and form of crime that can be committed. I believe that these war memorials are sacred. They should be absolutely respected and revered for what they signify. And this is -- this is to me, is just a no-brainer. And I fully support this legislation. All too often in this building we agonize over what is the right thing to do.

And I just firmly believe that this is a no brainer. This is simply the right thing to do. And I would respectfully urge and strongly ask you to please support this legislation going forward. And just as a side, I will let you know that Mayor DellaVolpe, Mayor of Ansonia, was going to be here to submit testimony today. But something came up in town. But he wanted me to express his full support of this bill as he -- this was also very personal to him because one of the monuments that was desecrated in the City of Ansonia contained the names of father and his uncles. And it's intensely personal to him.

So, on his behalf, I let you know that he fully supports this legislation. And I thank you for your time and effort. Any questions?

SENATOR LEONE: Any questions?

Representative.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you for your testimony. And

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I think very rarely does a title actually capture the intent and spirit of what we're trying to do. But this one actually falls into that category, where the title says it all. And -- and as you mentioned it's a very despicable act. And I don't think anyone on this committee had any second thoughts about why we shouldn't be doing this.

And -- and we're very hopeful that when it gets out to the -- our other committees and to the floor for debate, there'll be probably little debate in terms of passing this. Because we recognize for -- it is for what it is. So I think we're -- this is one of our better ideas. And -- and hopefully it will sail through.

Mr. Chairman.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Representative Gentile, I just want to commensurate with you the outrage that you feel. My father's from Ansonia. So I have family in Ansonia that has served in wars. And it's quite upsetting. Thank you.

REP. GENTILE: Thank you. I appreciate your support and your time.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE: Representative Adinolfi.

REP. ADINOLFI: Thank you.

Welcome. It's nice to see you sitting there since you said you don't usually do that.

REP. GENTILE: Thank you, Representative.

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REP. ADINOLFI: Question is a very general question. My understanding when this bill came out was that -- the desecration of war or veteran's memorial also included veteran's graves, tombstones, the markers on the grave, and the flags that are put there. And now I'm not sure. And I was told this was general. I just was -- I'm just curious if that came out anywhere. Does it -- does it or doesn't it cover the desecration of graves and so on?

REP. GENTILE: Representative, as far as I'm concerned it should cover anything related to the -- to the veterans. I mean -- we just need to respect and revere.

REP. ADINOLFI: Yes. I understand.

Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE: Thank you, Representative.

REP. GENTILE: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE: Next on the list, Representative Len Greene.

REP. GREENE: Thank you very much.

Senator Leone, Representative Hennessey ranking members of members of the committee. For the record, my name is Len Greene. I'm the Representative from the 105th District. Which is comprised of Seymour, Beacon Falls and Ansonia. I too am here to fully support Senate Bill 198. I won't reiterate what Representative Gentile just said in the interest in time. But I just wanted to give you an idea as to what this -- what these memorials in particular meant to -- to us down

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in the lower Naugatuck River Valley.

As Representative Hennessey just mentioned, he had some family from Ansonia. You know, the City of Shelton, City of Derby and the City of Ansonia were all affected by this. One memorial in the City of Shelton was dedicated to one of the first captains of the U.S.S. Constitution, Commodore Hull. You know, several memorials in the City of Derby were dedicated to a man who sacrificed his life and earned the Congressional Medal of Honor. And those memorials were stolen. Presumably for the sale of scrap metal.

So, you know, this bill I think would go a long way towards helping us separate this -- this concept out from some other desecrations of other pieces -- pieces of property. I think it -- it shows that the legislature in general and that the -- the communities in general we -- were making a strong statement here saying that these memorials are dedicated to people who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Who have made decisions that some of us might not have done.

They serve as places for us to -- to gather every Memorial Day, Veteran's Day, Independence Days to actually honor those people proactively. For veterans to come and actually see the names of people that they might have served with, friends they may have lost. Or family members they may have known. And the fact that they were stolen for the simple -- presumably for the simple sale of the -- of value of their metal is -- is deplorable.

So, I want to commend the committee for -- for raising this bill. You know, I don't want to

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take up too much more of your time. But I do believe that at least separating this out and increasing the penalties is -- is a step towards showing our communities that this is a bigger problem. And that when it comes to our community, public memorials, things of this nature that we really -- we really care about it.

And it's -- it's a larger -- there's a bigger value to these memorials than just the monetary value of their metal. With regard to -- to one other issue, we didn't include when we issued the request for the committee to raise the bill, I know there were a number of us on -- on both sides of the aisle. Actually there was at least one member from each caucus that brought this out to your attention. We didn't include anything with regard to the scrap metal dealers themselves. The people who buy or sell these materials.

Knowingly purchase or sell something of this nature. That's something that the committee may want to take a look at. I know that in the past, the legislature has actually addressed this. I've heard from some of my constituents that they're more concerned about those people who are creating a marketplace for -- for such metal than they are about the people who are perpetrating the crime.

But, you know, we didn't put that in the bill because I know we have -- the legislature has actually strengthened those laws in the past. And, you know, we wanted to at least have this as the starting point for the committee to consider. You know, I won't take anymore of your time. And I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

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REP. HENNESSY: Thank you, Representative Greene. I just need to mention that Bridgeport has monuments and seaside park that about five years ago, the bronze plaques were taken. And so now a composite has been duplicated on it. But, you know, Bridgeport had that happen a little while ago.

Thank you.

REP. GREENE: It has been as I understand it, there's been incidents in -- in New Britain. There have been other places in the state that have been affected. One thing that I did hear about recently in the City of Waterbury, there was a monument in a cemetery that had been there for over 100 years that was stolen. Thankfully, they were able to catch the person who did it and recover the property.

But, you know, we didn't include that in this particular bill. As I said, this is kind of a starting point. Just a way for us to pull -- pull the -- the value of a -- of a public memorial, especially to veterans or war memorials, for people, as I said, who might have sacrificed the ultimate sacrifice. A way for us to -- to pull that out and -- and show the true value of these -- of these monuments. So.

SENATOR LEONE: Thank you, Representative for your comments. You know, no matter where these steps or damage occurs, it's an insult on all our senses. So, regardless of where it happens, it needs to stop. And that's what the intent of this bill will do. And you mentioned about the scrap metal. We've talked about that in the General Law, another committee which I also get to serve on. And we are looking at those issues as well. So

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that we can combine both factors and make sure we can pass a bill as strong as possible.

So, we thank you for your input. Mr. Chairman.

REP. HENNESSY: Just -- just one other comment. I'm hoping that it is due to monetary gain that this motive is -- when I first heard about it I was wondering if there's some kind of seditious element out there is -- is focusing on that. And I certainly hope not. Can't imagine that that would be a motive.

But I hope -- I hope it's, you know, crack addicts that, you know, are just interested in getting their next fix or whatever. As opposed to someone whose -- whose, you know, has some kind of wish to harm the -- the memory and honor of our service people.

REP. GENTILE: Absolutely. And, you know, until we catch the people there's no way of knowing. But, you know, I share your sentiments with that.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE: Thank you, Representative.

REP. GENTILE: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE: I have time for one more elected official because I know he's on a tight schedule. Representative Hetherington and then we'll move into the public.

REP. HEATHERINGTON: Thank you.

Senator Leone and Welsh and Representative Hennessy and Adinolfi and members of the

HB 5296

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gathering support in trying to pass this --  
this legislation to help you.

Any other questions?

Thank you very much.

Next on the list is Senator Kelly.

SENATOR KELLY: Good afternoon, Chairman Leone,  
ranking member Welsh, Senator Slossberg and  
Representative Rose. My name is Kevin Kelly.  
I'm the State Senator for the 21st District,  
which represents the towns of Monroe, Seymour,  
Shelton and Stratford. I'm here this  
afternoon to testify in support of Senate Bill  
198, An Act Concerning Desecration of War and  
Veteran's Memorials.

Last year, during the Memorial Day weekend, I  
had the unpleasant experience of going down to  
Shelton and finding out that the Veteran's  
Park on Howe Avenue was desecrated by vandals,  
who had turned over American flags and sprayed  
paint over the sidewalk and memorials to the  
Veteran service. That was a very, I'm going  
to say, disappointing experience of mine in  
public service.

And this bill is being offered to increase the  
penalties to somebody who does that. And to  
make them personally responsible for putting  
the memorial back the way it was prior to  
their conduct. I think we'll all agree that  
democracy is the cornerstone of -- free speech  
is the cornerstone of democracy. The First  
Amendment guarantees that.

However, courts do allow us to regulate that  
speech to time, place and manner. And quite  
frankly, I believe there are ways to get your

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point across in other manners that would not desecrate the service that our veterans have given to this country and to individuals to give us that right to free speech. And to find out that this happens on a weekend such as Memorial Day, I just don't think that's the proper speech and that this is the type of bill that we need to discourage those individuals from engaging in that.

I'm available for further questions. But I do support this -- this bill.

SENATOR LEONE: Thank you, Senator.

Your remarks are pretty much on the mark. And it's unfortunate that it was even occurred on a veteran's holiday. I mean that's salt in the wounds for all better. And so, we thank you for your support and we can't wait for this bill to pass.

Thank you.

SENATOR KELLY: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE: Any questions?

Thank you.

Next on the list is Carmelo Figueroa followed by Sofia Nelson on deck.

CARMELO FIGUEROA: Good afternoon, Senators and chair members. Thank you for your time and consideration today. I'd like to speak on behalf of Senate Bill 114, 198 and House Bill 5298. I just want to make a couple of comments just very brief on Senate Bill 198 and House Bill 5298 then I'll go back to Senate Bill 114.

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That's pretty much self explanatory, okay. Bottom line is it shouldn't happen. You know, I work as a Judicial Marshal, we have a 24 hour lock up facility I'd be more than happy to accommodate those individuals that desecrate our war monuments and our cemeteries period. That's the bottom line. Okay.

I also volunteer during the Memorial Day holiday in place with the Boy Scouts, 5500 flags at our North Cemetery here in Hartford too. So, that's very meaningful to me. Very near and very dear. And I find it very offensive that individuals in this state or in anywhere in this nation do something like that. So, please take that into consideration.

Individuals, on House Bill 5298, individuals that take advantage of contributions in the name of veterans, that's also very disgusting and very offensive. I find that very, very, very offensive. You know, and I know that's probably going to be a very long hard fought battle as I heard the Commissioner earlier mention that she had the experience at Stop & Shop.

I personally observed it at Wal-Mart on Flatbush Avenue not too long ago. And then one of the Veterans as well called me. Some organization called Vets For Life called me personally. And I said, look this is going to be looked into. And no sooner than it was mentioned to me, it was brought up at one of our veteran organization meetings. So whatever we can do to address this issue, let's address it in any legal form that we can. Please.

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facing.

So, not only are veterans not using those services. But those services match what supervised diversion and accelerated rehabilitation may mandate.

REP. HENNESSY: Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much for your testimony.

SENATOR LEONE: Next on the list is Gary Waterhouse.

GARY WATERHOUSE: Good afternoon, Chairman SB 115 SB 198  
Hennessy, distinguished members of the HB 5298  
Committee of Veteran's Affairs. My name is Gary Waterhouse. And I'm a proud Vietnam veteran. I had the honor of serving in H Company Rangers, 75th Infantry assigned to the First Cavalry Division. And I'm pleased to offer testimony today in supporting legislation that in my opinion is good for veterans.

I also have the distinct pleasure in serving as a Veteran Service Officer at the VA in Newington. So my job is to deal with veterans issues day in and day out. I'm here today to support Senate Bill 114, An Act Concerning Pre-Trial Diversionary Programs. I was a police officer in Connecticut for 25 years. And I have come to believe that many people do things under the influence of post traumatic stress syndrome that they would not normally do.

In Connecticut, we currently have a pilot program called the Veterans Justice Outreach Program. It is a federal jail diversion program designed to write outreach services to eligible veterans. Veterans who are involved

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with the criminal justice system. Justice involved veterans can be at risk for homelessness and struggling with issues of substance abuse, mental issue and or physical health problems.

The goal of the program is to write consultation necessary to facilitate access to VA services by providing the court with the treatment plan that it could use as an alternative to incarceration. The federal programs at GA23 New Haven Superior Court and GA4 in Waterbury Superior Court have been successful in the eyes of the veteran's community.

Although the Judicial Branch has consistently opposed legislation that requires the creation of special courts or dockets, because it takes away resources from available to handle all their other cases. We believe that the members of our armed forces have earned the additional resources after 10 years of war.

I'd also like to support Senate Bill 115, An Act Concerning the Military Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program. I cannot conceive of a reasonable legal theory that would oppose providing confidentiality for disclosures made by military personnel or victims of sexual assault to military sexual advocates. And again as a police officer for over 25 years, I learned the value of confidentiality in allowing victims of this horrendous crime to speak the whole truth. And to identify perpetrators. I believe this is an easy one to pass.

I'd also like to speak in support of Senate Bill 198, An Act Concerning Desecration of War or Veteran's Memorials. I strongly support

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this bill. And the protection it would offer to the structures erected in our communities to commemorate our military history. War monuments are a vital part of this country's heritage. Veterans see service memorials as a visualization that the community validates the veterans commitment to duty, honor and country.

Further, I'd like to support House Bill 5298, An Act Establishing a List of Preferred Veterans Charitable Organizations. Stated simply, the veteran's community is embarrassed by the scam artists and hustlers misleading generous people into giving their hard earned money to veteran causes that are diverted into the scammers pockets.

The First Amendment notwithstanding, the public should be protected from the scam artists and honest veterans causes identified and recognized as truly veterans service organizations. We've been embarrassed for many years by the behavior of some of these groups. I know it's difficult to regulate charities. But there may be a way to validate some of the veterans service organizations.

So, that concludes my testimony. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you, Gary.

Any questions or comments?

Thank you.

GARY WATERHOUSE: Thank you.

REP. HENNESSY: Are there any elected officials

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF CONNECTICUT



STATE LEGISLATIVE OFFICE

STATEMENT OF

ROBERT A. HUNTER  
STATE LEGISLATIVE CHAIRMAN  
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

WITH RESPECT TO PENDING VETERAN-RELATED LEGISLATION  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2012  
HARTFORD, CT

SB 198 SB 250  
SB 251 HB 5296  
HB 5297 HB 5298

Senate Chairman Leone, House Chairman Hennessey, and members of the Select Committee on Veterans Affairs:

On behalf of the roughly 20,000 men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. (VFW) and our Auxiliaries I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. Our members greatly appreciate the voice you give them at these hearings that are critical to their well-being as veterans and citizens of the great State of Connecticut.

1. S.B. No. 113 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SERVICE MEMBERS CIVIL RELIEF ACT PROCEEDINGS.

The VFW supports this bill. We believe providing the opportunity for testimony through some electronic means while deployed, and not able to be physically present during court proceedings, affords that service member a reasonable means of meeting his or her civil obligation(s)

2. S.B. No. 114 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING PRETRIAL DIVISIONARY PROGRAMS.

The VFW supports this bill. With the consideration that our state has seen more than 16,500 residents deployed to combat since 2001, and roughly 25% of them can be expected to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS); an opportunity to help these

who have seen no other course of treatment but to self-medicate is presented in the bill. The low-level offenses that can be expected as by-products of PTS are most easily addressed through treatment, and this proposed legislation offers a vehicle to make that a reality for our veterans who need more help than they are willing to seek for themselves.

It should be noted the cost of a diversionary program per capita is approximately one-third of the cost of incarceration. Treatment for our veterans as the need arises will help them re-enter civilian life as capable, productive citizens. This is a win for the state, a win for our fellow citizens, and most assuredly a win for our returning veterans.

3. S.B. No. 198 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DESECRATION OF WAR OR VETERANS' MEMORIALS.

The VFW supports this bill, and believes ensuring the integrity of our state's memorials serves its citizens the reminder of the costs of war, and pays honor in perpetuity to those who gave their last measure of devotion to their country in its service.

4. S.B. No. 250 (RAISED) AN ACT EXCLUDING VETERANS' DISABILITY COMPENSATION FROM PROPERTY ASSIGNMENT AND ALIMONY IN DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE PROCEEDINGS.

The VFW supports this bill, as it protects the disabled veteran by ensuring a continued, undiminished stream of compensation for losses accrued during their service to the United States. Such compensation may well be the normalizing factor in allowing the veteran to sustain a viable life following the dissolution of marriage proceedings.

5. S.B. No. 251 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING VETERANS' JOBS.

The VFW supports this bill, as it will directly address the disparity in the veterans' unemployment rate of 11.7% and the overall rate of 9.1% by providing greater opportunities to both veterans and the companies that would hire them.

6. H.B. No. 5296 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING COURSE ENROLLMENT FEE WAIVERS FOR CERTAIN VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD ENROLLED AT CHARTER OAK STATE COLLEGE.

The VFW is in favor of this legislation. Returning veterans, regardless of their duty stations, return to civilian life with experiences and a self-discipline not commonly enjoyed by their civilian counterparts. Creating greater opportunity for, and easing the costs of higher education to our war veterans brings back to our state an energized veteran workforce capable of putting their experience and education to work.

7. H.B. No. 5297 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE SUBSTITUTION OF STATE LICENSING REQUIREMENTS WITH MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TRAINING FOR VETERANS.

To the select committee on Veterans affairs: My name is SFC. Carmelo Figueroa, and I am here today to speak on behalf of mainly 3 issue's. However for the record I do support any and all matters pertaining to the Continued growth and betterment of the quality of life for all veterans. I am A 30 yr Army Veteran (3 combat tours Desert Storm-Iraq and Afghanistan) I sit on the Board of the Directors for the CT. Veterans Military Coalition as well as the Board for the Hispanic American Veterans and the OEF-OIF Task force team. So as you can see I take these matters very seriously. When I am not in any of the above capacities I work my normal job as a Judicial Marshal,(at G.A.-14 Hartford), in recent years mostly in Criminal Court- Which exposed and allowed me to see 1<sup>st</sup> hand the different elements and caliber of citizens that Have been presented before our Judicial system. One being our troops both pass and present- as of late, mostly from these recent conflicts-oef/oif and any other part of the world.

I can remember a young service member(prefer not to mention the component) that I personally new and was very shocked and surprised to see him facing the judge for some serious criminal charges. This kid fought in the battle of fallugah back in 2004-he had no one to fight for him in front of that judge because there were no programs in place for him-not to mention he was taken advantage of by a private attorney. This is one example of why We need programs like the pre-trial diversionary program, so please support it.

1<sup>st</sup> SB NO. 114(Raised) An act concerning pre-trial diversionary program.  
SB 198- desecration of war memorials  
HB 5298- a list of preferred veterans charitable organizations

Gary E Waterhouse  
Vietnam War Veteran  
Tuesday, February 28, 2012  
Select Committee on Veterans Affairs Public Hearing

**SUPPORT- *S.B. No. 115 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE MILITARY SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROGRAM.***

I cannot conceive of a reasonable legal theory that would oppose providing confidentiality for disclosures made by military personnel who are victims of sexual assault to military sexual assault advocates. The recent trend of protecting the confidential communications between sexual assault counselors and sexual assault victims is a step forward in promoting victim recovery and expanding the scope of a rape victim's rights. Similar to the more well-known evidentiary privileges between psychotherapists and patients, husbands and wives, and clergy members and penitents, a majority of state legislatures has, in recent years, enacted legislation privileging the communication between rape crisis counselors and sexual assault victims transmitted during the course of the counseling relationship. Keeping such information confidential allows for the development of a trustful and healing relationship between a sexual assault victim and her counselor and cultivates the type of connection necessary for recovery to occur. While many state legislatures have recognized the need to foster the victim counseling relationship by enacting privilege statutes, the scope of the privilege varies widely between states.

**SUPPORT- *S.B. No. 198 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DESECRATION OF WAR OR VETERANS' MEMORIALS.***

I strongly support this bill and the protection it will offer to the structures erected in our communities to commemorate our military history. War Monuments are a vital part of this country's heritage. Veterans see military service memorials as visualizations that the community validates veteran's commitment to Duty, Honor and Country. Carved on them are the names of men and women who were killed beside you. "They died for their country, and now even their names are being destroyed by thieves, just grabbing them to make some money from scrap metal.

**SUPPORT- *H.B. No. 5298 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A LIST OF PREFERRED VETERANS' CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS.***

Stated simply the veterans' community is embarrassed by the scam artists and hucksters misleading generous people into giving their hard earned money to veteran causes that is diverted into the scammer pockets. The First Amendment notwithstanding, the public should be protected from scam artists and honest veterans causes identified as recognized as established Veteran service organizations.



## State of Connecticut

### SENATE

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REGULATIONS REVIEW COMMITTEE

#### Testimony

#### In Support of SB 198, AAC Desecration of War or Veterans' Memorials Special Committee on Veterans Affairs February 28, 2012

Good morning Chairmen Leone and Hennessy, Ranking members Adinolfi and Welch.

I am Senator Kevin Kelly of the 21<sup>st</sup> district covering the towns of Stratford, Shelton, Monroe and Seymour. I am testifying today in support of SB 198, AAC Desecration of War or Veterans' Memorials.

Let me start by saying thank you for raising this very important bill, this issue hits very close to home for me.

Last year, during Memorial Day weekend, vandals struck Veterans Park in Shelton. They turned American Flags upside down, sprayed graffiti on the sidewalks, and sprayed more on the monuments themselves. It happened two nights in a row, leading up to the Memorial Day ceremonies that are held at the park every year.

I was disgusted and appalled that these vandals had absolutely no respect for the veterans who are represented in that park. They have no respect for those men and women who put their lives on the line every day to ensure the free world that we live in. They have no compassion for these places to gather and remember those who made the supreme sacrifice for our country so we can enjoy the liberties that we do today.

This bill would impose harsher penalties on those who vandalize war or veteran's memorials. It would require that they pay out of pocket for the damages they caused and would impose stiffer fines if convicted.

The cornerstone to democracy is free speech. However, embodied in our First Amendment, there are limits to that freedom. We need to do everything we can to protect the veterans who provide service over our country, ensure our rights, and deserve our respect.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony

Sincerely,

Kevin C. Kelly  
State Senator – 21st District



**State of Connecticut**

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 LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT

**S.B. 198, An Act Concerning Desecration**  
**Of War Or Veterans' Memorials**  
**Select Committee on Veterans Affairs**  
**Public Hearing Testimony**  
**February 28, 2012**

Senator Leone, Senator Slossberg, Senator Welch, Representative Hennessy, Representative Nicastro, Representative Adinolfi and Members of the Select Committee on Veterans Affairs:

I am sorry I cannot be with you today to personally communicate my support for this bill, but thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.

For some reason, perhaps given our difficult economy, there is a trend in the State of Connecticut involving the theft of property that contains copper, bronze and other valuable metals. These valuable metals are stolen and then sold for scrap. Two sources of these metals are war and veterans' monuments and memorials found on numerous town greens as well as veterans' cemeteries throughout our state.

In late 2011, over the course of several weeks, the towns of Ansonia, Derby and Shelton fell victim to the theft or desecration of their veterans' war monuments and memorials erected in honor of many of their bravest and most honorable citizens who served their country, some of whom paid the ultimate sacrifice.

The actions of those who intentionally desecrate any war or veterans' monument or memorial are not only illegal but highly disrespectful and unpatriotic. The penalties for this type of crime should be strengthened and increased to separate them from those of other forms of vandalism and theft. That is what SB 198 seeks to do, proposing changes to Subsection (e) of Section 46a-58 of the Connecticut General Statutes, which currently states:



**State of Connecticut**

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STATE CAPITOL**

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**RANKING MEMBER**  
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

**MEMBER**  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

*Testimony by Representative Jason Perillo  
Before the Joint Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
On Senate Bill 198  
February 28, 2012*

Good afternoon Chairmen Leone and Hennessy, Ranking Members Welch and Adinolfi, and members of the Joint Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity today to testify in favor of SB 198.

The theft of property unfortunately has become a more common occurrence in our society. The items I speak of today are copper, bronze, and other valuable metals. These items are stolen and then sold for scrap. In particular, two sources of these metals include veterans' monuments and memorials found on town greens as well as cemeteries.

In 2011 the towns of Ansonia, Derby and Shelton had a rash of such thefts over several weeks. I personally find this repulsive that individuals would desecrate their veteran's monuments that were erected in recognition of their service to our country, some of whom paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Section 46a-58(b) of the CT Statutes states that: "Any person who intentionally desecrates any public property, monument or structure, or any religious object, symbol or house of religious worship, or any cemetery, or any private structure not owned by such person, shall be in violation of subsection (a) of this section." It goes on to say in subsection (e) "Any person who violates any provision of this section shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor, except that if property is damaged as a consequence of such violation in an amount in excess of one thousand dollars, such person shall be guilty of a class D felony." SB 198 would double this fine and "the court shall require full restitution for all costs of repair and replacement of the property damaged in violation of this section if that property is a war or veterans' memorial or monument."

The change this bill proposes is appropriate and will compensate towns for the repair or replacement of those memorials and monuments that honor our veterans and war heroes.

Thank you for holding this hearing on SB 198 and I wish to express my support of the bill and ask the committee's favorable action.

Sincerely,

Rep Jason Perillo  
State Representative  
113<sup>th</sup> District



**State of Connecticut**

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE CAPITOL**

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**MEMBER**

FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2012**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

**PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY**

***RE: Support of Proposed Senate Bill No. 198, "An Act Concerning Desecration of War or Veterans' Memorials"***

Good Afternoon Chairmen Leone, Chairmen Hennessy, Ranking Member Welch, Ranking Member Adinolfi, and the honorable members of the Select Committee on Veterans Affairs,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of S.B. 198 "An Act Concerning Desecration of War or Veterans' Memorials" It is truly sad that we must address legislation of this sort in response to the recent acts of vandalism, destruction, and theft at memorials around the state.

It is imperative that we protect these monuments erected to honor the men and women who have fought, sacrificed, and died so that we can all enjoy the freedoms and liberties that we often take for granted. These monuments, and veterans they memorialize, deserve a higher level protection from the law than they currently are afforded. Additionally, those who commit acts of desecration against veteran and war memorials need to be held fully accountable for their actions. These acts are not only disrespectful to the memory of those who have served, but are also hurtful to the veterans and their families who live on as our neighbors and friends.

For these reasons, I full heartedly support S.B. 198 and hope the Committee continues to support this effort by favorably voting it forward.

Sincerely,

Christopher Davis,  
State Representative  
57<sup>th</sup> District



State of Connecticut  
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**CHAIRMAN**  
 PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

**MEMBER**  
 COMMERCE COMMITTEE  
 PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

February 28, 2012

The Honorable Carlo Leone  
 Legislative Office Building, Room 3602  
 Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Jack Hennessy  
 Legislative Office Building, Room 5002  
 Hartford, CT 06106

Good Afternoon Honorable Chairs, Ranking Members, and Committee Members of the Veteran's Affairs Committee.

My name is Representative Linda Gentile, and I represent the 104th District serving the cities of Ansonia and Derby. I am here to discuss Senate Bill 198, An Act To Increase The Penalties For The Intentional Desecration Of War Or Veterans' Memorials.

I am strongly in favor of this legislation, and I respectfully urge the committee to pass this important bill this session. I believe that any monuments or memorials that honor our service members and veterans in Connecticut are sacred and should never be intentionally defiled. In recent months, my district has seen vandals steal original and historic plaques in both Witek Park in Derby and at the Woodbridge Avenue Memorial in Ansonia.

As a result of this vandalism, there was a public outcry from the Valley Community to find a way to cover the costs to replace the plaques that were stolen from the memorials. Although fundraising has begun, the Valley Community should not have to be responsible for the replacement of these monuments.

The meaning that these plaques symbolize, for not only the community, but also for the Veterans and their families that sacrificed for our state is of the utmost importance and I strongly urge the committee to pass this bill unanimously.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony and thank you for raising this important bill.

Very truly yours,

Linda M. Gentile  
 State Representative, 104<sup>th</sup> District

Raised Bill No. 198- AN ACT CONCERNING DESCECRATION OF WAR OR VETERANS' MEMORIALS  
Testimony submitted 28 FEB 2012 by Patrick Henri, 16 Harris Road, Ansonia, Connecticut

On behalf of the American Legion Gordon-Viselli Post 50, Ansonia, Connecticut, I would like to thank the committee and all those involved in creating the proposed bill and in setting up this public hearing. We support any endeavor that would help to protect our cherished memorials.

The American Legion was founded on the principal of 4 Pillars: Veterans' Affairs, National Security, Patriotism, and Children & Youth. Under these broad headings, Ansonia American Legion Post 50 deems it well within its duty to have input into these hearings today. Our members feel that they have been victimized by the theft and desecration of Veterans' Memorials throughout the Naugatuck Valley, as if the items were taken from our own homes.

At the time the crimes had been committed in August 2011, I was serving in Afghanistan on active duty with the Navy Reserve. I read of the accounts in the Valley Independent Sentinel, an online local news publication that covers Ansonia and its surrounding towns. As I read the article, my heart sank and I was angered. I could hardly believe it. There was a distinct feeling of being betrayed. That someone would stoop so low as to take plaques with names of those who put themselves at risk in our nation's armed forces was sickening. This sort of irreverent behavior falls in line with other vile acts such as knocking over grave markers, robbing the elderly and flag burning. Not only should the perpetrators be punished for their obvious crimes, they should be punished for their blatant disrespect. These offenses are a slap in the face to all veterans that should be answered with a strong kick in the teeth. The ante for such crimes must be upped well above that of "usual" stolen goods when memorial artifacts are involved.

To that end, to enhance the deterrent of such future crimes and to aid convicted offenders in feeling a deeper and more substantial pain, I respectfully offer the following recommendations:

- 1) Institute additional penalties for selling stolen memorial artifacts. Remember, these are not just hunks of scrap metal; they represent honor, service, valor, sacrifice, and remembrance. They are part of the fabric and spirit of our communities. The victims of these crimes are many, including those who are no longer with us.
- 2) Institute additional penalties for the buyers. Make them vigilant. It may be obvious to scrap dealers that something is amiss when an unaffiliated individual brings in something that is ground-down, shredded, melted, or in other ways altered from a recognizable item. Let's give those dealers the tools and inspiration to exercise more scrutiny when making purchases.
- 3) Implement seizure and confiscation policies pertaining to buyers' and sellers' vehicles, homes and businesses; similar to drug related crimes.

Let's put out a strong message to those who would commit such offenses in Connecticut that we are determined to protect and preserve our memorials with a sacred fervor, and violators of our laws, our history and our heritage will be intensely regretful when caught.

Thank you and God bless you.



Patrick Henri, Finance Officer, American Legion Gordon-Viselli Post 50, Ansonia

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**Testimony on SB 198**  
**AAC Concerning Desecration of War Or Veterans' Memorials**

“Any person who violates this law shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor, except that if property is damaged as a consequence of such violation in an amount in excess of one thousand dollars, such person shall be guilty of a class D felony.”

SB 198 would double the fine under this subsection and allow the court to require full restitution for all costs of repair and replacement of the property damaged in violation of this section if that property is a war or veterans' memorial or monument.

I believe this is a fitting change to the existing statute, which will help compensate towns for the repair or replacement of their memorials and monuments as well as honor the veterans and war heroes for whom those memorials were erected.

I respectfully request your thoughtful review and consideration of this legislative proposal and that you support its passage out of your committee.

Sincerely,



Themis Klarides  
Deputy House Republican Leader

TK/pb



## State of Connecticut

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#### S.B. 198 AN ACT CONCERNING DESECRATION OF WAR OR VETERANS' MEMORIALS.

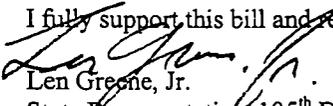
I am here today to address an ever growing problem here in our state in which individuals target property that contains copper, bronze and other valuable metals, steal it and sell it for scrap. The most egregious example of this occurred in three separate towns of the Naugatuck River Valley this past fall. Over the course of a few weeks the towns of Ansonia, Derby and Shelton were victimized by thieves who stole War Memorial Monuments designed to permanently commemorate the heroic actions of many of the Valley's bravest. Some of those honored by these monuments, a man awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in World War II, one of the first captains of the U.S.S. Constitution, in the War of 1812, and several Ansonia men who never made it home.

The nature of this crime has truly struck home with our residents in the Valley, particularly those who served with their friends and their families. The lack of sensitivity and respect to our veterans is abundantly clear in this case, but what is often not considered is the impact such a crime can have on the local community as a whole. Each year we hold events meant to honor our veterans, and often times these monuments serve as tangible reminders of their sacrifice. Therefore, in my opinion, any crime against the community as a whole should be subject to stricter penalties because of it.

I wholeheartedly support the provision in S.B. 198 that doubles the penalties associated with such a crime. In doing so, we as a state are acknowledging that Veterans Memorials are in fact worth more to our communities than the simple material value of the monument.

Additionally, I believe it to be of the utmost importance that we create a form of restitution to those communities that have been affected by this crime. Requiring full restitution for damages will help those communities rebuild or repair their monuments, helping to make those communities whole once again.

I fully support this bill and respectfully urge the committee to do so as well.

  
Len Greene, Jr.  
State Representative, 105<sup>th</sup> District