

PA13-48

SB0070

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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2013**

**VOL.56
PART 13
4177 – 4511**

pat/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

78
May 16, 2013

Will Members please return to the Chamber
immediately.

DEPUTY SPEAKER BERGER:

Have all the Members voted? Have all the Members
voted? If all the Members have voted, the Clerk will
take the tally and the machine will be locked. Will
the Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Bill Number 6473 as amended by House "A".

Total Number Voting 135

Necessary for Passage 68

Those voting Yea 135

Those voting Nay 0

Those absent and not voting 15

DEPUTY SPEAKER BERGER:

The bill as amended passes.

Will the Clerk please call House Calendar Number
435.

THE CLERK:

House Calendar 435, Favorable Report of the Joint
Standing Committee on Approps, Senate Substitute Bill
70 AN ACT RESTORING BENEFITS TO VETERANS DISCHARGED
UNDER "DON'T ASK DON'T TELL".

DEPUTY SPEAKER BERGER:

Representative Hennessey.

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Mr. Speaker, I move acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER BERGER:

The motion before the Chamber is acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill. Will you remark further?

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this bill makes veterans eligible for state benefits if the benefits were previously denied or would be denied due to the veteran's ineligibility of federal funds, the veteran was denied federal benefits based solely on his or her sexual orientation pursuant to a federal policy prohibiting homosexuals from serving in the armed forces and the veteran's ineligibility for federal benefits has been reinstated.

I urge support from the House.

DEPUTY SPEAKER BERGER:

Motion before the Chamber is adoption of the bill in concurrence with the Senate. Is there further comment? Is there further remark? Representative Yaccarino of the 87th.

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like the good Representative, the Chair of the Committee said, this follows federal law. It cannot be enacted until the recipient or the new honorably discharged veteran applies for their rights and their qualifications.

So Connecticut law will mirror the federal law and I urge adoption. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER BERGER:

Thank you, Representative. Will you remark further on the bill before us? Will you remark further on the bill before us?

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

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by Roll.

The House of Representatives is voting by Roll.

Will Members please return to the Chamber immediately.

DEPUTY SPEAKER BERGER:

Have all the Members voted? Have all the Members voted? If all the Members have voted, will they check the board to see if their vote is properly cast.

If all the Members have voted, the machine will be locked and the Clerk will take the tally. Will the Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Yes, Mr. Speaker. Senate Bill 70 in concurrence with

The Senate.

Total Number Voting	134
Necessary for Passage	68
Those voting Yea	134
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	16

DEPUTY SPEAKER BERGER:

The bill passes in concurrence with the Senate.

Representative Hampton, for what purpose do you rise, sir?

REP. HAMPTON (16th):

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER BERGER:

Good afternoon, Representative.

REP. HAMPTON (16th):

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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2013**

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PART 4
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mhr/gbr

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SENATE

April 24, 2013

On Page 15, Calendar 211, Substitute for Senate Bill
Number 70, AN ACT RESTORING BENEFITS TO VETERANS
DISCHARGED UNDER "DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL," Favorable
Report of the Committee on Veterans Affairs.

THE CHAIR:

The Chair will recognize Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE:

Thank you, Mr. President.

I move acceptance of the joint committee's Favorable
Report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

The question before the Chamber is acceptance and
passage. Do you care to remark further?

SENATOR LEONE:

Yes, Mr. President.

Thank you, very much; a pleasure to see you there
today.

The summary of this bill, briefly, this bill makes
Veterans that would be eligible for state benefits, if
the benefits were previously denied or would be denied
due to the Veteran's ineligibility for federal
benefits or the Veteran was denied federal benefits
based solely on his or her sexual orientation,
pursuant to a federal policy prohibiting homosexuals
from servicing in the Armed Forces; and, three, the
Veteran's eligibility for federal benefits has been
reinstated.

What this does would follow federal legislation that
with the repeal of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Veterans
that were discharged and were not receiving benefits,
this would restore those benefits once the federal
legislation takes effect. And if that does happen,
then Connecticut would follow suit.

mhr/gbr

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SENATE

April 24, 2013

And, with that, I would urge my co-members to support this bill.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark further on the item before us?

Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Mr. President.

I, too, will be supporting this bill. I think if we have a situation where the federal government is offering benefits and the state is not, then -- then we are discriminating, and that's something we ought not to be doing.

I do have a caution for the Circle, though, and that is we need to be careful and tread lightly when we as a civilian body tell a military body what we think they ought to be doing. It's very important in the military that a -- a soldier serving under the command of one follow orders, and they follow orders sometimes without question, in danger, and putting their own life at peril for the greater -- greater cause. And when they choose not to follow orders and the civilian body says that's okay, I think we need to be very careful about sending the wrong message, one that might just get to the very fabric of the system that we have that defends us and protects us so well.

With that said, notwithstanding, I will be supporting this bill. I think it's something that we ought to be doing, given -- assuming that the federal government makes the move that we're expecting them to.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Will you remark further?

Senator Leone.

mhr/gbr
SENATE

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April 24, 2013

SENATOR LEONE:

Yes, Mr. President.

I -- I want to thank Senator Welch for his comments. The comments that he made was -- were fleshed out in committee, and there was similar concern. And -- and, again, it's only if it's the repeal of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell, not considering any other aggravating factors that may have caused a different discharge. So I -- I thank him for his input as well as the -- the whole committee, and I urge support.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Do you care to remark further?

Senator Boucher.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

Thank you, Madam President [sic].

Madam President -- Mr. President, too-small, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Too tall.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

I rise in support of this amendment and I think -- and I'm very proud of our state in making this very positive statement on this issue this day.

Thank you, very much.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, madam.

mhr/gbr

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SENATE

April 24, 2013

Are there further remarks?

If not, the Chair will ask the Clerk to announce that a roll call vote is in progress. The machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
 Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

Will all members please check the roll call board to make certain that your vote has been properly recorded? If all members have voted and all votes are properly records, the machine will be locked. And the Clerk will take a tally.

Clerk, please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Senate Bill Number 70.

Total Number Voting	34
Those voting Yea	34
Those voting Nay	0
Absent and not voting	2

THE CHAIR:

The bill is passed.

Clerk, please call Calendar 180.

THE CLERK:

On Page 11, Calendar 180, Substitute for Senate Bill Number 944, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM TO ALLOW FOR MUNICIPAL AGGREGATION, Favorable Report of the Committee on Energy and Technology.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Duff.

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
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In conclusion I would just like to say what -- I'd just like to say without veterans, none of us would be here, and we would not have that great country that we all enjoy. God bless all the veterans and God bless America. Thank you.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you, sir. Is there any questions from the Committee?

Thank you very much for your testimony.

BRUCE GAUNYA: You're welcome.

REP. HENNESSY: Next I would like to call Commissioner Schwartz. I'd also like to say that after Commission Schwartz that we would be instituting a three-minute time limit for testimony.

COMMISSIONER LINDA SCHWARTZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Slossberg, Senator Fasano, Senator Welch, and Committee Members.

SB185 SB384
HB5387 HB5388
HB5754

This afternoon I have provided you a written testimony in which I took a little bit of time to address the Proposed Bill No. 70, AN ACT RESTORING BENEFITS TO VETERANS DISCHARGED UNDER THE "DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL."

As you will note in my testimony, I have requested the assistance of the Office of the General Counsel of the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs to provide a -- an opinion on the pending legislation regarding the restoration of eligibility for all available benefits to former members of the Armed

Services who were discharged with service under less than honorable.

Basically what this says is is that if they have other than any discharge category other than Dishonorable, V.A. does have some latitude in looking at extenuating circumstances, which means that just because they got an Other Than Honorable does not necessarily mean that they are precluded from having Federal benefits.

What is a -- a factor is, and what they kind of told us was that if someone has a Dishonorable Discharge, there are usually aggravating factors which would be known by the Service, but not necessarily to us.

Finally, under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Rule, anybody who is barred from their -- by the character of their discharge from V.A. benefits, can apply for the Correction of Military Records to upgrade the discharge, oftentimes to General.

We looked at what was required here, and I just absolutely have an Honorable -- Anything but a Dishonorable Discharge, and you will see that it -- it mostly has to do with property tax exemptions, licensing fees, waivers for fees for selling and buying specific goods, a waiver of operation -- operator license fees, and of course, if they did not -- if they had a Dishonorable Discharge, they would not be eligible for the Connecticut Wartime Service Medal.

Additionally, someone who does not have an Honorable Discharge would not be eligible for the Presidential Memorial Certificate, of burial flags, basic educational assistance, or the Post-911 G.I. Bill.

Actually, in -- in trying to make sense of this, what I would like to say is that there is now a remedy because of a change of the law that allows a person who was discharged under dishonorable conditions to actually -- it's almost pro forma for them to apply and get their -- their discharge upgraded.

The second of my testimonies today was on Bill No. 185, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PREFERENCE IN THE AWARD OF STATE CONTRACTS FOR VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESSES, and I combined that with the Senate Bill 384, to creating a set-aside program for disabled veterans contractors, and I know you have testimony from D.A.S. about this.

Several years ago some of you may remember that similar measures came before us. We did discuss it. There was some consensus on having a -- a preference with point systems where disabled veterans of ten points, and for veterans five points, but I think the overriding question right now is this: If we set aside, and it was back then, if we set aside for veteran-owned businesses or disabled-owned businesses what -- what is the population from which we would draw. Would that -- excuse me -- would that actually be a viable option?

they have questions from their own town. So it's not going to be that they're going to become Accredited Service Officers, but we would -- there's a great deal of interest, and a great deal of need for people in the community, especially in some of our Town Halls.

SENATOR LEONE: And -- and having the Town Halls as well as the -- all the entities that do support our veterans working together. And -- and sometimes it's quite as simple as the fact that some of the Town Halls may not even be aware that some of these organizations are near by or in the town, so I think just having that open communication is -- is going to be a big step in the right direction. Thank you.

I -- I walked in on the tail end, so I apologize, but I wanted to go -- just can you share with me again on Senate Bill 70 about the benefits to veterans discharged under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Because I know there's very specific veteran guidelines, and what I don't want to do is have any intent to change the definition of what a veteran is under national guidelines, because that would throw many of the programs that we've begun and continue to work on into disarray if all the sudden we start changing definitions without realizing their true impact. So I really -- I want to be supportive, but I want to walk cautiously here, and -- and your input would be very informative.

COMMISSIONER LINDA SCHWARTZ: I have taken great pains in the written testimony to lay out for you that I did talk -- did request from V.A.'s General Counsel a read-out of what would be the extent -- circumstances under which someone would have a Dishonorable Discharge under that specific part of the Code of Military Justice.

The response -- the short response is is that Other Than Honorable does not -- it doesn't sound good and -- but in most cases V.A. will look at the circumstances and allow for the treatment of the individual under the V.A. healthcare, but it will preclude them from some of the benefits which are -- I -- they identified as the G.I. bill, having a flag, having a Memorial Certificate, some of those things. And in our own State, an Honorable Discharge, or an Other than Dishonorable Discharge -- well, let me just go the other way. Dishonorable Discharge would not allow you for the tax exemption, the Connecticut Wartime Service Medal, and the waiver of some of the fees. It's all required that you have to have anything but a Dishonorable.

Under the President's new pronouncement of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," new guidelines have been published so that people who were discharged before the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was really accepted, back in the 80s, and those who have been just most recently, there are two different avenues for them to have the Correction of Military Records.

Usually the Correction of Military Records takes years, but under these circumstances it's expedited because of the -- the change in the regulations.

So in reality, the State of Connecticut -- any Department of Veterans' Affairs cannot change the character of the Discharge. That is the purview of the Department of Defense. If they need to upgrade their Discharge, they will have to go that route. What -- what V.A. is saying is that it does not preclude -- if you don't have -- if you had anything but a Dishonorable, you could possibly get care at the V.A., but there are some benefits you will not be eligible for.

SENATOR LEONE: And -- and you're correct that any legislation Connecticut passes wouldn't supersede national standards, but in terms of Connecticut benefits, then this legislation would apply, correct?

COMMISSIONER LINDA SCHWARTZ: It could apply to any Connecticut legislation.

SENATOR LEONE: And -- and the fact that the national standards have been or are currently being rewritten due to the overturning of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," is it possible that at some point, hopefully soon, this type of legislation might not even be necessary if it's already --

COMMISSIONER LINDA SCHWARTZ: That is very true.

SENATOR LEONE: -- already going to be addressed?

COMMISSIONER LINDA SCHWARTZ: It is true. We have -
- we are already working -- the Office of
Advocacy and Assistance is already working with
two individuals who had the Dishonorable
Discharges for this reason, and so by
advocating for them, we're kind of finding out
how fast it can actually go.

It is our great hope, as it I am sure is yours,
that the -- the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," the
President's decision that it will become a
blanket effect and will not be a barrier for
any of these individuals. However, as we all
know, all of those of us who served know, when
they talk about aggravating circumstances,
which are referred to in my written testimony,
it can be other things like sexual assault,
child molestation, things like this that --
that are, in the view of the Department of
Defense, could not be upgraded.

It's the aggravating circumstances that
generally get the Dishonorable Discharge, at
least that's what my readout was.

SENATOR LEONE: And -- and that would be something we
would have to make sure doesn't get overturned
unnecessarily so.

COMMISSIONER LINDA SCHWARTZ: Right.

SENATOR LEONE: And -- and I believe this
legislation is modeled after California
legislation, so we can look to them to see how
they implemented theirs.

COMMISSIONER LINDA SCHWARTZ: It is -- it is a point of honor for all of us who served that the passing grade is Honorable. However, we know that some of our friends have gotten caught and have been dealt a terrible blow with an Other than Honorable or Dishonorable Discharge. As long as we can assist in getting them the Discharge they earned and deserve, that -- that should be our mission.

SENATOR LEONE: I don't think I could state it any better. Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you, Senator, and thank you, Commissioner. Is there any other further questions from the Committee?

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Commissioner, for coming before us and speaking and I'll be brief.

I just -- as someone who just got off active duty a year and a half ago -- I did four years of active duty in -- in the Marine Corps, House Bill 5347 is very dear to my heart with the M.O.S.'s and the Task Force that try to grandfather in requirements in certifications and credentials. And, you know Connecticut is expecting 5 to 6000 veterans coming home in the next five years because of the D.O.D. downsizing.

(HB 5387)

SENATOR MARTIN M. LOONEY
MAJORITY LEADER

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February 19, 2013

Good Afternoon Senator Leone, Representative Hennessy and members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I am here to testify in support of SB 70, AN ACT RESTORING BENEFITS TO VETERANS DISCHARGED UNDER "DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL". Our society has moved on the fast track in the last decade to protect the civil rights of gay and lesbian members of society. This has been true in all aspects of our culture and it has been particularly noticeable in the military. While it is likely that very few veterans living in Connecticut were given a less than honorable discharge due to sexual orientation, we owe it to any military veteran who was so discharged to restore his or her honor which was so unfairly questioned and to provide the benefits that any other veteran would receive.

Thank you for hearing this important bill which would provide greater equity to Connecticut veterans



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**Written Testimony In Support of Senate Bill No. 70,
An Act Restoring Benefits go Veterans Discharged Under 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'**

Senator Leone, Representative Hennessy and distinguished members of the Veterans Affairs Committee, I'm Andrew Schneider, Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut, offering testimony in support of Senate Bill No. 70, An Act Restoring Benefits to Veterans Discharged Under 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell.'

Between 1993, when the so-called 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' rule took effect in our nation's military until 2011, when it was repealed, more than 13,000 service members received less than honorable discharges because of their sexual orientation. These patriotic lesbian, gay and bisexual Americans have been denied many of the benefits meant for those who served their country, including some benefits administered by or through the state of Connecticut.

Under Chapter 506 of the Connecticut General Statutes, many benefits are reserved for veterans who were honorably discharged. These include eligibility to live in the state Veterans' Home, to be buried in the state cemetery for veterans and to receive charitable assistance through the American Legion from the state's Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Fund. This legislation will restore those benefits to military veterans who did serve their country honorably and should never have been punished and excluded simply for being who they are. As our country moves toward repairing the damage inflicted by years of discrimination, the state must be sure to keep up.

The struggle for equal treatment of lesbian, gay and bisexual soldiers, sailors and Marines and veterans continues at the Pentagon, in the courts and in the halls of Congress. Full benefits for same-sex military spouses and dependents, reinstatement of service members discharged under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," acceptance of transgendered service members and many other issues have yet to be resolved. The state of Connecticut has a chance to join the march of progress by passing this legislation, and I urge you to vote for it.

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Statement
Commissioner Linda Schwartz

Before
Veteran Affairs Committee
February 19, 2013

**Proposed S.B. No. 70 AN ACT RESTORING BENEFITS TO VETERANS
DISCHARGED UNDER "DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL".**

As a prelude to a Hearing on this Legislation, I requested the assistance from the Office of the General Council of the US Department of Veteran Affairs to provide an opinion of the pending legislation regarding the restoration of eligibility for all available benefits to former members of the Armed Forces who were discharged from service under less-than-honorable conditions pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 654(b), which previously provided for discharges under the policy commonly referred to as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

I have included excerpts to that inquiry for the sake of clarity and to better inform the Committee of the present situation with Federal Benefits.

"For VA benefit purposes, a "veteran" is a "person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released there from under conditions other than dishonorable." (38 U.S.C. § 101(2)). Accordingly, to be eligible for the payment of benefits and nearly all of the other services administered by VA, a person must have been discharged or released from active duty service under conditions other than dishonorable.

While the Department of Defense is the authority to determine the character of a Service member's discharge based on the known facts in each case governed by Section 654 (b). General Counsel maintained that

"It is our understanding that discharges based solely on a violation of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, with no aggravating factors, were usually under Honorable conditions."

In most of these situations, these veterans are eligible for all VA Benefits. Should the Service member receive discharges such as General, Uncharacterized, Other than Honorable or Bad Conduct they could be eligible for most Federal VA Benefits provided that their discharges were not issued "Under Dishonorable Conditions".

In such cases, VA makes case-by-case determinations as to whether a discharge was under conditions other than dishonorable, applying standards set forth in VA regulations. **VA regulations issued in 1980 provide that discharge due to homosexual acts involving aggravating circumstances or other factors affecting the performance of duty, such as assault, coercion, or child molestation, will be considered to have been issued under dishonorable conditions. (38 C.F.R. § 3.12(d) (5)).** In identifying those limited disqualifying circumstances, VA explained that [the effect of this action is to confer basic eligibility for [VA] benefits on most persons discharged for homosexual acts."] (45 CFR. 2318) (Jan. 11, 1980). Accordingly, under current statutes and regulations, discharge based on the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy generally does not bar entitlement to most VA benefits, unless the discharge involved aggravating factors as described above.

Certain benefits are, by Federal Laws, available only to Veterans who received an Honorable Discharge. These include Presidential Memorial Certificates, burial flags, basic educational assistance, and post-9/11 educational assistance. State of Connecticut Statutes which require Honorable Discharges are limited to "Property Tax Exemptions" (CGS. 12-81); "Licensing Fees" (CGS12-93; Waiver of Fees for selling and buying specific goods" (CGS 21-30) and "Operator License Fees" (CGS 27-102a) additionally award of the Connecticut Wartime Service Medal requires and Honorable Discharge.

It is important to remember that the "Character of the Discharge" is not a Veteran or State issue. If the character of a veteran's discharge is a bar to some or all VA benefits, they may request an upgraded discharge from their Service Branch of the Department of Defense Discharge Review Board or correction of their military records by their service Board of Correction of Military Records.

Proposed S.B. No. 185 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PREFERENCE IN THE AWARD OF STATE CONTRACTS FOR VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESSES. (VA) and Proposed S.B. No. 384 AN ACT CREATING A SET-ASIDE PROGRAM FOR DISABLED VETERAN CONTRACTORS.

Similar bills have been proposed by the Legislature. In the past we tried to broker a process with the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to have "Set Asides/Veterans Preferences" for State Contracts. The main question from DAS was "Are there enough Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses to warrant a "Set Aside? At that time some veterans were very strident that the "Set Aside" only be for Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses. As a compromise, we tried to promote a rating of 5 points for Veteran Owned Businesses and 10 points for Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses when considering State Contracts. Unfortunately, there was no consensus and the opposition coupled with the lack of support from both sides contributed to the failure of the legislation.

According to the US Business Census of 2007, there are more 41,000 veteran owned businesses in the state, more than 10,000 of these businesses are also employers which indicates that there is a robust field of potential applicants for State of Connecticut Contracts that warrants consideration for a set aside provision. The Connecticut Department of Veteran Affairs suggests that these options need to be explored and are not mutually exclusive. DAS has been very supportive of programs for veterans but at the same time we have to consider the reality of the actual numbers and services provided by veterans in Connecticut. It would be disappointing if we could not capitalize on the interest that brought these issues to the Veteran Affairs Committee and the opportunity it presents for veterans in our State.

If these measures do go forward, I would like to suggest that the criteria for verification of a Veteran-owned business and/or service-disabled veteran owned business be passed on the published criteria adopted by the Small Business Administration and the Department of Veteran Affairs which would also qualify these businesses for additional

**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF CONNECTICUT**

PS



STATE LEGISLATIVE OFFICE

STATEMENT OF

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

BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

WITH RESPECT TO PENDING VETERANS' BENEFITS LEGISLATION
FEBRUARY 19, 2013
HARTFORD, CT

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the following veterans' legislation. The more than 18,500 members of the Department of Connecticut, Veterans of Foreign Wars 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. Proposed S.B. No. 70 AN ACT RESTORING BENEFITS TO VETERANS DISCHARGED UNDER "DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL". (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation with the conviction that all honorably discharged veterans should be afforded the benefits due them for their honorable service in our nation's armed forces.

2. Proposed S.B. No. 71 AN ACT CONCERNING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERANS AND SPOUSES OF ACTIVE MILITARY PERSONNEL. (VA)

The VFW supports the proposed legislation as it will serve veterans and their spouses to ease their re-entry into the workforce.

3. Proposed S.B. No. 152 AN ACT CONCERNING A MUNICIPAL PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION PROGRAM FOR ONE HUNDRED PERCENT DISABLED VETERANS. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation. Our one-hundred percent disabled veterans face many challenges throughout the course of their lives most citizens will never experience, with reduced income-earning potential laying in the forefront of the challenges they face as civilians. Relieving these honored citizens of their property tax burden will certainly ease some of the unique stresses they endure as a function of their disability.