

PA13-57

SB0386

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|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| House | 4704-4709 | 6 |
| Senate | 1448-1455, 1509-1511 | 11 |
| Veterans | 147-150, 248 | 5 |
| | | 22 |

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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2013**

**VOL.56
PART 14
4512 – 4855**

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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May 20, 2013

REP. SANTIAGO (84th):

I pledge allegiance to this Flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Is there any business on the Clerk's desk?

THE CLERK:

Yes, Mr. Speaker.

We have the Calendar for today, Monday, May 20, 2013, on the Clerk's desk.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

And before we get started, are there any announcements or introductions? Any announcements or introductions? Got a busy week ahead of us, so let's get right to it.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar 545.

THE CLERK:

On page 27, Favorable Report of the Joint Standing Committee on Education. Senate Bill 68 -- I'm sorry, 386, AN ACT CONCERNING HONORARY DIPLOMAS FOR VIETNAM VETERANS.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

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Representative Hennessey, the distinguished Chair
of the Veterans Committee.

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Good morning, sir.

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Mr. Speaker, I move for acceptance of the Joint
Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill
in concurrence with the Senate.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The question is acceptance of the Joint
Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill
in concurrence with the Senate. Will you remark, sir?

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this bill allows local and regional
school boards of ed to award Vietnam-era veterans who
left high school to serve their country and go to war.
We have done this bill before with the Korean and
World War II veterans. We are always saying that we
can't thank our veterans enough. This bill is just
one small gesture for Vietnam-era veterans who, in
service to their country, never got a high school

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diploma. I ask that the House support the bill.

Thank you.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

Do you care to remark? Do you care to remark on the bill as before us?

Representative Yaccarino, the distinguished Ranking Member.

REP. YACCARINO. (87th):

Mr. Speaker, and thank you.

I rise in support of this bill, but I do have one question for the proponent of the bill, please.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Please proceed, sir.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, it says honorary diploma. Is it an actual diploma or an honorary diploma?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Hennessey.

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I believe it is an honorary diploma.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in support of this bill. Like the good Representative Hennessey said, this is for men and women that served from 1961 to 1975 in our military that left school early to serve our country. I rise in strong support of this. It follows World War II veterans and Korean War veterans, and I urge your support. Thank you.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

Do you care to remark further on the bill as before us?

The Vice Chair of the Veteran's Committee,
Representative Nicastro of the 79th.

REP. NICASTRO (79th):

Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Good morning, sir.

REP. NICASTRO (79th):

Mr. Speaker, I stand in strong support of this bill. I served on a Navy destroyer during this time

period, and I can recall young sailors coming aboard our ship who had left high school for one reason or another. And we would sit down and we would talk. And a lot of them would say they just couldn't handle the school setting. That was a -- you got to keep in mind though, that was long before we had real special ed programs to deal with young people who had different problems in school.

To make a long story short, these young men who served deserve that diploma. They left because they couldn't handle the high school setting. But as they got older, they realized they made a mistake, at least they thought that way. And this bill would go a long way to honor them like we do our World War II and our Korean War veterans. These young men who served, and young women who served, they deserve this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

Do you care to remark further? Do you care to remark further on the bill as before us?

If not staff and guests to the well of the House, members take your seats, the machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representative is voting by roll.

The House of Representatives is voting by roll. Will members please return to the Chamber immediately.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted? Will the members please check the board to make sure your vote is properly cast. If all the members have voted, the machine will be locked and the Clerk will take a tally.

Will the Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Bill Number 386 in concurrence with the Senate.

Total number voting 125

Necessary for passage 63

Those voting Yea 125

Those voting Nay 0

Those absent and not voting 25

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The bill passes in concurrence with the Senate.

Are there any announcements or introductions?

Are there any announcements or introductions?

Representative Hwang.

REP. HWANG (134th):

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Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, if the Clerk would call as the -- the next item, Calendar Page 19, Calendar 387. Then Calendar Page 19, Calendar 392.

And then Calendar Page 20, Calendar 396; and then return to a couple of items that were passed temporarily, earlier, and those items were Calendar Page 17, Calendar 360, and Calendar Page 18, Calendar 372.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On Page 19, Calendar 387, Senate Bill Number 386, AN ACT CONCERNING HONORARY DIPLOMAS FOR VIETNAM VETERANS, Favorable Report of the Committee on Education.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE:

Good afternoon, Madam President.

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

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on passage. Will you remark, sir?

SENATOR LEONE:

Thank you, madam.

Quite simply, the -- the title of this is very much reflective of what this bill does. It's to honor our Vietnam Veteran -- Vietnam Era Veterans who left

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school early to join the Armed Forces and serve our country with distinction for that conflict. And it simply will do what we've also done for our World War II Veterans and Korean War Veterans.

And -- and I want to thank everyone who's worked on this bill as well as Ranking Members. This passed with unanimous support, and I would urge adoption.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark further? Will you remark further?

Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Madam President.

This is a good bill, and I'd like to thank not only the Chairman but Senator Kissel, who in 2011 came to us with -- with a very similar concept, with respect to Korean War Veterans. There are a lot of wonderful men and women who either answered the call voluntarily or involuntarily, but nonetheless, as a result, did not complete their high school education. And this is just a wonderful way to say thank you and to give them, reward them, since they probably learned more in the field those years than they would have back home.

So thank you, Madam President. I urge the Chamber's support.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark?

Senator Kissel.

SENATOR KISSEL:

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Thank you, very much, Madam President.

I would like to thank Senator Leone, Chairman of Veterans and Ranking Member Welch, as well as Senator Stillman, the Chairman of the Education Committee, where this bill also traveled.

We did have a great deal of success recently in passing a similar bill regarding Korean War Veterans. Indeed, I was made aware of a particular individual who was quite moved when they were given the high school diploma, having dropped out to serve in the Korean War.

And when we discuss this particular proposal, it's hard for people to fathom because it seems so fresh in so many of our memories, but the Vietnam War ended nearly 40 years ago. And so these folks have gone on. They're not a danger to anyone in our job market, but to -- for municipalities, board of education to decide we're going to award a diploma, high school diploma for someone who dropped out to go and serve our nation in one of the most brutal wars in our nation's history, I think that this will touch a lot of folks.

And, again, I certainly want to commend the -- the good Chairman of the Veterans Committee for moving this forward and thank him for his efforts and urge everyone's support.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark?

Senator Frantz.

SENATOR FRANTZ:

Thank you, Madam President.

If there was ever a bill that made you want to serve on this particular committee, this is it. As Senator Kissel just elaborated, these people are so deserving

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of so much of our support. One of the most noble things one can do in his or her lifetime is to go serve the nation on the front lines, in particular, in a war as controversial and messy as the Vietnam War. And I'm sure you went through all of the background and the -- the details associated with that specific war, seeing that this is specifically designed for Vietnam Veterans.

I -- I do have one question, through you, Madam President, to Senator Leone.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR FRANTZ:

Thank you.

Through you, Madam President.

Whenever a program like this is put into place, all with the best of intentions, oftentimes there are reports of some abuse. Do we know in the other programs, for Korean and World War II, and perhaps World War I, Veterans of anything that have been given to them, that there has been any sort of abuse in the program?

And the reason why I ask the question is that I want this program to be honored and to be respected and for it to have creditability going forward.

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE:

Thank you, Madam President.

Through you.

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To my knowledge, there has been no abuse in terms of any of the World War II Veterans that have been honored with this distinction or the Korean Conflict Veterans that we've awarded this distinction. And so it would be my hope that that would hold true, moving forward, if we pass this particular bill for our Vietnam Era Veterans. So none of us had heard of any kind of abuse, and it did not come up during any of the committee discussions when this bill was before us. And if there were, we would gladly look into it to make sure it would never happen again.

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Senate -- Senator Fasano -- oh, Senator -- Senator Frantz. Sorry.

SENATOR FRANTZ:

Thank you, Madam President.

And that was the answer I was hoping to get, Senator Leone.

And to all of those Veterans out there, regardless of which war you fought in, welcome home and thank you for your service.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Frantz.

Senator LeBeau.

SENATOR LeBEAU:

Thank you, Madam President.

I'd like to thank the Veterans Committee and to Senator Leone for bringing this bill out today.

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The Vietnam War was probably the most controversial war that this country has ever been engaged in. And the scars that were, that people had were not just physical and not just mental. They -- there were scars in our country. Our country was divided in a way that I -- I think we haven't -- we certainly haven't been in divided since and nor before. And probably the only other war that had anything close to it, of course, was the, even greater division, was the Civil War.

This is a wonderful bill to say thank you to those men who served, those men and women who served during that period of time. I'm a -- I am, myself, a Vietnam Era Veteran, and I know that the Veterans of that war, many of them still feel some bitterness over the way they were treated when they came home, over the way they were treated when they went, over the way that they were treated when they traveled through the country.

And this is to say, this bill is to say, and I -- I think the intent is to say to those Veterans, thank you for your service. We may not have agreed with the war, itself, and it made that war -- that war may have been a mistake; that war -- war may have been the right thing to do. I'm not going to pass judgment on that, although in my own mind I have. But it's to say to those men and women thank you; you are valuable; your lives are valuable; your effort was valuable, and that this is one country and we are together in thanking you for your service.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

Senator Boucher.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

Thank you, Madam President.

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Madam President, I rise to support this bill. And, as always, when we mention a bill regarding this particular era, I am reminded of living through that, ourselves, on a college campus in Washington, DC, when emotions were so heightened and dating someone that was in the military, in the Air Force, who is now my husband. And we both remember back when they were forewarned and experienced some very offensive behavior and comments and how it was difficult to even to suggest to your friends that you're going to school with that you were dating someone from the military during that time.

It's really sad that that kind of attitude permeated, and how wonderful it is, although bittersweet after September 11th, when many of them, some in wheelchairs, would go to various functions with yellow ribbons throughout our districts, championing those that were standing up for America during the time of a great attack and how those Vietnam Veterans, you could see the looks on their faces, and how saddened they were because they were remembering back to the kind of negative responses that -- and terrible experiences they -- they had to go through. And they were watching the change in attitude and these young children that were watching the great patriotism and the flying of flags throughout this country, during this time, that did not live through the sixties and seventies, like so many of us had.

And I think that as time went on and increasingly people recognized that although they did not agree with necessarily that particular conflict, they all realized, some for the first time, that, in fact, these young men and women did what they were told to do and served, no matter what their personal feelings were, and that they stood up with courage for our country.

And that's the kind of courage that we need, and I hope that that inspired some of those young people to serve, themselves, in the future. And I think this is just very fitting, and it is a good thing that we do when we recognize our military men and women that went through a most difficult period. And some of them still have some lasting effects from that period of time.

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So I strongly support this and I'm so glad that the Senate Chamber is unanimously going to pass this bill out of committee.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark?

Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE:

Thank you, Madam President.

I want to thank everyone who has commented favorably on this bill; Senator Kissel, for your leadership on promoting this, and Senator LeBeau, Senator Frantz. And I'm happy to hear Senator Boucher was able to marry that handsome Air Force Veteran, and I have a fondness for the Air Force, being one myself.

But I -- I think it's very clear that as the Vietnam Era is still close enough in our recent history that we still see and deal with people from that conflict, that this is a -- a small measure of our ability to say thank you for a job well done, for going on to serve our country when our country needed them most, and so I want to thank everyone for their, for their comments.

And -- and if there are no objections, I'd like to put this on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no --

SENATOR LEONE:

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

-- objection, so ordered, sir.

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So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Calendar page 48, Calendar 309, Senate Bill Number 899, Madam President, move to place this item on the foot of the Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

And Madam President, on Calendar page 50, Calendar 405, Senate Bill Number 848, Madam President, move to refer this item to the Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, if the Clerk would now read the items on the first Consent Calendar and then if we might proceed to a vote on that first Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On page 1, Calendar 496, House Joint Resolution Number 98; Calendar 497, House Joint Resolution Number 99.

On page 2, Calendar 498, House Joint Resolution Number 100; Calendar 499, House Joint Resolution Number 101;

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also on page 2, Calendar 500, House Joint Resolution
Number 102.

On page 4, Calendar 119, Senate Bill 564.

On page 5, Calendar 155, Senate Bill 231.

On page 6, Calendar 169, Senate Bill 881; and Calendar
188, Senate Bill 1029.

On page 7, Calendar 192, Senate Bill 835.

On page 12, Calendar 284, Senate Bill 964.

Page 16, Calendar 353, House Bill 6481.

On page 18, Calendar 376, Senate Bill 878; Calendar
372, Senate Bill 977.

On page 19, Calendar 387, Senate Bill 386; and
Calendar 392, Senate Bill 366.

On page 20, Calendar 396, Senate Bill 991; and
Calendar 413, Senate Bill 1049.

On page 21, Calendar for 424, House Bill 6212.

And on page 25, Calendar 463, House Bill 6405.

THE CHAIR:

Those are all the bills on the Calendar.

At this point, Mr. Clerk, will you call for a roll
call vote of the first Consent Calendar of the day and
the machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

~~Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.~~
Voting the first Consent Calendar of the day.
Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Senators please return to the chamber.

(Senator Coleman of the 2nd in the Chair.)

THE CHAIR:

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Would members please check the board to see that your vote has been properly recorded? If all members have voted and all votes have been properly recorded, the machine will be closed.

And would the Clerk please take and announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

On the first Consent Calendar of the day.

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Total Number Voting | 36 |
| Those voting Yea | 36 |
| Those voting Nay | 0 |
| Those absent and not voting | 0 |

THE CHAIR:

The Consent Calendar has passed.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, thank you, Mr. President.

If we might stand at ease for -- for just a moment.
Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

The Chamber please stand at ease.

(Chamber at ease.)

SENATOR LOONEY:

Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

**JOINT
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COMMITTEE
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**VETERANS'
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So I -- I applaud you for coming here and testifying today, and hopefully we can make this Bill a reality, so thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you, Representative Alexander, and thank you, Ms. Jennings.

Any other comments? Questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

JAN JENNINGS: We appreciate it, and we look forward to working with you guys and anything you need for it.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you.

Senator Kissel.

SENATOR KISSEL: Good afternoon, Chairman Hennessy, esteemed Members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. First I want to thank you for raising Senate Bill 386, AN ACT CONCERNING HONORARY DIPLOMAS FOR VIETNAM VETERANS. I will be submitting written testimony later on as well.

A couple of years ago, I helped co-sponsor and get through the Legislature a similar proposal which is now Public Act 11-17, AN ACT CONCERNING HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS FOR KOREAN WAR VETERANS, and I wanted to put this forward before you for Vietnam veterans as well.

The way the previous bill that passed in 2011 was drafted though, is it gave the authority to Boards of Education to make this determination. The way this bill is drafted right now, it is the Commission of Education, and I think it would be probably better if it was changed a little bit to allow the local Boards of Education to make this decision.

I can state very affirmatively that the individuals that I know personally that actually received that honorary degree based upon their service in Korea were really moved by that experience. And I think -- when I broached this subject with members of this Committee in the past, they said well maybe in a few years because not enough time has gone on -- gone by. But the end of the Vietnam War was in excess of 35 years ago, and I think that no one is going to try to use this Honorary Degree to try to get a job or something that -- that they don't have the qualifications for. But, at the same time, in those instances that a Board of Education, if -- if you do decide to change the language, or the Commissioner decide to issue one of these Honorary Diplomas, I think the recipients would be awfully grateful and -- and honored. And let's face it, if anybody got out of school early so they could go serve in the Vietnam War, God bless them. I think this is the least that we can do.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you, Senator Kissel, for your testimony:

Senator.

REP. NICASTRO: Thank you. Good afternoon, Senator.

Senator, you mentioned the Korean War. I can tell you firsthand, you don't know how happy those men and women were to get their high school diplomas.

I can remember a few years ago at Eastern High School with the former Secretary of State and I were there presenting them out. We were handing them out and it was unbelievable. They were actually crying. They felt like they had left to serve their country, and, you know, here they are, being repaid back with that high school diploma. It was a great thing to do, and I strongly support this bill. I strongly support it. I think it's the right thing to day.

You know, like I've said before so many times. If we can send them over there, they come home with no arms, no legs. Some come home in a box, then we have to take care of them. We have a responsibility to take care of these men and women. I say that sincerely, and I think giving these Vietnam veterans their high school diplomas, that left school early to -- to serve our country are well deserving of that, and I thank you for that.

SENATOR KISSEL: Well thank you. I very much appreciate it, and it would be remiss of me if I didn't say hi to my two constituents. Representative Bacchiochi, it's great to see

you here, and my personal State Representative, Representative Alexander, great to see you.

So thank you all for your service.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you, Representative Nicastro, and thank you, Senator, for your testimony.

SENATOR KISSEL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. HENNESSY: John Jepsen.

A VOICE: Sorry for the noise.

JOHN JEPSEN: Good afternoon; it still is. I have sympathy with you guys.

Thank you for the opportunity to come before the Committee. I am very interested in Raised Senate Bill 836, proposing to amend the current law protecting veterans' records. I received a number of requests in 2001 and 2002 from Washington to ask you to pass what is the current law. We proceeded to discuss it with Legislators, Town Clerks Association, the Governor, and members of the Governor's staff.

The question arose because a number of thefts of veterans' assets, where -- when information was taken from public records was then used to receive certain tax exemptions. In one case, out in the Midwest, a lawyer was involved, and many, many thousands of dollars of theft just by getting the information from a public record.

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State of Connecticut

SENATE

STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

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INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE

MEMBER
GENERAL LAW COMMITTEE
LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

February 19, 2013

Senator Carlo Leone
Representative John Hennessey
Veterans' Affairs Committee
Room 509A, Capitol
Hartford, CT 06106

Senator Leone, Representative Hennessey and Members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on SB 386 AN ACT CONCERNING HONORARY DIPLOMAS FOR VIETNAM VETERANS.

My proposal would honor Vietnam era veterans who left school early to join the armed forces. It would allow the state's Commissioner of Education to issue an honorary high school diploma to any veteran who did not complete high school due to service in the armed forces during the Vietnam era.

This proposal is similar to a measure I co-sponsored in 2011 which allowed boards of education to award high school diplomas to veterans of the Korean War who left school early to enlist in the armed forces in service to their country. That bill is now PA 11-17 AN ACT CONCERNING HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS FOR KOREAN WAR VETERANS. It is my hope putting forward this year's proposal that a new generation of veterans who bravely served in defense of our freedom will be able to finally obtain the diploma they deserve.

Thank you for consideration of my request.

Sincerely yours,

John A. Kissel
State Senator-7th District