

SA13-5

HB5387

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HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
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Calendar Number 233 on today's, on Page 10 of today's Calendar, Favorable Report of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Public Employees, Substitute House Bill 5387 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE USE OF MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TRAINING AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR STATE LICENSING REQUIREMENT.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Jack Hennessey.

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I move for 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. Representative Hennessey.

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to create a comprehensive plan to create jobs for veterans. This is a task force that will be put together with state agency heads and legislative leaders in order to streamline the ability for veterans to move into occupations in which their

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skill sets as military people can be used to waive certain requirements.

So this task force will put together a plan to create legislation to allow our veterans to seamlessly move into jobs.

Madam Speaker, the Clerk is in possession of an amendment, LCO 6647. I would ask the Clerk to please call the amendment and that I be granted leave of the Chamber to summarize.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Will the Clerk please call LCO Number 6647, which will be designated as House Amendment Schedule "A".

THE CLERK:

House Amendment Schedule "A", LCO 6647 introduced by Representative Hennessey et al.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The Representative seeks leave of the Chamber to summarize. Is there objection? Objection? Seeing none, Representative Hennessey.

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, what this does is, it puts, creates six legislative leader appointments so that the Legislature can be a part of this task force, which only makes sense since this

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will be creating legislation for the future that we'll be voting on. I move adoption.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The question before the Chamber is adoption of House Amendment Schedule "A". Will you remark further on House Amendment Schedule "A"? Representative Yaccarino, on House "A".

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise in support of the Amendment. It makes sense because ultimately we'll have to come back, it will have to come back to us to make legislation. I think it's important that we do this as quick as possible and as smart as possible for our men and women who served us so well.

So I support this Amendment and hope we all do in this Chamber. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, sir. Will you care to remark further on the Amendment before us? Representative Adinolfi. Representative Bacchiochi, on the Amendment, madam.

REP. BACCHIOCHI (52nd):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do support the bill and I do support the Amendment, but I do have a quick

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question for the Chairman of the Veterans Commission,
through you, Madam Speaker.

The underlying bill originally had the
Commissioner of Veterans or the Commissioner of
Consumer Protection or their appointees serve as the
Chairmen. Is that correct?

Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessey.

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, I believe the
question was the original bill had Commissioner of
Veterans and Commissioner of Consumer Protection, yes,
and the Amendment strikes that.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Bacchiochi.

REP. BACCHIOCHI (52nd):

Yes, through you, Madam Chair. Could the good
Chairman explain why we did strike the original
chairmen and who the replacement chairmen will be and
why?

Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessey.

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REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. Members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tem of the Senate shall be chairpersons of the task force.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Bacchiochi.

REP. BACCHIOCHI (52nd):

Yes, and I'd like to understand more clearly the reason for the change, if the good Chairman could explain that to me.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessey.

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, the reason, as I stated before is that this is a legislative process of which we should be familiar with throughout the entire process of this task force so that when we craft legislation we know what we're doing, so that's why the Chairs will be from the Legislature. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Bacchiochi.

REP. BACCHIOCHI (52nd):

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Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I do agree with the Chairman. This is a good bill. The intention is good. We do need to find a way to support our veterans and help them transition more seamlessly into different opportunities.

I was under the impression that we carefully chose the Commissioner of Veterans and Consumer Protection to chair the committee because of their very explicit expertise in this area. The Amendment does switch the chairmen to a more common practice that we have, by having the Majority, the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate make those choices. I'm sure they'll make excellent choices.

I'm not really concerned that they are choosing the chairmen. I just thought our original intention was better, to have the Commissioners making those decisions.

But through you, Madam Chair, I appreciate the bill and I thank you for the opportunity.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, madam. Will you care to remark further on the Amendment before us? On the Amendment?

If not, let me try your minds. All those in favor please signify by saying Aye.

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REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

All those opposed, Nay? The Ayes have it. The
Amendment is adopted. Will you care to remark further
on the bill as amended? Representative Adinolfi.

REP. ADINOLFI (103rd):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. This bill, I could
personally attest to, that the training that you get
in the military is very intensified, very accurate and
very up to date and especially in Connecticut, with
our National Guard or so on, are actually trained in
repairing power lines and phone lines and so on, and
this training is good. It's up to date, and I think
the companies in Connecticut will take advantage of
this, and they certainly should.

So I highly recommend that my colleagues support
this bill. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, sir. Will you care to remark further
on the bill as amended? Will you care to remark
further on the bill as amended? Representative
Nicastro.

REP. NICASTRO (79th):

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Thank you, Madam Chair. I stand in strong support of this bill. Madam Chair, over the last several years we've talked about doing something about this here in the Legislature and finally we've got the bill in front of us.

There isn't a month that doesn't go by that I don't run into a veteran or a young man or woman who's coming back from overseas that had special training.

Example. Military police. They've got to go to school for months. Electronics technicians. They've got to go to school for months. Pipefitters, which would be plumbing. They've got to go to school for months. These all are important positions that are used in the military, all branches, and these young men and women are trained for months and months and months. There's no reason why that can't be used toward having them get a state license.

This bill will go a long way to help to have that accomplished, Madam Chair. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, sir. Will you care to remark further on the bill as amended? Representative Smith of the 108th. You have the floor, sir.

REP. SMITH (108th):

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Madam Speaker, I just wanted to quickly stand in support of the bill. To me, the amount of training that our veterans get overseas in active duty and even here, when they're home on duty is tremendous, so much so that they could probably teach some of these courses, and for us to not recognize that would be a shame.

So there is an issue, not only in Connecticut, but throughout the country with our veterans getting back to work. This is a step in the right direction. I understand it's just a study, but let's move forward and help our veterans and this is a good bill to do that.

So I ask my colleagues to support this as well.
Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, sir. Will you care to remark further on the bill before us? Representative Alexander of the 58th. You have the floor.

REP. ALEXANDER (58th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise in support of this bill as a young veteran returning out of active duty in the Marine Corps. In fact, Madam Speaker, this bill and this concept is my number one

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legislative priority and is extremely dear to my heart.

As this Chamber knows, Connecticut's expecting six to seven thousand veterans returning to Connecticut within the next couple of years. That is a statistic from the Governor's office due to the military draw down with our force commitments overseas.

With that being said, Connecticut, like other states, is going to be faced with the challenge of getting these young men and women back into society. Many of them served four to ten, twenty years, and this task force looking at this issue directly hits that full board.

This MOS jobs bill, Madam Speaker will take MOS credentials. When you're in the service on active duty you do get DOD credentials in such fields like nursing, EMT, pharmacy tech, electricians, heating and cooling, et cetera and what we're asking in this task force and this concept, is for Connecticut to recognize those DOD credentials, just like any other state.

For instance, Madam Speaker, if you were that Navy corpsman that was a pharmacy tech at Camp

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Pendleton Naval Hospital, why is it that you can't come to Connecticut and transfer your credential and take a supplemental test?

But if you were in Orange County down the road doing the same job, being trained by the State of California to do the same thing, you can take a supplemental test and come back here.

And with all these veterans coming back, Madam Speaker, this is something that is definitely in need. I actually spoke to a DOD, DA rep yesterday for the Northeast Region and other states in our region of the country are looking at this and trying to do this as well and I think we should follow their lead.

As an aside, Madam Speaker, during the public hearing for this task force, we actually had a woman come in and speak in support of it. Her family owns a heating and cooling company in southern Connecticut and she told us that her business field is having a hard time finding enough qualified people to go into this business.

Her brother, a Marine Corps Corporal who just got out, he was awarded the Purple Heart and I think he hit an IED in Afghanistan, was a utilities Marine who was trained with a DOD certification for this, and

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Connecticut is requiring him to go back to school.

That doesn't make a lot of sense.

We should recognize his credential, require him to take a supplemental test and he should go to work.

I can personally speak as someone who I served in my first unit. It was called MWSS172 in Okinawa, Japan. It's the most occupationally diverse unit in the Marine Corps.

We had bulk fuelers, we had electricians, we had construction men, we had carpenters, we had truck drivers. I can personally speak to the credentials they have and the jobs they did. When I would pull into work in the morning I thought I was on a construction site.

When I went to do live fire training in Thailand, I personally saw their professionalism and knowledge base and we definitely should honor their credentials.

The Governor himself is really much in support of this. He does have a Veterans Cabinet. They came to Enfield three weeks ago to discuss this issue. I think he would be on board with this.

I do think going with a task force this year is a great idea. I wanted to have a full board, a bill come forward but we need to take our time, obviously,

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because we want to make sure all regulatory things are done properly. We don't want someone under-qualified going in and doing a job.

So I do think, Madam Speaker, the task force is a great idea and a good start. I also think the Amendment is a great idea due to the fact that it opens it up a little bit. Let's get some people outside of the General Assembly who have experience in the military active reserve to come in and help us out with this.

Many people that were listed prior to the Amendment are already in the Veterans Cabinet for the Governor and I think they're doing great work on their end, but we should open this up further. The Amendment does that.

So in closing, Madam Speaker, I call for passage of this bill. Let's move forward and I also call on this task force to come up with some tangible recommendations for next year and I call for this Chamber to come back next year and possibly pass a full MOS licensing bill so we can get these young men and women employed in the Connecticut economy. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

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Thank you, sir. Will you care to remark further on the bill as amended? Representative Alberts. Hang on.

Representative Alberts.

REP. ALBERTS (50th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a good bill. Ought to pass. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, sir.

(APPLAUSE.)

Representative Ackert of the 8th District.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Through you, a couple questions to the proponent of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Please proceed.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. And first of all, I do want to start off by saying that I'm sorry this is just a study. But I would like to ask the proponent of the bill, was there a problem that arose, and I did hear the good proponent, another proponent of the bill mention it, some areas, that brought this, rather it was licensing and I guess I did hear that said that

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you know, we're just not bringing forth the qualifications and qualifying these individuals. Was there an individual situation or did multiple veterans come in and say they're just not being qualified for state licensing? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessey.

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, I'm not really sure what the question was.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

Okay.

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

But, this task force is going to bring all the agency heads together and task them to sit down in a room and work out what exactly occupational skills and training the military have.

In the past, we really haven't done that, so this is going to be a focused task force that is going to produce results. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

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Thank you, Madam Speaker. And I'm sorry I didn't frame my question. Let me give you an example. When I got out of the military in 1985, I brought my DD214 to the Occupational Licensing and Apprenticeship Board. They looked at that. My qualifications fit exactly what it takes to become an electrician. They gave me the hours required. I sat for the test. This is many, many years ago of course and I'm wondering how that has changed in the many years that individuals came back, because it was mentioned licensing, occupational licensing.

And years ago, that was in place and I thought it was the same. Many of our veterans come back typically from the Navy in this state, come back and their hours that they served are qualified and applied to the apprenticeship and then allowed to sit for the test. Has that changed?

Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessey, did you hear all that?

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Okay.

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REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

So for the gentleman's qualifications, his occupation, that obviously was set up for that occupation, but there are occupations that don't have that type of follow through such as EMTs and technology jobs. So we want to be able to create a greater avenue for our veterans with specific training. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

Thank you to the good Chair, and I guess I'll just close with a comment. I think that, and I appreciate his answers and I appreciate them bringing this bill forward.

One of the things that we want to do is make sure that the very concise training that is received in the military is definitely considered. It is typically done, as many people know, when you serve in the military under, not the perfect conditions if you're serving in the field or, as I did in the desert a couple of times.

So you're doing your job, not in the best, in the most perfect conditions, or more adverse conditions

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and the training is very regimen and I believe that I would have rather seen, rather than a study because it takes time, is just to move forward with the original intention of the bill, but I thank the good Chair for their work on this and look forward to, once this study is done, that we act on the legislation, so thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, sir. Will you care to remark further on the bill as amended? Representative Yaccarino of the 87th, you have the floor, sir.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you, Madam Chair. A question to the proponent of the bill, through you, Madam Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Please proceed.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you, Madam Chair. In the bill, the Board of Regents of Higher Education, is it my understanding that they're in part of this bill to transfer credits from military education? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessey.

REP. HENNESSEY (127th):

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Through you, Madam Speaker, yes. Currently there is that happening in our state schools and we need to be able to standardize it throughout so all our higher education colleges and universities can augment the training that the veterans receive with credits.

I would just like to segue a little bit concerning the previous speaker. When I was in the Rangers, there was a medic that was in my unit and he had been in Vietnam in the (inaudible) offensive and seen extensive experience in Vietnam and he got out of the Army and he wound up being a medic in, I mean an orderly in one of the hospitals in New York City and he wasn't allowed to do anything because, well, because he wasn't allowed.

But anyway, one day there was a traumatic influx, something happened and there were a lot of people coming in with trauma and the doctor that came in mistook this Corpsman Donovan as an intern and he started ripping off orders of how to process all the people that were coming in.

And so, he fulfilled those duties and at the end when everybody had been processed and gotten their wounds treated, the doctor that came in with the casualties remarked to the doctor in charge of

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emergency room that he had a great intern working for him, very talented and the doctor was mystified. He said, I don't have an intern. I'm the only one. Didn't realize that this person had such incredible training and background.

Unfortunately he was disillusioned by the lack of opportunity and he wound up going back in the military, which is when I met him.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you for that answer, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the Chair of the Veterans Committee and the whole Committee as a whole. This is a very important piece of legislation, but we really have to act, like Representative Ackert said, as soon as possible, as quick as possible for these men and women who serve us so well.

So I would hope we all support this. I'm sure we will, and I thank you for your time. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, sir. Will you care to remark further on the bill as amended? Would you care to remark

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further on the bill as amended? Will you care to
remark further on the bill as amended?

If not, staff and guests please come to the Well
of the House. Members 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 ORANGE:

Have all Members voted? Have all Members voted?
Representative Berger, have you voted? Have all
Members voted?

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

THE CLERK:

Bill Number 5387 as amended by House "A".

Total Number Voting	143
Necessary for Passage	72
Those voting Yea	143
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	7

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DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The bill as amended passes.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Will the Clerk please call Calendar 66.

THE CLERK:

Yes, Mr. Speaker. On Page 38, Calendar 66,
Favorable Report of the Joint Standing Committee on
Education. House Bill 6329 AN ACT CONCERNING
DISSECTION CHOICE.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Urban, you have the floor, madam.

REP. URBAN (43rd):

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

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The question is on acceptance of the Joint
Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.
Will you remark, madam?

REP. URBAN (43rd):

Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we
have had this bill in front of us several times and it
is really because of a change in technology that we
are now able to offer the students that are taking

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Also, we had another item on the foot of the Calendar, that's already on the foot of the Calendar, Calendar 120, Substitute for Senate Bill Number 803; would move to remove that item from the foot and also to mark it passed, retaining its place on the Calendar.

Then, Madam President, some items to add to our go-list -- rather to our Consent Calendar before calling for a vote on that Consent Calendar. Madam President, beginning on Calendar Page 22, Calendar 511, House Bill 6243; would move to place that item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

On Calendar Page 23, Calendar 517, House Bill 6453; move to place this item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Moving to Calendar Page 24, Calendar 525, House Bill 6457; move to place the item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

And on Calendar Page 29, Calendar 562, House Bill 5387; move to place the item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, if the Clerk would now proceed to read the items placed on the Consent Calendar today, before calling for a vote on that Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

Beginning on Calendar Page 3, Number 146, Senate Bill Number 959; also on Calendar Page 3, Number 165, Senate Bill 327.

On Calendar Page 8, Number 303, Senate Bill Number 1018.

On Page 22, Calendar Number 511, House Bill 6243.

On Page 23, Calendar Number 517, House Bill 6453.

On Page 24, Calendar Number 525, House Bill 6457; also on Page 24, Calendar Number 526, Senate Bill 1079.

On Page 25, Calendar Number 527, Senate Bill 1131; also on Page 25, Calendar Number 529, Senate Bill 965. Finally, on Page 25, Calendar Number 531, Senate Bill 986.

On Page 29, Calendar Number 562, House Bill 5387.

On Page 35, Calendar Number 39, Senate Bill 597.

On Page 40, Calendar 210, Senate Bill 817.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk, on Page 35, have you also seen Calendar Number 44, Senate Bill 809?

A VOICE:

Yeah.

THE CHAIR:

(Inaudible) wrong. Okay. Okay; I apologize, sir.

Please proceed.

THE CLERK:

On Calendar Page 40, Number 210, Senate Bill 817.

On Page 41, Calendar 254, Senate Bill 1013.

On Calendar Page 42, Number 271, Senate Bill 1072;
also on Page 42, Calendar Number 286, Senate Bill
1113.

On Page 44, Calendar 364, Senate Bill 1014.

On Page 46, Calendar Number 397, Senate Bill 992; also
on Page 46, Calendar 406, Senate Bill 1129. And
finally, on Page 46, Calendar 407, Senate Bill 383.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk, I ask for a roll call vote. The machine
will be open for the Consent Calendar.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the
Senate on the Consent Calendar. Immediate roll call
vote has been ordered in the Senate; Senators please
return to the Chamber.

THE CHAIR:

All members have voted: all members voted? The
machine will be closed.

Mr. Clerk, will you please call the tally.

THE CLERK:

On the Consent Calendar.

Total Voting	36
Voting Yea	36
Voting Nay	0
Absent, not voting	0

THE CHAIR:

The Consent Calendar passes.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, at this point, having concluding the day's business, would certainly yield the floor to any members for purposes of announcements or committee meeting or -- or other points of personal privilege.

THE CHAIR:

Are there any point -- points of personal privilege or announcements? Are there any personal privileges or announcement?

Senator McKinney.

SENATOR McKINNEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, as fate would have it, we came close yesterday to being able to celebrate the birthday of two of our members. Yesterday we celebrated the birthday of Senator Slossberg; today, we get to celebrate the birthday of Senator Len Fasano, so --

THE CHAIR:

All right.

SENATOR McKINNEY:

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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

We did learn that there are over 41,000 veteran-owned businesses in our state. I know that's hard to believe, but that's what the Small Business Administration says. The question then becomes are these kinds of businesses the ones that we would have on state contract to being with?

So I think D.A.S. has shown a willingness in the past to work on this. I would say that we -- we have a better idea of what we're talking about now, and I would just hope that the Committee would look at this from the factor of allowing D.A.S. to craft a policy, and that we work with the Committee to come up with something that is fair and equitable for not only disabled veteran businesses, but veteran-owned businesses.

One of the, unfortunately -- excuse me -- and I am sorry that I didn't put this in my written testimony, was Proposed Bill 5387 which would be the Task Force to study the use of military occupational specialty training as a substitute for State licensing requirement.

Let me tell you that there is a group of veterans who are now at the Yale Law School, who have come to Rocky Hill to look at the Service Codes and the Military Service Codes and -- and occupational specialties of veterans from our state who have been discharged, with the idea in mind that they are looking at what -- which one of these occupational specialties would articulate into maybe a waiver of some of the licensing requirements on the state level.

This is an ongoing effort. In addition to that, I believe Senator Leone and I talked earlier last year about the idea of convening a group which Governor Malloy has supported and has said will happen.

So I just want you to know, whatever the outcome of this legislation, that there are efforts that are ongoing to really capitalize on this concept.

And the last -- actually the last bill that I wanted to talk about was S. 5388 which is AN ACT REQUIRING MUNICIPALITIES TO DESIGNATE A VETERANS SERVICE CONTACT. I think that we've discussed this with some of you in the past, and if -- if this could be implemented, it certainly would go a long way. We have over 277,000 veterans in our state. They are not just in one place. They are in every town and city, and many of them are far, far away, and have questions about what is actually going on.

Some of them in some of the outreaches we've done in the past with you, Senator Slossberg, in Milford, and with others up in the Danielson area, it was very heartening to see people who had letters from the V.A., but they were afraid to open them because they didn't want to hear - - see what it said, or -- or afraid they would not understand what it said. So having a contact is a very pragmatic way of reaching across to the neighbors and the friends in the towns and cities. Unfortunately we are not like Massachusetts where they actually have

families -- military where families are much more important.

So I -- I do understand the spirit and intent of the legislation, that DMAS and the Department of Veterans' Affairs should work together, but I guess what I'm here to tell you is that we have been working together, and we continue to evolve systems which do a better job -- a better job of addressing the needs of our veterans.

I will now have -- if you have any questions, I'll try to answer them.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you, Commissioner Schwartz, and I just want to thank you for your service to your country, the state and to our veterans. You're -- you're a great advocate --

COMMISSIONER LINDA SCHWARTZ: Thank you.

REP. HENNESSY: -- for their benefits.

Are there any questions from the Committee?

Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE: Thank you, Commissioner. I apologize I had to run out for another Committee. I wanted to be back in time for your testimony because you always have good -- great information to give the Committee to make sure that we're going in the right direction.

HB5387

You mentioned House Bill 5387, establishing a task force to study the use of military occupational specialty training. As you mentioned, this is something near and dear to all our hearts to really try to help our veterans as they are leaving the military and then transitioning into the civilian workforce. Many times they have great training that, for whatever reason, doesn't quite get recognized in order to obtain employment, and I -- I see that as a huge factor contributing to their high unemployment rate. I believe if we fixed that, we could really make a -- a great dent in reducing that -- that metric. So I'm -- I'm hopeful that we can get that going and work toward that common goal.

We have been in touch with some of the folks you've mentioned, as well as a few surrounding entities from neighboring states. I'm happy to say this is now becoming a -- a topic at the Federal level, and so I can foresee other states looking to do similar things, and the more that we have -- more states talking the same language, then that gives us a better chance at passing legislation at the national level. And so I'd like to take -- I'd like for us to take credit that we spurred that -- that conversation.

COMMISSIONER LINDA SCHWARTZ: Well --

SENATOR LEONE: So I thank you for that.

COMMISSIONER LINDA SCHWARTZ: Senator Leone, I was surprised when I had three Rangers and Airborne

call me on the phone wanting to come up to look at my DD-214s because they have -- they have ideas about what -- what are the requirements of the present military occupation, and how would that articulate without having to go back to square one. So since there were Rangers and Airborne, I did give them access, and they were very -- they -- they promised to share that information with us, so I'm looking forward to their report.

SENATOR LEONE: Thank you, and -- and kudos to those Rangers and Airborne. Obviously they do more than what we ask of them, and -- and God bless them for that.

And as well, you know, getting the designated veterans for every community, that is hugely important. You know, the larger towns can do that; the smaller ones sometimes cannot. And so I'm hopeful that your organization can help train them, that if we pass this, they will have someone to turn to so that they can at least point veterans in the right direction. I -- I believe this is not that they need to know all the intricacies of what it means to be a veteran, but they can at least point a veteran in the right direction.

COMMISSIONER LINDA SCHWARTZ: Well, I want for all the Veterans' Service Organizations here, I want to be clear. We're not -- we're not training them to handle claims, but what we are trying to do is have for them information available, who to call, what to do, and that we can set up a nice flow of information, or if

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: 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)

COMMISSIONER LINDA SCHWARTZ: Right.

REP. ALEXANDER: That's just what we're dealing with in our parameter. They're downsizing. With that being said, it's an issue that -- that is dear to my heart, and I think going with a task force is the right approach because we have to make sure what M.O.S.'s match up to what licenses. You -- you have the strict regulatory requirements for a reason, and I was pleased to hear that you mentioned that a task force would be developed, people with the Yale -- Yale Law School are coming around to -- to work on this.

I would just humbly submit, ma'am, that we would have, or make sure we have veterans on that task force, especially veterans maybe even in the Reserve community that can speak towards civilian world credentials and active duty. For instance, in my own Reserve Unit out in Fort Devens First Battalion 25th Marines, I have two medical doctors, one that practices in Connecticut, one that practices in Massachusetts -- one's a Commander; one's a Captain in the Navy -- that can really attest to nursing requirements with Navy Corpsmen and even Army Medics and say, you know, that they're pretty well the same for nursing requirements. And it kind of baffles them that, you know, someone that gets out of the military as a Corpsman with some great certifications and credentials can't even go into a nursing home to clean bed pans, if you will. And that there --

COMMISSIONER LINDA SCHWARTZ: I agree with you and let me just say this. Definitely the -- the task force working on this will have veterans. I -- I can sympathize with you, and I wonder if you've spoken to the Majority Leader Aresimowicz --

REP. ALEXANDER: I have.

COMMISSIONER LINDA SCHWARTZ: -- because that is his very story that you just said. And we are working, too, with nursing. The State of Connecticut Nurses' -- Connecticut Nurses' Association -- once, when I was very young, I was their president, and so I've got them on board looking at -- and we know that Navy Corpsmen are probably -- that go remote are probably the most qualified to -- to take care of that.

But the point being is, it's a good chance for us to do -- stop people from jumping through hoops just because. So, yes.

REP. ALEXANDER: I appreciate it. Thank you, ma'am. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

So right now we are going back and forth between the public and private individuals, but I see that Senator Frantz is here with us, and so I'd call him to provide his testimony.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you, Representative Bacchiochi.

Seeing no other questions or comments, thank you, sir, for your comment and your service.

GLENN TERLECKI: Thank you.

REP. HENNESSY: Bob Hunter.

Tom White; Tom Wright. Oh, sorry.

BOB HUNTER: Well, that was a sobering moment.

REP. HENNESSY: Yes.

BOB HUNTER: No pun intended, but that was a -- that really got me.

Chairman Leone, Chairman Hennessy, the rest of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak in front of you. I'll keep it brief because I do have three pages, so I'm going to touch on a few things.

It's certainly because of our comrades like Mr. Lloyd that the V.F.W. certainly supports Proposed Senate Bill 152. The 100 percent disabled veterans already face many challenges throughout the course of their lives that most citizens will never experience. Reduced income-earning potential lay in the forefront of the challenges they face as civilians, and Mr. Lloyd is a great example.

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post-traumatic stress, it also provides quiet places to go. There are plenty of State Parks in Connecticut where it is a retreat. I have my places where I go, and I -- I would appreciate this personally.

Proposed Bill -- House Bill 5387, the V.F.W. heartily supports this bill. We -- I believe it was brought up last year. We chose to support it then as well. It should ultimately lead to legislation, this task force, that will accelerate the return to -- to the civilian workforce by many of our State's skilled veterans.

The current process for licensing these already well-trained men and women is expensive, arduous, and degrading to many who return with a skill set that's often superior to the minimum requirements for licensing.

If I may, one more? Thank you.

Concerning mental health services for veterans and members of the Armed Forces -- the V.F.W. supports also this proposed legislation in principle. The V.F.W. holds high the mental health of its veterans as one of its signal issues requiring our attention at both the national and state levels. We remain concerned that treatment must include alternative methods that lie beyond the long-term medication therapy that is often prescribed for such mental health issues as post-traumatic stress.

HB 5754

REP. HENNESSY: Janet Austery, Auster.

Brad Sweeney.

William Sereaz.

Jan Jennings.

John -- no, I'm only kidding. Sorry.

JAN JENNINGS: I'd say good morning, but we're well into the afternoon, almost good evening. I'm Jan Jennings. I'm the Executive Director of the Connecticut Heating and Cooling Contractors' Association, and I'm here today to comment and support House Bill 5387, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TRAINING AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR STATE LICENSING REQUIREMENTS.

Members of the heating and cooling industry applaud all current members of the military and veterans alike for their service to our country. And the CHCC stands as a willing partner to help promote careers in the occupational trades for members of the military and veterans.

It is important to streamline the process by which we get our veterans re-employed, particularly in our fields where heating and cooling technicians are very much in demand. I'm sure everyone's aware of the Governor's Gas Expansion and Comprehensive Energy Plan right now. The heating and cooling industry is

significant understaffed, and this would aid in really helping to staff the -- the fields.

With regard to the relevancy of the training received, it is our understanding that the purpose of Occupational Trade License by the Department of Consumer Protection, the various Occupational Licensing Boards, are already required pursuant to Public Act 10-105, to accept relevant military training in considering whether an individual is eligible to obtain a license. This is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. However, the CHCC also understands and realizes that sometimes this process can be slow, unwieldy, and even inconsistent.

Far too many contractors do not maintain the proper licenses or qualifications, creating public safety concerns.

In addition, individuals who have worked as apprentices, whose employers have failed to properly register them, are unable to pursue licenses without repeating their apprenticeship hours. These laws must be vigorously enforced to protect consumers and employees. Strong enforcement of the State's licensing and apprenticeship laws relative to the heating and cooling industry, along with all licensed trades, is paramount.

Ensuring the individuals performing work are held to high standards helps maintain the highest possible level of safety, training, and professionalism in our industry, just as it

does in the military. In this respect, CHCC supports efforts to have veterans employed or re-employed in our growing industry in a fair and time manner.

On behalf of the CHCC, a sincere thank you to all veterans and current service members for their service, and thank you to this Committee for consideration of our comments, as we look forward to the passage of this bill and more support for those who serve and have served our great nation.

Furthermore, the CHCC is willing to offer and recommend someone from our association to serve on the task force to discuss our experience with employing and training veterans in the heating and cooling industry.

On a personal note, I am a proud big sister of a recently discharged U.S. Marine who is also a Purple Heart, and just came back to Connecticut and is looking for employment.

It's a great trade. The heating and cooling industry really needs young, working individuals, and to be honest, they're mechanically-inclined to begin with. I bet you they could take apart an AR-15 or an AK-47 faster than I can make my bed in the morning, so I think they're pretty quick to pick up the trade and should be able to just test for the license.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you, Ms. Jennings, for waiting to provide your testimony, and thank you for

your testimony. And it's -- it's exciting that your industry is so supportive of our veterans in an occupation that they can really put their hands upon, no pun intended.

Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be brief. If you were sitting in the Hearing today, you know how supportive I am of that task force and -- and everything and Semper Fi to -- to your brother, as -- as you mentioned.

And I would just point out, my -- my first unit in the Marine Corps was one of the most occupationally-diverse Units in the Marine Corps. It was a -- an Airwing Squadron -- Support Squadron out in Okinawa, Japan, and I would say that the utilities section of this Unit, when it comes to heating and cooling, and when it comes to generator support, and the certifications that those individuals had in the utilities end would probably match up pretty closely to your business. And I'm not an expert, and I think that's in fact why we would need a task force to look into this. But on the surface level of all of this, it just makes a lot of sense to me that we would go ahead on this avenue of approach. Whereas a lot of people that I saw, whether I was out in Okinawa or -- or conducting lipire training in Thailand, and they were providing heating and cooling support, water purification, electricity support at -- at a base camp and what have you, would match pretty close to what you're doing in your business.

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.

I, we do our work, go home, 9 to 5, and then we read the paper and have supper. They're on 24 hours a day. They may be on an operation four, five, six days until they come to a stand down. When they come to the stand down, their mail may be not there. So we need to offer them additional time to compensate for that problem.

I -- why I'm here to support the absentee -- by now you've probably figured I've come to support the absentee ballot measure.

Any questions?

REP. HENNESSY: Any questions from the Committee?

Thank you, sir.

JAMES SHELMERDINE: Thank you for your time.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you for your service, and thank you for waiting all day.

Dave Fairman.

Brian Parkman.

Micah Welintokonis.

MICAH WELINTOKONIS: Welintokonis.

REP. HENNESSY: Sorry.

MICAH WELINTOKONIS: Good evening, and thank you guys for having this opportunity. This is only HB 5754 HB 5188 HB 5387 SB 700 HB 6349 SB 647

my second public speaking, I guess. Hence, I don't know the exact procedures, but thank you.

My name is Sergeant First Class Micah Welintokonis, and I come to you today as a recently combat-wounded veteran, not as a soldier, but as a private citizen. I had the privilege to serve with Paul Tarbox in Iraq over a brief period of time, and we lost some good friends over there in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I am in full support of combat-wounded veterans to not have to pay any dues to an organization in order to receive his or hers combat-wounded plates and S.B. No. 700.

In addition, I propose the State waive the \$79 fee which I recently had to pay for my plates. It is an insult to charge someone who was wounded while serving their country and their state. I also propose that the State of Connecticut reimburse those fees. We wounded veterans did not choose our injuries. We live with the pain and the scars and the emotions. We pay for it every day of our lives, and it is a constant reminder of what has happened to us. And as you see in the paper I submitted, I submitted my x-ray of my arm which right now only has a 20-degree range of motion, and has over 20 pieces of shrapnel.

And seeing how we have a little bit of time, I'd like to discuss some other things, that I was sitting over here and, excuse me, but I think all the other vets here -- thank you guys

been back for years, you know, and I take that advice wholeheartedly, and they've helped me in a lot of ways.

Free admission to State Parks, No. 5188. The crap that I've seen, the stuff that Tarbox has seen, and I've seen -- I've had 27 guys go down in one shot. Would it be nice to have a nice view from a State Park for free, where I didn't have to pay? Yes, sir; yes, ma'am; it would.

No. 5387, Licenses. I am in full support of that, full support, and Mr. Tarbox can verify, I've gone to schools that only a doctor has gone to, and one of them is advanced trauma life support. I'm a military medic. I was the only non-doctor in there. So I can do more stuff, even right now than a nurse can, with a busted arm. Or give them college credit for it. Something.

Military Relief Fund. Service would be -- it's kind of screwed up because it limits no improvements to homes. So let's say for example, I lost my leg or my arm. I can't get that as a service member, nor can my wife because there's no improvement to the home. So you get a guy who comes back home from a deployment, or let's say a National Guardsman goes out. Most recently he's on the roof, slips, falls. Now he's in a wheelchair. How are you guys going to help him with this Military Relief Fund? You can't. You can't help the National Guardsman. Now that his back is all screwed up, now -- how is he going to go from a wheelchair to the steps? So let's

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gives them the opportunity to compete.
Veterans don't look for handouts. They look
for opportunity.

SENATOR LEONE: Right. I just wanted to make, be
sure that we're not picking winners or losers
here at the expense of veterans or any other
organization, because if we go down that road,
there really is no end in sight. So I just
wanted to make sure I'm clear on what -- how
you were explaining the process, and -- and
I'll be happy to talk with you at length on
this one. So I -- I appreciate your comments.

ANTHONY PILEGGI: I'd be interested in getting
answers to those questions.

Now, if -- if a -- if a firm is owned by a
woman, it's a DBE. If that woman is also a
veteran, that doesn't help her get into that
set-aside program. So it's -- so it's gender,
and it's ethnicity.

SENATOR LEONE: Thank you. Are there any other
questions? If not, thank you, sir.

ANTHONY PILEGGI: Thanks for your time.

SENATOR LEONE: Ms. Debbi Newton.

DEBBI NEWTON: Good afternoon. I'm actually here on
-- in behalf of two Organizations, and I will
make both of them very quick for you.

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SB 383

HB 5387

Senator Leone, Representative Hennessy, and
Members of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

I'm Debbi Newton, Legislative Liaison for the Connecticut Veterans and Military Coalition, and Organization of about 25 veteran groups, here to speak on behalf of Proposed Bills 152 and 383, both of which propose to extend the Property Tax Exemption to 100 percent for 100 percent disabled veterans, and I think everyone that's been here today has spoken much more eloquently than I could, so I will leave it at that for you.

Putting on my other hat, I am here as the Legislative Chair of the National Guard Association of Connecticut. I have served in that position for ten years, and I'm in my 34th year with the Connecticut National Guard right now.

You have my written testimony. Many people have spoken on many of the bills in there, so I'm only going to concentrate on two, the Act providing free admission to and parking at State Parks.

I've included several pieces of documentation for you on what State Parks cost. If you look at them, the majority of them are about nine dollars on weekends for in-state residents. Some of them drop to six dollars during the week, and some have no admission fee at all during the week. The majority of them only charge approximately six months out of the year from May through October.

If you take 200 veteran families, and give them free admission to those State Parks, once a

their dependents. So this is something -- we're, you know, there are other states in the country that do this, not a lot, and this is a place where Connecticut can lead the way.

The other bill I want to talk about is the ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE USE OF MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TRAINING.

HB 5387

This is a piece that two years ago the Connecticut General Assembly passed into law to allow this to happen -- not the Task Force, but to allow military occupational specialties be considered for civilian job skills. We were specifically testifying back then on things such as plumbing -- the people that go and get their plumbing MOS through the military, spend two or three, four years on active duty or overseas building and putting the plumbing in and everything come back. They have much more experience than anyone that has to go through the process from day one. We're not asking with this that their state testing be wiped out. We still expect them to do that. The Task Force is something that we assumed had been set up two years ago when the law passed allowing this. So for two years we've, in effect, held veterans and military people back from productive civilian occupations.

So we're just asking for your support of that bill, and if you have any questions, I'm more than willing to answer.

SENATOR LEONE: Thank you, Debbi, for your commands and from the Task Force perspective, we would

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DEBBI NEWTON: Right.

SENATOR LEONE: So thank you. Are there any questions?

Yes. Representative Alexander.

REP. ALEXANDER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just real quick. When it comes to your support, ma'am, of the Task Force, would it be your position, let's say for plumbing, that you would want to treat the veteran coming back to Connecticut just like someone from a neighboring state that was qualified as a plumber that's coming here to transfer their requirements to Connecticut to practice as a -- a plumber, or electrician, or a medical technician. Would that be your position? To treat them just like -- that's -- that's kind of my view, treat like anyone else coming in from any other states. Why are they treated differently if they have the same credentials?

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DEBBI NEWTON: Right, and like with the building inspector, there's going to be specific Connecticut Laws and Statutes that they would have to know, so yes, they'd have to learn that and test on that. We're not just looking for them to come in and be able to hang up their shingle and go right to work. But to meet any other criteria that they have not already met.

REP. ALEXANDER: Exactly. To treat them just like any other person with the same credentials or

some of the credentials from just a different state --

DEBBI NEWTON: Correct.

REP. ALEXANDER: -- just a different (inaudible).

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR LEONE: Thank you. Any questions?

Thank you.

DEBBI NEWTON: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE: I appreciate your testimony.

Next up, Representative Mushinsky.

REP. MUSHINSKY: Mr. Chairman, Members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Mary Mushinsky from the 85th District in Wallingford, speaking in support of House Bill 6348, AN ACT CONCERNING STATE MILITARY SERVICE.

HB 6062

Specifically I'm trying to ask the Committee to do an amendment to the bill. The bill concerns benefits connected with prior military service, and I'm seeking clarification of an unclear statute regarding honorary promotions for residents who have served in the National Guard.

In my constituent's case, he served nearly his entire career in the National Guard and then at the end of his career switched to the Army

**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.

4. Proposed S.B. No. 185 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PREFERENCE IN THE AWARD OF STATE CONTRACTS FOR VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESSES. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation. Veterans face unique challenges when re-entering the workforce, let alone starting and operating a business. This act will afford some modicum of parity with the veterans hiring preference for municipal and state employment.

5. Proposed S.B. No. 384 AN ACT CREATING A SET-ASIDE PROGRAM FOR DISABLED VETERAN CONTRACTORS. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation much as it does for proposed S.B. No. 185, with appreciation for the Committee's sensitivity to the additional challenges our disabled veterans face as business owners.

6. Proposed S.B. No. 385 AN ACT EXCLUDING START-UP FARMERS WHO ARE VETERANS FROM THE SALES AND USE TAX. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation.

7. Proposed S.B. No. 647 AN ACT CONCERNING VOTING BY MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY SERVING OVERSEAS. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation which will certainly ease the process of absentee voting for electors who serve overseas on active-duty in the military, their spouses, and/or their dependent (s). We appreciate the steps the Committee is taking to ensure that every Connecticut serviceman/-woman who elects vote may do so expediently, and will have their vote counted.

8. Proposed S.B. No. 649 AN ACT CONCERNING REDUCED FARES ON THE METRO NORTH RAILROAD. (VA), AND Proposed H.B. No. 6167 AN ACT CONCERNING FARES FOR DISABLED VETERANS WHO USE MASS TRANSPORTATION. (VA)

The VFW supports these pieces of proposed legislation.

9. Proposed H.B. No. 5131 AN ACT CONCERNING UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION BENEFITS FOR SPOUSES OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES WHO ARE DEPLOYED OR TRANSFERRED. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation in principle.

10. Proposed H.B. No. 5188 AN ACT PROVIDING FREE ADMISSION TO AND PARKING AT STATE PARKS FOR CONNECTICUT VETERANS. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation, not only for the recreational benefits it stands to afford our veterans, but for the peaceful setting it stands to provide to those in our ranks who currently suffer from the effects of Post-Traumatic Stress.

11. Proposed H.B. No. 5386 AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING ASSISTANCE FOR VETERANS. (VA), AND Proposed H.B. No. 5755 AN ACT CONCERNING AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES. (VA)

The VFW supports these pieces of proposed legislation in principle, as they should afford our returning veterans a means of securing a safe, affordable domicile until they fully reintegrate into civilian life.

12. Proposed H.B. No. 5387 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE USE OF MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TRAINING AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR STATE LICENSING REQUIREMENTS. (VA)

The VFW heartily supports this proposed legislation which should ultimately lead to legislation that will accelerate the return to the civilian workforce by many of our State's skilled veterans. The current process for licensing these already well-trained men and women is expensive, arduous, and degrading for many who return with a skill-set superior to the minimum requirements for licensing.

13. Proposed H.B. No. 5388 AN ACT REQUIRING MUNICIPALITIES TO DESIGNATE A VETERANS SERVICE CONTACT. (VA)

The VFW supports this proposed legislation in principal. The VFW endorses it with the hope that further steps will be taken to ensure quality time is afforded the veteran(s) in need, and that such a position is not treated as a secondary responsibility of low priority.

Lands Pass Series information. Allowing Service Members and their families the ability to enjoy our state parks and forests without charging them is a very nice way of saying thank you for their service and of exposing people to our wonderful resources.

Proposed Bill 5386, An Act Concerning Housing Assistance for Veterans is, unfortunately, an act that is much needed right now. The sad fact is that many Veterans have not been able to find jobs, or jobs that pay enough to keep a roof over their heads. Homelessness among Veterans is very high. Giving Veterans Preference to those in need of housing assistance is something we do need to do.

Proposed Bills 649, An Act Concerning Reduced fares on the Metro North Railroad and 6167, An Act Concerning Fares for Disabled Veterans Who Use Mass Transportation also fall under the unfortunate need category. It is my understanding that many free Veteran Transportation Programs have become victims of budget cuts and because of this, many of our Veterans are unable to make their medical appointments, job interviews or even jobs. Allowing for reduced or even free mass transportation would go a long way to easing this situation for many of our Veterans. I would not necessarily help those who live in rural areas of Connecticut where mass transportation is not available, but it would assist many.

Finally, **Proposed Bill 5387, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study the Use of Military Occupational Specialty Training as a Substitute for State Licensing Requirements** carries through on a law the Connecticut General Assembly passed two years ago allowing for military training to be used as a substitute. We worked to get that law passed as a way to qualify more of our Soldiers and Airmen for valuable jobs in the state of Connecticut and passage of that law was a great step in the right direction. However, not having a task force or other such group established to look at the military training and the state civilian requirements for licensure, in effect, negate the work we all did to pass that law and keeps many from being gainfully employed in many fields right here in Connecticut today. We urge passage of this bill.

NGACT fully understands the fiscal situation the state is facing, but we ask you to remember when casting your votes on these bills, that they directly affect only 1% of our population...those who chose to serve their country and, in some cases their state, but will also have an indirect affect on their families. These bills are all effective ways of saying thank you to these men and women, and helping them transition into civilian life as productive citizens.

I thank you for your time and for what you do for the Veterans, Military Members and Retirees of Connecticut and their families and congratulate you on your status as a Standing Committee. This concludes my testimony and I am available for any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Debbi Newton
Legislative Chair NGACT
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**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**VETERANS'
AFFAIRS
PART 2
251 – 506**

2013

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**TESTIMONY OF
JENNIFER JENNINGS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
BEFORE THE
VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 19, 2013**

~~2013~~**PRESIDENT**

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The Connecticut Heating & Cooling Contractors Association (CHCC) submits the following comments in support of HB-5387 An Act Establishing A Task Force To Study Military Occupational Specialty Training As A Substitute For State Licensing Requirements:

Members of the heating and cooling industry applaud all current members of the military and veterans alike for their service to our country, and the CHCC stands as a willing partner to help promote careers in the occupational trades for members of the military and veterans. It is important to streamline the process by which we get our veterans reemployed, particularly in our field, where heating & cooling technicians are very much in demand.

With regard to the relevancy of the training received, it is our understanding that for the purposes of occupational trades licensed by the Department of Consumer Protection, the various occupational licensing boards are already required pursuant to Public Act 10-105 to accept relevant military training in considering whether an individual is eligible to obtain a license. This is reviewed on a case-by-case basis; however, the CHCC also understands that sometimes this process can be slow, unwieldy, and sometimes inconsistent.

Far too many contractors do not maintain the proper licenses or qualifications, creating public safety concerns. In addition, individuals who have worked as apprentices but whose employers failed to properly register them, are unable to pursue licensing without repeating their apprenticeship hours. These laws must be vigorously enforced to protect consumers and employees. Strong enforcement of the state's licensing and apprenticeship laws relative to the heating and cooling industry along with all licensed trades is paramount. Ensuring that individuals performing work are held to high standards helps maintain the highest possible level of safety, training and professionalism for our industry, just as it does in the military. In this respect, CHCC supports efforts to have veterans employed or re-employed in our growing industry in a fair and timely manner.

On behalf of the CHCC, a sincere thank you to all veterans and current service members for their service, and thank you to this Committee for its consideration of our comments and as we look forward to passage of this bill and more support for those who serve and have served our great Nation. Furthermore, the CHCC is willing to offer and recommend someone from our association to serve on the task force to discuss our experience with employing and training veterans in the heating & cooling industry.

On a personal note, as a proud big sister of a recently discharged U.S Marine, whom received a Purple Heart following his second tour to Afghanistan, I cannot express enough gratitude to those who support the legislation and efforts to provide opportunities for our service members and Veterans. It is now our opportunity to serve those who have served us.