

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

PA 14-141

HB5294

House	4048-4057	10
Senate	3460, 3475, 3480-3481	4
<u>Veterans</u>	<u>6, 13, 104, 106, 107, 110</u>	<u>6</u>
		20

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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2014**

**VOL.57
PART 12
3746 – 4097**

The House of Representatives is voting by roll.

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

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Have all members voted? Have all members voted?

If all the members have voted, please check the machine to be sure that your vote is properly cast.

If so, the machine will be locked. And the Clerk will take a tally, please.

And will the Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

House Bill 5424 as amended by House "A."

Total number voting	140
Necessary for passage	71
Those voting Yea	133
Those voting Nay	7
Absent, not voting	11

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The bill as amended passes.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar Number 68.

THE CLERK:

House Calendar 68, on page 3, Favorable Report of the joint standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs, House Bill 5294, AN ACT MAKING TECHNICAL CHANGES TO

THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS STATUTES.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The good Veterans' Chairman, Representative Jack Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The question before the Chamber is on acceptance of the joint committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Clerk has an amendment, LCO 4673. 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 4673, which will be designated House Amendment Schedule "A."

THE CLERK:

House Amendment Schedule "A." LCO 4673, as

introduced by Representative Hennessy, and Senator Leone.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The Representative seeks leave of the Chamber to summarize. Is there objection; objection?

Seeing none, hearing none, Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this bill is a technical bill in the sense that it -- it makes the identification of the Commissioner gender neutral. Existing now statute says, regards as a -- a male gender and so it's, that's a technical change.

And there's also a Section A is where the hospital association has agreed to -- to ask Veterans when -- when they're admitted into hospitals if they're a Veteran. So both the hospital association and the Department of -- of Public Health are very in support of this bill. It has no fiscal note, and I urge adoption.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, Representative Hennessy.

Will you remark further on the amendment before

us? Will you remark further?

Representative Yaccarino, you have the floor,
sir. Good evening to the --

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you, Madam Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

-- distinguished Ranking Member.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Good evening.

A question to the good Chair of the Veterans'
Committee, through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Please proceed, sir.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, during testimony we
heard from Veterans and from the Commissioner of
Veterans' Affairs about lack of funding sources, and
basically this text they'll fix is the crux of this
bill and which would alleviate the -- the pressure on
the VA system.

Through you, Madam Speaker, is that true?

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Well --

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

To the good Chair of the Veterans' Committee.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, yes. The Veterans' Affairs Commission is budgeted basically to -- to help the Veterans at Rocky Hill. The budget is not enough to be spending money on -- on hospital bills. So rather than the Administration being the first source of payment for -- for indigent Veterans, the hospitals will be asking to see if there's other revenue sources, federal and state.

Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you for that answer, and thank -- through you, Madam Chair.

When we listened to the testimony, I was surprised to hear that the State of Connecticut gets \$5.8 million from the federal government for the Veterans' Home in Rocky Hill, but unfortunately, they don't really see much of that money; it goes in our General Fund, which I'd like to see it go back to the

Rocky Hill Veterans' Administration.

I support this bill. It's a clear source of funding for our hospitals, for our Veterans to get -- to get care. It alleviates the -- the pressure off the VA in Rocky Hill and then throughout the state. And it's really clarification as far as who provides those benefits first. I support this bill and hope the, hopefully our colleagues will in this Chamber.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, sir.

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

Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And just a couple clarification questions through the proponent of the amendment.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Please proceed, sir.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

Just to make sure, I'm under the impression on line 8 in the existing language, just for my clarification, home is the home, Rocky Hill facility;

is that true?

Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, yes.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the good gentleman for his answer.

How is our space availability now in Rocky Hill? Do we have adequate space or are we full in Rocky Hill?

Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Madam Speaker, I'm afraid I really don't know the answer to that.

Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

And thank you, Madam Speaker.

And I know it wasn't in the bill but I know what we're looking to do is, you know, make sure that those that have the need, we have support for those. So it's something that, you know, I'll continue to support the Veterans, along with I know the Chair of the Veterans' Commission, to make sure that we do have adequate space.

So thank you for the answers, sir, and through you, Madam Speaker. And thank you to the good Chairman.

A VOICE:

Are you okay?

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

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

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

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

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?

Please check the board to determine if your vote has been properly cast.

If so, the machine will be locked. And the Clerk will take a tally, please.

And will the Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

House Bill 5294 as amended by House "A."

Total number voting	141
Necessary for passage	71
Those voting Yea	141
Those voting Nay	0
Absent, not voting	10

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The bill as amended passes.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar Number 299.

THE CLERK:

On page 12, Calendar 299, Favorable Report of the joint standing Committee on Education, Substituted House Bill 5567, AN ACT CONCERNING A DEFINITION OF AND GUIDELINES FOR ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAMS.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Rojas.

REP. ROJAS (9th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The question before the Chamber is acceptance of the joint committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

Representative Rojas.

REP. ROJAS (9th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Clerk is in possession of an amendment, LCO 4551. I ask that it be called and I be granted leave of the Chamber to summarize.

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CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2014**

**VETO
SESSION**

**VOL. 57
PART 11
3246 – 3508**

pat/gbr
SENATE

275
May 7, 2014

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President. Moving to Calendar Page 22 where there are three items. The first, Calendar 536, House Bill 5546, move to place on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President. Second, Calendar 541, House Bill 5456, move to place on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

And Calendar 539, Calendar 539, House Bill 5294, move to place on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President. Moving now to Calendar Page 25, where we have a single item, Calendar 564, House Bill 5489, move to place on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Calendar Page 26, Madam President, where we have three items. The first, Calendar 568, House Bill 5434, move to place on the Consent Calendar.

pat/gbr
SENATE

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May 7, 2014

003475

Calendar 500, House Bill 5547.

On Page 18, Calendar 507, House Bill 5530.

On Page 19, Calendar 512, House Bill 5386.

Calendar 514, House Bill 5521.

Calendar 516, House Bill 5500.

Calendar 517, House Bill 5305.

On Page 20, Calendar 527, House Bill 5592.

Calendar 528, House Bill 5453.

On Page 21, Calendar 531, House Bill 5299.

Calendar 533, House Bill 5290.

On Page 22, Calendar 541, House Bill 5456.

Calendar 539, House Bill 5294.

On Page 24, Calendar 551, House Bill 5588.

Calendar 552, House Bill 5269.

On Page 25, Calendar 564, House Bill 5489.

Calendar 562, House Bill 5446.

(HB5466)

On Page 26 --

THE CHAIR:

Hold on. Okay. Sorry. Please proceed.

THE CLERK:

On Page 26, Calendar 568, House Bill 5434.

Calendar 569, House Bill 5040.

Calendar 566, House Bill 5535.

pat/gbr
SENATE

295
May 7, 2014

SENATOR LOONEY:

If we might pause for just a moment to verify a couple of additional items.

Madam President, to verify an additional item, I believe it was placed on the Consent Calendar and Calendar Page 30, on Calendar Page 30, Calendar 592, Substitute for House Bill 5476.

THE CHAIR:

It is, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

It is on? Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Madam President. If the Clerk would now, finally, Agenda Number 4, Madam President, Agenda Number 4 one additional item ask for suspension to place up on Agenda Number 4 and that is, ask for suspension to place on the Consent Calendar an item from Agenda Number 4.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President, and that item is Substitute House Bill Number 5566 from Senate Agenda Number 4.

Thank you, Madam President. If the Clerk would now, if we might call for a vote on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk. Will you please call for a Roll Call Vote on the Consent Calendar. The machine will be opened.

THE CLERK:

An immediate Roll Call has been ordered in the Senate.

pat/gbr
SENATE

296
May 7, 2014

An immediate Roll Call on Consent Calendar Number 2 has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

If all members have voted, all members have voted, the machine will be closed. Mr. Clerk will you please call the tally.

THE CLERK:

Consent Calendar Number 2.

Total number voting	36
Necessary for adoption	19
Those voting Yea	36
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	0

THE CHAIR:

The Consent Calendar passes. Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President. Two additional items to take up before the, our final vote on the implementer. If we might stand for just, for just a moment.

The first item to mark Go is, Calendar, to remove from the Consent Calendar, Calendar Page 22, Calendar 536, House Bill 5546. If that item might be marked Go.

And one additional item, Madam President, and that was from Calendar, or rather from Agenda Number 4, ask for suspension to take it up for purposes of marking it Go, that is House Bill, Substitute for House Bill 5417. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**VETERANS'
AFFAIRS
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**2014
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welcome back an attorney that used to be with us, (inaudible) is back with us on the Committee so we thank her for coming back, and of course all the others that are here also.

Before officially starting, my ranking Chairmen, any comments? Great, fabulous. Any other comments?

With that, we will start our public hearing. We will start first with the elected officials and then we will go on to the public. If we run into too much time on the elected, then we'll alternate.

With that said, our first up is our own commissioner, Commissioner Schwartz.

Welcome back, Commissioner.

COM. SCHWARTZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It's good to be back, although I'm hoping that I will be moving on sometime soon.

SENATOR LEONE: Yes, we're all ears to see how you are progressing and I'm sure when the time is right you'll keep us informed.

COM. SCHWARTZ: I will. I will.

SENATOR LEONE: And good best of luck to you in that regard.

SB 212
HB 5299
SB 213
SB 216
SB 218
HB 5294

COM. SCHWARTZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. Good to be here again.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs would like to comment on several bills. The first one is the R.S. Raised Bill 210, VETERANS WHO SERVED IN THE NATINOAL GUARD.

Hopefully we have learned from some of the problems of the past that we must be mindful that in today's atmosphere so many people are coming out of the woodwork so to speak, saying they want to help veterans. And some say that very little of the contributions that are made to them actually go to veterans.

And last but not least, the technical changes described in 5294 CHANGES TO THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS STATUTES. I realize that I am the spoiler in this because all the references are to he, and so hopefully there will be a woman to follow me someday. Not in 140 years, but we would like to change throughout the statutes the word to commissioner. Thank you.

I am available for any questions you may have.

SENATOR LEONE: Thank you, Commissioner. And duly noted on that last point, and I just wanted to have you know that that was no our suggestion for insertion of that language.

COM. SCHWARTZ: Okay.

SENATOR LEONE: You've testified on quite a few bills. I do thank you because you've shed some light on some of them. I do have a few questions and then I'll open up to the floor for others. And given the fact on your expertise, your input is very valid.

Let's start from the first one, RSB 210 THE VETERANS WHO SERVED IN THE NATIONAL GUARD. You mentioned that many of the definitions and therefore how it's utilized is through federal legislation, which is accurate and I know sometimes causes consternation because some people are covered and some are not. And I think that's what we've been trying to figure

<u>SB 212</u>	<u>SB 213</u>
<u>SB 214</u>	<u>SB 215</u>
<u>SB 216</u>	<u>SB 217</u>

Aaron Jones
 Veterans Outreach Coordinator
 South Park Inn Emergency Shelter
 75 Main Street
 Hartford, CT 06106

Page 6
 Line 15 SB 218 HB 5293
HB 5294 HB 5297
HB 5298 HB 5299

Testimony of the Aaron Jones, Veterans Outreach, in regards to the following bills before the Veterans' Affairs Committee February 25, 2014

Good afternoon, Senator Leone, Representative Hennessey and members of the Veterans Affairs Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to come before you and testify in regards to the bills being reviewed for this legislative session.

As the Veterans Outreach Coordinator at the South Park Inn Shelter, and as a combat veteran and former member of the Connecticut Army National Guard, I come in contact with a large number of veterans from a variety of different organizations and groups. Today I am representing the South Park Inn Emergency Shelter and the veteran population that we serve. This population includes 191 homeless veterans that were housed in one of the programs offered at South Park Inn. This also includes the over 700 veterans that have been served since starting the weekly Veterans Drop Inn Center. These numbers reflect veterans living not only in Hartford, but from the greater Hartford area and extending across our state. This is a very diverse population both demographically and culturally, that shares a common experience of military service and veteran status. I am here today to speak on the current bills based on my experiences working with these veterans and listening to their needs, interests, and concerns.

It is our hope at the South Park Inn that these bills will help our homeless veteran population and that we can work together with this committee to further assist not only homeless veterans but veterans in general who may benefit from these laws.

1. S.B. No. 210 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING VETERANS WHO SERVED IN THE NATIONAL GUARD. (VA)

Support – This is an issue which we feel is very important for individuals who have served in the National Guard but did not deploy and are not eligible for Federal Veterans benefits. These men and women volunteered to serve and currently there are only very limited services available to them due to the current definition of veteran status.

2. S.B. No. 211 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE SOLDIERS, SAILORS AND MARINES FUND. (VA)

Oppose – The current language puts control of this fund under the authority of the State Treasurer. We feel that the fund should be administered by the American Legion and that the State should have fiduciary oversight.

9. S.B. No. 218 (RAISED) AN ACT CREATING A VETERANS' PROJECTS ACCOUNT. (VA)

Support – We support this bill in that it gives residents a way to donate money to help veterans and support veterans' organizations.

10. H.B. No. 5293 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING STOLEN VALOR. (VA)

Support – We are in support of this bill that clarifies the issue of misrepresentation of military service.

11. H.B. No. 5294 (RAISED) AN ACT MAKING TECHNICAL CHANGES TO THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS STATUTES. (VA)

Support – We support the revisions to this statute.

12. H.B. No. 5297 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A DEDUCTION FROM THE INCOME TAX FOR AMOUNTS RECEIVED AS ACTIVE SERVICE PAY. (VA)

Support – We support the revisions to this statute.

13. H.B. No. 5298 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ACTIVE SERVICE PAY FOR MEMBERS OF THE CONNECTICUT NATIONAL GUARD. (VA)

Support – We support the revisions to this bill and feel that this bill will help deployed service members and their families financially.

14. H.B. No. 5299 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE FINDINGS OF THE MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TASK FORCE. (VA)

Support – We support this bill in that it removes a possible barrier for employment for service members and their spouses thus reducing the impact of returning to civilian employment post- deployment or after completing their period of service.

We appreciate this opportunity to come before you and testify on these matters. On behalf of the South Park Inn and the veterans we serve, we wish to thank you for your continued support of our service members, veterans, and their families.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS
 287 West Street
 Rocky Hill, Connecticut 06067

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Line 2
SB 212 HB 5299
SB 213 SB 216
SB 218 HB 5294

TESTIMONY OF

COMMISSIONER LINDA S. SCHWARTZ, RN, MSN, DrPH, FAAN

Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs

Presented to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

February 25, 2014

Good Afternoon Senator Leone, Representative Hennessy and members of the Committee. The Connecticut Department of Veteran Affairs appreciates this opportunity to comment on several legislative proposals being considered by the Committee.

RSB 210 VETERANS WHO SERVED IN THE NATIONAL GUARD proposes that the Department conduct a study of services that are not available to veterans who served in the National Guard. Specifically, that the study would include the need for additional services, obstacles to providing them and possible ways to facilitate their provision and implementation. As used in the Connecticut General Statutes, Section 27-103 members of the Connecticut National Guard and reserve components of any of the US Armed Forces that perform duties under Title 38 of the United States Code and receive an "Honorable" discharge or are released under "Honorable Conditions" are included in the definition of those eligible for various veterans' benefits. These benefits are principally decided by Congress as set forth in Title 38 of the United States Code and do not include all those who served in the National Guard or Reserve Components of the Military Services. In 2007, we sought and obtained authorization from the General Assembly to permit the burial of members of the National Guard or Reservists, eligible for Retirement, in our State Cemeteries. This was at no additional cost to the State because the time in service of these particular "Retirees" were equal to the burial benefits of a military veteran. Connecticut is one of a few States to permit non-veterans to be buried in a State Veteran's Cemetery.

As you may know I served both on Active Duty and as a Reservist in the US Air Force and am very well aware of the commitment made by our citizen soldiers who do not serve in the active forces. However this is not a State issue. Many members of the Guard and Reserves are veterans by virtue of their service on Active Duty; however the disparity in access to benefits in many instances is set by Federal Law. We are aware that Congressman Courtney and Senator Blumenthal are working on Federal legislation to address this very issue. The Department of Veteran Affairs looks forward to working with the Committee to synthesize the essence of this issue and develop a plan of action.

perfect way to facilitate their contributions. Thus we do believe that the spirit and intent of this legislation is much needed and would do much good. At the same time, I would be remiss if I did not say that we must not replicate the mistakes of the past. As we ponder the good, we must factor in accountability for the funding, the criteria for awarding grants and outcome measures which reflect the real effectiveness of this program. Hopefully we have learned from some of the problems of the past. We must also be mindful that many organizations today purport to care for veterans but in actuality do not use the funding for veterans. Care must be made in developing the process for these funds to assure that the funding goes to the veterans in need.

RHB 5294 TECHNICAL CHANGES TO THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS STATUTES. We support the changes proposed in this legislation. For obvious reasons, this change should also be made throughout the Statutes governing the Department of Veteran Affairs.

This concludes my testimony, I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.