

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

PA 14-56

HB5293

House	1830-1840	11
Senate	2920-2923	4
Veterans	63-67, 98, 99-101, 104, <u>106, 111, 112</u>	13
		28

H – 1186

**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2014**

**VOL.57
PART 6
1681 – 2023**

law/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

150
April 23, 2014

been properly cast. If so, the machine will be locked and the Clerk will take a tally. Will the Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

House Bill 5066.

Total Number Voting 140

Necessary for Passage 71

Those voting Yea 137

Those voting Nay 3

Those absent and not voting 10

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The bill passes. Will the Clerk please call Calendar number 393.

THE CLERK:

Three nine three. Three nine three on page 31, favorable report of the joint standing committee on judiciary, House Bill 5293, AN ACT CONCERNING STOLEN VALOR.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

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

law/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

151
April 23, 2014

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The question is 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 4083. I would ask the Clerk to please call the amendment and that I be given leave of the Chamber to summarize.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

will the Clerk please call LCO number 4083 which shall be designated as House Amendment Senate A.

THE CLERK:

House Amendment A, LCO 4083 represented by Senator Hennessy -- Representative Hennessy et al.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The Representative seeks leave of the Chamber to summarize. Without objection, Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, an act concerning stolen valor clarifies the issue of misrepresentation of military service. What we're doing is realigning our existing stolen valor statutes

law/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

152
April 23, 2014

with federal law. Specifically due to the Supreme Court ruling previously that struck down our law the - - this bill makes it illegal to misrepresent the uniform with medals if there is the intent to obtain money, property or other tangible benefit. There are other -- there's a couple of other items on this bill that are technical fixes that LCO represented -- asked that we do. And I move adoption.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The question before the Chamber is on adoption of House Amendment Schedule A. Would you care to remark further on House A? Would you care to remark on House Amendment Schedule A? Representative Yaccarino, you don't have your crutches. Can you stand okay?

REP. YACCARINO:

I can stand pretty good. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Okay.

REP. YACCARINO:

Thank you, Madam Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

You have the floor, Sir.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the good Chair of the committee for the work on this bill along with screening but I do have a couple of questions for the Chair of veterans committee, through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Please proceed, Sir.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

In the bill the technical fixes for the monetary purposes which is vitally important for stolen valor but also we passed last year the service coordinator portion for -- to help veterans. And this clarifies the goal of that first service coordinator where -- where it's mandated but not at necessarily a cost because you could utilize -- the town could utilize a full time employee. Is that -- is that correct, through you, Madam Chair to the good ranking -- to the good Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Madam Speaker, could you please ask that he repeat his question.

law/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

154
April 23, 2014

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Yaccarino, would you please repeat your question?

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Sure, Madam Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Last year we had passed a service coordinator where every town would have a service coordinator to help our veterans in need. It wasn't really clarified. We clarify in this bill where -- but it's a mandate but not necessarily a cost mandate because we have full time employees in each town that could service the -- as service coordinators. Is that correct? Through you, Madam Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Through you, Madam Speaker, yes the intent of the -- last year's bill was to have each municipality have a designated contact person for veterans and you know unfortunately there was an error in the language and -- and what this

law/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

155
April 23, 2014

attempts to do is to clarify the intent and that is
that each municipality will have a contact person.

Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you for that answer, Madam Chair --
Chairman Hennessy. Thank you. One last question.
Department of Veterans Affairs will -- is it correct
that they'll actually train the service coordinator in
each town? Through you, Madam Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, yes they can do that.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

And one -- the towns do not have to participate
if they don't want to. Is that -- is that true?
Through you, Madam Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Well -- well actually the bill we passed last year mandates that there is a contact person.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

The -- let me clarify. They do -- they do not have to participate in the training. That's correct.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Right.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

That was the question and that was the answer. Thank you. I'd like to thank the good Chair for all his work and our work as a committee and it's a very important bill. And the technical fixes are important for our veterans and thank you. It's a good bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, Sir. Will you care to remark further on the amendment before us? Representative Nicastro, you have the floor, Sir.

REP. NICASTRO (79th):

Thank you. Good afternoon, Madam Chair.

law/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

157
April 23, 2014

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Good afternoon, Sir.

REP. NICASTRO (79th):

Madam Chair, this bill has been a long time coming. You know we've seen it happening all over New England. We've seen it happen in Connecticut. Just down at the Danbury way a short time ago. I mean we have men and women who are placing their lives on the line every day of the week; Afghanistan, Iraq on and on and on. And we have people trying to use that that never served in the military to try and get jobs, to try and get money from banks and things like this.

This is wrong. It's got to come to an end. I mean you've got to stop and think about this. If our men and women can go there and do this for all of us to protect our country, to keep our country safe why should we allow somebody who's done nothing to do anything like that yet to try and claim they're a veteran. I think that's a disgrace. It's a disgrace to all the military personnel and I strongly support this bill. Thank you, Madam Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, Sir. Will you care to remark further on Amendment Schedule A? Will you care to remark

law/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

158
April 23, 2014

further on Amendment A? Representative Mary Fritz of the 90th, you have the floor, Madam.

REP. FRITZ (90th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Through you to Chairman Hennessy please.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Please proceed, Madam.

REP. FRITZ (90th):

Chairman Hennessy, you talked about compensation before that somebody would pose as a veteran so that they could get a form of compensation. Would you consider winning an election a form of compensation?

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. If said person presents themselves as a military person without being a military person well that -- that certainly is I would say a statement of stolen valor. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Fritz.

REP. FRITZ (90th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

law/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

159
April 23, 2014

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

You're welcome, Madam Fritz. Will you care to remark further on House Amendment Schedule A? Will you care to remark further on House A? 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 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? Please check the board to determine if your vote has been properly cast. If so the machine will be locked

law/gbr
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

160
April 23, 2014

and the Clerk will take a tally. And will the Clerk
please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

House Bill 5293 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

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The bill as amended passes. Will the Clerk
please call Calendar Number 367.

THE CLERK:

On page 48, Calendar Number 367, favorable report
of the joint standing committee on judiciary,
substitute House Joint Resolution Number 26,

RESOLUTION VACATING THE DECISION OF CLAIMS

COMMISSIONER TO DISMISS THE CLAIM AGAINST THE STATE OF
CHASE CORCORAN AND AUTHORIZE THE CLAIMANT -- THE
CLAIMANT TO SUE THE STATE.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Jerry Fox.

REP. G. FOX (146th):

**S - 677
CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2014**

**VOL. 57
PART 9
2668 – 2992**

THE CHAIR:

The Senate will stand at ease.

(Chamber at ease.)

The Senate will come back to order. Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, we have a number of additional items to add to the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

All right. Let's go.

SENATOR LOONEY:

First, Mr. President, Calendar page 4, Calendar --

THE CHAIR:

Hold on. Let's make sure we're in order, here. Get all our bills on Consent. Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, thank you, Mr. President. The first item is Calendar page 4, Calendar 273, Senate Bill 480, 4-8-0.

Next, moving to Calendar page 14, Calendar 435, House Bill 5044.

On Calendar page 16, Calendar 450, House Bill 5371.

Also on Calendar page 16, Calendar 451, House Bill 5373.

On Calendar page 18, Calendar 464, House Bill 5293.

On Calendar page 19, Calendar 471, House Bill 5374.

On Calendar page 20, Calendar 472, House Bill 5380.

Also Calendar page 20, Calendar 488, House Bill 5222.

Moving to Calendar page 23, Calendar 504, House Bill 5309.

Also Calendar page 23, Calendar 505, House Bill 5484.

And on Calendar page 23, Calendar 506, House Bill 5487.

Moving to Calendar page 26, Mr. President, Calendar 519, House Bill 5375.

Also Calendar page 26, Calendar 520, House Bill 5471.

On Calendar page 30, Calendar 542, House Bill 5378.

Calendar page 33, Calendar 558, House Bill 5459.

And also we earlier today had placed Calendar page 37, Calendar 120, Senate Bill 237.

And one additional item, Mr. President, Calendar page 45, Calendar 158, Senate Bill 209.

So this would be our proposed Consent items at this time, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, and if the Clerk would then read the items on the Consent Calendar for verification so we might proceed to a vote.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On Page 4, Calendar 273, Senate Bill 480.

Page 14, Calendar 435, House Bill 5044.

On Page 16, Calendar 450, House Bill 5371.

Also Calendar 451, House Bill 5373.

On Page 18, Calendar 464, House Bill 5293.

On Page 19, Calendar 471, House Bill 5374.

On Page 20, Calendar 472, House Bill 5380.

Calendar 488, 5222.

On Page 23, Calendar 504, House Bill 5309.

And Calendar 505, House Bill 5484.

Also Calendar 506, House Bill 5487.

And on page 26, Calendar 519, House Bill 5375.

Calendar 520, House Bill 5471.

Page 30, Calendar 542, House Bill 5378.

Page 33, Calendar 558, House Bill 5459.

On Page 37, Calendar 120, Senate Bill 237.

And on page 45, Calendar 158, Senate Bill 209.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Mr. Clerk. Please announce the pendency of a roll call vote and the machine will be opened.

THE CLERK:

An immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
roll call on today's Consent Calendar has been ordered
in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

Have all members voted? If all members have voted, please check the board to make sure your vote is accurately recorded.

If all members have voted, the machine will be closed and the Clerk will announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

On today's Consent Calendar.

Total Number Voting	35
Necessary for adoption	18
Those voting Yea	35
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	1

THE CHAIR:

Consent Calendar Number 1 passes.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, would move for immediate transmittal to the House of Representatives of Senate bills acted upon today.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, would yield the floor to members for any announcements or points of personal privilege before adjourning and announcing tomorrow's Session.

THE CHAIR:

Any announcements or points of personal privilege? Announcements or points of personal privilege? Seeing none, Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**VETERANS'
AFFAIRS
1 – 228**

**2014
INDEX**

military experience and training to account for civilian licensing criteria goes a long way toward reducing these barriers and provides the opportunity for veterans to get back to work faster.

This legislation is a great start toward building a bridge from military to civilian life. We support the task force findings and offer it support in finding further solutions and including even more occupations in the future.

I'd like to introduce Mike to talk H.B. 5293
CONCERNING STOLEN VALOR.

MIKE ZACCHEA: Good afternoon, Chairman Leone, Chairman Hennessy, and distinguished members of the Committee.

My name is Mike Zacchea. I'm a combat-wounded, medically-retired, Marine Lieutenant Colonel. I was awarded to Bronze Stars for valor in military service and combat, and a Purple Heart. I was attached to Headquarters Company First Battalion Third Marines during Operation Phantom Fury, which was the second battle of Fallujah.

I want to speak for somebody who could not be here today, Sergeant Rafael Peralta, who was in my company. I'm going to read very briefly from Sergeant Peralta's Navy Cross Citation.

While clearing his seventh house of the day, Sergeant Peralta opened the door to a back room and immediately came under intense close-range automatic weapons fire from multiple insurgents. Sergeant Peralta was shot twice in the head and once in the chest, and fell mortally wounded.

After the initial exchange of gunfire, the insurgents broke contact and fled from the building, throwing a fragmentation grenade behind them. The grenade came to rest by Sergeant Peralta's head. In his last dying moments and without hesitation and with complete disregard for his safety, Sergeant Peralta reached out and pulled the grenade under his body, absorbing the brunt of the blast and shielding his fellow marines only feet away. Sergeant Peralta ultimately succumbed to his wounds.

Those of us who have worn the uniform take the sanctity of selfless service and sacrifice seriously. Stolen valor is disrespectful to every veteran who has sworn the oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic. Of greater concern is how stolen valor undermines the integrity of veterans who have served honorably everywhere.

The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce is committed to being part of the solution. We have taken organizational steps in implementing technology to prevent stolen valor among our members, and fraudulent self-identification as a service-disabled or veteran-owned business within our membership.

I urge the Committee to adopt House Bill 5293 CONCERNING STOLEN VALOR.

DAWN MCDANIEL: The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce looks forward to serving as a resource for the Committee and working with Committee members on legislation that will enhance, increase, and promote veteran-owned businesses and provide meaningful employment for all our state's veterans.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear here before you today, and we are available for any questions.

SENATOR LEONE: Thank you, Dawn. Thank you, Mike, for your comments.

We will be leaning on you as we proceed on this legislation, as well as a few others. I believe you have a lot to offer and share in terms of providing the organization that you've created and to make sure that they can assist us as we try and further along our public policy for all veterans.

I do want to thank you, Mike, for sharing that story because it's those kinds of stories that are the reasons why we're here and the reasons why we must act on these types of issues. And stolen valor is important to every single person in this room, and we want to make sure that we do all we can to prevent that from happening.

And there are times when we would like to make it even more forceful than we are sometimes allowed, but that's also the reason why we have the freedoms that we do in this country. So to the extent that we can make it as tight as possible, that's exactly what we're going to do. So I want to thank you both for your support and your comments and your service.

Any questions?

Mr. Chairman.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you.

Just on the stolen valor bill, I was interviewed by Channel 3 News. It was here yesterday, regarding a case in Connecticut. A

certain individual by the name of Banks is impersonating as a special force -- they always choose special forces.

I was in a ranger battalion myself. And in fact, a constituent once checked out a national website called Stolen Valor. It's subtitled, It's not hell, but you can see it from here.

MIKE ZACCHEA: I'm familiar with it.

REP. HENESSY: Yes. Well, interestingly enough, he was my roommate in the ranger battalion. So when he called up to see if I was in fact the stolen valor candidate, he could vouch for my credentials seeing as we served the same time in the First Ranger Battalion down in Georgia. But this is a very important issue.

Thank you for your testimony. Thank you for your service.

SENATOR LEONE: Representative Nicastro.

REP. NICASTRO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank you both of you for meeting with me this morning. It was quite informational. I love the way you broke the bills down. Really it makes it so much clearer. You state why you support it and the reason why each and every bill and most people don't do that. But also, I enjoyed speaking with you in my office today. Really I learned a lot.

Thank you very much.

DAWN MCDANIEL: Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE: Thank you both. We appreciated it.

We will be in touch.

Next Brian Baker, then followed by Aaron Jones.

BRIAN BAKER: Good afternoon, Senator Leone, Representative Hennessy, Chairs, and distinguished members of the Select Committee of Veterans' Affairs.

Thank you so much for having me testify this afternoon.

SENATOR LEONE: Brian, correction. That's standing committee.

BRIAN BAKER: Standing committee.

SENATOR LEONE: We did that last year. Thank you.

BRIAN BAKER: That's right, yes we did. Yes, you did.

SB 211 SB 213
SB 215 SB 216

Aaron Jones is en route. He's a student and he's a part-time employee of ours at South Park Inn. He will be here very shortly, so if we need to skip over him; and he'll be right here.

I am the Assistant Director of the South Park Inn. We are a homeless shelter here at Hartford. We've been there since 1984. I've been there 29 years myself. I started as a volunteer in 1984. We've served 50,000 men, women, and children since we have been at 75 Main Street.

Among the folks that we serve, unfortunately there are quite a few homeless veterans. And I don't really use that term homeless veterans. I'd rather use the term veterans experiencing homelessness because the vast

REP. HENNESSY: And so can you give us an example of this use?

RYAN HENOWITZ: I mean some of my friends they have used it for heating, oil. They've used it to try and just get housing assistance when they haven't done well. I mean some of the veterans I know it does take them a while to find a job once they've been out of the military.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you, Ryan.

Any comments or questions?

Okay, thank you.

So unless there is anybody else who would like to come up and submit testimony at this time, the -- yes, sir.

Please come forward and state your name.

HB 5293
THOMAS OHARA: My name is Thomas O'Hara and I'm a constituent out of Groton. I'm also an intern here. Please bear with me when I go through this. I'm going to try to control my emotions and my level of (inaudible) language.

I'm supporting S.B. 210, AN ACT CONCERNING VETERANS WHO SERVE IN THE NATIONAL GUARD. I did a ten-month combat tour to Afghanistan where I was serving alongside the Army National Guard unit out of Boston. And we would always poke fun at them. We'd call them weekend warriors or the national girls.

But the fact of the matter is they were incredible professionals at what they did. When we would leave the wire for the security details, if it wasn't for them I'm -- in their presence, I'm sure I probably wouldn't be here

today. They deserve all of the benefits that I get being a vet.

And secondly, I'm supporting H.B. 5293, THE ACT CONCERNING A STOLEN VALOR. This one especially hits close to home with me.

I got married a month ago today. And instead of giving little knick-knacks to the guests to my wedding, me and my wife we donated money to the American Disabled Veterans Organization in the name of one of my friends who he served with when he went downrange.

The guy I served with, he was a corpsman in the Navy. When he was deployed he was his company's corpsman, or his unit's corpsman. And he went out on patrol one day where one of his best friends, Lance Cpl. Blaise Oleski, he got hit with an IED. My buddy, the corpsman, there was nothing he could do to save his friend, the Lance Corporal. He died in his arms.

A couple of weeks after my wedding there was a case of stolen valor of a gentleman up in New York who was posing as Lance Cpl. Blaise Oleski, which is (inaudible).

My corpsman friend, there was a couple of days that he needed to recover from it. He suffered from PTSD when he came back. I mean he got help. He's out now and going to school. But if there's anything that we can do to up the consequences of people who decide to do this, it should be passed in my opinion.

Thank you.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you, and thank you for your service to your country, and sorry to force you to wait until the end here.

THOMAS OHARA: It's cool.

REP. HENNESSY: Okay, good.

REP. NICASTRO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your service, and never be afraid to show your emotions. I say that sincerely. I do when I feel that way.

You know something you said about the National Guard; shortly after the Korean War ended, because the National Guard was called out during Korea. I don't know if you knew that or not. But shortly after that the National Guard was basically home units. But since Iraq and Afghanistan, they've been out there. They've been out there quite a bit. In fact, percentage-wise they were out there more than the regular Army was out there. I don't know if you're aware of that. That National Guard men and women were overseas greatly and the percentage was unbelievable.

I know in Connecticut we had one of the highest percentages of men and women overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan for the National Guard, okay; I just really want to make you understand that.

If somebody joins the National Guard they have a reason for it, but they're there when the call is called. They go.

THOMAS OHARA: Oh, absolutely.

REP. NICASTRO: Okay. And I'm very proud of our National Guard in Connecticut, very proud of it and the country. And I'm proud of your service truly.

And what you saw, what you went through, I've heard so many different times from other men and women who were in action and believe me I understand. I understand truly and I say that sincerely. So thank you for your service. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you for your service. And it's really not just National Guard, it's all branches of services that are reserve units that today are being deployed more frequently than ever.

But basically I just want to thank you for your service and you should always speak up. You should know that. I mean you can speak and say anything you want to say and we appreciate your service and what you've done for us.

REP. YACCARINO: Thank you.

THOMAS OHARA: Of course.

REP. HENNESSY: Thank you very much.

This concludes the public hearing.

<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.



Connecticut Veterans
Chamber of Commerce

Page 5
Line 12

Connecticut Veterans' Affairs Committee
February 25, 2014 Public Hearing

**Testimony in favor of bills SB 210, SB 212, SB 213, SB 214, SB 215, SB 216, SB 217,
SB 218, HB 5293, HB 5297, HB 5298, HB 5299.**

Good afternoon Senator Leone, Representative Hennessy, Senator Welch, Representative Yaccarino, and members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I am Dawn A. McDaniel, Executive Vice President of the Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce. The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce seeks to foster growth and opportunity for veteran-owned businesses and veterans transitioning to the workforce.

The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce represents the voice of over 42,000 veteran owned businesses in the state, accounting for 8% of the state's GDP. Studies have shown that Veterans operate successful businesses and are more likely to hire veterans. Over the past four years, the UConn Entrepreneur Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities has invested \$1.2 Million into veteran-owned businesses, which has resulted in \$6.5 Million in gross revenues. We support state legislation that lowers barriers to entry to business ownership, economic reintegration, workforce development, and transition to the civilian sector.

The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce supports providing servicemembers, veterans, and their families the best benefits available. In Connecticut, the veteran population represents 6.15% of the state's population. These brave few support our nation's freedoms and offer unrelenting support in the state's time of need.

All the bills below strive to improve the life and transition of military servicemembers, veterans, and their families by increasing workforce re-entry and economic reintegration opportunities, reducing unemployment, and protecting the integrity of service from fraud.

We support these bills and appreciate the committee's efforts to provide these benefits. The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce looks forward to serving as a resource for the committee and working with the committee members on any legislation that will enhance, increase, and promote veteran-owned businesses and provide meaningful employment to all of our state's veterans. Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you and we stand ready to answer any questions you may have.



**Connecticut Veterans
Chamber of Commerce**

Bills Supported by the Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Licensing and Transitioning Veterans to Civilian Life

SB 212– AAC IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TASK FORCE and,

HB 5299 - AAC THE FINDINGS OF THE MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TASK FORCE.

Allowing military experience and training to account for civilian licensing criteria goes a long way toward reducing these barriers and provides the opportunity for Veterans to get to work faster. This legislation is a great start toward building a bridge from military to civilian life. We support the task force findings and offer our support in finding further solutions and including more occupations.

SB 213 - AAC THE VETERANS' OPPORTUNITIES PILOT PROGRAM.

This legislation provides the groundwork for expanding opportunities for Veterans in the workplace

SB 214 – AAC A TAX CREDIT FOR DONATIONS OF VEHICLES TO VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS.

We support this legislation as it provides an incentive for the community to engage with the Veteran population and enhances the connection between civilian and military communities ultimately resulting in a better transition experience.

SB 218 – AAC A VETERANS' PROJECTS ACCOUNT.

This is a wonderful way for the community to show their appreciation to Veterans for their service and sacrifice. An account such as this will provide much needed support to non-profits serving veterans and supporting their transition. Programs that build opportunity to business ownership and skills for the workplace offer a solid solution to reducing unemployment and homelessness among Veterans around the state.

HB 5293 AAC STOLEN VALOR.

The uniform of the armed services is a symbol of pride and honor. Those who have worn it and made the sacrifice for their country take this issue of stolen valor seriously. At a minimum stolen valor is disrespectful to those who have made the sacrifice and served their country. Of greater concern is how stolen valor undermines the integrity of Veterans everywhere. The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce is committed to being part of the solution. We have taken organizational steps and implemented technology to prevent "stolen valor" and fraudulent self-identification as a service disabled or veteran-owned business within our membership.