

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

<u>HB 5064</u>	<u>PA 175</u>	<u>1986</u>
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CONNECTICUT
GEN. ASSEMBLY
HOUSE

PROCEEDINGS
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House of Representatives

Wednesday, March 5, 1986

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Is there business on the Clerk's desk?

CLERK:

There is, Mr. Speaker. I have communications. I have the report of the Auditors of Public Accounts to the 1986 Session of the General Assembly. For reference to the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

The record report that the report is received and the reports are referred to the Committees on Finance, Revenue and Bonding and the Committee on Appropriations.

CLERK:

I have favorable Changes of Reference from the House.

Favorable Report of the Joint Standing Committee on Public Safety on Substitute House Bill No. 5064, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS. The committee has met and feels the bill ought to pass but first be referred to the Committee on Government Administration and Elections.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

So ordered.

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CLERK:

Calendar 374, Substitute for House Bill 5064,
File No. 402, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS'
AFFAIRS. Favorable Report of the Committee on Appropriations.
REP. NEUMANN: (62nd)

Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Otto Neumann.

REP. NEUMANN: (62nd)

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

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

The question is on acceptance and passage. Will
you remark?

REP. NEUMANN: (62nd)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the course of the work
of the Public Safety Committee and for that matter, the
efforts of the Governor, there was a recommendation put
in the Governor's budget and in legislation developed by
the Public Safety Committee to create a Department of
Veterans' Affairs, the purpose being to allow Connecticut
veterans a central place to deal with the issues that are
before it and a chance for these people to get into the
benefit programs a lot easier. I would move passage of

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the bill.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

The question is on acceptance and passage. Will you remark? Will you remark? If not --.

REP. MIGLIARO: (80th)

Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Eugene Migliaro, Jr.

REP. MIGLIARO: (80th)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the members of the Public Safety Committee on both sides of the isle, first of all I'd like to compliment each and every member for a job well done and also to compliment the input on this particular bill on behalf of all the veteran organizations in the state, the VFW, the American Legion, the DAB, Vietnam era, Marine recruiters and I can go on and on and unfortunately we were not aware of it at the time that we were formulating this particular bill that there was a women's task force for veterans in the state and we apologize for that and it sure as hell would have been abided as well, but on something that has been long in coming for the State of Connecticut.

As you know, the State of Connecticut ranks 50th as far as benefits on a per capita basis for our veterans

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in this state from federal grants. And through an extensive study committee that we had over the summer, an interim study committee, we can site incidents and document it that there are many veterans, approximately 12,000 of them in convalescent homes in this state and looking down the road in the next decade you can probably multiply that by ten times more.

The State of Connecticut has well over 420,000 veterans in this state. It's also interesting to note that we rank 21st in the nation as far as contributing manpower and women power in the time of need when this country has been at war and I take very big pride in that and I think that we, as citizens, members of the State of Connecticut should also take great pride in that.

But over the years our veterans in this state have been neglected. They have been shortchanged, no thanks to the federal government and our veterans have had no place that they could go to or their spouses to seek assistance. This Veterans' Affairs Committee will afford that to them. At the present time, the way the makeup of this bill with six service officers one of which would be a director, plus the aid from over 100 volunteers from all the veteran organizations in the State of Connecticut for service officers free of charge, I think we can do a

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very good job for our veterans. I'd like to cite you a couple of incidents and I have had many over my 12 years up here, of assistance for veterans, but this one really touched my heart this past Christmas. It was veteran and a third party called me up on this particular problem. This veteran was a double amputee, had rheumatoid arthritis, the wife had to quit work in order to take care of that veteran. They seeked assistance on the federal level and got nothing. They went everywhere. They didn't know who to turn to. When this was brought to my attention, I took it upon myself to call this individual and when the wife came to the phone, the first thing she said after I introduced myself was, well, there's nothing you can do for me, we've tried every avenue with the federal government, Newington Hospital as well as West Haven Hospital. There's nothing anybody can do for us. I guess we'll just have to live the way it is. Well, I told her to let me worry about that. To make a long story short, that veteran had no purpose in life.

Well, in January right after the first of the year I got a beautiful letter from them thanking me for my efforts and it made my Christmas because this individual today now has a \$4,200 motorized wheelchair and that individual is now a part of society and can move around

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as an individual and it is incidents of this type that have happened repeatedly where I have helped and many of our legislators have helped veterans when they were in need, but I think it's about time that we have a central focal point for these veterans where they can pick up the phone and call the service director of a Veterans' Affairs Committee and tell them their problem and let these directors seek out any benefits that they're entitled to.

Another example, of the 12,000 veterans that are in convalescent homes, Sen. Miller and myself and members of the Committee, we sought out information. We found that many of these veterans were getting as little as \$5 a month in federal assistance. That meant that the State of Connecticut was picking up the difference in Title 19 and welfare benefits. After researching their qualifications, these individuals are now receive over \$500 a month from the federal government. That's just a classic example of what can be happening out there that they're being cheated out of and the State of Connecticut, thanks to the State of Connecticut, are picking up to make these people survive.

I had a veteran's spouse call me. She was getting \$1,000 property tax exemption. She didn't know where to.

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I asked her her situation. Come to find out she was entitled to \$3,000 for property tax exemption and under the statutes we can go back six years to recover that for her for six years and under the new program, thanks to this General Assembly last year, that woman now gets \$9,000 property tax exemption. Had she not had a place to turn to she would still be getting \$1,000 a year on tax assessment. There are many, many cases out there and our veterans have been crying to this state, just give us a hand and tell us where to go when we need help. There was no place for them to go. With this bill, there will be a place for them to go and I think it's a small tribute for the efforts that these men and women have laid down and given up and sacrificed and some of them have paid the supreme sacrifice and unfortunately this bill will not help them, but it can help their spouse and their children.

I urge this body very strongly to support this legislation. I feel very confident and very optimistic about this bill. I know that there's been a give and take approach on both sides and it has been a very unanimous approach. It's not a political bill. It's a bill that's something that has been long in coming. It's something we owe the veterans in this state and probably the future

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veterans of our state and I think that we owe it to them to show our appreciation for giving them a central focal point where they can come in their of need.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Clerk has an amendment in her possession, LCO No. 3414. Will the Clerk please call, and I believe it's so short, I'll let the Clerk read it, too. Thank you.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Will the Clerk please call and read LCO No. 3414, designated House Amendment Schedule "A".

CLERK:

LCO 3414, designated House Amendment Schedule "A", offered by Reps. Jaekle, Belden, Farr, Krawiecki, Migliaro and Kezer. In line 11, delete the word "the". Delete lines 12 and 13 in their entirety and insert the following in lieu thereof: "six service officers one of whom shall be the department and clerical personnel." In line 14 delete the word "state" and insert the word "other" before the word "service". In line 16, delete the word "one" and insert the words "at least one" in lieu thereof. In line 20, delete the words "the department head and each" and insert the word "each" in lieu thereof.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

The amendment is in your possession, Sir. Your

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pleasure.

REP. MIGLIARO: (80th)

Mr. Speaker, I believe the amendment clarifies layman language.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Would you please move adoption, Sir.

REP. MIGLIARO: (80th)

I move for adoption, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

The question is on adoption. Will you remark?

REP. MIGLIARO: (80th)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's a simple amendment. It doesn't change the concept of the bill. I think it just clarifies the language in the areas about six service officers one of which will be the department head and I believe also delete the word "state" and insert the word "other" and "service". I believe it just clarifies it and I move adoption of the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

The question is on adoption. Will you remark?

The Chair would inquire for anyone who wishes to remark or we're going to have to have a show of hands or something because the lights have all gone out up here.

Rep. Terri Bertinuson.

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Apparently your lights can be turned on, Rep.
Bertinuson.

REP. STOLBERG: (93rd)

Mr. Speaker, I was going to point out, well, the
lights might be off I don't think that there's anything
else wrong with the system. The mikes are all live.

REP. BERTINUSON: (57th)

Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Bertinuson, you have the floor before you
were so quickly intercepted by your Distinguished Minority
Leader.

REP. BERTINUSON: (57th)

Through you, if I may, a question to the proponent
of the amendment.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Please proceed, Madam.

REP. BERTINUSON: (57th)

Through you, Mr. Speaker, Rep. Migliaro, I was a
little surprised to see now that one, if I'm reading the
amendment correctly, that one of the service officers
will also be the department head, through you, Mr. Speaker,
is that the intent of the amendment?

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REP. MIGLIARO: (80th)

Through you, Mr. Speaker, the reason for that is on our budgetary item we felt that be designating six service officers and to keep our budget within the proper limits until we know how much work is out there, one would be the service direct officer, would also be a service office, but also be appointed as a director by the Governor of this state. I don't believe at this time we know how much work is going to be out there we need a director separate from the six officers. So I felt for being fiscally responsible on this, I want to make sure we come in with something realistic that we let the service officer be one of those six people, the director to be one of those six people.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Bertinuson.

REP. BERTINUSON: (57th)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and just one more question or perhaps a comment, because later in the bill it does specify that the department head is in fact a cabinet level officer and I wasn't sure if this is a customary thing to have a cabinet level commissioner also being called upon to cover a whole congressional district as a service officer.

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REP. MIGLIARO: (80th)

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Migliaro, do you care to respond?

REP. MIGLIARO: (80th)

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I believe whoever the veteran is who is going to be appointed director, I don't believe that it will matter much to them whether they have their title cabinet officer or not. I think that person would be dedicated enough to want to assist the veterans, but down the road we will probably have to appoint more if the caseload gets heavy.

REP. BERTINUSON: (57th)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Will you remark further? If not, the question before you is the Adoption of House Amendment Schedule "A".

Rep. Osler, we're using the hand waving system, remember. The lights are out. No one can identify who is seeking recognition.

REP. OSLER: (150th)

Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we have in this amendment eight men and women, six service officers and one of whom shall be the department head, then that means

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there are two clerical personnel, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the proponent of the amendment.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Migliaro.

REP. MIGLIARO: (80th)

Through you, Mr. Speaker, the answer is it will six and two other people, one a secretary and one a clerk and the two people, the six will have to be veterans, the other two do not have to have veteran status.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Osler.

REP. OSLER: (150th)

Well, I have a little bit of a problem with that. Women legislators have looked at this bill and felt very favorably toward it because it does help women veterans as well as men and traditionally the women veterans have gotten pretty short trips because most of the men working at the Veterans' Administration have been more interested in the problems of the men and indeed there are so many more men veterans than women. However, all of World War II men and women veterans are now reaching an age where they begin to have more and more problems that need attention. I think the women legislators would feel to a woman that if you say we have a staff of not less than eight men and

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women that you can be mighty sure that the six service officers are going to be men and the two clerical and clerk persons will be women and we would be very reluctant to see that happen.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Will you remark further on the adoption of House Amendment Schedule "A"? Will you remark further? In not, all in favor indicate by saying aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

All opposed indicate by saying nay.

The ayes have it. House Amendment Schedule "A" is adopted and ruled technical.

REP. POLINSKY: (38th)

Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Janet Polinsky.

REP. POLINSKY: (38th)

I said a few moments ago I'd stand up on another bill and this is it. I happen to think it's a marvelous bill. I think it's long overdue and like the other one, I will most likely vote for it because I believe in it, but again, it is a bill, this time for \$250,000 that implements

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the budget. Now I know I'm not going to win on this and I'm not going to make a prolonged debate on this. I thought that if the Chairman of Appropriations were in the room I could ask him a question or two, through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Please proceed, Madam, please frame your question.

REP. POLINSKY: (38th)

Through you, a question to the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, may I assume from this bill and the last one that we passed and a few others on the Calendar that obviously these particular bills are not on the kill list of the President of the Senate, through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Your answer, Rep. Neumann.

REP. NEUMANN: (62nd)

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I do not really know what is on any list that the President Pro Tem of the Senate has or had. I do know that we have been asked, the Co-Chairmen of Appropriations have been asked to work on a list and we are working on a list. We intend to finish tomorrow and the bills before us are not on that list.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Polinsky.

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REP. POLINSKY: (38th)

Again, through you, Mr. Speaker, would you care to share any of the other things that are not on the list that you are putting together that you will finish tomorrow, through you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. NEUMANN: (62nd)

No, Mr. Speaker, through you.

REP. POLINSKY: (38th)

It was worth a try.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Polinsky.

REP. POLINSKY: (38th)

One final thing, the day we were J-F'ing bills out a question was asked of the Chairman of Appropriations about the bills coming out knowing perfectly well that there was going to be some problem to say the least with the budget and I think at that time the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee indicated to us that he would ask that all such bills that implement the budget, he would ask that the leadership P-R them, through you, Mr. Speaker, again one final question to the Chairman of Appropriations, I am presuming that you asked your leadership to do it. Can you indicate a reason to us why they did not abide by your suggestion because Lord knows

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in the last year and a half you have proved you were a very wise man.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Neumann, do you care to respond.

REP. NEUMANN: (62nd)

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I choose not to, but I must. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would assure the Ranking Member that I did discuss it with my Majority Leader and my Majority Leader explained to me much what I said at the earlier time that I went up. If indeed we spend time holding back every bill, most of the non-controversial ones would get in the way of the controversial ones and it made more sense to send out the non-controversial ones that had to go to the Senate anyway and keep some degree of the Calendar moving and I concurred in that decision at that time.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Polinsky.

REP. POLINSKY: (38th)

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One final word, we don't, we were a little wiser this year than last year and we have a lot fewer bills that are coming out of Appropriations. I think it's a weak argument considering the fact of the kind of precedent

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this sets. Again, the bill is a good one, I will vote for it, but I really have very strong reservations about the process that is being broken here. I think it will come back to haunt us and maybe it will haunt us this year and not this side of the isle, but the other. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Thank you, Rep. Polinsky.

Rep. Pauline Kezer.

REP. KEZER: (22nd)

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation. I'd like to commend Rep. Migliaro for his work on this issue and for recognizing that we're recognized by the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women's commission to study the women's veterans issues.

I think the way the amendment is worded is good. It clarifies that at least one of the six service officers shall be a woman veteran who has concern for raising the issues and helping those who have traditionally not been served as well as the majority who happen to be men. I commend the work of his committee. I commend the work of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women who have put a lot of time and effort into this and I urge passage of this bill.

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SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Will you remark further?

REP. KRAWIEC: (26th)

Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Stanley Krawiec.

REP. KRAWIEC: (26th)

I rise in support of this bill. I think it's a very good bill. It's a bill that will benefit all the veterans in the State of Connecticut. Not only will it benefit the veterans in this state, but it will also benefit the state. I urge support of the bill.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Will you remark?

REP. CUNNINGHAM: (148th)

Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Richard H. G. Cunningham.

REP. CUNNINGHAM: (148th)

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this bill. A few moments ago I was the only member here to vote against adding \$5,000 this year and probably every year they'll keep putting it through to increase the amount going to these regional groups and so forth for education.

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The \$250,000 this year is just a beginning. It is another department for this state, another commission. Mr. Speaker, we have long learned in government that these commission do not die for their existence goes on and on and on. It may seem altogether worthy that we do something for our veterans and many things we have done. In fact, this Chamber last year voted to increase veteran's exemptions on property taxes. We did that for veterans.

Nationally there are many things to be done for veterans. In fact, it would appear that one of the purposes of this commission is to work things to encourage more things, more money for veterans coming out of Washington and yet we have a growing national deficit. It is growing in large parts because government officials such as ourselves cannot say, no. We always say, yes. We establish one one commission after another. When will we ever learn?

Mr. Speaker, if we want freedom for the people, as these veterans fought for freedom, we must consider the economic freedoms of our people and say that the people are better off keeping their money and not paying higher taxes, having the freedom to do with their money as they choose, veterans and non-veterans alike. I may very well be the only person to vote against it. No one dares be considered against a group of veterans. I am not

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against veterans, but I am in favor of less government, less taxes and for the people and I oppose it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Will you remark further?

REP. ANASTASIA: (138th)

Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Lawrence Anastasia.

REP. ANASTASIA: (138th)

Mr. Speaker, I rise to voice my support of this proposal. I would also like to take the opportunity as the Ranking Member on Public Safety to commend the Chairman and, more importantly, many members of the Committee that put a great deal of time and effort, bipartisan support, by the way, on both sides of the isle for this much needed piece of legislation.

I know back a few years ago, the last figures I was made aware of was that Connecticut was 43rd in the amount of benefits they received from the federal government. I think the reason is quite simple and quite plain, Mr. Speaker, the lack of a commission that we are establishing here today to make sure that whatever benefits are available for our veterans and there are many and the State of Connecticut

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has not taken the advantage of this. I'd rather not go into some of the comments made by the previous speaker, but the federal government is cutting back on VA money. It would be much more scarce, but I do feel, Mr. Speaker, that at this time within the commission that we have established here today we will have that opportunity to put in our strong bid for monies that are available to help our veterans that are in need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Irving Stolberg.

REP. STOLBERG: (93rd)

Mr. Speaker, I would urge Rep. Cunningham to reconsider his position. I heard what he said and I know his sincerity in saying it. Let me say that we are both here some day in the distant future when all veterans' needs have been met, I would join him in doing away with this commission, but for today and tomorrow there are significant needs that veterans have and the job of state government is to serve the needs of the people.

I think the case has been made for this bill. It clearly has bipartisan support. I am proud that the Governor showed in his message his commitment to it and the need is there now and we're dealing with now and the immediate future. I commend the Committee for its work on

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this bill. I think it's done a fine job and put into place the commission that is needed at this time. I would urge support for the bill.

REP. GILLIGAN: (28th)

Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Robert Gilligan.

REP. GILLIGAN: (28th)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Clerk has an amendment, LCO 3245. I would request that he call it and please read it.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Will the Clerk please call LCO No. 3245, designated House Amendment Schedule "B".

CLERK:

House Amendment Schedule "B", LCO 3245, offered by Rep. Gilligan, Carey and Stolberg.

In line 8, strike out the word "shall" and insert "may" in lieu thereof.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

The amendment is in your possession, Sir.

REP. GILLIGAN: (28th)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move adoption.

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SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

The question is on adoption. Will you remark?

REP. GILLIGAN: (28th)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ladies and gentlemen, this is a simple one word amendment and may I say by background that we have discussed it with Rep. Migliaro and also, for the benefit of those of you who are just receiving it, the original Goldenrod copy has stamped on it that there is no fiscal impact and therefore no fiscal note is needed. It simply is to accommodate the remote possibility that the department may not be able to be housed on the side of the state Veterans' Home and Hospital grounds.

The thought was, and it's our every expectation that it would be located there as previously discussed by the principal sponsors of this bill, but our fear was that if for one reason or another it couldn't be located there, since the bill says shall be located on the grounds, the substitution of the word "may" would not frustrate the purposes of the bill. So I would urge adoption of the amendment.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

The question is on adoption of House Amendment Schedule "B". Will you remark?

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REP. MIGLIARO: (80th)

Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Eugene Migliaro.

REP. MIGLIARO: (80th)

Mr. Speaker, after a lengthy discussion on this I was very concerned with one factor, but we have a fiscal analysis report that there are no fiscal notes necessary because there will be no change. It does not put the bill in jeopardy. So I have no opposition to change the word from "shall" to "may" because it is possible that somewhere down the line instead of definitely putting a spot, we may have to find somewhere else, but whatever the case may be in January 1st they've got to come up with a spot. It could very well end up in Rocky Hill anyway. So I have no opposition to the amendment.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Will you remark further on the adoption of House Amendment Schedule "B"? Will you remark further. If not, all in favor indicate by saying aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

All opposed indicate by saying nay.

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The ayes have it. House Amendment Schedule "B" is adopted and ruled technical.

REP. ANTONETTI: (82nd)

Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Rep. Richard B. Antonetti.

REP. ANTONETTI: (82nd)

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise in support of the bill before us and to be brief I'd like to associate my comments with Rep. Migliaro and I'd like to commend the Committee for an excellent piece of legislation that is long overdue and I think as a speaker as far as in behalf of the veterans, Rep. Migliaro over the several years has been out in the forefront of veterans throughout the State of Connecticut and I think as a group we can be well proud of his action. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Will you remark further on the bill? Are you ready to vote. Rep. Bertinuson.

REP. BERTINUSON: (57th)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Briefly I would like to add my support to this bill and also express the appreciation of the Women Veterans' Task Force on which I serve to Chairman Migliaro and the Committee for recognizing that

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there are special needs of women veterans and including them in the purvue of this long needed service for the State of Connecticut.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Thank you, Rep. Bertinuson. Rep. Elsie Swensson.

REP. SWENSSON: (13th)

I also rise in support of this bill. I didn't realize six years ago when I became a legislator that I would be involved with veterans' affairs. I had a lot to learn and unfortunately sometimes we become too closely involved with a patient or a telephone call and it's going to be such a relief to me to know that I have someplace to turn where I'm not going from the Newington Hospital to Rocky Hill back to our Senators through federal and state and I think it's the biggest break we ever had and I think it's the best thing we ever did in here and \$250,000 is nothing compared to the help we can give these people. Thank you.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Will you remark further on the bill?

REP. NYSTROM: (46th)

Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Please understand there is no way to recognize you by lights other than your standing and waving. Rep. Nystrom.

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REP. NYSTROM: (46th)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise in support of this legislation. I think it is long overdue and at this time I would ask my colleagues to support and I would also like to invite each member of the House to the City of Norwich on May 4th of this year, the City of Norwich will be hosting the VFW Loyalty Day Parade. At that time you may have the opportunity to join your own veteran colleagues from your own hometowns and again I urge you to support the bill. Thank you.

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Will you remark further on the bill? Are you ready to vote? Rep. Cunningham, are you ready to vote. The machine will be opened. The Clerk please announce the pendency of a roll call.

CLERK:

The House of Representatives is now voting by roll.

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

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted? If so, the machine will be locked. The Clerk please take a tally.

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House of Representatives

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Will the Clerk please announce the tally.

CLERK:

House Bill 5064, as amended by House Amendment
Schedule "A" and House Amendment Schedule "B".

Total number voting	146
Necessary for passage	74
Those voting yea	145
Those voting nay	1
Those absent and not voting	5

SPEAKER VAN NORSTRAND:

The bill, as amended, is passed.

CLERK:

Calendar 375, House Bill 5126, File No. 408, AN ACT

CONCERNING SPEEDING.

REP. JAEKLE: (122nd)

Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER BELDEN:

Rep. Jaekle.

REP. JAEKLE: (122nd)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May this item be referred
to the Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding.

DEPUTY SPEAKER BELDEN:

The motion is to refer Calendar 375, House Bill
5126 to the Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding.

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SENATOR UPSON:

Mr. President, a Point of Personal Privilege?

THE CHAIR:

Excuse me, Senator Upson, are you discussing the motion
before us, Sir?

SENATOR UPSON:

No, I'm not.

THE CHAIR:

Well, we'll get to you in a moment, Sir. Will you remark
further on the recommendation of Senator Smith? All right, all
those in favor, please indicate by saying aye. Those opposed?
Senator Smith, the motion has been adopted. Would you care to
read in the Agendas, Sir?

THE CLERK:

Senate Agenda No. 2, dated Wednesday, March 5, 1986 and
Senate Agenda No. 3, dated Wednesday, March 5, 1986.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Smith.

SENATOR SMITH:

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I would move that
all items on the Senate Agendas Nos. 2 and 3, dated March 5, 1986
be acted upon as indicated, and that the Agendas be incorporated by
reference into the Senate Journal and the Senate Transcript.

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Monday, April 28, 1986

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SENATOR MILLER:

Yes, Mr. President. This bill has been needed for a long time in the State of Connecticut. And deliberations of the Public Safety Committee, through the interim period in 1985, did a lot of study. And a lot of checking into it. And we found a need for this. And we estimate that within the first year, we might have an additional eight million dollars to add to our surplus, if this works the way it's supposed to.

THE CHAIR:

Remark further? Senator Harper.

SENATOR HARPER:

Thank you, Mr. President. I'm not rising in opposition to the bill, but I did have a question, through you to Senator Miller.

THE CHAIR:

You may proceed.

SENATOR HARPER:

The File copy, fiscal note and O.L.R. report indicates that the State would make money as a result of this? Could Senator Miller elaborate on how we would, as a government, be in receipt of more funds as a result of creating this Department than is currently the case?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miller.

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have a referendum, that the question must be very clear. And if you mean 'yes', that's the way you vote on the machine, as 'yes'. We've all seen bumper stickers that say 'If you mean no, vote yes', or 'If you mean yes, vote no'. This clears that up. And you'll see bumper stickers that say 'If you mean no, vote no' and 'If you mean yes, vote yes'. And if there's no questions or comments, I would move this to the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered.

THE CLERK:

Cal. 403, Subst. for House Bill 5064, File 402 and 540. An Act Establishing A Department of Veterans' Affairs. (As amended by House Amendment Schedules "A" and "B".) Favorable Report of the Committee on Appropriations.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miller.

SENATOR MILLER:

Thank you, Mr. President. I move acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill, as amended by the House.

THE CHAIR:

You may proceed. You wish to remark further?

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SENATOR MILLER:

Yes. We are of that opinion. And the manner in which it shall be received would be, we would have Veteran Advocacies that would go out and generate and prosecute claims for veterans that have them coming, and have them coming now and had them coming from years past that never did get them. Because we had no vehicle and no avenue to justify it or follow it through. And by this becoming a law, I believe the Governor will sign it, and we will have what we need to prosecute and generate claims for our veterans. And that will bring more Federal V.A. money into the State of Connecticut. And in some instances, taking veterans that are on Title 19, in nursing homes, off Title 19. Part of our studies, in a particular home and hospital, I think we generated fourteen V.A. pensions, that went from a hundred and twenty five to five hundred and twenty five dollars per month. We had one in particular that caught my eye. It went to a thousand, fifteen dollars a month. That person had been in that home and hospital for a long period of time, and had been entitled to that pension for a long period of time. It was never collected, because the case was never prosecuted.

SENATOR HARPER:

One more question, through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harper.

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SENATOR HARPER:

Many communities have veterans' service centers. In my city, we call it a Department of Veterans' Affairs. I was curious as to whether or not this Department would be acting in tandem with existing local veterans' service offices the town and city governments have, or is it duplicating those services? I mean, what would provide, if at all, for coordination between the two?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miller.

SENATOR MILLER:

Through you, Mr. President. In some instances, yes. There would be a duplication. However, I would also say, in most instances there would be no duplication of services in this matter, because very few towns have full-time... very few municipalities have full-time service offices. I know Danbury does. I think Bridgeport used to, and doesn't have it any longer. And what happens now is, veterans' groups, like the American Legion and the V.F.W., Jewish War Veterans, Catholic War Veterans... they all have their own volunteer service offices. And that's part of the breakdown. They will all continue to be involved. However, the people that come on board in this program, will go out and generate claims. They will check the nursing homes, as we have done on the one. That would be their job.

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SENATOR HARPER:

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harper.

SENATOR HARPER:

I'm through questioning. I just have a comment. Thank you,
Senator Miller.

THE CHAIR:

You may proceed.

SENATOR HARPER:

I support the bill, but I just want to state for the record that as the questioning has brought out, there are local offices and veterans' organizations, and sponsored by town and city governments that essentially do what this Department will be doing. However, the Assembly recognizes that there are not enough of these centers to address the needs of all veterans. However, in terms of future requests for new positions and increasing the funding of this Department, I just think we should be cognizant that there are currently, and will continue to be, similar services available. And the State should attempt to refer and utilize those existing services wherever possible. And certainly, we don't want to see this become just another burgeoning State Department bureaucracy down the road. That once it becomes... once it comes into existence, and begins to feel an identity, that it

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just feels that there's not enough of it. I think it's a commendable effort, and I know it will address areas of the State that have no such services. But again, I do make that caution for the record.
Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Further remarks? Senator Miller.

SENATOR MILLER:

I have no further remarks at this time.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Larson.

SENATOR LARSON:

Thank you, Mr. President. Just a question, through you, to the proponent of the bill, Senator Miller. Senator Miller, excuse me because I was out of the room, but to what extent will outreach occur throughout the State under the program?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miller.

SENATOR MILLER:

Through you, Mr. President. In each Congressional district, there will be a Veterans' Service worker. In each Congressional district. In talking with the Veterans' Councils in most areas that came to our meetings, we find that they will still be involved. And we have taken much testimony to prove it. We have, from the Stamford

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area, from the Norwalk area, from Danbury... we've even got petitions asking for this State to set up this kind of program. Because it really needs it.

SENATOR LARSON:

Through you, Mr. President. Thank you Senator.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Larson.

SENATOR LARSON:

It's my understanding that there are in excess of some two hundred thousand veterans that do not belong to, or are affiliated with, any particular veterans organization throughout the State. Did you hear testimony to that effect, or is... does that statistic bear out what your Committee has looked into?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miller.

SENATOR MILLER:

Through you, Mr. President. Yes, there are a lot of veterans that are not affiliated with any veterans' groups. And one of the things that we came across that needed addressing was that the Governor had appointed a Task Force on women veterans. And they, too, aren't affiliated. It seems as there are sixteen thousand of them in the State of Connecticut. And they, too, are not being serviced properly by the Veterans Administration, and need help in prosecuting claims.

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THE CHAIR:

Further remarks?

SENATOR LARSON:

Thank you, Mr. President. No further remarks... no further questions on my part. I would like to remark, and commend the Senator and his Committee for the work that they've done along these lines. And certainly rise in support of this legislation, and associate myself with the remarks of Senator Harper previously, that the outreach that's needed to, again, effect the over two hundred thousand veterans who are not affiliated with particular associations. And also, particularly in the area of women veterans. We think that legislation of this nature is vitally important, and will support the bill, and urge members of the Circle to do also.

THE CHAIR:

I think Senator Schoolcraft was up before, followed by you, Senator Hampton. Senator Schoolcraft. Senator Schoolcraft, followed by...

SENATOR SCHOOLCRAFT:

Yes, Sir, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Schoolcraft.

SENATOR SCHOOLCRAFT:

Thank you, Senator Hampton. Yes, Sir, Mr. President, I rise to

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support this. Especially in my district and my area, there is an extreme lot of veterans. It's kind of the end of the State where they all migrate to. And we have a big attraction, the submarine base. But I think, to answer Senator Harper's question earlier, there's a lot of veterans out there that have been out... World War II veterans for forty years, and a lot of them have forgotten what benefits are available to them. And there's a lot of area where the State currently is paying veterans benefits and taking care of the veterans, that they don't realize that there is available out there, money for these people. And I think this is going to go a long way in bringing it to the attention of a lot of people. And this is where the State is going to improve. And it will be a financial gain to the State of Connecticut. And I urge all the people in the Chamber to support this.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Hampton.

SENATOR HAMPTON:

Thank you, Mr. President. Those members of the Circle that were here two years ago know that I worked on getting funding to establish the Veterans Cemetery in Middletown, and worked with all of the veterans units throughout the State. And this was one of the things that I kept hearing over and over. That we need some organization that can help those individuals that haven't chosen to belong to the

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American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, or other veterans organizations. And I would just like to join Senator Larson, Senator Schoolcraft, and Senator Miller in urging the vote on this particular legislation.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miller, you want to move this to the Consent Calendar?

SENATOR MILLER:

If there's no objection, I would ask it to be moved to the Consent Calendar, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered.

THE CLERK:

Page 5, Cal. 409, Subst. for House Bill 5826, File 377 and 544.
An Act Concerning the Establishment of Branch Offices By Banks. (As amended by House Amendment Schedule "A".) Favorable Report of the Committee on Banks.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Eaton.

SENATOR EATON:

Thank you, Mr. President. I move the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill, as amended by the House.

THE CHAIR:

You have an amendment. Mr. Clerk.

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THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Clerk, please make an announcement for a roll call vote on the items that have been referred to the Consent Calendar.

THE CLERK:

There will be an immediate roll call in the Senate on the Consent Calendar, all Senators please return to the Chamber. There'll be an immediate roll call on the Consent Calendar, will all Senators please return to the Chamber.

THE CHAIR:

Please give your attention to the Clerk, who will now call the items that were referred to the Consent Calendar.

THE CLERK:

Page 3, Cal. 306, Subst. for Senate Bill 451.

Page 4, Cal. 362, Senate Bill 476. Cal. 387, Subst. for House Bill 5172. Cal. 403, Subst. for House Bill 5064.

Page 9, Cal. 439, Senate Bill 257.

Page 10, Cal. 445, Subst. for Senate Bill 466.

THE CHAIR:

Are there any changes or omissions? The machine is open, please record your vote. Senator Barrows, Senator Larson. Has everyone voted? The machine is closed, Clerk please tally the vote.

Result of the vote: 34 yea, 0 nay. The Consent Calendar is adopted. Senator Smith.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

New Britain City Hall
Room 209
February 18, 1986
7:00 P.M.

PRESIDING CHAIRMEN: Senator Miller
Representative Migliaro

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SENATORS: Miller

REPRESENTATIVES: Migliaro, Orsini, Bassing
Fusco, McCavanaugh, Thorp,
Krawiec

REP. MIGLIARO: Okay, the hearing will come to order. I'd like to introduce, first of all, the members of the committee that are here. To my right is Rep. Fusco; Sen. Miller, co-chairman of the Public Safety Committee; and to my left is Stan Krawiec who I'm sure is no stranger to the people of New Britain; and I'm Rep. Migliaro, co-chairman of the Public Safety Committee.

What'd I'd like to do is, if anybody wants to speak on any particular bill -- there are two bills that we have in our possession -- we have a sign up sheet for the speakers. Some people have signed up and maybe some of you don't know that you have to sign, and then we call you in order. Now our purposes here tonight is to listen to you people and get your input. When you do come before the mike to sit down and speak to the members of the committee, we would like you to state your name and any post you represent or what organization you represent, we have that on record on the tape.

As you know, we're approaching two bills tonight. We're going to be addressing. One is naturally Bob's bill and my bill which is House Bill 5064 which is the Veterans Affairs Commission. The other is the Bingo Bill which will permit -- the basic reason for this bill is to permit the tickets to become legal in the State of Connecticut, which many veteran outfits use, and nonprofit organizations. And we can address both bills.

As you know, the Corrections Affairs Committee bill, the

REP. MIGLIARO: (continued)

commission -- the reason and the purpose for having this bill is one of much importance in this respect. We have approximately 460,000 plus veterans in the State of Connecticut. Connecticut ranks 21st in the nation as far as contributing man and woman power during the call of arms and need when this country has been engaged in a war, in a conflict.

Yet, we're the lowest on the totem pole as far as federal grants are concerned and benefits to our veterans. With the assistance of the VFW, John Burns in particular, American Legion, Disabled Veterans, association with Donald Osey, Jim Sparrow with the Viet Nam, members of the Viet Nam war, as well as the Marine Corps recruiter, and we didn't mean to neglect the women veterans in this state which we have approximately 16,000 of them. But at that time, we had no knowledge that the government had formed a task force for that. So our apologies for that for the women who are veterans.

It was not an intentional oversight on our part, because we would have loved to have their input in this particular committee as well. The committee was formed to make sure that the veterans in this state get their benefits that they're entitled to. And we are going to, according to the bill, we're setting up six services offices are in this bill, one of which will be appointed as a director by the Governor of this State.

We also will have a WATS line so that the veterans will have a central focal point for information center on any problem they may have. They can call that number and ask for assistance. Sen. Miller, through a survey with John Burns, found that in our convalescent homes we have approximately 12,000 veterans, of the 460,000 plus, in convalescent homes today. And in the next decade, because of the age factor, we are anticipating possibly another five times that amount in convalescent homes. And through some cases that they can document and have documented, they found that there were many veterans in there who were getting as little as \$5 a month in assistance from the federal government when in reality they were entitled to much more. In some cases over \$500 or more.

This commission will endeavor to seek these veterans out in cases of that type, and to proceed to look into any

REP. MIGLIARO: (continued)
federal benefits that they're entitled to, and to acquire them. Now one question many people ask, well, how could your six services office handle the state? Well, the VFW in the State of Connecticut, as well as the American Legion and the DAVs have guaranteed to this committee that when it comes to services offices, many of the veterans in these organizations will assist this commission on a voluntary basis so that we can have probably another hundred or more services offices throughout the state.

It's a combined effort by all the veteran organizations in the state, and their input was very much appreciated. It's a bill that has been long in coming, and it should have been here quite some time ago. It will save the State of Connecticut millions of dollars in funds that they're paying out to support these veterans in the form of Title IXX and welfare benefits.

Now we will make the federal government share their fair share, and pay their fair share to the veterans in this state. I think that the commission is one of the best bills that is coming out of the House of Representatives and I don't see any -- and I mean this sincerely -- any opposition on either side of the aisle.

As you know, the Governor of this state, when we commemorated the Veterans Cemetery in Middletown, he jumped the gun and said that he was putting \$100,000 in his budget. Well, that was long before the committee, which was in an interim study committee, had our facts and figures together. And I've talked to the Governor since then and told him that we cannot do the job with \$100,000. We need \$250,000. And now it's in the Governor's lap. He's made his commitment and I'm sure -- I don't think he has the nerve, as far as I'm concerned, not to come up with the other \$150,000. Because I think it's going to come one way or the other. And it's going to be a unanimous vote, I'm almost positive, on both floors of the House.

The Veterans Commission bill will be beneficial to the veterans. It will give you a central information point. If you have any problems, you can contact them, and always go through your own legislator as well. And we can proceed to get you the benefits that you're entitled to. Not only for the veterans, but the surviving spouses as well. They're entitled to it as well.

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REP. MIGLIARO: (continued)

So with that, I don't think we'll say any more. I will leave it up to you and I'll call the first name for anybody that wants to speak. And from that point on, be sure that when your name is called, you give your name, your organization, and go into whatever you want. If you have any written testimony, we would appreciate you would leave that with the committee for our records. So the first person is David Macey.

DAVID MACEY: Good evening. My name is David Macey. I'm from Viet Nam Veterans of American, Chapter 120. I'm here to speak in favor of the bill for a Veterans Affairs Commission for the State of Connecticut.

NB 5864
I've been involved with veterans affairs since I got out of the service in 1971. And up until recently, I worked at the Hartford Viet Nam Vet Center for approximately 6 years where I treated some of the stress and Agent Orange difficulty of Viet Nam veterans possess.

In reviewing the bill that I've seen, I think that one thing, if at all possible, can be changed. I think that the director, as a field worker, is probably more cost-saving than anything else. But at a certain point, that might become very unmanageable. So I would, hopefully, see that in the long run that the, whoever would be in charge would sit in Hartford or in Rocky Hill and the other individuals would be out in the field. And he -- he or she -- could possibly service those individuals for whatever they might need.

I'm here to present to the commission some statistics that I've drummed up. There are 419,000 veterans in Connecticut up 'til December 1984. The breakdown is approximately 180,000 World War II. There are 100,000 Viet Nam veterans, and there are approximately 90,000 Korean veterans. The World War II veteran is leaving us at a very rapid rate and the statistic will slowly start to decrease. We are one of the most heavily populated states within the country when it comes to Viet Nam veterans. I think that the commission hopefully will take under its wing all of the other things that are happening for veterans, namely the Agent Orange Commission and the commission set up for the female veterans.

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MR. MACEY: (continued)

I strongly urge your support and I strongly have been urging all the members of the community to take part and try and get their particular congress people to vote for it. Thank you very much.

REP. MIGLIARO: Dave, I'd like to show you one thing. The reason why we set up six service offices -- that's one from each Congressional District -- your point is very well taken. It is not our intention to leave the director out in the field. Only in dire necessity. And your thought will be taken into consideration because I don't think that's going to happen with a volunteer. Sure, your organization has got some volunteer service office that they could draw on if they needed them.

MR. MACEY: Yes.

REP. MIGLIARO: The other question on the duties of the commission. I think you will find that they're going to be open in almost every direction. We're not -- and it's not our intention that this commission overlap the duties of any other existing veterans organization. That's not the intention and not going to happen. They're a separate entity. I just wanted to clarify that for you. Is there any questions from any other member of the committee? Thank you very much.

We've just been joined by James McCavanaugh, Representative who just stopped in and is part of the panel, sitting to my left. The next person -- and you're going to have to forgive me if I don't pronounce the name correctly -- I know it's Paul B -- what is it Paul.

PAUL KNESTRICK: Knestrict.

REP. MIGLIARO: Yeah. Abraham Lincoln couldn't write too well either, and he became President.

MR. KNESTRICK: My name is Paul Knestrict. I'm representing the American Legion Post 71 on the -- well both bills. But, we're more or less in agreement with the Veterans Commission deal. We have a service officer who is probably qualified to run the whole program for you. But, I won't let him go.

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REP. MIGLIARO: Can I get for the record that you are in favor of the bill --

MR. PEREZ: I am in favor of the bill in the same position -- changes the director (inaudible).

REP. MIGLIARO: Dorothy Borzee.

DOROTHY BORZEE: I wasn't planning to speak. I thought we were just registering here. I wasn't planning to talk.

REP. MIGLIARO: Well, do you have an opinion on the bills that we have?

MS. BORZEE: No, I'm just (inaudible).

REP. MIGLIARO: Would you just come up to the mike, ma'am. We'd like to hear it for the record. I know you're representing Post 71. And what is your position on the bingo? Do you support the new bill that references the bingo?

MS. BORZEE: I'm in favor of (inaudible).

REP. MIGLIARO: Of the increasing of the prizes and all.

MS. BORZEE: No, I think they should stay the way they are.

REP. MIGLIARO: And you're opposed to the 5% gross charge.

MS. BORZEE: Yes --

REP. MIGLIARO: And how about the Veterans Affairs Commission bill? Are you in favor of that? That's the bill that we talked about earlier.

MS. BORZEE: I don't know too much about it, sir. So I can't --

REP. MIGLIARO: Thank you very much. Mr. Liebman, is it?

DR. ALBERT LIEBMAN: Yes. Doctor. I'm Dr. Liebman, connected with VFW Post 511 here in New Britain. And associated with John Burns' committee on VFW. Some of this fine committee have seen me at the Capitol.

I want to speak in favor of the bill, and I'm so happy that finally after I've been corrected -- I thought 10 years

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DR. LIEBMAN: (continued)

but it's 15 years that VFW has had this item come on the state convention. And then asked our legislative committee to pursue. And I'm most happy to have -- your body understands this veterans situation pretty well. In January 7, through John Burns and his coalition committee, he had sent in a report of his visitation together with DAV and American Legion, and our good friend Bob Miller, at the Masonic Home. And this is a gem of a report. I call it a gem because I have a brother that's a double amputee who's been in Parkview Medical Center Home which is, oh, maybe a mile from West Haven Vet's Hospital. And half of the patients -- half -- are veterans on Title IXX.

And it's a big place. Got two big wings. I don't know how many patients they have. But I'm there every Tuesday. Fridays is my day at the Newington Vets Hospital. But I'm at this home, just listening and pursuing, or doing errands actually for these guys. A statement in this report states that 76% of veterans on Title IXX at the Masonic Home. You'll find that's high even. But once the VA gets the veteran out of West Haven Hospital and gets him somewhere, and the three months go up, that's all the VA will pay for.

Now the patient is on his own. Whether he gets on Title IXX or not, thank heavens, at least Connecticut is a real state -- or the family battles it out. Who knows? But, that's how it goes. Now the social director of that hospital, be it Newington or downstate, they're not interested after that. It's out of their hands. Because they say the patient now is -- look to Medicare.

And when they want to get back of the hospital, they're afraid that that patient comes over there -- West Haven with its bed allowance of 700-odd, they will don't want to make provision for that patient to get over there. They'll treat him as an out patient. But that's all.

Now, it is stated in here where we -- I don't know about 24th in respect to the amount of money that the state could have as compared to equal states around the country. Easily the state would be rewarded through this committee very easily because I have documented my brother's case. Here's a fellow lost one leg, got on a pension, and his pension in, oh 1980, \$258. Social Security, \$287. He lived with me for a while with one leg. But when he had a shock,

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DR. LIEBMAN: (continued)

there was nothing I could do. I got him back to the VA, and through the VA lost another leg. And then went into the home.

What I'm trying to bring out is, here's a patient that was -- his case originally -- when he lost the first leg through service loss, John Burns took his case and got him a pension of that \$258. He had nothing coming. But you see, when he was not unable to perform his duty, unable to work, all veterans, irrespective of age, everyone thinks that they've got to be 60 years old or better. No. If they're unable to perform their regular duty, there's a provision. But that money is turned in when he became on Title IXX. And when he became on Title IXX, the total monies turned back to the state in '82 was \$6540. But in 1984, 1985 in September, his pension -- through -- he needed help, an aid, assistance loss, his case was reviewed and it went to \$450.

That gave a total of \$7500 for the year. That the state got back between Social Security and his pension. January 1 of this year, it was raised when it was reviewed. And so, the amount of that pension is \$516. Now mind you, it means nothing to the individual, my brother or myself or so. All that money goes back to the state. But, if it's there for the state, why not get it? And this committee can do that.

And so, at present, it's \$9900 that he gets between the two things. I had a couple of the receipts and I have a listing. And I think the committee ought to hold that one file somewhere.

REP. MIGLIARO: We can have this for file?

DR. LIEBMAN: Yeah.

REP. MIGLIARO: Thank you. Can I ask you one question at this point, Doc? Who was the individual that reviewed your brother's case? Was it John Burns?

DR. LIEBMAN: It was John Burns, the service officer.

REP. MIGLIARO: In other words, had not John Burns looked into this thing, your brother wouldn't be receiving what he's getting today.

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DR. LIEBMAN: He wouldn't get anything.

REP. MIGLIARO: So this is exactly what the committee will be doing.

DR. LIEBMAN: Oh that's what the committee would be doing. And the committee has thousands of these kind of cases throughout the state. As long as these county representatives that this bill speaks, does their job, you have it. The only issue I have -- and I haven't read the bill in full -- is that the commissioner, the overall commissioner that oversees, his hands should not be tied. Because there's so many darned forms in this VFW. You can go crazy. And to be a service officer, especially, it's a profession by itself. And it's a hard deal.

So the -- where you say they should have some education in respect to same, very necessary. How, where -- we'll find out.

REP. MIGLIARO: Well, the bill states that the service officers will be veterans, number one.

DR. LIEBMAN: Yes.

REP. MIGLIARO: And they will have to come under the qualifications according to the sections that exist. In fact, if you look at the bill under section 27-103, the regulations spelling out the duties and qualifications to be a service officer is spelled out in that section of the statute. So that's existing language now.

The one point I want to get clear for the record -- and correct me if I'm wrong, Doctor, is that in 1982, your brother received \$258 from veteran pension.

DR. LIEBMAN: Right.

REP. MIGLIARO: 1986, through the efforts of John Burns, who sought out, he is now receiving \$516.

DR. LIEBMAN: Right.

REP. MIGLIARO: So there is a difference -- quite a difference there.

DR. LIEBMAN: Quite a difference.

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REP. MIGLIARO: And that, I'm sure, prevails in many cases that are out there. And we're well aware of that. But we thank you very much for your presentation. Do you want to leave this with the committee as well, or is that your copy?

DR. LIEBMAN: You can have it, Mr. Miller. But at least I think you ought to review it anyways, because I think that's a gem of a presentation of any committee. It's concise, to the point, and 100% correct.

REP. MIGLIARO: Well, I think we can thank Sen. Miller and the -- efforts of Sen. Miller and John Burns as well as the VFW for their efforts in this.

DR. LIEBMAN: Thank you.

REP. MIGLIARO: Thank you very much. Any questions from any other members? We have two more legislators who just joined us here. Oh, three. I'm sorry. We have Rep. Thorpe to my left with the good beard, Rep. Bassing, and Rep. Orsini.

REP. BASSING: But for the grace of God I'd be in Bristol tonight. But, you know, taking a wrong turn --

REP. MIGLIARO: Don't hold that against every legislator. We usually know where we're going. That's just a little foresight. At any rate, you made it. The next speaker would be John Burns of VFW.

JOHN BURNS: Mr. Chairman, co-chairmen Sen. Miller and Rep. Migliaro, I have a prepared statement that I would like to present this Thursday on the 18th. So in order to save some time, I'd like to pass this around to the committee. I've given 25 copies to Dan, your clerk, but I don't know where he's got them. In a brief case somewhere.

REP. MIGLIARO: You're not going to read the entire statement, John.

MR. BURNS: No, sir, Mr. Chairman.

REP. MIGLIARO: Well, I was wondering whether I should go to sleep now or later. Go ahead. I think you can say it all.

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MR. BURNS: I've worked closely with a lot of the veterans in New Britain, and some of them told me, go ahead and read it, John. So -- but I'm not. I'm going to skip, if I might --

REP. MIGLIARO: John, if you want to read the entire thing, I don't think any of the committee member would mind. I sure won't. Do what you like.

MR. BURNS: Well, I think I would like to do that on Thursday, if I may. In the meantime --

REP. MIGLIARO: Why don't we do it today, and forget it Thursday? Thursday's going to be a long day.

MR. BURNS: That's fine with you, I'll be glad to do it.

REP. MIGLIARO: Fine. Go ahead, John.

MR. BURNS: Okay. My name is John D. Burns. I'm the director of the Meriden/Wallingford Veterans Service Center. A full-time employee of the Town of Wallingford. A fund representative for the Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Fund from American Legion Post 45 in Meriden, and Legislative Chairman of the Department of Connecticut Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, speaking for the 33,000+ overseas veterans who are members in Connecticut. And, one of four legislative co-chairmen of the Connecticut Veterans Coalition Forum.

I might explain that the other three co-chairmen are as follows: Nick Motto who is the commandant for the Veterans Home and Hospital; Bill Pomfret, the Administrators of the Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Fund; and Roy Orloysio from the Disabled American Veterans; and myself.

REP. MIGLIARO: How about Hugh Grant?

MR. BURNS: No, he's not one of the co-chairmen. He does not speak for the Connecticut Veterans Coalition Forum. The Connecticut Veterans Coalition Forum is made up of representatives of any nationally-chartered veterans organization and/or organized veterans or military clubs or groups in Connecticut registered with the office of the Secretary of the State, and whose members meet the eligibility requirements for state or federal benefits. Basically, that means wartime veterans.

MR. BURNS: (continued)

According to the bylaws of the Connecticut Veterans Coalition Forum, the Coalition Forum may not adopt, enact as a body politic on any matter before it or express a view in its own name which is inconsistent with the view of the position of any member organization or which is not agreed to by each member organization in accordance with its respective rules and regulations. I might add, in addition to the names of the representatives, we haven't updated our stationery, there are several other organizations which is the American Ex-Prisoners of Wars, and there's two other groups. The Submarine Sailors and a Pearl Harbor group.

By vote of the Connecticut Veterans Coalition Forum, the vote was unanimous on the concept and need for a Department of Veterans Affairs. We urge you to seriously consider the views of our member organizations. Our members represent a vast variety of locales, from every city, town and hamlet in our state. Our member organizations have humane objectives and members who reflect representative cross-sections of the populace. All members, both men and women, have one thing in common: they served their country honorably in the armed forces.

Their opinions, therefore, are not bigoted or provincial, but reflect the thoughtful maturity of a well-travelled and experienced patriots. Our policies are established democratically; hence, reflect considered judgment.

The Connecticut Veterans Coalition Forum unanimously voted to support Committee Bill 5064. They further voted that all member organizations be encouraged to give testimony in regards to their different views on how the Department of Veterans Affairs should function.

Like the armed services themselves, Connecticut Veterans Coalition Forum is made up of men and women from all of these great United States from every walk of life, race, creed and origin are represented. Yet, all members share something in common. The Connecticut Veterans Coalition Forum has no member who hasn't answered the call in defense of America and all it stands for.

All member organizations are self-governed and are dedicated to the service of the United States and to the needs of its

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MR. BURNS: (continued)
members and their families.

Therefore, we prevail upon you to seriously consider the views of the Connecticut Veterans Coalition Forum. Our members are citizens from every city and town in our great state. The Connecticut Veterans Coalition Forum supports a sincere and necessary to right the economy by the elimination of fat, fraud and waste throughout the state and federal governments. To rekindle within all citizens a spirit of pride and personal accomplishment, and the elimination of work disincentives.

However, we trust that in the process the state and federal governments will always remember those who have contributed by far the most to our continued freedom and democratic way of life, our nation's veterans.

The ideal social state is not that in which each gets an equal amount of wealth, but which each gets in proportion to his contribution. The challenge of meeting our nation's commitment to a rapidly aging veterans population did not just surface. George Washington, our first president and first commander-in-chief, stated it benefits with part of their hire, it was the price of their blood, and of your independence. It is therefore a common debt; it is a debt of honor.

A grateful nation, through our Congress and our President, granted veterans benefits under the provisions of the United States Code Title 38. Thirty-six states have departments of veterans affairs and those state receive the greater percentage of the veterans benefits. In fiscal year '84, just completed, the VA budget was \$25.7 billion, the second largest budget in the federal government. The chart covers fiscal year '83 and '84 VA budgets is market exhibit A further on in this presentation, compares Connecticut with six states nearest to Connecticut in veterans population. Shows in column K that all six states except Connecticut have a department of veterans affairs.

Reference is made to the appropriate state statutes under which they function. Column A indicates the total veteran population in each state, the total amount of money in millions spent in each state for all veterans programs. It doesn't take a mathematician or an actuary to detect and

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MR. BURNS: (continued)

recognize that there is an obvious disparity in the total amount of money being received in Connecticut and that received by the six other states closest to Connecticut in veterans population that have departments of veterans affairs.

I might correct my good friend, Doc Liebman. He said Connecticut is 24th; Connecticut is 50th in the country in the receipt of per capita veterans benefits.

Down further is a chart I'm referring to which shows the dollar amounts. There is a considerable amount of time spent in preparing this. It came from the VA annual budget -- and while I'm talking, if anyone wants to look through this, it shows where the \$27.5 billion was spent state by state, dollar by dollar, whether it's in nursing homes, compensation, education, etc.

Those figures, gentlemen, came from that annual report from the VA. In fiscal year '84, VA budget, the money spent each state represents the following amount per veteran. Now I've listed all the states from Alabama down to Oregon which are in these six states. And as you'll see, Connecticut is at the bottom with \$627 per veteran is the amount that's spent. We have a budget in Connecticut, they spent \$254 million. There is nothing to stop us from getting up to where Alabama is.

Now let me explain what Alabama does. I have here the whole outlay of the department of Alabama, veterans affairs. Their budget for their department of veterans affairs is \$5.--I forget the exact-- million dollars. They spend \$5 million on a department of veterans affairs in Alabama. But, gentlemen, they recover twice of what we recover with a small, few veterans difference. So, for a \$5 million investment, they're bringing back \$250 million. That's what this amounts to as you go from state to state.

I'm not going to read each state; you can see it. And I believe that the need for, and the justification for, a department of veterans affairs is well documented. And I want to thank the committee chairmen, Sen. Bob Miller and Rep. Gene Migliaro, co-chairmen of the committee, for giving me the privilege to serve as a member of the advisory committee. And that recommended this Raised Bill

MR. BURNS: (continued)
5064, An Act Creating a Department of Veterans Affairs.

MR. BURNS: Now, for the department of veterans affairs to be successful, you, our legislators, must establish more specific goals. Just as a foundation is poured before a house is built, goals must be in place before the department of veterans affairs can begin to achieve any degree of success.

REP. May I suggest the following -- those of you who have the bill in front of you. Delete lines 28, 29, 30, and 31. Now the department head and each service officer -- this is what's in there now -- shall successfully complete a course in veterans benefits offered by the Veterans Administration within one year of commencement of employment, and shall be assigned to each Congressional district. The reason to delete the above is because the Veterans Administration does not offer a course in veterans benefits to anyone. They do not offer it to veterans organizations; they do not offer it to any states. So, therefore, may I recommend the following lines in lieu of 20, 29, 30, 31. The services officers shall successfully complete a course in veterans benefits conducted by the Commissioner within one year of commencement of employment and the services officers still then be assigned to all Congressional districts.

MR. The Commissioner shall have extensive experience in the development, presentation and prosecution of claims before the Veterans Administration, and have accreditation by the Veterans Administration.

Page 5, amend section 1C, lines 51, 52, 53 and define clearer goals and objectives.

REP. MIGLIARO: John, before you go any further --

MR. BURNS: Yes.

REP. MIGLIARO: I'm a little bit disturbed at this point. Why weren't these points brought out during the interim study committee?

MR. BURNS: Well, let me say this. I went to all of the meetings that the interim study -- of the committee.

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REP. MIGLIARO: Exactly right.

MR. BURNS: I talked to your people in your office. I've talked to Sen. Miller four or five times. And during the summer months, I've talked to you four or five times. I was not given any privilege or privy to this bill. I saw this bill for the first time when it came on the street. So, when you're asking us for input, we gave you the input from the veterans organizations.

REP. MIGLIARO: Right.

MR. BURNS: But none of your committee saw fit to discuss the final bill with any of the veterans groups.

REP. MIGLIARO: Wait a minute, John. You're off base.

MR. BURNS: Well --

REP. MIGLIARO: You're way off base. This committee is giving you that prerogative at hearings.

MR. BURNS: We gave it. We gave it.

REP. MIGLIARO: But what I'm saying is during the interim study committees, which you attended --

MR. BURNS: Right.

REP. MIGLIARO: -- particularly in reference to lines 28, 29, 30 and 31, it was your recommendation -- and I'll get the transcript -- and members of your organizations that insisted that the department head and these service officers successfully complete a course in veterans benefits. Now you're saying there are no courses. Well, you should have known that when you made your recommendation.

MR. BURNS: There are courses that are given by veterans organizations, nationally chartered. The American Legion has a service officers school, I believe it's in Indianapolis once a year. The VFW holds one in Kansas City. The DAV holds one. But the veterans -- you have in here the Veterans Administration. They don't give one.

REP. MIGLIARO: You people are the ones that made this recommendation. We did not on this committee. And I take exception to that. This committee took your input

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REP. MIGLIARO: (continued)
and tried to put it together. I'm not trying to argumentative about this thing. But I think the people listening to you -- you're indicating that the portions in this bill that were put in there were put in by this committee. That is not so. That was put in by the recommendation of the VFW members that were there, American Legion, DAV, Viet Nam veterans. It was your recommendation that we took and put into this bill. Not these committee members.

MR. BURNS: Mr. Chairman, let me explain something. I would be remiss in my duties if I don't bring this to your attention.

REP. MIGLIARO: I appreciate that you're bringing it to our attention, John, but --

MR. BURNS: I would have brought it to your attention prior to the -- I've worked on legislation for 35-40 years at the Capitol. A lot of committees.

REP. MIGLIARO: I've been there a while myself.

MR. BURNS: And I have had some input to some veterans legislation. And I've seen their drafts, etc. I did not see this until it was printed. Believe me.

REP. MIGLIARO: Well, I'm not going to belabor the point, but I think you're missing my point. It was your recommendations from your veteran organizations that we drew this concept up. So don't blame us if there's something in there that isn't in existence.

MR. BURNS: I saw to a young fellow in your staff -- I forget -- he's an Oriental -- I believe Chin. Did he draw this bill up? Did he have a lot to do with this bill? I called your staff on several occasions during the summer months asking to have more input. Because once we went to hearings, once we went -- we never heard anything more. And you've come out with the bill. Now, again, if I don't bring these flaws to your attention --

REP. MIGLIARO: These are not flaws. These are your flaws that you contributed to and not this committee.

MR. BURNS: Well, then, they are my flaws that I --

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REP. MIGLIARO: Thank you. I just wanted to clear the record. Go ahead.

MR. BURNS: Regardless of whose flaws they are, Mr. Chairman, they must be corrected.

REP. MIGLIARO: We understand that now.

MR. BURNS: Thank you. Next, number three is a commitment to excellence for a feedback system where the state can determine the degree of excellent and amount of money recovered by veterans and their dependents from the Veterans Administration.

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Line 30 and 31 of Raised Committee Bill 5064 is not clear as to whether or not the Commissioner shall also serve as one of the service officers in an assigned Congressional district. In the event that it is contemplated, may I state for the record that the top executive job, the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Affairs, has the responsibility for the success of this new department. The Commissioner must be an individual who can integrate this entire organization to function with all other existing state agencies.

That individual's skills, including a thorough knowledge of veterans affairs and the ability to communicate and teach the service officers regarding all state and federal laws concerning benefits. The commissioner must have the ability to integrate the service officers into a situation that motivates them to work together productively, cooperatively, with economical, psychological, and social satisfaction. Also, to develop teamwork which effectively fulfills the needs and achieves organizational objectives.

Therefore, I recommend that the commissioner's duties not include being one of the six service officers. However, to meet part of the requirement of a feedback system, all claims would be filed through the commissioner's office for his review and approval prior to submitting the claims to the Veterans Administration.

I'd like to elaborate on that, Mr. Chairman, because we're going into promoting an agency that is an advocate for individuals receiving veterans benefits. It is quite possible -- and service officers throughout the country have been sued. It's possible and permissible by federal

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MR. BURNS: (continued)

law to sue an individual who represents you in a claim if they inadequately or fraudulently, or neglectfully represent you. So it's of the utmost importance that the individual service officers be completely trained in that someone capable is able to oversee all of the service officers' work. That these six service officers or five -- however you have it around the state -- if they take a claim in Bridgeport today, they shouldn't mail the claim at the end of the day directly to the Veterans Administration because it might not be adequate.

Should send it into the state headquarters whether it be in Hartford or at Rocky Hill, or wherever it is. And have the administrator, the director, the commissioner approve, index a claim so that when awards are made, we can determine how much we -- how beneficial we have been in helping claimants.

Without that type of check and recheck, there is no way of having the five or six service officers travelling around the state to know how efficient they are. To know their workload. It has to be sent into a headquarters. And there are over, over 10,000 VA forms in the Veterans Administration. The regional office uses between 400-500 types of forms. So it's ridiculous, the red tape. But someone who's out in the field must be able to call back to somewhere, not a clerk or a girl in the office who won't know the answers and say I'm in this situation in a nursing home or I'm in a prison or in a hospital. I'm visiting this veteran and here's the situation. What do I do?

Someone has to advise them. A three or four months, or a six month training course isn't going to give someone all the answers.

On page 6, it would be impossible for the commissioner to perform his administrative duties, his primary objectives and purposes within the Department of Veterans Affairs if he is assigned as a service officer. He will not have time to formulate broad policies, make financial recommendations, basic organizational structure in similar fundamental considerations. Therefore, I urge you to clarify line 30 and 31 regarding the duties and responsibilities of the commissioner.

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MR. BURNS: (continued)

In conclusion, may I recommend that you include new language in the raised committee bill that will address the issue of representation. Under the provisions of Section 3402 -- I have to get my briefcase and give you a copy of that -- I've got one here for everybody. That is what is known as the appointment of an organization to represent a claimant. Without this document, your state service officers will not be able to represent and get any feedback from the VA. This is an appointment of a service organization.

SEN. MILLER: This is a power of attorney, John?

MR. BURNS: That is a power of attorney, Mr. Chairman. Yes. Under provisions of Title 38, Section 304 which is quoted at the bottom down here, recognition of certain organizations in the preparation, presentation and prosecution of claims under laws administered by the Veterans Administration, such representatives upon appointment of the claimant, may act for him or her and become entitled to information under the provisions of U.S. Code Title 38-3301b.

Presently, another state agency has been recognized by the Veterans Administration and only one state agency can be recognized by the VA. The issue of which state agency will handle veterans claims must be resolved and decided by you, our legislators. Now if you'll notice on the back of the form, it lists all of the organizations that have the right to present claims before the Veterans Administration. The American Legion, the American National Red Cross, all the way down to the Veterans of World War I of the U.S.A.

Now the VA supplies to veterans organizations free rent, free office equipment, free telephones. It does not offer state agencies any space, any office equipment, or any use of the telephones. So for a state agency to be located in a VA office, most of them operate through veterans organizations in order to get the free rent, the free phones. In other words, you have your man accredited -- your state employees will say -- I'm just taking for instance -- I know they are in Florida, VFW represent the State of Florida. And all the representatives work for the VFW. They're state employees. In Michigan, it might be the American Legion. In some other state, it might be

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MR. BURNS: (continued)
all organizations. But, in some states, you have just the state agency representing -- like we'll say at Rocky Hill or the state capitol.

Now the problem with that is, you don't get any office space, you don't get any use of FTS or federal telephones, and you do not have -- you have to hire another representative to represent the men before the boards. In other words, if a man files a claim, he is denied. He appeals; he wants to go before a rating board, before the doctor, the lawyer and the rating specialist to appeal his claim. That'll take a half a day. It's like a judge, a lawyer going before a judge to disagree with the percentage of his disability. Half a day is shot; they allow a half a day.

So if you get this agency going around the state and you have your representative state employees without going through a veterans organization -- it doesn't matter -- American Legion, DAV, VFW, AmVets do it in Connecticut. Then they can represent these claimants before appeals, if they'll take the responsibility. Otherwise you'll have to have state employee, whoever the director is, or administrator, or service officer, learn the advocacy system, learn all the rules and know how to appeal. You can't represent a man half way. You can't get a man to the point where you file the claim for him, he's denied, and as much as 26% of all claims on appeal become final. You can't say, well, we've represented you this far. Now you've got to go on your own.

So when I said this needs fine tuning, it needs fine tuning and those are my thoughts. And I'm available to discuss with you.

REP. MIGLIARO: Any questions from members of the committee?
Thank you, John.

MR. BURNS: You're welcome.

REP. MIGLIARO: I'm sorry, Lou. Go ahead.

REP. ORSINI: Did you want to discuss this a little bit to the point where when we first had our meeting, here in the State of Connecticut we did not have the Veterans Affairs Commission. And we were making the attempt to start one. And we weren't sure that it would go through. So, with

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REP. ORSINI: (continued)
that thought in mind, we decided to form this veterans organization -- this Veterans Affairs Committee -- on a small scale. We first started out where we were asking to appropriate, as I recall, approximately \$150,000, hoping that it would go through. Even at that point, we weren't sure.

And I might point out at this time, at the present time the Governor has in his budget \$100,000 for this Veterans Affairs organization. And, after we've met as many times as we have, we've kicked this around, we've had input from people like you, and this -- at that point we came up with the six service officers with one officer to be appointed by the Governor who would act as the commissioner. And when we took everything into account, we came up with a figure of approximately \$250,000 to carry this out.

As Gene as pointed out, and many of us have pointed out, that this is just a start. And we crawl before we walk. There could be flaws in here, but we're doing the best we can. And it -- I was under the impression that you people understood this and you'd be working with us, not against us.

MR. BURNS: We certainly are working with you. I have given testimony for 30 years or so or more at the Capitol. I have hardly ever seen a committee bill come out the same as it went in. I've seen bills that went in as five pages, come out as 30 pages. Or it went in as six pages and come out as one page. So you have the right to change this. I don't see why there is a resentment for a professional in the field to tell you how this organization might work.

REP. MIGLIARO: Well, John, as a professional in the legislature for 12 years, I take exception to your remarks -- some of your remarks because you refer that we did something that wasn't right when you were there with the input and you were very well aware of every piece that went into this piece of legislation. And if you had any questions at that time, that was the time to raise it. And I think Rep. Orsini put it very well. We all knew the \$250,000 was about the most realistic figure we could come in.

But for you to indicate that this committee did something without your knowledge, you're dead wrong. Because you

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REP. MIGLIARO: (continued)

had as much knowledge in this bill and as much input as the Senator and I and members of that committee had. In fact, moreso. And for you to come here and say that these things now should be corrected, which we're great to see this, you could have said the same thing at the committee meeting with the other members of the veteran organizations who would have been appreciative to hear the same thing you're saying here before this committee that you didn't say before your fellow comrades.

And I take exception to that. Any further questions?

REP. ORSINI: What I don't understand here it says the service officers shall successfully complete the course in veterans benefits conducted by the commissioner. Now this commissioner is going to be appointed by the Governor. He is the one who is to determine who the service officers are to be and give the course. Now who's to say that the commissioner is going to be better qualified who's appointed by the Governor than these other commissioners who are to take the test?

REP. MIGLIARO: Well, the follow up on that, Rep. Orsini, I think, it's going to be very interesting to see who puts in for the job for the commissioner of this particular veterans commission. Any other questions? Thank you very much. All right, I'm sorry. Go ahead, Angelo.

REP. FUSCO: I just want to say that, you know I wasn't part of the subcommittee. I served on another subcommittee. I think that there might be a little bit of a breakdown in communication at some point. But I, too, favor fine tuning the piece. And there's time to, you know -- I always feel that if something's not broke, don't fix it. But if there's some fine tuning that needs to be done, I'd be willing to work with anyone to do it.

REP. MIGLIARO: The fine tuning, Rep. Fusco, is well taken. And we understand that. That's why the purpose of the hearings. But I think the indication and inference if you read that transcript and have it played back to you, is the part that I took exception to is the very man who made some remarks, not on fine tuning but to direct remarks in degrading this committee. And I think one quote was, "I'd never seen the bill come out. I had no input in this bill whatsoever." That was the furthest thing from the truth,

REP. MIGLIARO: (continued)

John. You had a lot of input in this bill. So did other members. And that's the part that got my -- a little bit upset. As far as fine tuning, that is the purpose of hearings. We know there are pieces in this legislation that may not be what the likings is, not only to yourself, but other members and veterans in this state. And I'm not just taking your word for what's got to be tuned. I'm taking the word of everybody. And we will come back with substitute language in this bill. There's no question about it.

But the only thing that I took exception to was the fact that you said you had no knowledge of this bill. That's not true, John. Not at all. Any other questions? Thank you.

The next speaker, Boyer. I hope I've got the right name.

RUTH BOYER: I'm Ruth Boyer and I'm a vet. I'm not representing any group and that's one of the issues that I'd like to raise with you tonight, along with some others. First of all, I was very pleased to hear your statement at the beginning that women were not left out on purpose. That it was an oversight or what have you. And I am very, very interested in having women represented on all of your committee work and on the commission if it develops out of this legislation.

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women has formed a women's veterans task force. And it was formed in September of '85 because they felt the needs of women veterans needed to be looked at and studied. And maybe some of the special needs presented. Now some people have problems with women's needs as being different than men's needs and I must tell you that for about 35 years I've been working in the women's movement. At the present time, I am the director of the Women's Center at Central Connecticut State University, and that same issue comes up at the university level. Why do you need a Women's Center on a university? What's different about it?

Those of us who are working in women's issues know that there is a difference in the needs for women. One of the things that you will -- all of us will have to face as we grow older and as the veterans get older -- and you've heard some comments about that tonight -- is the fact that women

MS. BOYER: (continued)
do live longer than men. That is a given, and that is
a truism. And therefore --

REP. MIGLIARO: Not if we make you shovel more snow.

MS. BOYER: Right, right. I am enough of a feminist to let
my husband shovel the snow. But there is -- women's
issues are different than men's issue. And may I tell
you a personal story. When I first got out of the service,
I was just as proud of my record as some of the men are
that you hear tonight. I was very, very proud of the fact
that I lived the kind of life where I was free to join
the service and serve my country. And I remember an
American Legion -- and I am not damning the American
Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, anything else -- but
it might give you some insight as to the special needs
of women.

A member of the American Legion in a different state than
Connecticut came to our house to talk to my husband about
joining. My husband wasn't home, but I sat down and talked
to him. And you can imagine my feeling after a proud
service when I was told I could not join. That I could
join the auxiliary. But I could not join. Now that may
have changed, but it colored my life as far as seeking
veterans organizations to join. So I turned around and
I have been a militant feminist working for women's issues
all my life, but not through any kind of veterans
organization.

And, as I said, that may have changed around. But I have
not sought it out. We would like to have you consider
adding the women's force to your legislation. I cannot
write a bill as well as the Permanent Commission on the
Status of Women, so if you will allow me, I would just
like to read something that I also support.

The Women Veterans Task Force of the Permanent Commission
supports the intent of the proposed bill which is to
establish a Department of Veterans Affairs in Connecticut.
The preliminary work of this committee has yielded some
important information indicating that women veterans have
unique needs which have not been adequately addressed in
the past or at the present time. Based on these findings,
it is the recommendation of the task force that the

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MS. BOYER: (continued)
present language of the bill be expanded to specifically identify a person responsible for the issues effecting women veterans.

For example, this person might be called or could be called the coordinator of women's issues or women's veterans coordinator. Now I personally have not tapped the veterans commission for anything except when we bought our second house. Our second house was bought on my veterans privilege. Our first house was bought on my husband's. My husband used all of the veterans services to finish his education, of which we are very proud and very, very happy about. But I am rather typical of women veterans. We do not tap the Veterans Administration for very much.

And part of it is that we are not affiliated with veterans group and their power. And so when we go for any tapping of any veterans benefits we probably go all by ourselves. Without any organization behind us. So it would be very important if you would seriously consider adding some sort of a women's representative, a women veteran -- she doesn't have to be a veteran -- an administrator or something to represent women. Because there are a great deal of needs for women and their needs are different. Those of you who go into the veterans hospital have probably found out as well as the Permanent Commission and I have that the women's needs in veterans hospitals may not be addressed as well as -- yes.

REP. FUSCO: Would you favor having one of the six being a woman or have a woman coordinator at large?

MS. BOYER: I would like to think about that. I am not sure. I'm sorry I didn't think about this. I really thought of a state -- at the beginning I thought of a statewide woman. And now you've raised an issue that -- but if you're going to do out of every six Congressional districts that wouldn't work.

REP. MIGLIARO: Well, what I think that Rep. Fusco -- the line of questioning that I was going to ask you. I think the fact that we have six directors according to the bill --

MS. BOYER: Yes.

REP. MIGLIARO: Now to expand on the duties of this particular bill at this point -- I think if we start witch hunting in the bill we can destroy it. I think Rep. Fusco said, if we put one woman of those six service officers -- if one were a woman, would that be acceptable to you and your group?

MS. BOYER: Well, I'm -- as I said, I'm not representing the Permanent on the Status of Women --

REP. MIGLIARO: Let me ask you as an individual.

MS. BOYER: Personally. For me personally, maybe I agree with you, it's a step in the door in the right direction. And if it would allow this bill to go through, because the bill is a good one, and as you've heard tonight, it's a needed bill for fiscal responsibility and for help and for everything. So if that is the way it could be done without doing the changes that you suggest, yes.

REP. MIGLIARO: Well, because what I think that with six service officers involved, if one were a woman -- and this is only my personal opinion, due to the fact that the Senator and I and the members of the committee at that time were not aware of a Governor's task force for women. We were never informed of that and you people would have definitely been invited to have input on that committee. I can assure you that.

MS. BOYER: Sure.

REP. MIGLIARO: I know you have 16,000 and I know how important you are. But I think maybe the solution here is to give you the equal representation or a portion of representation on that committee, would be to spell out in the bill that one of the service officers shall be a woman veteran. And if that seems agreeable to you, the committee I'm sure will kick this around.

MS. BOYER: I believe the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women is going to talk to you at one of the other meetings. And I will get in touch with them and ask them to raise it, because they've done more research on that. I really am here to say women need some representation.

REP. MIGLIARO: Now, today women can join the veterans --

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MS. BOYER: Well, I think so. As I said, I was not damning the organization. I'm just telling you a personal --

REP. MIGLIARO: That was kind of shocking, I'm sure.

MS. BOYER: -- that I faced when I came out. And that really hurt because I felt I was just --

REP. MIGLIARO: I can understand. Rep. Krawiec.

REP. KRAWIEC: To set your mind at ease before you leave tonight, I'd like to tell you that here in New Britain, we have the Jewish War Veterans and the commander of the Jewish War Veterans is a lady.

MS. BOYER: Here, here. Wonderful.

REP. KRAWIEC: -- husband (inaudible).

MS. BOYER: Very, very good. But you see, I told you that story, and it may not be true any more, in order to give you the sense that women face when these things happen to them. And I'm here to talk about veterans, but I could tell you the same thing in many other fields of endeavor.

REP. MIGLIARO: Rep. Fusco.

REP. FUSCO: Just to follow up, I think that, you know, there is a question as to whether we can accomplish having a woman-at-large. But I think in reality, if you have one of the six people that would be a woman, you probably would have a lot of the women veterans in the state contacting her anyway.

MS. BOYER: Anyhow. Uh huh.

REP. FUSCO: You know, it's one of those situations where I think a woman would probably feel much more comfortable talking to a woman. She may have a bit heavier of a workload than the rest of them with respect to geographics -

REP. MIGLIARO: One at a time. Are you finished, Ang?

REP. FUSCO: Yeah.

REP. MIGLIARO: Rep. Bassing.

REP. BASSING: Well it might be -- I agree there ought to be representation. But it might be hard to spot her in one of the districts. I would presume that we would appoint, or consider a woman to represent the whole state. Let's say she's in the 3rd or the 6th district. It might be hard. And I think there ought to be (inaudible) representation. Not necessarily one of the six.

REP. MIGLIARO: I don't think it's the intent of this committee, Rep. Bassing -- and I think we're getting far ahead of ourselves, in my book, tell the so-called director, whoever it may be, how to run their shop. But it's my indication and the intent of the law is that the six people will have six congressional representations. But that doesn't mean they will only be servicing whatever -- one district. They could run into 2nd District, 6th District, wherever the load may be. So that doesn't mean if the service is going to be designated for one specific district and one only.

MS. BOYER: That eases my mind. That's why I didn't want to say just to go, because I was afraid that each one --

REP. MIGLIARO: No, that is not the intent.

MS. BOYER: All right. If that's not the intent, then I could personally say yes. Let's go that way and get our foot in the door and see what the load is, and do some research.

REP. MIGLIARO: Well, I think my personal opinion. I'm only speaking for myself. I'm not speaking for any of the members of the committee. I'm going to make a recommendation that one of the service officers in the six districts, whatever districts they are, will be a veteran and a woman. And I think that due to the fact that you people were neglected and having input, I think this is the best way to give you your day in court, and become a part of the veteran population in this state. And I personally can see a woman as one of the six would be the proper gesture in this case. And that will be my recommendation to the committee at the time.

REP. KRAWIEC: Gene's there's one more point on this. There's a good possibility you may have five women on this.

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MS. BOYER: That is a great possibility, sir, in my experience.

REP. KRAWIEC: (inaudible)

MS. BOYER: No, no. I'm being funny. But that really is --

REP. KRAWIEC: There's a good possibility you could have two or three women on it.

MS. BOYER: A probability, a possibility --

REP. MIGLIARO: You know, no matter what kind of pants you wear, a veteran is a veteran in my book. And --

MS. BOYER: I like the idea of that, respecting those of us who did serve. I really --

REP. MIGLIARO: I have a deep respect for you. I think some women have quite a record. Any other questions?

SEN. MILLER: No, I was going to, but I thought better of it. He picked up on it; he picked up on it. I had discussed at an earlier time a possible -- one of the directors being a woman. We had discussed that with another lady one night about that. But, also I would say that the first year of this program, when we get it going, there would have to be a woman travelling with a man. If this council gets off the ground and does its job, in order to go into nursing homes, it would be very difficult situation for a man to go into a female portion of the hospital to survey a population. You know, so it would be almost -- I agree.

MS. BOYER: Thank you.

SEN. MILLER: I certainly do agree.

MS. BOYER: I thank you very much for giving me your time.

REP. MIGLIARO: Thank you very much. I think you've got some allies on the women's side.

MS. BOYER: Thank you.

REP. MIGLIARO: Rep. Orsini would like to be excused. He has another meeting to go to. Just don't take the cord with you. John Puzzo. By the way, if anybody else would like

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REP. MIGLIARO: (continued)
to speak, we have a signup sheet here that any person that
wants to say anything can -- very much welcome to do so.
Give your name, John, and --

JOHN PUZZO: Good evening. My name is John Puzzo. I'm from
West Hartford, Connecticut. And I'm here to address the
committee on something which I feel is very important,
very pertinent to veterans of my generation. Let's see.
I don't know which one of these you want first, or should
I just -- not keep you and -- I'm a historian by training,
and as a historian I generally believe that it's safer
to rely on hard evidence, facts, before you draw any
serious conclusions. Having said that, I'd like to tell
you a story about an anonymous person.

REP. MIGLIARO: Yes. Talk into the mike, John. Good.

MR. PUZZO: He is a man, 38 years old --

: A little louder, please.

MR. PUZZO: I'm sorry you can't hear me.

REP. MIGLIARO: Don't be nervous, John. You know, just stay
loose.

MR. PUZZO: Okay, well I'm trying my best to do that.

REP. MIGLIARO: Don't worry. We'll all like it. Take it easy.

MR. PUZZO: This is really a very poignant story. I compiled
the biographies of a number of Viet Nam era, Viet Nam
veterans recently. And while I was involved in this study,
I came across a database that gave me access to a lot of
Viet Nam war technology. A portion of this included
information on the health aspects of service in Viet Nam.
I am an advocate of veterans; I'm a veteran of the Viet
Nam war. I'm also an advocate of the truth.

This man died recently in a one-car crash. And I'm afraid
to say that he died despairing of his country. Apparently
he had been involved in a relationship with a woman. Being
38 years old it was one of his final chances for a family,
I guess. And she read an article somewhere stating that
it was possible for Viet Nam veterans to father deformed
children as a result of exposure to Agent Orange in Viet Nam.

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MR. PUZZO: (continued)

Well, I think the man died hating his country a little prematurely. And I would, in view of trying to present hard evidence to support that, I'm not a scientist, but I would like to refer all the members of the committee to the most recent article in Scientific American published in February of 1986. It's on the newsstand today. And I believe it should be required reading for all the members and all the commissioners of the Viet Nam Information Herbicide Commission which I believe was established under the Public Safety Committee.

REP. MIGLIARO: No, I put that bill in through Appropriations. Four years ago.

MR. PUZZO: Well, in support of the current bill that we're all here to talk about tonight, and having heard some statements earlier tonight about conflicts between veterans groups or veterans groups and veterans operating at cross purposes to each other, or not sharing all the information that is available, perhaps it could be one of the missions of this new organization, the committee, to be sure that any time they make definite statements appointing accusing fingers at somebody before the evidence is in that it shouldn't be allowed to be done without someone to refute the evidence.

REP. MIGLIARO: I'm not getting your point, sir.

MR. PUZZO: Well, the Agent Orange issue, they've really had most of the country as a captive audience. But they are taking data and extrapolating from studies that since 1957 have not really proven conclusive. Now the establishment of the information -- the Viet Nam Herbicide Information Commission -- states nowhere that it is attempting to establish a cause and effect relationship between Agent Orange or the dioxin that was in it and certain serious chronic long-term health term problems in Viet Nam veterans.

They begin with the premise that these chemicals and their use just caused the problems that they're alluding to and they have not built up the database of information to support that.

REP. MIGLIARO: You're talking federal data. Is that what you're talking about?

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MR. PUZZO: There is a wealth of scientific data that is available on the subject. And, again, just in view that I'm not here to bring you any -- I'm just here to raise the issue. Scientifically --

REP. MIGLIARO: I want to see if it's in our purview is what I'm --

MR. PUZZO: Well, I'm sorry if it isn't.

REP. MIGLIARO: What I'm trying to say is, if you're talking about Agent Orange and as far as the effects of Agent Orange and the scientific data on that, that's all federal. That has nothing to do with state. Your Agent Orange --

MR. PUZZO: We have a Viet Nam Herbicide Information Commission --

REP. MIGLIARO: You're right. That's made up of Viet Nam veterans and that is to seek out those with claims.

MR. PUZZO: And Viet Nam era veterans.

REP. MIGLIARO: Right. But as far as the scientific data on what the cause is -- that is federal. We don't do that on state level. The Herbicide Committee is not doing that here. They're getting their information from federal. They're not getting it on state level.

MR. PUZZO: I would suggest to you that they are not getting all their information from federal sources.

REP. MIGLIARO: Possible, possible.

MR. PUZZO: As a matter of fact, I tried to make some information available from the years -- from 1981 until this present year. The study that I did that involved research on Viet Nam war technology really had a lot of information --

REP. MIGLIARO: Did you forward your information to state?

MR. PUZZO: Yes, I did. And I gave it to Jimmy Spiro, Frank McCarthy, Peter Fuscass I talked to about it. I talked to a rather infamous figure by the name of Dennis Peazley. I had all this information that -- what it showed, and I tried to bring to the attention of this group as it was forming years ago -- it showed that there are a lot of naturally occurring substances that can cause the health

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MR. PUZZO: (continued)
problems that they are alluding to.

REP. MIGLIARO: Well --

MR. PUZZO: It's more than just an illusion. As to whether or not I'm in the right place tonight I don't know.

REP. MIGLIARO: I'll be very honest with you. The subject you're speaking on is not relative to what we're hearing tonight. But I'm interested in what you're saying.

MR. PUZZO: Well, you are speaking on veterans affairs --

REP. MIGLIARO: Affairs committee. You want the Veterans Affairs Committee to be tied in with this?

MR. PUZZO: I would hope that there would be a place in it, or at least an attitude, prevailing attitude among the interested parties, that you don't just seek information on this issue on a biased -- from a biased point of view. But you seek all the information there is available whether it supports your view or not. And I will suggest that, you know, perhaps this is a really good reason to point out the need for a state committee. You know, this issue, the Viet Nam thing about Agent Orange and herbicides has a whole hearing category.

REP. MIGLIARO: Well, I think that would --

MR. PUZZO: The first research was done on herbicide was begun at the University of Connecticut at the end of World War II. And Agent Orange Victims International began in Stamford, Connecticut with Paul Bergan and --

REP. MIGLIARO: Jim Sparrow.

MR. PUZZO: -- Jim Sparrow, yeah.

REP. MIGLIARO: All right. I know --

MR. PUZZO: I tried to show this information to Jimmy Sparrow and Mr. Sparrow actually turned me away and said to me, John -- I showed him two reports that I happened to pick up from an obscure French medical research library that were published in 1978 and were in the database. And it pointed out that liver cancers that began with liver tumors

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MR. PUZZO: (continued)
had a great percentage of causes that came --

REP. MIGLIARO: John, I'm not trying to -- I hope you don't think that I'm trying to be indifferent to you. I know where you're coming from. I know where you're coming from. But that is not the purpose of this hearing tonight. I mean, what you're saying, that's information. I'd be happy to take any information you want to give us and probably forward this information to Agent Orange Commission, and you know, Any Carey's on that and people that you've mentioned. And I'll talk with Jim Sparrow. The Senator and I are in contact with him and I'd be happy to talk with him.

MR. PUZZO: Ask Jim Sparrow if he knows me.

REP. MIGLIARO: And I also would be in favor of, when the Veterans Affairs Committee is formed, that maybe something like this that would be part of their job if they're seeking out benefits for a veteran from Nam who is injured and are looking for federal -- maybe your information would be helpful to them. But all I'm saying the right time to present this thing would be through the commission when it starts. Or, if you want to give us some of your information, we'll try to get it to the proper authorities. But there's nothing that this committee could do on that, specifically tonight.

MR. PUZZO: Well I think then that the whole purpose of my coming here and trying to --

REP. MIGLIARO: I think you've made your point very well.

MR. PUZZO: -- make a point.

REP. MIGLIARO: I think you did.

MR. PUZZO: And I think it just speaks for itself and that there is a very definite need.

REP. MIGLIARO: I don't dispute that at all. Have you got anything to leave with us in this committee. Any reports or something you want to leave with us so we can digest it?

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MR. PUZZO: Nothing but a card with my name on it --

REP. MIGLIARO: All right, can I ask you this? Can you give us some information and we'd be happy to receive it in the Public Safety Committee.

MR. PUZZO: What I will do, sir, is provide your committee or whatever -- the Public Safety Committee -- with 125 copies of the reprints from Scientific American, February 1986.

REP. MIGLIARO: Is that going to cost you money?

MR. PUZZO: It's going to cost me money --

REP. MIGLIARO: I don't want to see you do that. Can you give us one copy and we'll make our own?

MR. PUZZO: -- one copy.

REP. MIGLIARO: We'll make our own. I don't want you to go through the expense. When can we get that copy?

MR. PUZZO: Tomorrow morning.

REP. MIGLIARO: All right, then. Can you send it to the Public Safety Committee?

MR. PUZZO: I'll deliver it in person.

REP. MIGLIARO: Fine. Room E-19. And Danny, our Clerk, will be there. And leave it. And we'd be happy to look it over. And if there's anything we can do for you on it in the future --

MR. PUZZO: -- support, but I intend to be speaking tomorrow and -- well, support the truth. That's what I'm here for.

REP. MIGLIARO: That's all. Speak from the guts. Nice having you.

MR. PUZZO: Thank you very much.

SEN. MILLER: Who are you going to speak to tomorrow, John?

MR. PUZZO: Well, there's another meeting tomorrow, but I do believe from what I've best been able to establish is that tomorrow in Hartford at the vets center on Market Street

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MR. PUZZO: (continued)
there is going to be part of the public hearing of the quarterly hearing process on the Herbicide Information Commission will be meeting tomorrow on Market Street. I will be there tomorrow.

REP. MIGLIARO: Give them a copy of that, too.

MR. PUZZO: Yes, I will.

REP. MIGLIARO: Thank you very much, John. We appreciate your input.

REP. BASSING: Mr. Chairman, may I ask something?

REP. MIGLIARO: Yes.

REP. BASSING: I read in our bulletin that we're privy to, as Representatives, where Rep. Stolberg and company are entertaining the President of the National Viet Nam -- and I question why -- I asked number one, has this committee been offered some invitations to this? Or is it a partisan type meeting or what? And I'm serious about this because I know the Governor has offered his own department of affairs in his budget, veterans affairs. And we're conducting hearings from the summer. And I don't see where any representative from this committee has been even invited to their reception for the President of Viet Nam affairs chaired by Rep. Stolberg. I would yield to the chair as to why. I think it's simply a lack of courtesy. Believe me, I'm not being partisan.

JILL MISCKEL: Mr. Chairman --

REP. MIGLIARO: I'm sorry. Would you like to speak, ma'am?

MS. MISCKEL: I'm probably out of order.

REP. MISCKEL: No, you're not out of order. Would you like to sit down and speak? We'll get to your question after, Mr. Bassing.

REP. BASSING: I'd like to get to it now.

REP. MIGLIARO: Excuse me.

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MS. MISCKEL: I'd like to address that also.

REP. MIGLIARO: All right. The question. I can't address it.

MS. MISCKEL: Your question was that Viet Nam Veterans of America, with Irving Stolberg, put on a reception for Bobby Muller, is that what is -- two weeks ago. That was the day after the press conference that you had -- that Bobby Muller had with the Public Safety Committee. And as far as DVA was concerned, it was only open to Democrats. You're right. It was open to Democrat members of the House. And that's my impression of what it was.

I invited myself, but I ended up not going. But I'm a member of DVA.

REP. BASSING: The could you, through the Chair, answer me as to why only Democrats were invited?

MS. MISCKEL: No. The reception was put on by either Irving Stolberg, so (inaudible).

REP. MIGLIARO: That's the very man who tried to kill the veterans bonus bill that I had in four years ago.

MS. MISCKEL: I had nothing to do with that, but I would like to address the comments of John Puzzo.

REP. MIGLIARO: Okay.

MS. MISCKEL: I am the vice-chair --

REP. MIGLIARO: Would you mind sitting down, giving your name and your position?

MS. MISCKEL: I don't really want to testify today because I have testimony prepared for Thursday. I just wanted to issue an invitation to all the members of the Public Safety Committee to come to the Herbicide Commission meeting tomorrow --

REP. MIGLIARO: Are you -- will you give your position and name?

MS. MISCKEL: Vice-chair of the Herbicide Information Committee. My name is Jill Misckel. I've been vice-chair for the last three years.

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REP. MIGLIARO: Okay, have they been responsive to Mr. Puzzo's -- don't get nervous.

MS. MISCKEL: I'm very upset, really. We have been responsive to any responsible people who have spoken to us. We --

REP. MIGLIARO: -- Wait a minute. I don't think we'd better carry this any further. I don't like any -- no --

Cass. 3 MS. MISCKEL: -- What we came up here to do was to invite you to our meeting tomorrow. It's nothing more than a routine, bi-monthly or every other month --

REP. MIGLIARO: -- Let me just say this. We would appreciate it, as members of the Public Safety Committee and as a person who was the proponent of that bill, I have never received one report on what you people are doing, if you want to be factual, on what that commission has done since their inception. I know nothing about it and we are Public Safety. We should get some reports on it.

MS. MISCKEL: You have to see the report because we have published a report in an orange folder --

REP. MIGLIARO: -- The only person who's been in contact with our committee is relative to the Viet Nam veterans, Jim Sparrow, who has been very active, very informative to us, and we (inaudible). I would appreciate it if your committee could send us a report and I don't want to carry this thing any further. I don't want to get into an argument with Mr. Puzzo or anybody else. I don't think that's our reason here.

Let me ask you, are you in support of 5064?

MS. MISCKEL: Like I said, I did not come here to --

REP. MIGLIARO: -- Okay, then there's no sense in taking any testimony. Now, Rep. Bassing, I think has your question answered but I know -- I'd like to just clear the air for some of you people here, why that question was probably asked.

Back four years ago, when I put in the bill for the veterans myself, and Andy Carey, when we put that bill in,

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REP. MIGLIARO: (continued)
to increase property tax exemptions for veterans in the State of Connecticut, the man who stopped that bill was Rep. Stolberg and I think where Rep. Bassing is coming from (inaudible) a veteran's bill to him at a party and members of this committee were invited so I just wanted to clarify that.

If there are no other speakers, I'm ready to conclude.

SEN. MILLER: I would just like to ask one thing. Rep. Krawiec is here and he is a Democrat. Stan, were you invited?

REP. KRAWIEC: Not that I know of.

REP. MIGLIARO: You're not Mr. Stolberg's most wanted list I guess.

REP. KRAWIEC: Which list?

REP. MIGLIARO: Most wanted list (laughter) but sometimes we wine and dine the wrong guy, but that's neither here nor here. That's not going to alter this committee's intention of coming forward with that veteran's affairs commission bill. That bill will come forward. We will do everything in our power to make sure. We will make some changes because some of the things that John has pointed out, we will make them. We will also try to make some changes and I'm sure we're going to make a recommendation to put one woman as one of the the service officers on that committee so then it will have women's representation for the women veterans in the state.

If there are no other questions from any other people in the audience or members of the committee, I will call this meeting adjourned and we thank you very much for your attendance.

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SEN. MILLER: (continued)
other programs instead of spending it and duplicating
courses offered by other universities in different areas.

MS. SUNDHOL: You may be aware, Sen. Miller that what you call
infringement problems are being worked out by the
constituent units in conjunction with each other right now.

SEN. MILLER: Are they? That's another issue in itself.

REP. MIGLIARO: Any questions relative to the bill. Thank
you very much. The next speaker will be Bill Pomfert who
is a Soldier, Sailor and Marine and if Col. Motto would
like -- you're both on the same view. Would you like to
come up at the same time, I don't think the committee
would have any problems with it. I'm trying to push
along. I want to make sure everybody gets their day in
court.

COL. NICK MOTTO: Sen. Miller, Rep. Migliaro. I'm Col. Motto.
I'm Commandante of the Veterans Home and Hospital in Rocky
Hill. Today I wear three hats for the committee. One, I
will be representing the Governor today. The other is I'm
representing the Veterans Home and Hospital and the other
is that I am representing the Veteran's Coalition on the
legislative committee which represents all the veterans
that belong to the coalition..

First as the Governor's representative today, I'm here to
tell you the committee, the Public Safety Committee, that
he espouses the concept or the theory of establishing a
veterans affairs group. He feels that any information
that any of our veterans can get by this group that will
disseminate information on benefits or any other thing
that are available in the state of Connecticut or in the
federal government area of the Veterans Administration, he
whole heartedly supports. There are two bills that you
will be seeing. One is the committee bill, HB 5064, and
as I understand there is a Senate Bill that will be
forthcoming. Both of them espouse the same thing, and I
must as the Commandant of the Veterans Home also endorse
this for the simple reason that it is something that we
should have done probably 35 or 40 years ago to establish
this and to give our veterans all of their information.

In addition, there are two other bills, three other bills

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REP. MIGLIARO: (continued)
questions from any of the committee? Thank you. Bill Pomfret.

BILL POMFRET: My name is Bill Pomfret, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee. I'm the Administrator of the Soldiers, Sailors, and Marine Fund. I'm also a member of the American Legion Legislative Committee, and as the Colonel, I serve on the Veterans Coalition and Legislative Committee. A fear of the gong that the Chairman has here, my statement is going to be very brief. And I just want to express my favor of the concept of the HB 5064, the Establishment of an Office of Veterans Affairs to assist veterans and their dependents to acquire full benefits from the Veterans Administration.

I attended your subcommittee meeting, Mr. Chairman, and offered my input at that time. I am sure, Mr. Chairman, you and the members of your committee know my feelings and my concern for the particular proposed bill. However, I do support it whole heartedly. To get into the other bill about the Korean War dates, I certainly favor HB 5074. And even though the Soldiers, Sailors and Marine Fund is still better than that particular bill, the Veterans Administration -- the law of the Veterans Administration, this particular bill would not even come up to our dates.

REP. MIGLIARO: I appreciate that. I think, Mr. Pomfret, that bill, I would like to explain why. Over the years, I have been putting in bills trying to get the Korean War dates -- but there are so many statutes that address it and this one area that I was told by legislative commissioners office, we've been going on the peicemeal approach rather than come in and hit that section, that would cover them all once and for all.

And I think it is about time that we do it. But --

MR. POMFRET: I think it is a good bill, Mr. Chairman, if I may interrupt --

REP. MIGLIARO: Yeah.

MR. POMFRET: I think it is -- what we would do as you say it has been brought up every year, and I think we appear every year and last year we thought we had it.

REP. MIGLIARO: And the year before and the year before, and the year before that. But I'd like to just say this before you jump -- before any of the members of the committee, I want to thank you and Col. Motto as well as Veterans Organizations for their input in our subcommittee during the time of formulating the bill 5064 of the Veterans Affairs Committee, and a lot of your efforts and recommendations went into this bill, and I think Col. Motto's recommendation that we house it on Rocky Hill was really great, and yourself and your input from Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines, but I want to thank all organizations, particularly you people for being involved and giving us your time.

Any questions from members of the committee? Thank you, gentlemen. Ruth Congdon. Am I pronouncing it right, Ruth? I know it is Ruth. I know who Ruth is, but I can't get the last name.

Task Force of Women Veterans
RUTH CONGDON; I'm Ruth Congdon, and I'm on the Governor's staff for Women's Veterans Task Force members, and what we are asking is that creating a position for a woman coordinator within the establishment of a Veterans Affairs Office, and I'm commander of the Women's Post here in Hartford, and I think we really need a woman that the women can go and talk to. The men are great, but women feel as though they can't talk with Veterans Services.

REP. MIGLIARO: Ruth, I know (inaudible) here and I think I'm personally going to make a recommendation, as Senator is, and I know many members that were there, Krawiec and McCavanaugh, we are looking in the (inaudible) now and in the bill putting some substitute items which are going to be some changes in the bill in reference to designating one of the service officers to be a woman to represent the 16,000 women veterans in this state for your information. This is being considered.

Any questions from members of the committee? Thank you very much. That's great. I hope we can move along like this. Lt. Dunstone. One, two, three, four, you've got to make it fast, Ed. We are running against the clock. We've got approximately 10 minutes. I want to get everyone in if possible.

LT. ED DUNSTONE: I'm Lt. Dunstone, the Executive Office for

MR. BACON: If I could respond to that. We recognize what is happening with the group homes, especially the federal court order to move people out of our institutions into the group home. These people are certainly deservant of that type of protection which we are in the process of looking for emergency regulation to adopt a nationally recognized standard for board and care homes which will pick up the group homes, which will mandate a retroactive application for residential sprinklers.

REP. ADAMO: Thank you very much.

REP. MIGLIARO: There are no further questions. Thank you both very much.

MR. BACON: Thank you.

REP. MIGLIARO: I'd like to recognize at this point State Rep. Terry Bertinuson please. Sorry, I didn't know you were on the list. I know you have other committee meetings to go to so I am going to make you next anyway so.

REP. BERTINUSON: Thank you. Sen. Miller, Rep. Migliaro, I'm Terry Bertinuson, State Representative from the 57th District, a member of the Women's Veterans Task Force and a veteran. I'm here to speak in strong support of 5064 of the creation of the Department of Veterans Affairs or an Office of Veterans Affairs. (inaudible) the way it is going to be put together, I'm not really going to address that.

My particular concern is that you do make provisions for addressing the very particular concerns of women veterans. We have found in the Task Force that they are different, particularly in needing a great deal more outreach, and that applies particularly to older women veterans from World War II perhaps or Korea who really were not advised at the time they left service of some of the rights. So that there are a lot of women veterans out there entitled to services that you are not aware of, and I think that kind of outreach makes their case different from the men veterans, and pleased to hear that you are at least considering putting one woman as a service advocate.

My concern now would be that each service officer presumably will have a full plate as far as dealing with

REP. BERTINUSON: (continued)
their particular geographic areas, that's by --

REP. MIGLIARO: The way the intent is we designate 6 congressional districts, one in each district, but that doesn't mean that they will just be servicing that one district. (inaudible) other districts as well, so it doesn't make any difference. We just did that to get the number 6.

REP. BERTINUSON: That sounds good. I was concerned that if you had a person and it was a women who was responsible for one whole congressional district, for all veterans, and also to respond to all women across the state, you might run into problems, but I don't think it will.

REP. MIGLIARO: There is one thing that I would like to make clear to you, Terry, is that at the time we had the intrastudy committees, this committee was not aware, nor was ever informed that there was a Women's Veterans Task Force in the State.

REP. BERTINUSON: I understand that.

REP. MIGLIARO: We were not informed. It was not a slight -- an intentional slight. We would have welcomed and would have invited them to become a part of that study committee, and I just want you to know that. We were never aware of the Task Force.

REP. BERTINUSON: We understand that, and we have had some publicity, but apparently not enough.

REP. MIGLIARO: Well, it was very little because with myself and I am speaking for the members --

REP. BERTINUSON: The problem (inaudible).

REP. MIGLIARO: One thing we don't want to do is get the women mad at us. Any questions?

REP. ANASTASIA: Mr. Chairman.

REP. MIGLIARO: Rep. Anastasia.

REP. ANASTASIA: Just a comment, as I agree with Rep.

REP. ANASTASIA: (continued)

Migliaro, if the subcommittee, and we did a great deal of research on this matter, Terry, had been aware of your Task Force, -- any material you might have that might be helpful to us, why don't you forward it to us.

REP. BERTINUSON: I am sure that we will pass it on.

REP. ANASTASIA: We would appreciate it.

REP. BERTINUSON: And I congratulate you for bringing it (inaudible).

REP. MIGLIARO: We thank you for coming. Any questions? Thank you, Terry. We appreciate it. We've got approximately 5 minutes to go, and one, two, three, four more speakers. So I may stretch it, but I want to give everybody a chance. J. A. Damata, is that Damata. J. A. Domonwitz, am I pronouncing it right? Well, okay, then Capt. Moore, that's great. Well it looks like you are going to get in. Ken Seymour, DAV. I'm sorry, give your name, sir.

KEN SEYMOUR: Ken Seymour. I represent the Chapter 12 of the Disabled American Veterans. I am currently the Commander. Sen. Miller, Rep. Migliaro, I hope you can hear me here and your committee. I'm here to address House Bill 5064 and 5074. Chapter 12 is in support of both of those House Bills. As an individual, you know, I've talked to you personally on the phone several times in the last 2 years on 5074 and I am quite happy to see this has happened as one of those veterans who falls in the gray area.

Enough said on 5074. But on 5064, I talked to Mr. Aloisio yesterday from the National DAV office in Hartford. I assume he is going to be here to testify --

REP. MIGLIARO: You can almost bet money that he'll be here.

MR. SEYMOUR: Right, either way, on representing Chapter 12 I would like to come out in support of 5064 as it stands. Of course, I understand there is the opportunity for some changes and would certainly encourage those changes that are necessary to support the women veteran. The two things that we feel that the bill is long overdue. It

MR. SEYMOUR: (continued)
will serve two major functions to support the veteran in the manner to which he or she is entitled, and number two, to ensure that this state, rating as far as their record in support of veterans being number 50 in the country is soon on the mend. That's all the statements that I have at this time.

REP. MIGLIARO: Thank you. No questions? I thank you very much. The last speaker on the legislative agency head, just coming -- Dobson -- middle.

SHIRLEY DOBSON GIERAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I especially like your way of speaking and your rapport with the people.

REP. MIGLIARO: Thank you. I can't get a date if I tried.

MS. GIERAY: I'm a Navy veteran. I'm going to read this. I'm a Navy veteran and a member of the Task Force of Women Veterans, and I would just like to point out something to the Safety Committee that an American Aviation Pioneer, Amelia Eirhart was in the forefront of the establishment of the federal earmarkings program in this country, which is an excellent navigational aid for pilots. During World War I, Miss Eirhart was a volunteer with the Red Cross Detachment at Military Hospital in Toronto, and she was the first woman to be awarded the distinguished Flying Cross presented to her by the Vice President of the United State Charles Curtis.

I am proud to tell you that I recently had a beautiful volume of tributes to the American Pioneer entitled: "Amelia - Pilot and Pearls" and issued by Lynch Press of Plains, Virginia. As a member of the Governor's Task Force and Womens Veterans, I commend Governor O'Neill and his advisors as well as the committee in establishing an office of veterans affairs. Within that Office, I urge that the position of coordinator of women's veterans be included. An individual particular sensitive to the needs of women veterans and their benefits in all areas. And I thank you very much.

REP. MIGLIARO: We thank you very much, and we can assure that the committee is very, very concerned about the women veterans in this state, and we are not going to slight them. I can assure you of that.

REP. MIGLIARO: (continued)
duties, but this bill would definitely bring it out, and I don't see any problem, but I was just trying to clarify, you are saying one, but the other bill you are talking about is in Judiciary. That is separate from us. So, but that will tie in with this bill as well. Any questions from the members.

Thank you very much.

MS. KERR: Thank you.

REP. MIGLIARO: Bill Rocks.

BILL ROCKS: Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Bill Rocks, and I'm a Vietnam veteran. I live in East Granby, and I'm here to speak in support of Bill 5064. I read in The Hartford Courant recently that we ought not to be repeating what everyone else has said, but let me just say that I agree with what has been said, and I endorse and support your bill as written. I would like to add one quick point though, that while we have heard there is a significant increase to be expected in the amount of direct veterans benefits, dollars to veterans in the state of Connecticut, I think that view represents the tip of the iceberg.

During the time when I ran The National Alliance of Business in Hartford, we opened up a Vietnam Veterans Outreach Center, in the old W. T. Grant building in Hartford, and while we provided the kinds of services that are called for in this bill, the Center also provided an opportunity for the private sector, for universities, for corrections, for organizations which have a mandated response to veterans to plug in. I'm not used to sitting down here talking to people sitting up there. So I am nervous.

REP. MIGLIARO: Well, we understand that, but I've got to look up to you so what is the difference?

MR. ROCKS: I think while the \$250,000 will result in an increase in direct veterans benefits, I think you can leverage millions of dollars in other sorts of activities in the state of Connecticut.

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REP. MIGLIARO: I think that was an intent on the same bill but we felt that, as you know we did a lot of research on it, to help a lot of the veterans associations including members of your -- and we have found out of the 12,000 veterans that are in convalescent homes, a lot are being short changed, but I think this is going to be addressing all veterans of all wars, and I think it is a long time coming and we do appreciate your support. Any questions from members of the committee?

Thank you, sir. Ganley, did I pronounce it right? Here comes the Chief. Hi, Chief.

THOMAS GANLEY: It is Ganley with an "N". Thomas Ganley. I'm the Police Chief with the town of Newington. I'm here representing the Connecticut Police Chiefs' Association concerning two bills that are before you. One is the committee bill No. 25 which is An Act Appropriating Funds for the State Police Forensic Science Laboratory. I (inaudible) towards this bill in that last spring in my town as dasterdly crime was committed, and I can tell you if it wasn't for the efforts of the Forensic Laboratory, down in Meriden, that there was quite a bit of doubt that this crime would be solved.

The outgrowth of the assist given to us by the Forensic Laboratory was such that just about a month ago, about a one and a half ago, the person we arrested in connection with that, pleaded to Murder I which is a rare instance in the state of Connecticut where someone would plead to the more serious felony. The reason being the case against the person was virtually hopeless, actually hopeless. The degree of forensic evidence that had been perceived at the scene, analyzed by experts, was made available to the court system, allowing us to present such a (inaudible) case that he had no choice, going to trial would have been losing.

So anything that you can do to aid and abed and help for Forensic Laboratory, would certainly be in the best interest of the local chiefs, and as I look around I suspect that many of you representers are from departments at least the same size as mine, small jurisdictions, and occasionally you get impacted by very serious crime. I want you to know that the State Police Forensic Laboratory is a very valuable tool, and can become a very valuable

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REP. MIGLIARO: Carl Candels.

CARL CANDELS: Carl Candels from the Connecticut Hotel and Motel Association. I am the Executive Vice President. Just to clarify what Gene Bryant has said. On line 42, right after 42, it says, "sprinkler systems in the new construction in residential buildings". We just want to be up there to be concerned that the hotel industry wants to support it because of fires concern. I was the spokesman for the Treadway/Cromwell Hotel and we know what the fire sprinkler system did to save the new section. It was the old section that burned.

REP. MIGLIARO: Do you want to clarify that this is applicable to new structure?

MR. CANDELS: And this is new structure.

REP. MIGLIARO: Okay.

MR. CANDELS: Right.

REP. MIGLIARO: Okay, because you want grandfather out what is there. New structure then.

MR. CANDELS: Yes.

REP. MIGLIARO: Okay.

MR. CANDELS: Thank you very much.

REP. MIGLIARO: Any questions? Thank you very much, sir. Jim, its a long time in coming. You are next.

JAMES SPARROW: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, committee members.

My name is James Sparrow. I live in Stamford, Connecticut, and I am the National Executive Director of Vietnam Veterans Agent Orange Victims, Inc. Currently, dealing with 5,000 Vietnam Veterans and their families who reside in th state of Connecticut. I'm here to testify in support of Raised Committee Bill 5064, An Act Establishing a Department of Veterans Affairs. I'm also an active service officer in the VFW and the American Legion.

I'm quite sure that this committee has heard over and over again from people giving testimony of the need of

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MR. SPARROW: (continued)

establishing a Department of Veterans Affairs. The overwhelming facts bear this out, the fact that Connecticut ranks last in the nation in average federal veteran expenditures and we can go on and on. I feel that anyone concerned in bettering the quality of life of the veterans in the state of Connecticut would support this bill 100%. I don't see a problem in getting this bill passed. I see it as a bipartisan deal. I don't see any problem getting it passed at all. That's why I would like to focus my testimony on the funding of this department.

It has been my personal experience in the past 4 years dealing with state funding in the state of Connecticut that the state has a tendency to set up a very worthwhile program and then let it fall by the wayside because of inadequate funding. In my own case, the workload and the need can triple but the funding remains the same. This causes undue hardship on staff, and those veterans that staff is supposed to service. This is not guess work on my part. This is cold hearted spirits of 4 years, of more need, of more work, but no more money. It is a very frustrating dilemma. One that I would not like to see happen to this department of Veterans Affairs.

A bill which becomes law was only as good as it is able to be enforced. On paper, it looks wonderful, but if it cannot be enforced, it becomes a failure. In the case of this department of Veterans Affairs, the enforcement element is the funding. I would ask that the first full operating year of this department be funded with the \$250,000 as is written in the bill. Anything less would be the beginning of failure. We would also ask that it be written into the bill that as the need and the work increases, so does the funding.

Let's not just have a paper department for Veterans Affairs. Let's have a strong functioning department of Veterans Affairs. That can only be done with proper funding. Thank you.

REP. MIGLIARO: Jim, I thank you, but I also think that for those that are committee members, they realize that we appreciate your effort and your input on the infrastudy committee which you attended every meeting, and we want to thank you (inaudible).

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MR. SPARROW: I know the women were overlooked through no fault of anybody, but --

REP. MIGLIARO: We'll correct that.

MR. SPARROW: -- The Vietnam Veteran there, that's for sure.

REP. MIGLIARO: We'll correct that. Thanks a lot, Jim. Alan Parker.

MR. PARKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Alan Parker.

REP. I am President of the Westbrook Ambulance Association. I'm here today to speak in favor of Raised Committee Bill No. 5072, An Act Requiring Payment to Volunteer Ambulance Services for Calls on Limited Access Highways. The Westbrook Ambulance Association, as are many of our associations in that area, fits the description (inaudible) in this bill. Our primary concern is to provide emergency medical care to the town's people of Westbrook, and our surrounding towns.

MR. We do extend our service to the limited access highways primarily Interstate 95 in that town. I would like to quote some statistics that show that many of the calls to which we respond on Interstate 95, we are not reimbursed for. During the calendar year, January 1985 to December 1985, Westbrook Ambulance Association responded to 16 calls on Interstate 95. None of which we were reimbursed for. In addition to those 16 calls, we responded to 13 calls on Interstate 95 that were either refusals or fire standby for the local fire department.

REP. We were not reimbursed for those calls. Our rate structure within the town of Westbrook is a very nominal one, and a very fair one to the residents. However, it is being stretched, and it is being extended when we do make these types of responses and are unable to collect from our patients. Thank you.

REP. MIGLIARO: I have a couple of questions. When you respond like you said on I-95 was it?

MR. PARKER: Yes.

REP. MIGLIARO: Who called?

MS. NEALE: No, but it is a little under a dollar a square foot, but that is a general number.

REP. ORSINI: Because this bill doesn't have anything to do with one family dwellings. It is 3 family.

MS. NEALE: But it is probably about the same amount.

REP. ORSINI: Per foot.

MS. NEALE: Per square foot.

REP. ORSINI: Per square foot.

MS. NEALE: Um hun.

REP. ORSINI: Okay, thank you.

REP. MIGLIARO: Any other questions? Thank you very much.
George Ducanic.

GEORGE DUCANIC: Ducanic. Sen. Migliaro, Sen. Miller, my name is George Ducanic, and I'm representing the members of the Post of the American Legion in Stamford, and members of our post support HB 5064 to establish the Department of Veterans Affairs in Connecticut. We also have a small pension drive and I have a petition here that I would turn over to the Chair with 600 residents of the state of Connecticut and also Fairfield County.

REP. MIGLIARO: In support of the bill?

MR. DUCANIC: In support of the bill. Unless you want them to come and testify, and I said I would take care of it.

REP. MIGLIARO: I'm glad you told them no. Gees.

MR. DUCANIC: Thank you very much.

REP. MIGLIARO: It would be hell to sit them all down at the table at one time, because that is what -- I thank you very much. Any questions? Thank you. Gee. Thank you for small favors. I think we ought to call a special meeting and have them all come up here just to find out if you are telling the truth. Bob Faucher. Did I pronounce it right?

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BOB FAUCHER: No.

REP. MIGLIARO: I figured.

MR. FAUCHER: Bob Faucher, Rep. Migliaro. Good Frenchman. Good afternoon, my name is Bob Faucher, and I'm from Manchester. I would like to address bill 5064. In July, 1971, I came home to Connecticut from Vietnam. I came back home to a confused and uncaring nation whose main way to handling Vietnam was to ignore its veterans. Well, they didn't exactly ignore us. They treated us as if we had done something wrong. It should be remembered that if the war was right, or wrong, we served our country because it asked us or told us to.

Finally, America has paid attention to us, the Vietnam veterans and it is not just because it is right and traditional to help war veterans, but because we have fought for it. This time there is no question that we have fought for our rights. We served America when America needed us, and we ask --

REP. MIGLIARO: We don't mean to interrupt you, sir, it is somebody. Go ahead, we'll get them lights or no lights. Keep going.

MR. FAUCHER: We served America when America needed us. Now we ask, now we insist that America serves us, when we need them. What has Connecticut done for Vietnam vets? Unfortunately not much. Connecticut has a law that Vietnam vets cannot be discriminated against when seeking employment. Unfortunately this bill is nothing but a law on paper. I know of no time that this law was ever enforced. And I know personally that I did not get (inadible) jobs, a job which I was well qualified for, simply because I happen to be a Vietnam veteran.

The proposed state Department of Veterans Affairs would not just be for Vietnam Veterans nor should it be. Unfortunately, I doubt there would be any question at all of establishing it if the Vietnam legacy did not exist and a great deal, if not the majority of the benefits go to Vietnam veterans. In regards to Connecticut, it is a disgrace for this great state, it makes us laugh, an average federal veteran expenditures. It is a disgrace. It is our elected state government's responsibility to

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MR. FAUCHER: (continued)
resolve this disgrace. Connecticut needs and has an obligation to establish a State Department of Veterans Affairs. As I said, the state Department of Veterans Affairs would not just be for Vietnam veterans nor is it just needed for Vietnam veterans. World War II veterans, we have them in the latter years of life. They have then the need the assistance for the state to advise to make sure that they are kept.

Many World War II Veterans help their Connecticut to one of the finest states in this great nation. Let us not forget if it wasn't for them, Connecticut, or a free America, wouldn't exist. We owe them at least help knowing what their entitlements are and where and how to receive them. Korean veterans also came home to a country and a state that preferred just to ignore them. Korean veterans chose not to ignore America. Many Connecticut veterans also help to build this Nutmeg state into one of the greatest states in the nation.

It is past time for Connecticut to stop ignoring its obligations to its veterans. We need a state Department of Veterans Affairs. We need a strong state government body to be our advocate. We are one of the most financially secure states in the union and should not be the last in the veterans receiving their entitlements under the veterans law. It is your responsibility as elected representatives in Connecticut to make sure the circumstances do not continue to exist. A state Veterans Agency can strongly help to make sure this disgraceful situation is reversed. As an American veteran and not just as a Vietnam veteran, I ask, no, I plead, please go back to the full legislature with a firm recommendation and a strong push to the establishment of a state Department of Veterans Affairs.

Veterans of all wars were there when you needed us. Well, now, many of us need you. Make 1986 the year that Connecticut does more than just politely recognize its veterans service and helps us. Connecticut should establish a state Department of Veterans Affairs and it just makes sense that the veterans have a State Department fully and strongly acting as its advocate. Thank you very much.

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REP. MIGLIARO: Thank you, Bob, it was well said. And as I think as you look up here you are looking at many veterans who served in different areas, and I am glad that you mentioned Korean veterans because as I think you know, Korean veterans went table and vocal, and I'll tell you, many of them were slighted when they came back from Korea too, and I am glad to see in your testimony that you included all members of the armed forces, regardless of what war they served in in defensive of their country.

And I agree. I like the words. I wish you would leave your statement. There, there is a copy for our committee. Could you leave that. Any questions from the committee? Thank you very much, Bob.

MR. FAUCHER: Thank you.

REP. MIGLIARO: I'll bet you I get this one right. John Roberto.

JOHN ROBERTO: Mr. Chairman, members of the Public Safety Committee. My name is John Roberto, and I'm Chairman of the Legislative Committee of the American Legion, Department of Connecticut. My message will only take one minutes, by the way.

REP. MIGLIARO: Take your time. That was only for legislators. We don't care about the public. It was just the legislators that had --

MR. ROBERTO: The American Legion certainly approves the concept of House Bill 5064. The concept of establishing an Office of Veterans Affairs, they will advise, assist and if necessary available to represent veterans, and their dependents in obtaining federal benefits from the Veterans Administration. The American Legion does strongly feel that such an office should have --infringe or attempt to replace the work of service officers of the Veterans organizations as stated in Section 3 of the proposed House Bill 5064, cooperate with service organizations and agencies throughout the state in disseminating and furnishing counsel and assistance in obtaining federal and state benefits.

The American Legion would like to suggest that voluntary committee made up of members of various veterans

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MR. ROBERTO: (continued)
organizations be established for the purpose of guiding and assisting the office of veterans affairs. Once again, the American Legion certainly supports the concept of Bill 5064. Thank you.

REP. MIGLIARO: John, I know that concept was coming out, and I don't think and I think the committee will agree, once the Veterans Affairs Commission is on board, I would think that the Director would look in that vein. We'd like to -- delete that as a matter of record, and think in those lines of getting assistance from -- we do recommend it, I think at our hearings that we had. You were there. And this suggested maybe a 100 or more individuals out there as service officers around the state who can assist this group to give the Veterans a direct one on one service.

MR. ROBERTO: (inaudible) for 35 years.

REP. MIGLIARO: I know, John, and I know (inaudible) too. Any members have any questions? Just a minute, John. Rep. Anastasia.

REP. ANASTASIA: Just a comment if I may, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to commend John Roberto and many others who have given a great deal of time and effort to assist this committee in a project that I feel is so necessary. I would just like to extend our thanks and appreciation, John.

REP. MIGLIARO: Don't go away. I want those papers. (inaudible). I'm going to make writers out of you fellows. I'm probably going to write a book.

MR. ROBERT: (inaudible) knew that last night.

REP. MIGLIARO: Oh, really? Some legislators take a month to do that. That's only a pun. We've got good legislators here. Edward Bogus. Did I say it right? Stephen Pritz, did he leave too? PRITZ, I believe. Those are the kinds of testimony that I like, you know, real fast. Joyce Wojtas.

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JOYCE WOJTAS: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairpeople and members of the committee. My name is Joyce Wojtas and I am Director of Legislative Relations for the Connecticut Construction

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MR. CROOK: (continued)
\$15 in 1980. In 1982 the FBI began charging \$12 for fingerprint processing. So the total cost today for the procedure of acquiring a state permit and most people have a state permit initially is \$42. Chiefs of police are required to investigate the applicant, but most of the work is done by the applicant. In addition to a testing no drug, no alcohol, psychiatric or other problems, he submits three letters of recommendation --

REP. MIGLIARO: Bob, I don't want to interrupt you. I'm going to make a little statement. I'll tell you why. I've been informed that half the lights went off. (Inaudible).

MR. CROOK: All we really want, we want a low fee structure so that we can get people who require permits, permits so that there will be compliance with the law.

REP. MIGLIARO: (Inaudible).

MR. CROOK: To raise the fees is not going to be compliant. You're going to have more problems with gun control than you do right now.

REP. MIGLIARO: I thank you. Questions? (Inaudible). June.

MS. JUNE WILLINZ: For the record, Mr. Chairman, it's a great privilege to be here. I'm here in several capacities. I'm the Executive Director of the American Veterans Committee, and I'm also the author of Women Veterans, America's Forgotten Heroines. That's the reason for the book and that's the reason I'm here primarily, is to not only endorse Number 5064 to preserve a Department of Veterans Affairs, but to endorse one, that is adequately funded, that is number one. Number two, I would like to emphasize something very, very important.

I was very heartened to hear you talk about the womens' component and to get your wholehearted support. It has been to be done in a certain way. Women veterans have been a forgotten population in our country.

REP. MIGLIARO: I grant you.

MS. WILLINZ: They are less than 2% of the population. They

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MS. WILLINZ: (continued)
are now of the veterans population. They are now
approximately 4% of the population.

REP. MIGLIARO: Nationwide?

MS. WILLINZ: Nationwide. I'm talking nationwide, and I assume
what's nationwide is probably as true for Connecticut as
any other state. Furthermore, surprisingly enough, women
veterans are the fastest growing segment of the veterans
population.

Now one of the reasons why women veterans have fallen
through the cracks is because they have been this very
small percentage of the veterans population, so that when
services and whenever benefits programs are designed,
etc., they have fallen to the bottom because of their
small numbers.

A survey that was done for the Veterans Administration
last year, the Louis Harris survey, it was the first
serious data collection on women veterans, found that
women veterans were way behind --

REP. MIGLIARO: Excuse me a minute. (Inaudible) close that
door or tell them to keep quiet out there, please, to show
some respect in here. I'm sorry, ma'am. There are a lot
of loudmouths out there that are testifying out there when
they should have been doing it in here.

MS. WILLINZ: Women veterans are way behind men veterans
when it comes to the use of the veterans benefit
programs. Not only do they fall behind statistically,
their level of awareness of those programs has now been
shown to be way behind. So many women veterans, not the
ones here, and I have been very heartened by their
testimony, don't even identify as veterans.

It is very important, if you are trying to reach women
veterans, you set up this department of veterans affairs,
that there may be a womens' component, not just a womens'
service officer, but someone, preferably, I think a woman
veteran, who would be responsible for and committed to the
servicing of the women veterans in your state.

By the way I want to commend the State of Connecticut

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MS. WILLINZ: (continued)
because I think it is one of the few states in the union that has a women veteran's task force. I've been around the country. I've been in veteran's issues for over 20 years, and this is one of the very few states that has a women veterans task force, so I'm very pleased. I'm happy to say I'm going to meet with them later.

But I want to emphasize that first of all, I hope that this bill will be passed.

REP. MIGLIARO: It will be.

MS. WILLINZ: Good. Secondly, I hope that as you design it, that you will keep in this in mind -- in other words, it just can't be equal in the sense that the women veterans now need special attention because they have fallen way behind in their use of veteran's services. And we've also found from a recent study that my organization has done, for example, that the women veterans have fallen behind, even the general women's population, we found that in employment, it is very urgent that women veterans be brought into the mainstream of the veteran's population and to have the equal access to service that their war time service entitled them to.

So that is my plea. I have a written statement --

REP. MIGLIARO: We would like it if you'd leave it with the clerk. But one thing I want to be sure of. I think John made a statement earlier, he just went out, on there he is back there, and I think that when the commission is formulated, I think the intention is to get people involved of the veteran organizations in advisory capacity to this veteran's affairs committee, and I not only know, but I want to emphasize that, we've been informed that there is a women's veterans task force, I'm sure they will be included in any future endeavors on behalf of veterans in this state.

MR. WILLINZ: May I add just one postscript to this. The Veterans Administration two years ago set up an advisory committee on women veterans nationally. I happen to be a member of that committee. In trying to get the VA Hospital system to be responsive to the medical needs of women veterans, --

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REP. MIGLIARO: That's federal.

MS. WILLINZ: I know it's federal. But I just want to indicate that they set up a special women's coordinator in each hospital, so I am just suggesting that that might be some kind of Bible, not wanting to suggest that (inaudible) but that there definitely be someone designated to focus, not just to service, but to focus on women veterans.

REP. MIGLIARO: Well, I think we've got to creep before we walk. I know the intention and what the intent is for the veterans' affairs committee and we can go far afield on many other things they can do, (inaudible), seek out those benefits for our veterans and to (inaudible), man or woman. A veteran is a veteran in our book. And this committee will be available for both of them.

I know, Joe. Would you like to say something? What are you getting red for? Are you embarrassed? You think that women veterans, you can't to them like an equal? I think we can talk as equals as veterans. I mean, I did with the veterans I was involved with. We used to talk a lot. Any questions? Thank you very much. Please leave your statement. Mr. Mordente.

MR. JACK MORDENTE: Good afternoon, gentlemen, I'm Jack Mordente. I'm Director of Veterans' Affairs at Southern Connecticut State University. I served in the Army from 1970 to 1974, and I hope, Rep. Migliaro, you won't hold that against me. Some of my best friends are Marines.

I'm also Chairman of the Connecticut Vietnam Herbicide Information Commission, a member of the Connecticut Women Veteran's Task Force, a member of the DAV and Vietnam Veterans of America.

The issue I raise is not should Connecticut establish a state office, but rather how much money is needed to achieve the purpose as is outlined in 5064. It's proposed that \$250,000 be given. Governor O'Neill has allocated \$100,000. I suggest that \$100,000 is not enough and that \$250,000 may be enough for the first year, but however I suspect that what we're going to find out is that more money is needed, and as an example, by the year 2000, 63% of all males over the age of 65 will be veterans.

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MR. MORDENTE: (continued)

What that means is that two out of three elderly males will be eligible for VA hospital care at that time.

REP. MIGLIARO: And females?

MR. MORDENTE: And females. As you are aware a large portion of any budget or any department budget is made up of staff salaries. 5064 calls for a staff of not less than 8 people. The initial study that the Public Safety Committee did called for 8 people and commissioner who would be one of the six service officers, five others from each Congressional district, with a clerk and a secretary.

I propose that there be 10 employees. They are, commissioner, deputy commissioner, six service officers, representing each Congressional district, a secretary and a clerk. The commissioner would not act as one of the service officers. You can ask DAV, VFW, American Legion service office about the amount of time and effort that goes into being a service officer and having a case load with veterans. It's overwhelming.

The Commissioner must have the ability to manage effectively this operation, okay. He must be able to function as a manager, develop and maintain close working relations with not only the VA, but with all veterans service organizations throughout the state Connecticut and he must keep abreast of local, state and national issues so that he can make us aware of that here in Connecticut. The Deputy Commission would assist the commissioner and have one very important special duty winning veterans.

You all know about Governor O'Neill's winning Veterans Task Force. Our report was published on February 5, and it shows that Connecticut's approximately 16,000 veterans have been sorely neglected. There are three other states, New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts who have State Department's of Veteran's Affairs who have currently added staff to deal with this issue.

Connecticut has the opportunity to learn from these other states and so I hope we do that. The six service officers would be responsible for the duties as outlined in the bill. I recommend that they live in and work out of each

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MR. MORDENTE: (continued)
congressional district. I'm sure arrangements can be made within each district to house these people. The VA houses people up here in 450 Main Street. And then, of course, a secretary and a clerk. Governor O'Neill and the General Assembly have the opportunity to pass legislation within the program that will first and foremost enhances the lives of all veterans in the State of Connecticut.

This opportunity comes at a time when Graham, Rudmann and Hollings Act is going to wreck havoc with veterans in the country and in Connecticut. And we can go into detail about that, but that's not the purpose of this hearing. You can design a program that is underfunded and improperly staffed that will function like some other bureauracies and that would be a disservice to veterans. We can do it right using the guidance of our veteran leaders in Connecticut and from the knowledge we gain from the other 36 veterans' departments around the country.

I thank you for the opportunity.

REP. MIGLIARO: Are you going to leave that statement?

MR. MORDENTE: Yes, I am.

REP. MIGLIARO: We would appreciate it. Thank you very much, but I can assure you it wasn't our intention to make the director an active one. But what do we want a director for, we have to name somebody. Don't forget, we're coming in with a package that will be acceptable. And we're trying to come in with one that makes a reasonable amount of expenditure of \$250,000 and you're right. Next year that agency, like another agency can say the workload is getting heavy, will have to come in and request more.

And I don't have to tell you, once an agency starts, it expands. We're not about to make this a political appointment with commissioners and deputy commissioners. There's a certain amount of individuals in the state that really want to get that tide, get that money. That's not our intention.

We're looking for the benefit of the veterans in the state and those who are dedicated, really want to serve on this commission, serve and except the title and accept the amount of money. If they don't, the Hell with them. Let.

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REP. MIGLIARO: (continued)
them go someplace else. Okay. Let's have your
testimony. Thank you.

REP. ADAMO: Mr. Chairman.

REP. MIGLIARO: Go ahead, Mr. Adamo.

REP. ADAMO: I think -- just for the sake of clarity -- the
\$250,000 really represents a half year.

REP. MIGLIARO: (inaudible)

REP. ADAMO: It starts January --

REP. MIGLIARO: -- double that the next year.

MR. MORDENTE: In reality it's a \$500,000 for a full year.

REP. MIGLIARO: But we get caught on all the costs, -- that's
why \$100,000 isn't feasible. Okay. Let's try with the
next one, Jill, is that what you said?

MS. JILL MITCHELL: Good morning, Good afternoon, I'm sorry.
My name is Jill Mitchell, I'm a nurse and I'm a Viet Nam
Veteran. I've been active with Veterans' concerns since
1980. I am the vice chair of the Riverside Commission. I
belong to (inaudible) and I head two committees for them
and I current the chair of the Task Force for Veterans. I
want to thank you for the work you've done to establish
this department and tell you that I, like everybody else
here wholehardly supported --

Unfortunately, I do think there are some problems with the
way the bill is designed and they are basically the same
as everybody else has said this morning. The director is
going to have enough work to do without being a service
officer. Just the work of coordinating, teaching,
designing programs, doing outreach and supervising for
quality assurance will be more than one person can
handle.

As the Chair of the Womens Task Force, i want to thank the
members that I've met of the Public Safety Commitee and
for whats gone on here this morning. And your assurances
that women will be included in this project. I do feel
strongly that the position of a womens coordinator should

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MS. MITCHELL: (continued)

be a separate position. I have a copy of a report that we just put together. It has gone in the mail. It was delivered to the mailroom for everybody in the General Assembly to get one, but I'll put that in today so I can see you have it. I want to say that the work of a women veteran coordinator will be essentially be breaking new ground. There are people in this state and others including the VA advisory task force lobby and committee on women Veterans who be willing to help.

But in reality, there are no role models and no already already organized plan or approach. This coordinator will have to learn first. We'll have to help the VA hospitals become willing and able to deal more effectively with women Veterans. We'll have to enlighten the service officers on the needs of women Veterans and we'll have to be available to all women Veterans in the state.

Finally, this person will have to do outreach. Women Veterans have been ignored for too long for us to reasonably expect that just because we are now willing to help them, they will be willing to come to us. The creation of the department is not necessarily mean things will improve for women. Finally, I'd like to comment on two statements that I heard repeatedly recently.

And I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, one of the statements is one that you just made, a Veteran is a Veteran. That's a wonderful viewpoint, but it does not mean that automatically the special needs of women Veterans will be dealt with. I -- when I started this Task force, was not aware there were any special needs for women Veterans.

REP. MIGLIARO: There are special needs for all Veterans in this state.

MS. MITCHELL: Yes, I know, but there are special needs for women that are different.

REP. MIGLIARO: I'm not disputing that.

MS. MITCHELL: I've also been told recently that since the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women is the administrative component of the task force that they should be left to do for women Veterans. I want to say to that, I joined the Army because this country was at war.

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MS. MITCHELL: (continued)

I'm a nurse and I thought I could be useful. I also come from a family with a history of service to our country. Women as well as men. I was born a woman, but I chose to be a Vet. Please honor my service and the service of all my fellow Veterans.

REP. MIGLIARO: Thank you. Are you going to leave that statement with us as well as the other? Any questions?

REP. FUSCAS: Yes, one question here.

REP. MIGLIARO: Rep. Fuscas.

REP. FUSCAS: Hi, Jill. Very nice to see you again. You address special needs for women Veterans, and you said before you served on the task force that you weren't aware of these special needs. Can you enlighten us and tell us a little bit about what these special needs are?

MS. MITCHELL: From things as simple as no toilet facilities in Vet centers for women. As simple as no shower facilities in VA Hospitals for Women. As simple as the fact that women when they sign into a nursing home, they are not asked if they are Veterans, therefore, nobody's even going to know and file a claim for them. Things as simple as when women register in the state or move into the state or come back to the state, they are not asked their Veteran's status and consequently do not get Veteran's taxes on the form for their property tax exemption.

But because their name is now Miller instead of Miskell, they don't -- they can't track that and they can't find them. They're not asking for maiden names.

REP. MIGLIARO: If I may at this point, we can get on, Rep. Fuscas. She answered your question. We're here to address 506 and we just want to get a yes or no on that and to touch on that. But we're going far a field here. Thank you. Chris -- Chris, I don't want to ruin your name. You can't read these things, they're bad. I'm sorry, go ahead, Chris.

MR. CHRIS PANIOTO: My name is Chris Panioto and I'm here as a representative of the Viet Nam Veterans of American,

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MR. PANIOTO: (continued)
Connecticut chapter 120 speaking on raised committee bill 5064. My chapter as a member of the Connecticut Veterans Coalition Forum and the Connecticut (inaudible) Coalition is deeply concerned with Veterans affairs in our state. Connecticut should be note, it ranks last in every federal Veteran expenditure of \$596 per Veteran. We support the formation of the Department of Veterans' Affairs and feel that such an agency is long overdue.

Not that a state department dedicated to helping Veterans of all wars find their entitlements under Veterans' law, it is becoming a reality. DVA chapter 120 has a few specific concerns that we would like to address at this time. With regard to the position of director of the department, we feel the director should not be an active service officer, as wording in the working draft of this bill implies. In its infancy the agency will need the full attention of the department head in formulating directions.

This we believe will insure a long and prosperous life for the department. In the area of appointing a director, DVA Chapter 120 is very concerned at this point it may become a tool for politicians looking to repay political supporters. Should the position of director of this department become a political scam, only the Veteran will suffer. As Viet Nam Veterans we would also like to point out that historically qualified Viet Nam Veterans have suffered when appointments such as this have been made. Since Viet Nam Veterans are listed as minorities under the Affirmative Action Law in this country, we believe this appointment should go to a qualified Viet Nam Veteran.

Finally, and of special concern to us as Viet Nam Veterans --

REP. MIGLIARO: I'm stopping you at that point so I don't lose what I'm thinking. You said that the -- would you go back one paragraph about appoint of what -- appointment as a director. Okay, would you read that part again?

MR. PANIOTO: The whole paragraph?

REP. MIGLIARO: In other words, are you saying -- is it your suggestion that the director of this commission should be a Viet Nam Veteran?

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MR. PANIOTO: That's right.

REP. MIGLIARO: And that the other Veterans shouldn't be considered.

MR. PANIOTO: No, I didn't say that. I said that the director should be a Viet Nam Veteran.

REP. MIGLIARO: All right, go ahead.

MR. PANIOTO: Finally and of special concern to us as Viet Nam Veterans we would like to state you consider the inclusion of a woman Veteran liasion in the Department of Veterans Affairs. Women Veterans have been ignored as their needs as a Veteran and their special problems demand a position of a woman liasion in this department. The DVA wishes to thank and applauds all those who have worked to the existence of a state department of Veterans Affairs. We would also like the committee and the state to know that we are ready to work to see that Veterans obtain what is theirs by law.

REP. MIGLIARO: Thank you, any questions?

REP. KRAWIEC: Yeah, Gene. Why do you feel that it should be a Viet Nam Veteran. I mean don't you feel you're discriminating against the other Veterans by actually just naming one particular war?

MR. PANIOTO: I think for the last 40 years, the older Veterans have run Veterans Affairs in every agency. I believe its time to bring in new blood.

REP. MIGLIARO: Forget about the blood the other guy's had, right?

MR. PANIOTO: I didn't say that. I just said that I think --

REP. MIGLIARO: I don't want to get into an argument on this. That's -- I don't know. Any other questions? Thank you. Daniel Roselle. John Sherry. William Johnson. Bill, forgive me. I shut you off before, you're up next. I'm sorry. I checked them off and then -- I got a little frustrated on the last one and my mind was a little --

MR. WILLIAM JOHNSON: My name is William Johnson. I'm Chief of the West Haven Fire Department. I'm here to

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MR. LHERI: (continued)

you just hauled them and threw them in the back. So I've been around a little while. But in '60 they had it in there that we used to get \$50 for an ambulance anywhere in the state paid by the State of Connecticut on any state highway. They discarded that and went to \$100 for fire departments totally. This bill is long overdue. It's really not very much money for our costs. Cause as my count is, we're an ALS unit with an IV7.

We have additional costs factors that go into there. We only recoup. The people on the interstate do not have any obligations to our towns. And if you can understand what I'm saying it is that they get a statement from us for a donation for the amount that we are allowed to under the law and they ignore it and there's no recourse for us to get it because they're out of state.

And nine out of ten times we don't get it. Very few, there are some people out there that are very nice people and they will send payment in and return our money. But the greatest case is that we don't get it. So these things are needed. With that I'll just say that I am in favor of both bills and if there's any questions.

REP. MIGLIARO: Thank you. Any questions from the committee that's left here? Any questions. Thank you.

MR. LHERI: Thank you.

REP. MIGLIARO: Sam McClure. That don't look like no Sam to me.

MS. SAM MC CLURE: Yes sir. You don't know me. I talk very fast so this will be brief. My name is Sam McClure. I represent Connecticut National Organization for Women. And we fully support the intent of establishing a Department of Veterans Affairs and want to urge the committee to extend this bill to specifically include a position responsible for issues affecting women Veterans.

According to the womens Veterans task force, and the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, there are approximately 16,000 women Veterans in Connecticut who have unique needs which have not been adequately addressed in the past or in the present. A strong indication of this is the very fact that women Veterans were not included

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MS. MC CLURE: (continued)
in this bill. Reports from the federal government indicate that many organizations and agencies required to provide services to women Veterans do so inadequately. Many VA hospitals have no facilities for women. More important, most women Vets and their dependants are unaware of their eligibility, the services available or how to apply for the benefits.

This indicates the need for an intensive outreach campaign and strong advocacy for women veterans. The addition of a women Veterans' coordinator would make this legislation perfect in our eyes. And I know you want to pass perfect legislation. Briefly, I'd like to speak to HB5070. I told you I talk fast. --which is an act requiring standards for police response for domestic violence, which of course, we support. We want there to be standards by each community in how to respond to domestic violence.

My fear is that this piece of legislation will be considered by some to be all that's necessary on the subject of domestic violence and I know that others before me today have spoken about HB 5255 which is an extremely comprehensive piece of legislation representing the task force on domestic violence recommendations which were passed unanimously by the 13 member task force.

It's a very comprehensive piece of legislation dealing with counselling for batterers, public awareness campaigns, expansion of shelters, additional personnel, and I certainly hope that this bill won't leave people with the impression that this is all that's necessary. There's far, far more that's needed on the subject in the State of Connecticut. That's all.

SEN. MILLER: Thank you, Sam. Any questions from the committee?

MS. MC CLURE: Thank you.

SEN. MILLER: Thank you. This is the guy we've been looking for. Next, we have none other than other, Mr. Dick Good. Can we have a drum roll please.

MR. DICK GOOD: Gentleman, there's a car rental in Vermont -- they have a saying, if you don't say it, you won't have to say it again. But I wanted to talk to you briefly about

STATEMENT OF

June A. Willenz, Executive Director
of the
American Veterans Committee

In Support of Raised Committee Bill 5064,
An Act Establishing a Department of Veterans Affairs
in the State of Connecticut

February 21, 1986

Thank you for the privilege of appearing before you to support this bill to create a Department of Veterans Affairs in the State of Connecticut. The AVC has traditionally been concerned with the reintegration of veterans into the social and economic mainstream of the nation after leaving military service. We have supported all legislative and executive actions that would facilitate the reentry of the veterans of the Vietnam War, as we have for the veterans of previous wars. A state Department of Veterans Affairs can often contribute a special dimension to assist veterans. Many of the states have such a special Department to provide a focal point of reference and source of outreach services for veterans.

We are particularly concerned about the population of women veterans, who until recently have fallen through the cracks. In late 1983, my book, Women Veterans: A Forgotten Population, based on several years of research, zeroed in on the woman veteran and revealed that little attention had been paid to them. The 1980 Census revealed that there are one and a quarter million women veterans,

The Department of Defense and the VA had been suggesting that there were anywhere from 650,000 to a quarter of a million. We also found that there was no historical data and little current data on women veterans. My findings, which were buttressed by a GAO investigation in 1982, revealed that the women veterans were not using the VA medical system, and that when they did use it, found it was often not meeting their needs. After Congressional hearings in March 1983 and the appointment of a VA Advisory Committee on Women Veterans, that situation has begun to be addressed. Substantial progress has been made within the VA system with the full backing of the VA Administrator, to be more responsive to the needs and problems of women veterans. I am pleased to report that the Vet Centers which were supported to assist Vietnam veterans also have begun efforts to address those special needs of Vietnam women veterans.

The AVC recently conducted a study for the Department of Labor's Women's Bureau on women veterans employment. In a review of a selected number of well-performing offices of the United States public employment service, we found that women veterans were not doing as well as non-women veterans in the jobs that they were placed in by local employment offices. Their median hourly earnings were less than that of the median hourly earnings of women high school graduates. This was particularly startling, since 40 percent of the women veterans surveyed had completed some college. This finding, based on a limited study, suggests that women veterans are not doing as well in the employment market as might be expected, considering their education and experience.

A recently completed Survey of Female Veterans, done by the Lou Harris Associates for the Veterans Administration, published last year, found that "the low rate of usage of Veterans Administration programs by women veterans seems to reflect a problem of benefit awareness rather than preference." Furthermore, "for eleven out of 18 programs examined, the survey found that less than half of women veterans had heard of them.... With the exception of the hospital and health care programs, the Veterans Administration programs are used by relatively few women veterans."

These findings of the VA Survey point up the need for further efforts to inform women veterans about their benefits, and how to go about obtaining them. A chicken-and-egg situation seems to be the case here. A low level of institutional awareness of the women veterans together with the low level of individual women veterans awareness of ^{their} benefits have mitigated together against a full usage of the veterans benefits program available to the women veterans. Another example of this institutional lag is the fact that the VA-funded Veterans Centers Program set up by Congress to respond to the emotional needs of the Vietnam-era veterans, including such traumas as the PTSD, did not consider women veterans in its first years of operation. Only within the last couple of years, with the formation of a Working Group on Women in the Central Office of the VA, have the Vet Centers begun to address the emotional problems of the women who served in the Armed Forces of the Vietnam era.

These facts and findings confirm the qualitative assessment of many of us who have been working with women veterans that women veterans generally have not identified strongly as veterans and did not seek out the benefits which were coming to them as a result of their military service. More outreach efforts are needed if women veterans are to take advantage of their veterans benefits. A State Department of Veterans Affairs can coordinate outreach efforts and contribute a special dimension in assisting and servicing veterans. Many states which have such Departments have found them to provide a unique coordinating focal agency for outreach services for veterans. To help meet the needs of women veterans, the Department should have a women's component. This kind of targeted effort with a specific mission can have an important effect upon the quality and quantity of services offered women veterans as they seek to use the benefits which are their due.

Thank you for this opportunity to address this important legislation.

NB 5064

Good morning. My name is Jill Mishkel, I'm a nurse and a Vietnam Veteran. I've been active in Veteran concerns since 1980. I'm The Vice-Chair of The Vietnam Herbicide Information Commission. The Chair of The Agent Orange Committee and the Special Committee on Women Veterans For Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 120. And most recently The Chair of the Conn. Task Force on Women Vets.

I want to thank you for the work you've done to establish a Department of Veterans Affairs. I wholeheartedly agree that there is a great need for such a department. It will not only help Conn.'s Veterans but in the long run it will save the state money and thereby help all Conn citizens.

I must admit I would like to see some changes in the way the bill designs The Department.

First, I feel strongly that the Director should not have the additional duties of a Service officer. The work of Coordinating, teaching, designing programs, outreach and supervising for Quality Assurance will already be more than one person should be made to handle.

As Chair of the Women's Veteran Task Force I thank the members of the Public Safety Committee that I've already met & spoken to for their willingness to entertain the idea of a Coordinator for Women Veterans

being appointed to the department. I'd like to stress what I feel is the importance of having this position separate and distinct. You should all have received a copy of our report "America's Best Kept Secret --- Women Veterans", which supports this statement, but there are some things the report does not mention.

A Women Veteran Coordinator will be essentially breaking new ground. There are people in this state and others, including the VA Advisory Committee on Women Veterans who will be willing to help; but in reality there are no role models and no already organized plan or approach. This Coordinator will have to learn first; will have to help the VA hospital become willing and able to deal effectively with Women Veterans; will have to enlighten the Service Officers on the needs of Women Veterans; will have to be available to all Women Veterans in the state, and finally, will have to do outreach. Women Veterans have been ignored too long for us to reasonably expect that just because we are now willing to help them they will be willing to come to us. The creation of ^{a department} ~~this position~~ does not necessarily mean things will improve for women.

Finally I'd like to comment on two statements

I have heard recently. One is "A Vet is a Vet." This is an admirable viewpoint, but it does not mean that automatically the special needs of Women Veterans will be addressed.

Also I've been told "let the PCSW take care of Women Veterans." Gentlemen I joined the Army because this country was at war, I'm a nurse, I felt needed. I also come from a family with a history of service to our country, women as well as men. I was born a woman. I choose to be a woman. Please honor my service and the service of all my fellow Women Veterans. Help us be proud to say 'I'm a Veteran'.

Thank you,
Jill A. Mardles

20 February 1986 HEARING: Safety Committee 10:00AM H. B. No. 5064
 Capitol Annex W-54

MR CHAIRMAN:

MY NAME IS SHIRLEY DOBSON GILROY. I AM A NAVY VETERAN, AND A
 MEMBER OF THE TASK FORCE ON WOMEN VETERANS.

AS A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE, I WOULD LIKE TO POINT
 OUT TO YOU THAT AMERICAN AVIATION PIONEER AMELIA EARHART WAS IN THE
 FOREFRONT OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FEDERAL AIR MARKINGS PROGRAM
 IN THIS COUNTRY - AN EXCELLENT NAVIGATIONAL AIDE FOR PILOTS.
 DURING WORLD WAR I, MISS EARHART WAS A VOLUNTEER WITH THE RED CROSS
 DETACHMENT AT SPADINA MILITARY HOSPITAL IN TORONTO. AMELIA WAS
 THE FIRST WOMAN TO BE AWARDED THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS,
 PRESENTED TO HER BY THE VICE*PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,
 CHARLES CURTIS. MISS EARHART IS STILL AN INSPIRATION. I AM PROUD
 TO TELL YOU THAT I HAVE RECENTLY HAD A BEAUTIFUL VOLUME OF TRIBUTES
 TO THE AMERICAN PIONEER TITLED: AMELIA PILOT IN PEARLS ISSUED BY
 LINK PRESS, MCLEAN, VIRGINIA

AS A MEMBER OF THE GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON WOMEN VETERANS I COMMEND
 GOVERNOR WILLIAM O'NEILL AND HIS ADVISORS ~~FOR~~ IN ESTABLISHING
 AN OFFICE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS. WITHIN THAT OFFICE, I URGE THAT A
 POSITION OF COORDINATOR OF WOMEN VETERANS BE INCLUDED*AN INDIVIDUAL
~~SEN~~ PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF WOMEN VETERANS AND THEIR
 BENEFITS IN ALL AREAS * ~~IN HOSPITAL STAYS OR WHATEVER~~

THANK YOU MR. CHAIRMAN.



VIETNAM VETERANS of AMERICA, INC.

Chapter 120

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Position paper on the Formation of a State Department of Veterans Affairs

It is the position of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 120, that the institution of a State Department of Veterans Affairs is necessary, and is long overdue. HB 5064

We fully support the Public Safety Committee of the General Assembly in its effort to make the Department a reality. In so doing, we are not alone. We are unaware of any veterans organization with membership within the State of Connecticut who may stand in opposition to the concept of a State Department of Veterans Affairs. Indeed, one may say with confidence that it has been the collective, and historical, voice of veterans throughout the State that has beckoned this issue to the fore.

The facts illuminate the need for the Department. The Public Safety Committee's recently accomplished feasibility study clearly states that "Connecticut ranks last in average Federal veteran expenditure at \$596 per veteran."

While some would argue that veterans of "affluent" Connecticut have chosen to forgo receipt of benefits which are rightfully theirs, the facts are that Connecticut's veterans are simply unaware of their entitlements under Veterans Law.

The point is made that the Veterans Administration should undertake meaningful programs to inform veterans of their rights and benefits. Yet, the VA is charged with the responsibility to adjudicate all claims brought before it, and one may not expect the VA to act as agent against itself. Were the VA to conduct programs to educate veterans, it would be inviting an increase in the number of prosecuted claims which it must, by law, adjudicate. Subsequently, it is in the best interest of the VA to refrain from activities which would serve to dispel ignorance within the Veterans community.

It is for this reason that we see the fundamental role of the State Department as being one of advocacy. And in the performance of this advocacy, the Department may recruit veteran participation in the various services and benefits programs which veterans have earned through their service and sacrifice.

While the specific needs and concerns of veterans may differ according to the chronology of their age and their war, the creation of a State Department of Veterans Affairs is not a parochial matter; all veterans will benefit.

We are confident that from the ranks of veterans will arise the talent, the energy, and the vision necessary to ensure that the Department fulfills its mission of advocacy.

Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 120, applauds the efforts of all who have worked for the existence of a State Department of Veterans Affairs.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN VETERANS

OUTREACH

- The VA continue an aggressive outreach program for all women veterans with a coordinated and integrated public information campaign utilizing the various media.
- The VA revise the cover of the current brochure on Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents to depict both service men and women and develop a separate pamphlet or flyer on women veterans with the contents prepared with the advice and assistance of the Advisory Committee.
- The VA contact the National Advertising Council to pursue public service announcements on women veterans.
- The VA continue issuing press releases on women veterans.
- A film or video tape be developed that would highlight women veterans' issues, to be made available to veterans and all other community groups. The film should be made with consultation and advice of the members of the Advisory Committee.
- The term "women veterans" be used instead of "female veterans" in the VA communications except when female is clearly preferable.
- The VA adopt the slogan "WOMEN ARE VETERANS TOO" for the use in their outreach campaign.
- The VA Advisory Committee members be used as a resource to the VA for outreach.

HEALTH CARE FACILITIES AND STAFFING

- Construction and renovation projects regarding privacy be given first priority and not relegated to subsequent 5-year plans.
- Privacy renovations costing less than \$50,000, where approval authority rests at district or medical center level, be assigned a priority that will guarantee funding.
- The Administrator establish a requirement for annual progress reports on construction and renovation for privacy.
- Budget considerations include adequate staffing of all medical facilities to fully integrate women into the health care system.
- Nurse practitioners certified in gynecological care be used to provide some gynecological service as well as health counseling where those services are not currently available.

WOMEN VETERANS COORDINATORS

- The VA establish a policy that each medical facility appoint a women veteran coordinator.
- The VA publish uniform guidelines for the women veteran coordinator position.
- The VA encourage the use of local women's advisory groups.

STATISTICS

- All major statistical reports compiled and published by the VA on veterans include separate break outs on women veterans.
- The VA review and revise their programs based on the newly available data on women veterans.
- All future studies of veterans include a subsample of women veterans analyzed separately.

AGENT ORANGE

- A separate study be conducted on the health of women who served in South Vietnam and were exposed to Agent Orange and other chemicals.
- All women Vietnam Veterans be contacted and urged to participate in the Agent Orange Registry, if they have not already done so.

PLANNING FOR DISEASES SPECIFICALLY OR MORE COMMONLY FOUND IN WOMEN

- The VA continue to emphasize that breast and pelvic examinations and pap smears will be routinely accomplished as a part of a women's physical examination.
- The VA assess the best methods for providing low radiation mammography to the woman veteran.
- The VA include treatment for gynecological care in the aging population (e.g., postmenopausal symptoms endometrial cancer, ovarian hormone replacement) in future planning.
- The VA provide counselling on the prevention of osteoporosis.
- The VA provide counselling to patients and staff on the hazards of smoking.
- The VA record outpatient visits by gender.
- The VA disseminate to medical facilities a list of supplies and equipment needed to care for women patients.
- The facility director establish procedures for timely local purchase in areas where the size of the female population precludes stocking pharmaceuticals for common gynecological disease.
- Enact legislation adding Systemic Lupus Erythematosus to Section 301

The Veterans Canteen Service (VSC)

- Each Veteran Canteen Service Chief be required to survey women patients to determine their needs and to evaluate whether they are being met.
- The VA review population standards for stocking items essential to women patients.
- The VA design a catalogue system for patients to order articles not readily available with delivery date of no more than two weeks.
- Each facility be required to stock toiletries expressly for minority women.
- The VA to continue to aggressively monitor the Canteen Service provided women veterans.

WAAC and WASP SERVICE

- The VA determine how many of the former WAAC and WASP veterans who qualify for entitlements have, in fact applied for benefits.
- The VA continue to publicize WAAC and WASP eligibility; specifically by seeking out and working with service organizations to notify their membership of these entitlements to benefits.

FLAME RETARDANT PATIENT CLOTHING

- THE VA reexamine its current policy concerning flame retardant clothing and explore the availability of alternative materials that would provide patient comfort and an acceptable level of protection.

MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

- The VA continue its special efforts to inform women veterans of their burial benefits, individually and through veterans organizations and continue to emphasize to funeral directors that a deceased woman may be a veteran with the same entitlements as a male veteran.

TOPICS FOR FUTURE INVESTIGATION

- Jobs and Training
- Research on Women's Diseases

"AMERICA'S BEST KEPT SECRET --- WOMEN VETERANS"

WOMEN VETERANS TASK FORCE

Report to the General Assembly
February 5, 1986

The Governor of the State of Connecticut, in conjunction with the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, created a Task Force on Women Veterans in September 1985. The Governor appointed Jill Mishkel as the Chair and Geraldine Roberts as the Vice-Chair, along with 22 members. A list of the Task Force members is attached.

The Women Veterans Task Force (WVTF) was formed in response to the perceived need for analysis of the problems facing Connecticut's 16,000 women veterans. The charges to the Task Force are in the Memorandum of Understanding attached to this report.

The Task Force meets once a month. Our efforts have concentrated on compiling background information on women veterans, following state and federal legislation concerning veterans and contacting veterans organizations. A preliminary report was submitted to the Governor and leaders of both Houses of the Legislature on November 11, 1985. Included here are statistics on the population of women veterans, broken down by Connecticut town and by wartime and peacetime eras.

This report to the General Assembly includes a brief history of women in the military, a discussion of problems faced by women veterans and a description of the Task Force's activities since November. The report concludes with recommendations for initiatives by the State of Connecticut for ensuring that our 16,000 women veterans receive the honors and benefits they deserve.

Women in the Military

Women have always been active in the American armed forces but without recognition. In 1901 Congress established the Nurse Corps of the Army and, in 1908, of the Navy, thus providing recognition for women in the military. However, women were denied equal rank, comparable pay and veteran status. It was not until 1943, with the establishment of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) that women were granted full military status and eligibility for veterans benefits.

After World War II, Congress passed legislation creating a permanent place

for women in the Reserves of the armed forces. Women could now make a career out of service in the military. However, women were denied promotions to senior officer grades, and many career-enhancing schools and jobs remained closed to them. Often the military used its authority to discharge women officers and enlisted personnel for "unspecified reasons." These reasons generally amounted to discharging women who were pregnant or who had minor children.

Also, the population of women in the armed forces was limited, by legislation, to 2% of the total population of each branch of the armed services. This ban was lifted in 1967 and, with the additional influence of the All-Volunteer Force, the number of women in the military increased from 45,000 in 1972 to 120,000 in 1976. By 1985 there were 200,000 women in the armed services, or nearly 10% of the total active forces.

Women as Veterans

Military women have had to cope with unequal treatment as veterans. For example, men returning from WW II were welcomed enthusiastically while returning women were looked on with suspicion. Rather than assuming patriotic motivation, people accused the women of being the equivalent of "military paid prostitutes," a term coined during the Vietnam Era. Also, agencies responsible for assisting veterans, including the Veterans Administration (VA), were unsympathetic to the needs of women veterans or unaware that they were entitled to the same benefits as male veterans.

Since WW II, the attitudes and inequalities women veterans face have not changed appreciably. All Vietnam veterans faced a difficult homecoming and readjustment but women Vietnam veterans faced additional problems. Derogatory attitudes about women in the military still exist. Also, there are still people who cannot conceive of women as veterans. One woman who walked into a Veterans Center was asked "where's the vet?" Women who served as nurses in Vietnam sometimes feel they have no right to feel traumatized since they did not serve in a combat capacity. However, the circumstances of the conflict meant that nurses were very close to combat zones, treating critically wounded men who, in past wars, would have died before reaching the army hospital. One veteran who served as a nurse, when asked what she did in Vietnam, replied "I watched men die."

Women veterans of all ages have found that health care services at the VA medical facilities are not always adequate for their needs. Comprehensive health care should include breast and pelvic examinations, pap smears and mammography, yet these accepted medical procedures are unavailable at many VA hospitals. Simple amenities such as private toilets and shower facilities are not provided, nor are cosmetics, undergarments, etc. stocked in many canteens.

The 1980 Census was the first time that women were questioned about their veteran status. The information obtained by the Census showed that the number of women veterans was far larger than estimated (1,150,000) and that the proportion of women veterans 60 years and older was significantly higher than male veterans (38% women veterans 60 years and older compared to 29% male

veterans 60 years and older).

Since 1980 the VA has collected much information on women veterans, all of which has shown that women veterans have applied for fewer benefits in the areas of health care, hospitalization and the GI Bill.

The Veterans Administration Advisory Committee on Women Veterans

In response to mounting concerns about the treatment of women veterans, the General Accounting Office studied the issue and published a report in 1982. The GAO found that even though women have equal rights as veterans to the benefits and services available through the VA, in practice women veterans are being shortchanged. The report states:

- * only one out of seven VA medical centers monitored physical examinations of women patients for completeness;
- * eight out of thirty medical centers and independent outpatient clinics did not have outpatient gynecological services available for non-service connected, nonemergency gynecological problems;
- * ten of the sixteen VA domiciliaries would not admit women; and
- * some VA psychiatric programs did not provide treatment of women.

In 1983 PL 98-160 mandated the formation of the VA Advisory Committee on Women Veterans.

In February 1984 the VA commissioned Louis Harris and Associates to conduct a systematic survey of the current needs, attitudes and experiences of women veterans. Results of the study of 3,003 women veterans were published in September 1985. Highlights of that survey are included in this report under "FACTS ABOUT WOMEN VETERANS."

One of the problems addressed by the VA Advisory Committee was the fact that many women veterans are not aware of their entitlement to benefits. Many who are aware are reluctant to initiate claims. Outreach and services for veterans reflect the traditional societal outlook that veterans are, by definition, male. Many women veterans have not used the VA medical care system because of a perception of being unwelcome in a male-oriented facility. Construction of private bathrooms for women is not expensive; in fact, the low cost is equated with low priority.

The fact that an increasing number of aging veterans are women will need to become a priority for health care providers. Treatment for osteoporosis and ovarian hormone replacement, for example, will need to be available for women veterans.

The VA Advisory Committee on Women Veterans has included in their report of

July 1984 recommendations to correct these and other problems of serving the woman veteran. A copy of the recommendations is attached to this report.

The Women Veterans Task Force

The WVTF of Connecticut has been conducting background research and compiling information in order to help the State of Connecticut ensure that each honored veteran receives the benefits to which s/he is entitled. Including the Louis Harris Survey (1985) mentioned above, the following publications were reviewed: Female Veteran Population, 1983; Aging Female Veteran, 1984; Veterans Administration Advisory Committee on Women Veterans, 1984; Female Veterans Usage of the Post-Korean Conflict GI Bill, 1985; Demographic and Socioeconomic Data on Female Veterans, 1985. The attached FACT SHEET contains important points extracted from these publications.

The WVTF has been in contact with the Veterans Affairs Offices of New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts. They have all appointed special coordinators to address specifically the needs and concerns of women veterans. The WVTF has written to the remaining 36 states to glean what services and activities are available to veterans, and particularly women veterans, in those states.

Tours of Connecticut's three veterans hospitals have been arranged. Members of the Task Force will visit the VA Medical Centers in West Haven and Newington and the Veterans Home and Hospital in Rocky Hill. The Task Force is interested to see how the VA Advisory Committee on Women Veterans recommendations have been implemented in Connecticut.

Recommendations of the Women Veterans Task Force

All the publications reviewed by the Task Force, from the Louis Harris Survey to the VA Advisory Committee's Report, indicate the need for an intense outreach campaign and strong advocacy for women veterans.

The establishment of a Veterans Affairs Office in Connecticut would be the first step in accomplishing the goal of serving veterans. A Coordinator for Women Veterans Issues within the Veterans Affairs Department would ensure that women veterans would find the advocate they need. Also, a massive outreach campaign conducted by the Veterans Affairs Office could reach the numerous women veterans in Connecticut who do not realize their eligibility for benefits. For example, an outreach campaign could reach women veterans who do not know they are eligible for a property tax exemption of at least \$1,000 per year. Women veterans, who are older and less wealthy than their male counterparts, could use veteran benefits rather than Medicaid/Medicare for health care coverage.

A Coordinator for Women Veterans Issues is imperative to right the wrongs and help change the attitudes women veterans have coped with throughout the history of women in the military. Women veterans have served their country; they should not have to fight for the benefits and recognition they deserve.

The Women Veterans Task Force encourages the Governor and the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut to take this opportunity to make Connecticut one of the leading states to support women veterans.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Mishkel

Jill Mishkel, Chairperson

Geraldine Roberts

Geraldine Roberts, Vice-Chairperson

/log

WOMEN VETERANS TASK FORCE

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