

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

PA 14-198

SB217

House	6959-6962	4
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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2014**

**VOL.57
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Those absent and not voting 6

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The bill, as amended, is passed.

Representative Aresimowicz.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that we immediately transmit to the Senate any items waiting further action.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Without objection, so ordered.

Representative Aresimowicz, I understand we have another Consent Calendar.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We are. We are about to list off the bills that will be included in our second Consent Calendar for the evening, sir.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Proceed, sir.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I move -- I'd to add the following to the Consent Calendar. Calendar 426, Calendar 308, Calendar 438, Calendar 488 --

SB281

SB19

SB182

SB330

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Whoa, whoa, whoa.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

I apologize, Mr. Speaker. The first number was
427.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

So 427, thank you, sir. Proceed.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Calendar 476, as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar
445, Calendar 514, Calendar 505, as amended by Senate
"A"; Calendar 455, Calendar 456, as amended by Senate
"A"; Calendar 322, Calendar 536, as amended by Senate
"A" and Senate "B"; Calendar 430, Calendar 520, as
amended by Senate "A" and Senate "B"; Calendar 538, as
amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 424, as amended by
Senate "A"; Calendar 439, as amended by Senate "A";
Calendar 482, as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 325,
as amended by Senate "A."

Calendar 526, as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar
509, as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 532, Calendar
502, as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 421, as
amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 431, as amended by
Senate "A"; and Calendar 539, as amended by Senate
"A."

- SB 194
- SB 402
- SB 324
- SB 45
- SB 221
- SB 257
- SB 201
- SB 389
- SB 418
- SB 438
- SB 427
- SB 260
- SB 208
- SB 424
- SB 241
- SB 14
- SB 106
- SB 322
- SB 410
- SB 217
- SB 477
- SB 429

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Is there objection to any of these items being placed on the Consent Calendar? If not, Representative Aresimowicz, would you like to move passage of the Consent Calendar?

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Mr. Speaker, I want to remove Calendar 539.

SB429

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Please remove Calendar 539, Mr. Clerk.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Mr. Speaker, I move passage of the bills on the second Consent Calendar of the day.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The question is on passage of the items on Consent Calendar Number 2.

Staff and guests please come to the well of the House. Members take your seats. The machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll.

The House of Representatives is voting by roll on the second Consent Calendar of the day, House Consent 2. Please report to the Chamber immediately.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members
voted?

If all the members have voted, the machine will
be locked.

The Clerk will take a tally.

And the Clerk will announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Consent Calendar Number 2.

Total Number Voting 147

Necessary for Passage 74

Those voting Yea 147

Those voting Nay 0

Those absent and not voting 4

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

The items on the Consent Calendar are passed.

(Speaker Sharkey in the Chair.)

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The House will please come back to order.

Will the Clerk please call Emergency Certified
Bill 5597.

THE CLERK:

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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
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SENATE

April 17, 2014

Will you remark? Will you remark? Will you remark?

Seeing none, Senator Gerratana.

SENATOR GERRATANA:

Madam President, if there's no objection, I would like to place this item on our Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, ma'am.

Madam Clerk.

THE CLERK:

Page 25, Senate Calendar 303, Senate Bill 217, and there are amendments.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Leone, good afternoon, sir.

SENATOR LEONE:

Good afternoon, Madam President.

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

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on acceptance and passage. Will you remark, sir?

SENATOR LEONE:

Thank you, Madam.

Colleagues, this bill is a very good bill for our veterans and our active service members. What it does is it requires local or regional boards of education to grant ten days of excused absence in any school year to any student whose parent or legal guardian is an active-duty member of the Uniformed Services and who has been called for or is on leave from and has

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immediately returned from deployment in a combat zone or combat-support posting. And it also allows the boards to grant additional excused absence for such visits.

So basically for our active men and woman who are serving, they sometimes have pressing needs that would necessitate their children needing to be excused, and currently this would be taken as a, as an absence that would be held against the student. So this would actually prevent that from happening.

And this has had a complete bipartisan support. It's been unanimously voted out of committee. And I want to thank all the committee members and my Ranking Member for helping us on this bill.

But with that, Madam President, the Clerk is in possession of LCO Amendment 3616. I would request to move the amendment and seek to summarize.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk -- Madam Clerk, will you please call the amendment.

THE CLERK:

Senate Amendment LCO 3616, "A."

THE CHAIR:

Three-six-one-A? Amendment; oh, Senate Amendment "A." Thank you, very much.

Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE:

Thank you, Madam President.

This is actually an amendment, technical in nature. It corrects and rewords some definitions to be in line with our state compact that we passed a few years ago, of which Connecticut is part of ten states so that as service men and women move from, between these states, they, their services are reciprocated. So we're just

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making sure that the definitions stay in line with that and -- and still stays within the purview of making sure that we can grant these excused absences.

Through you, Madam President, I would urge support of the amendment.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

All in favor of Senate Amendment "A," please vote Yea -- Aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed? Senate "A" passes.

I got to tell you, that's that Silver Tsunami coming.

SENATOR LEONE:

Thank you, Madam President, for that warning.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE:

So with that, Madam President, we believe this is a good bill for our active service members and I would urge support.

And I would move this to Consent.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Markley.

SENATOR MARKLEY:

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Madam President, through you, if I could just put one question to Senator Leone about this bill, which --

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR MARKLEY:

Thank you, very much, Madam President.

Let me say I certainly support the intent of the bill entirely and will support the bill regardless of the answer to the question. But I'm curious; do we -- is this something which boards of education require our permission to be able to grant or is this something that -- in other words, could they do this on their own without us passing this bill or do we have to pass this bill for them to be able to give this, these excused absences?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE:

Thank you, Madam President.

My understanding is we would have to pass this; otherwise, boards of education could hold this as an absence against the -- the student.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Markley.

SENATOR MARKLEY:

Thank you, very much, Madam President. Thank you, Senator Leone.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Leone, at this time.

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SENATOR LEONE:

Thank you. If there are no further questions, I would put this on Consent.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Frantz.

SENATOR FRANTZ:

Thank you, Madam President.

And what a, what a great bill. Thank you for ushering this through the process. I know it's going to pass unanimously here.

But I do have one question, maybe, possibly two questions, through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR FRANTZ:

Thank you.

Senator Leone, is -- is it normal for a service person to come back for a ten-day period once a year, twice a year, once every two years? What's the typical schedule, if there is such a thing?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE:

Through you, Madam President, there's no schedule, per se. That would be up to the Military Department, based on what the mission is. There could be active duty for as short as a few days or as long as a year, so I would, I would defer that question to the Military Department.

Through you, Madam President.

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THE CHAIR:

Senator Frantz.

SENATOR FRANTZ:

Thank you.

Through you, Madam President, in -- in your judgment, is that a sufficient amount of time for a child or -- or children to be with their parents who's back on leave?

THE CHAIR:

It's Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE:

Through you, Madam President, can -- can you rephrase that question? I just want to make sure I understand the question in terms of how long the student is away from the parent; correct?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Frantz.

SENATOR FRANTZ:

Yeah, sure. Through you, Madam President, in other words if -- if that parent is home for, you know, two weeks or three weeks -- I don't know what the -- the normal schedule is -- is ten days in your judgment sufficient for that child to be with that parent or children to be with their parent to catch up? Why is it ten instead of five, for instance?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Frantz -- Senator Leone.

SENATOR LEONE:

Through you, Madam President, that was the acceptable number granted to us from the Military Department. It

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could be more; it could be less. I would gather if it was more, it would become more of an issue, so we -- we proposed what was given to us as a proposal from the Military Department and that would be acceptable to the education boards.

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Frantz.

SENATOR FRANTZ:

Thank you.

And through you, Madam President, to Senator Leone, thank you for your hard work on this. And that sounds completely reasonable to -- to me, and I'm in favor of it 110 percent.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? If I -- if there are -- seeing no objection it be put on the Consent Calendar, it's so ordered.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, before calling for a -- a vote on the second Consent Calendar, first of all, Madam President, on Senate Agenda Number 1, previously adopted, under Matters Returned from Committee there is Substitute Senate Bill Number 106, would ask for suspension to take up that item for purposes of referring it to the Committee on Labor and Public Employees.

THE CHAIR:

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Page 8, Calendar 74, Senate Bill Number 95; also on page 8, Calendar 80, Senate Bill 188.

On Calendar page 9 -- I'm sorry -- on page, yeah, page 9, Calendar 110, Senate Bill 125; Calendar 112, Senate Bill 255; Calendar 113, Senate Bill Number 256; Calendar 122, Senate Bill 260.

On page 11, Calendar 163, Senate Bill 280; Calendar 177, Senate Bill 271.

On page 13, Calendar 207, Senate Bill Number 193.

On page 14, Calendar 225, Senate Bill Number 281.

On page 15, Calendar 244, Senate Bill 283.

Page 17, Calendar 255, Senate Bill 477.

On page 23, Calendar 288, Senate Bill 413; Calendar 290, Senate Bill 418.

And on page 25, Calendar 303, Senate Bill Number 217.

THE CHAIR:

I'm sorry. At this time, Mr. Clerk, will you call for a roll call vote, and the machine will be open on the second Consent Calendar.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate on the second Consent Calendar of the day. Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

If all members voted, all members voted, the machine will be closed.

Mr. Clerk, will you please call the tally.

THE CLERK:

On the second Consent Calendar for today.

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Total Number Voting	35
Those voting Yea	35
Those voting Nay	0
Absent, not voting	1

THE CHAIR:

The Consent Calendar passes.

Mr. Clerk -- oh, I'm sorry -- Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, if we might go back to the item that was removed from Consent and ask for a roll call vote on that item. That was Calendar page 8, Calendar 78, Senate Bill 186.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk, will you call for a roll call vote, and the machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Immediate roll call ordered in the Senate. An
immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

Have all members voted; all members voted? The machine will be closed.

Mr. Clerk, will you please call the tally.

THE CLERK:

Senate Bill Number 186.

Total Number Voting	33
Those voting Yea	23
Those voting Nay	10
Absent, not voting	3

**JOINT
STANDING
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HEARINGS**

**VETERANS'
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I think we can all concur that the whole motivation behind this dustup has been to diminish the administrative costs so that more money can go to our veterans. And so that of course is the motive for why we made the change, and if it goes back then the administrative costs remain the same.

Now we're looking at making it as competitive as possible so that our veterans can benefit from it.

BRIAN ANDERSON: We wholeheartedly support our veterans. Our union has a very strong veteran membership and we'd be happy to try to help with inefficiencies that can be worked out.

REP. HENNESSY: Okay. Thank you, Brian.

BRIAN ANDERSON: Thanks.

SENATOR LEONE: Thank you.

Next is Debbie Newton, followed by Ed Wenners.

Hi, Debbie.

DEBBIE NEWTON: Hi. Good afternoon, Senator Leone, Representative Hennessy, and members of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

SB 212 HB 5299
HB 5297 HB 5298
SB 217

Debbie Newton, Legislative Chair of the National Guard Association of Connecticut where I've served in that position for 11, 12, 13 years depending on who you talk to. And I've been a member of the Connecticut National Guard for 34 years.

And on that note, I'd like to go off my written testimony a little bit because some questions came up earlier.

Commissioner Schwartz mentioned that our veteran status bill that's on the Hill in DC. That is Senator Sander's bill, S.B. 1982. It's actually being heard on the floor in the Senate today. It's a very comprehensive veterans omnibus bill and the actual language for the veterans status does change so that members of the Guard and Reserve who have retired with 20 or more years of service but without the 90 days of active not-for-training duty can be considered, we can call ourselves veterans, which means we can render the hand solute, we can play when they play the Army songs and they ask for veterans in the audience to stand.

However, the bill language specifically does not allow for any additional benefits to be added to it and that's been the biggest holdup down in DC in passing that legislation. The House has passed it several times. The President has said he would sign it, but there was one senator that would not allow it to even be heard in the Senate in DC because he said it was going to open a door to additional benefits. So they specifically put that language in there in order to pass the bill. So we expect it to be passed this year.

There's also another standalone Senate Bill 629 and House Bill 679 that are both stuck in committee that are specific to that issue.

And having said that, you've heard most of what I was going to say already today so I just want to hit on a couple of things; 212 and 5299 are both bills that NGACTION is extremely happy to support and see come to fruition.

As you know, or some of you know, NGACTION is the

organization that originally brought this to the attention of the Veterans' Affairs Committee asking to have MOS skills looked at for possible state licensing and we've been very happy to see the progress of this and we look forward to working on it and seeing this continue and having a very positive outcome for our veterans and members.

We're also in support of 5297 and 5298. Anything that's going to put a few more dollars in our members' pockets we wholeheartedly support, as well as S.B. 217, which no one has brought up today, the excused absences from school for children of service members who are deploying or returning from deployment.

We brought this to you last year based on what Texas was doing. It did pass the House and Senate last year, but not the Senate. They didn't have enough time to get it there. And we're willing to work with the Department of Education in this state and anybody else so we can work out details and try to get this through because it will benefit the children, but it would also benefit schools so that they don't have a number of unexcused absences on their books.

And I thank you for your time and what you've been doing for veterans in this state for many years now. I am ready to answer any questions you may have.

SENATOR LEONE: Thank you, Debbie.

DEBBIE NEWTON: I'm available. I may not be ready.

SENATOR LEONE: That's okay. Thank you.

SB 212 HB 5299

Again, thank you for your service and your

expertise. It's quite helpful, especially in terms of getting the MOS Task Force off the ground. That is something that we've all been wanting to do for so long and I'm glad we are where we are, but we still need to move forward and get that done. So that will be helpful.

It is nice to hear what's going on in the Federal Government and that that legislation is being heard, as a matter of fact, today. So we are all quite interested in how that will actually transpire and it will be a net benefit that you will be able to call yourself a veteran. And I think we believe you're a veteran, but the federal definition doesn't allow that.

I would like them to go further, but if we have to go one step at a time then so be it because one step is better than no steps.

DEBBIE NEWTON: Absolutely.

SENATOR LEONE: So hopefully we want to provide our support to our federal delegation in that regard.

On your final note, on 217, you're correct. No one has brought that up, but I'm glad you have. This Committee is very supportive of that, but usually education issues sometimes take precedence in terms of the intent.

DEBBIE NEWTON: That's correct.

SENATOR LEONE: And I would just say that I hope, and I'm sure you are pleased to work with the education committee to make them understand the importance of this bill; what it is and what it is not, and help them overcome some of the hurdles that they may raise as a reason

maybe not to pass this.

I'm sure it will fly out of this committee, but I'm not so sure it will fly out of theirs or any others that it might go to. So I would say try and work as best you can there and we will provide the best support possible.

DEBBIE NEWTON: Okay, I can do that.

SENATOR LEONE: Representative Nicastro.

REP. NICASTRO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senate Bill 217, that should fly. I've spent 17 years as a truant officer in another life, okay? And whenever we had a child that was out of school that I was asked to check on it was because Dad was being shipped overseas or stuff like that, I never, ever, ever took that child by the collar and said you're going to school.

What people don't understand, the children of today see things that I never saw back in the 40's as a child. There was no such thing as television. I didn't listen to radio unless it was the Jack Benny program on a Sunday night.

But today the children have television. They have it on their cellphones. They have everything. And they see these young men and women who are being killed or injured overseas and they know Dad is going over there. It might be the last time they see their father. They deserve that right to spend it with their father. If the Education Department doesn't like it, you know what? That's the way it goes. That's the way it goes. We have a responsibility to try and help children get through these terrible times. I say that sincerely.

It's not the young man or the young woman that's just going overseas. It's the family that's being left behind, and the children that are involved with that. And too many times, way too many times those children are seeing things that we never saw as youngsters. We may have, you know, if somebody in our family was lost or something like that we'd find out about it, but today it's a whole different ballgame and I think that bill should pass and I think the Education Department should take a good strong look at that.

I'm not saying that the kid should take two weeks off to say goodbye to his father or his mother, but to allow that child that chance to see their dad off, or when the father comes home after being gone for a year.

I mean we send, like I said before a hundred times, if we send them overseas we should allow them some rights when they come home or when they're going. And I strongly support that. And I would hope that this Committee and I would hope that the Education Committee and the floor of the House of Senate would pass a bill like this.

Thank you.

DEBBIE NEWTON: And I think in my testimony it does give the school the overall authority because a parent or student would have to request this and it would have to be approved. So if you've got a student that's on the verge of failing four out of five courses, the school would be completely within their rights to say no or he can't afford it.

But I think we all also understand that

students are already doing this in an unexcused absence status. They're going on that mini vacation with Mom and Dad before the deployment.

REP. NICASTRO: But that's not --

DEBBIE NEWTON: But not only is it hurting -- potentially hurting the student, but it's also potentially hurting the school with a certain number of unexcused absences. It could hurt their funding. It could hurt their status as an accredited school, and all of that. So this is a way to protect everybody in that, but limit it as well.

REP. NICASTRO: But we also know that, for example, there are three types of absenteeism; truant, habitual truant, and not attended. A truant sets up a standard. A non-attendant student has a reason for missing; it's psychological nine times out of ten.

I mean we're talking about seeing our children watching their parents be shipped overseas. I mean what do you consider truancy? One absence or two absences isn't truancy. You could never take a child to court on that. The judge would laugh at you. Trust me, I know, okay? It's when they set up a pattern, and that's not a pattern that they get sent overseas every day.

I think it's a good bill and I think it deserves merit.

Thank you.

SENATOR LEONE: Thank you, Representative Nicastro, for telling it like it is. We appreciate that; and it is. That's the way it should be.

Thank you, Debbie.

Last and not least, Ed Wengers.

ED WENNERS: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be before the Committee.

SB 212
HB 5299

I'm speaking as a task force member appointed by Minority Leader Larry Cafero at the recommendation of Representative Christie Carpino.

This is all kind of new to me. Serving on the task force was quite an experience. And sitting here today I've learned a heck of a lot. The biggest thing I've learned is to sign up earlier on the speaking chart.

I'm a veteran, 24 years active duty with the regular army, including two years in Vietnam commanding combat engineers. And I'm the commander of the 200-member Rocky Hill VFW Post 2138. You all are welcome to stop by anytime. The beer is very cheap.

I think I know veterans and I think I know their strengths and weaknesses.

I'm also fortunate enough to be a licensed civil engineer. I've practiced in Connecticut for the last 26 years, and including founding and running my own company for 20 years with seven employees. So I understand bureaucracies and how to work within state regulations.

Just to mention, I did transfer my engineering license from the State of Virginia to the State of Connecticut. It's reciprocal. Once you take the national exam once, it's reciprocal among most of the states.



National Guard Association of Connecticut
360 Broad Street, Hartford, CT 06105-3795
www.ngact.org

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Line 21

February 25, 2014

**Testimony in Favor of SB 210, 212, 213, 216 and 217 and HB
5297 and 5299**

Good Afternoon Sen. Leone, Representative Hennessy and members of the Committee on Veterans Affairs. I am Debbi Newton, Legislative Chair of the National Guard Association of Connecticut (NGACT). I have served in that position for 11 years and have been a member of the Connecticut National Guard for 34 years.

I am here today to speak in favor of several bills currently before you.

SB 210, ACC Veterans Who Served in the National Guard, SB 216, ACC Veterans and SB 213, ACC The Veterans' Opportunities Pilot Program are all bills that seek to assist Veterans either by determining which benefits Connecticut National Guard Veterans do not receive in Connecticut and how that may be rectified, provide for a study to determine what hardships Connecticut's Veterans do face and assist our most vulnerable Veterans with finding jobs. Anything that can be done to alleviate issues that make our Veterans vulnerable and that will empower them to become whole again is something NGACT stands behind and fully supports. Homelessness and joblessness are two hardships that must, and can, be eliminated and their elimination will assist our Veterans in continuing to do what they have already proven they can do...give back to their communities, state and nation.

SB 212, ACC Implementation of the Recommendations of the Military Occupational Specialty Task Force and HB 5299, ACC the Findings of the Military Occupational Specialty Task Force are both bills NGACT is very happy to support. As you know, NGACT originally brought this concept to the Veterans' Affairs Committee and the bill authorizing credit for military training became reality three years ago. Last year we were happy to see the bill authorizing the Task Force pass. Now we all get to see recommendations of the Task Force acted upon. Allowing our Soldiers and Airmen to take training they have received in the military for certain occupations and transfer that training to possibly state certifications without having to put forth additional time, effort and dollars to receive the same training again. This allows our Soldiers and Airmen to enter the civilian workforce sooner and with less effort than before. We are proud to have been a part of this legislation and to see it come to such a positive place.

HB 5297, ACC A Deduction from the Income Tax for Amounts Received as Active Service Pay and HB 5298, ACC Active Service Pay for Members of the National Guard. NGACT fully supports any bill that will put a few extra dollars in our Soldiers' and Airmen's pockets, whether through payments for active service or income tax exemptions. We appreciate the acknowledgement of the committee and the Legislature

of the sacrifices made by Connecticut Guardsmen and stand ready to work with you in any way possible to make these initiatives reality.

Finally, **SB 217, ACC Excused Absences from School for Children of Service Members** is an idea we brought to you last year after learning the Texas Legislature was considering the same concept. Unfortunately, I do not know if it was passed in Texas or not. As we all know, having a parent deploy is very stressful for a child. Allowing them to spend some uninterrupted time with that parent before and/or after a deployment can help ease some of that stress which the children take into the classroom with them. We are not asking for a "get out of school free" card here, parents and students would be responsible for getting the assignments they would miss in advance, completing them while on the excused absence and turning them in upon their return to school in order to receive the excused absence. Providing a maximum of 10 days excused absence allows for children whose parents deploy for six months the ability to spend 5 days with them prior to the deployment and five days with them upon their return home. For children whose parents deploy for a full year, the 10 days per school year could be used at the beginning in one year and the end of the deployment during the next school year. Many parents pull their children out of school for mini vacations or reunions upon their return or prior to the deployment already, which hurts the students' attendance records, potentially holding them back a year, and could also hurt the school's standing if it is in a high military populated area. Parents would have to request the excused absence in advance and have it approved by the school. NGACT urges passage of this initiative and looks forward to working with the Committee and the Education Community to make it happen. We would be very happy to work with the State Board of Education on this as well.

NGACT fully understands the fiscal realities we all face, but we ask you to remember when casting your votes on these bills, that they directly affect only 1% of our population...those who chose to serve their Country and, in some cases their State, but will also have an indirect affect on their families. Some of these proposals do carry price tags, but have the potential to pay off in the long run. These bills are all effective ways of saying thank you to these men and women, helping them transition into civilian life as productive citizens and relieving some of the stresses they may face.

I thank you for your time and for what you do for the National Guardsmen, Veterans, other Military Members and Retirees of Connecticut and their families. This concludes my testimony and I am available for any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Debbi Newton
Legislative Chair NGACT
860-913-5010
legislativeguard@gmail.com

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HB 5298 HB 5299

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. S.B. No. 212 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TASK FORCE. (VA)

Support- This will make it much easier for returning veterans to find gainful employment.

4. S.B. No. 213 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE VETERANS' OPPORTUNITIES PILOT PROGRAM. (VA)

Support – We feel that this Bill is vital to meeting the needs of veterans and especially homeless veterans who often tell us that employment is a barrier to them finding permanent housing. Furthermore, the grants that are proposed in this bill would allow agencies like the South Park Inn and others who work specifically with veterans to continue their work and expand employment services to their clients.

5. S.B. No. 214 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A TAX CREDIT FOR DONATIONS OF VEHICLES TO VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS. (VA)

Support – Veterans organizations provide many services to the veteran population and this bill would encourage donations which are essential to these organizations.

6. S.B. No. 215 (RAISED) AN ACT PROVIDING VETERANS' PREFERENCES IN THE RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND HOUSING AUTHORITY PROJECTS. (VA)

Support – We are in support of this bill as affordable housing is another barrier for homeless veterans to find permanent housing.

7. S.B. No. 216 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING VETERANS. (VA)

Support – We feel that a thorough study of the needs of veterans across the state will provide a better understanding of how state and non-profit agencies can work together to ameliorate the dissemination of services.

8. S.B. No. 217 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING EXCUSED ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN OF SERVICE MEMBERS. (VA)

Support – We recognize that deployment can have a drastic impact on a service member's children and that the implementation of this bill may reduce the effects of said deployment as well as improve the readjustment period following deployment.



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Connecticut Veterans' Affairs Committee
February 25, 2014 Public Hearing

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

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

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

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

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

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



Connecticut Veterans
Chamber of Commerce

SB 215 - AAC VETERANS' PREFERENCES IN THE RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND HOUSING AUTHORITY PROJECTS.

Lack of housing serves as a barrier for successful transition from military to civilian life. Providing more benefits will work to reduce the unemployed and homeless veteran population in Connecticut.

SB 216 - AAC VETERANS

The cultural divide between military and civilian populations continue to grow. This study will bring hardships among veterans to the forefront so that adequate and effective solutions can be implemented

Active Duty/National Guard support and benefits

SB 210 - AAC VETERANS WHO SERVED IN THE NATIONAL GUARD.

Service members regardless of branch deserve equal benefits for their service and sacrifice to our nation.

SB 217 - An Act Concerning EXCUSED ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN OF SERVICE MEMBERS

Deployment can be especially challenging for children. Providing excused time for children to spend time with their parent during the deployment cycle is a valuable benefit that continues to support our military children.

HB 5297 - AAC A DEDUCTION FROM THE INCOME TAX FOR AMOUNTS RECEIVED AS ACTIVE SERVICE PAY.

This tax deduction provides additional support to offset the sacrifice and burden of deployment and activation.

HB 5298 - AAC ACTIVE SERVICE PAY FOR MEMBERS OF THE CONNECTICUT NATIONAL GUARD.

This pay increase provides additional support to offset the sacrifice and burden of deployment.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Veterans' Affairs Committee
Testimony of Commissioner Stefan Pryor
February 25, 2014

Thank you Senator Leone, Representative Hennessy, Senator Welch, Representative Yaccarino, and members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee for the opportunity to comment on SB 217, AAC Excused Absences from School for Children of Service Members.

We think it is important that this committee is aware of the work the State Department of Education is doing to address the issue of excused and unexcused absences in a variety of situations.

As required by statute, the State Board of Education adopted definitions of excused and unexcused absences. In addition to those definitions, the Department provided official guidance to districts around this issue on May 15, 2013. Information specific to military deployments is included in this document. You will note that on Page 7 of this guidance, a military deployment is specifically listed as an example of an emergency. We certainly believe that such military service merits this recognition. This document also provides best practices and supports for districts and parents around absences. It is available electronically for your review (http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/publications/guidelines_excused_and_unexcused_absences.pdf).

Thank you.