

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

PA 15-246

SB903

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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2015**

**VOL.58
PART 24
7985 – 8298**

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The bill as amended passes. [gavel] Will the
Clerk please call Calendar No. 679.

CLERK:

On Page 34, Calendar No 679, Favorable Report
of the Joint Standing Committee on veterans'
affairs. Senate Bill No. 903, AN ACT CONCERNING
VETERANS' AFFAIRS.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Madam Speaker, I move for acceptance of the
Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of
the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

The question before the question is on
acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable
Report and passage of the bill. Representative
Hennessy. You have the floor, sir.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. So this was amended
in the Senate striking aspects that had a fiscal
note and right now what this - Madam Clerk, I
believe the - Madam Speaker, I believe the Clerk is
in possession the LCO No. 8591. I ask that he call

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it and I that I be given leave of the Chamber to summarize.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Will the Clerk please call LCO No. 8591, which will be designated Senate Amendment "A."

CLERK:

LCO No. 8591, designated Senate Amendment "A,"
and offered by Senator Flexer.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

The Representative seeks leave of the Chamber to summarize the amendment. Is there any objection to summarization? Is there any objection? Representative Hennessy. You may proceed, sir.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. What this amendment does is basically asks the judicial branch collect data on the number of members of the armed forces veterans and non-veterans who are granted admission or denied entry into the Pretrial Program for Accelerated Rehabilitation.

So we need to know how many veterans are into it, how many are being denied, and with this information we'll be able to go forward. I move adoption.

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DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

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

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you, madam. Thank you, Madam Chair, and good evening. A question or two, through you, to the proponent of the amendment, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Please prepare your questions. And one moment before you start. [gavel] Please proceed, sir.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you, Madam Chair - Madam Speaker, rather. To the good Chairman of Veterans' Affairs Committee, could you explain the diversionary program? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

I'm sorry, Madam Speaker. I didn't hear the question.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Representative Yaccarino. Would you please repeat your question?

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REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you very much. Sorry about that. Through you, Madam Speaker. Could the good Charitable of Veterans' Affairs Committee explain the purpose of this diversionary program through the judicial branch of the State of Connecticut. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. The purpose of this is for the Veterans' Committee to ascertain the amount of people that are applying for diversionary programs to hopefully get veterans out of serving prison time and to find out if there are those that are being denied it.

And so we'll be able to find out, you know, what's going on with the diversionary program to hopefully provide ways for veterans to seek rehabilitation instead of incarceration. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

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Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you for that answer to the good Chair. When a veteran participates in the diversionary program, through you, Madam Speaker, are there different levels, or for instance. If he or she were arrested, either on drugs or certain felonies, or if they're in a home, how do they get into this program? How do they find out about it? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

We;; there's different levels. There could be mental health, or drug addiction, or alcohol situations. So there's an assessment that's done in which the veterans may be eligible for different programs. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you again for that answer. Are there counselors - will they follow this - I know I just watch a program a few weeks ago, similar programs throughout the country. Will there be a counselor

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assigned to this veteran to follow their progress?

Either to work in the civilian life, to find a home, to find housing? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. I really don't have the answer to that. There's a very good program that's going on in New London and we're seeking to hopefully move this into the entire state. But I know after session I plan on visiting that court to see how veterans are being treated. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you again for that answer. It makes sense and it's very important. I just want to ask these questions so people can understand what these programs are intended to do, to help our veterans, men, and women who come home from overseas with so many mental health issues, or other issues.

One last question, through you, Madam Speaker, I know this is a collection of data to research

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what are the best programs. Is there a fiscal note to this program? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. No.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87th):

Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the good Chair of Veterans' Affairs for answering those questions. He's done a very good job with this bill. I urge support, and I urge all of us to have awareness to our veterans. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Thank you, sir. Will you remark? Will you remark further on the amendment that is before us. If not, I will try your minds. All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Those Opposed, nay. The ayes have it. The amendment is adopted. [gavel] Will you remark

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further on the bill that is amended? Will you
remark further on the bill as amended? If not,
will staff and guests please come to the Well of
the House. Members take your seats. The machine
will be open.

CLERK:

[bell ringing] The House of Representatives is
voting by roll. Members to the Chamber. The House
of Representatives is voting by roll. Members to
the Chamber.

[pause]

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Have all the members voted? Have all the
members voted? Will the members please check the
board to make sure your vote has been cast. If all
the members have voted, then the machine will be
locked and the Clerk will take a tally.

The Clerk will announce the tally.

CLERK:

Senate Bill 903, as amended by Senate "A," and
in concurrence with the Senate

Total Number Voting 144

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Necessary for Passage	73
Those voting Yea	144
Those voting Nay	0
Absent and not voting	7

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

The bill as amended passes in concurrence with
the Senate. [gavel] Will the Clerk please call
Calendar No. 6683.

CLERK:

On Page 35, Calendar 6683, Favorable Report of
the Joint Standing Committee on finance, revenue
and bonding. Substitute Senate Bill No. 1137, AN
ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT COMPETITIVENESS
COUNCIL.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

Representative Rovero, You have the floor,
sir.

REP. ROVERO (51st):

Thank you, Madam Chairman. And after very
little sleep you still look lovely. I move the
acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable
Report and passage of the bill, in concurrence with
the Senate.

DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYERS:

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SENATE

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THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk, Page 2.

CLERK:

On Page 2, Calendar 105, Senate Bill No. 903, AN ACT CONCERNING VETERANS' AFFAIRS, Favorable Report of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Flexer.

SENATOR FLEXER:

Good afternoon, Madam President. Madam President, I move for acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on acceptance and passage. Will you remark, ma'am?

SENATOR FLEXER:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, the Clerk is in possession of an amendment, LCO 8591. I ask that the Clerk call the amendment and that I be granted leave to summarize.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

LCO No. 8591, Senate "A" offered by Senator Flexer.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Flexer.

SENATOR FLEXER:

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Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I move adoption of the amendment.

THE CHAIR:

The motion is on adoption. Will you remark, ma'am?

SENATOR FLEXER:

Yes, Madam President, the bill before us makes a few technical changes to the Veterans' Affairs statutes, making them gender neutral and the amendment has to do with the Judicial Branch collecting data on the number of veterans that are entering our criminal justice system. It is similar to a measure that was debated in this Chamber a few weeks ago, and I urge my colleagues to support this measure. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark on Senate "A?" Senator Martin.

SENATOR MARTIN:

Thank you, Madam President, I rise in support of the amendment as well as the bill. The bill is gender neutral changes to a certain VA statutes and the amendment requests the Judicial Branch to collect data on the number of Armed Forces veterans and on veterans as well, so I rise in support of this bill.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark further on Senate "A?" Will you remark further on Senate "A?" If not, I'll try your minds. All those in favor of Senate "A" please say aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed? Senate "A" is adopted. At this time, further on the bill? Senator Flexer.

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SENATOR FLEXER:

Madam President, if there's no objection, I move that
we place this item on our Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, ma'am.

[pause]

THE CHAIR:

Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, if we
can now ask the Clerk to call Calendar Page 25,
Calendar 584, House Bill 7020.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

On Page 25, Calendar 584 Substitute for House Bill
7020, AN ACT CONCERNING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS AND
INITIATIVES. It's amended by House Amendment Schedule
"A" and a Favorable Report of the Committee on
Education.

THE CHAIR:

Good afternoon, Senator Slossberg.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG:

Good afternoon, Madam President. I move acceptance of
the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of
the bill in concurrence with the House.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on acceptance and passage in concurrence.
Will you remark, ma'am?

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[pause]

THE CHAIR:

Have all the members voted? Please check the roll call board to see that your vote is properly recorded.

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

CLERK:

Senate Bill 1096

Total Number Voting	36
Necessary for Passage	19
Those voting Yea	35
Those voting Nay	1
Absent/not voting	0

THE CHAIR:

The bill, as amended, is passed. [gavel]

THE CHAIR: (The President in the Chair.)

Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF:

Thank you, Madam President, if we can now call for a vote on the Consent Calendar, Consent Calendar No. 1. If the Clerk can call those items and then we'll have a vote following.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

On Page 2, Calendar 105, Senate Bill 903, Page 5, Calendar 387, House Bill 6873, also on Page 5, Calendar 389, House Bill 6914 and on Page 6, Calendar 434, House Bill 5358. On Page 7, Calendar 440, House Bill 7018, Page 8, Calendar 465, House Bill 6375. Also on Page 8, Calendar 459, Senate Bill 1131, on

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Page 9, Calendar 466, House Bill 5771, and on Page 9, Calendar 467, House Bill 6451.

Also on Page 9, Calendar 468, House Bill 6747, and on Page 9 again, 472, House Bill 6678, on Page 12, Calendar 495, Senate Bill 1137, on Page 13, Calendar 504, House Bill 6959 and on Page 19, Calendar 538, House Bill 6695, Page 21, Calendar 559, House Bill 6974 and on Page 22, Calendar 569, House Bill 6894.

HB6694

Page 23, Calendar 570, House Bill 6871, Page 25, Calendar 584, House Bill 7020, on Page 26, Calendar 587, House Bill 5907, Page 28, Calendar 605, House Bill 6736, on Page 30, Calendar 612, House Bill 6752, Page 41, Calendar 148, Senate Bill 303.

On Page 42, Calendar 313, Senate Bill 575, and on Page 50, Calendar 520, House Bill 6729.

THE CHAIR:

At this time, Mr. Clerk, will you call for a roll call vote on the First Consent Calendar?

CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Immediate roll call on Consent Calendar No. 1 has been ordered in the Senate.

[pause]

THE CHAIR:

All members have voted? All members have voted? The machine will be closed. Mr. Clerk, will you call the tally.

CLERK:

On Consent Calendar No. 1

Total Number Voting	36
Necessary for Adoption	19
Those voting Yea	36
Those voting Nay	0
Absent/not voting	0

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THE CHAIR:

The Consent Calendar passes. [gavel] Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I move that all items requiring action by the House be immediately transmitted.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF:

Thank you, Madam President. Is there a Senate Agenda No. 2 on the Clerk's desk?

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

The Clerk is in possession of Senate Agenda No. 2 dated Tuesday, June 2, 2015.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF:

Thank you, Madam President, I move that all items on Senate Agenda No. 2 dated Tuesday, June 2, 2015 be acted upon as indicated and that the Agenda be incorporated by reference into the Senate Journal and Transcript and be immediately placed on the Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF:

**JOINT
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**VETERANS'
AFFAIRS**

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HB 6383

Tim Ackert. I represent the 8th District including Columbia, Coventry, Vernon, and Tolland. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Bill 6383, AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAL COSTS FOR CERTAIN VETERANS AMPUTEES.

I thought it would be better to actually have the individual that helped me with this legislation and brought it to my attention, so I will heed my time to Sargent 1st Class Micah Welintukonis, a Purple Heart veteran. And he'd like to touch on a -- a few bills, so I'd heed the floor to him, Mister Chairman.

REP. HENNESSY: Please proceed.

REP. ACKERT: Thank you.

MICAH WELINTUKONIS: Thank you, Representative Ackert. Thank you, Members of the Board and the Chair, and thank you, fellow veterans, for coming out today, and also to Paul (inaudible) over there, who I had the pleasure -- well, not the pleasure of serving with in Iraq, because 142 degrees is not pleasurable.

A VOICE: This is why I (inaudible).

SB 903
SB 905
SB 523
HB 6383
SB 520

MICAH WELINTUKONIS: And to Representative Alexander, I am an Army guy, but Semper Fi, sir. Raised Bill Number 905, I'd like to propose an amendment. The study of treatment of veterans with TBI and PTSD. Being blown up and hit by a suicide bomber and spending two weeks in a coma and still going through my medical recovery, of all -- I've been diagnosed with PTSD and TBI.

The proposed substitute change on the wording "post-traumatic stress disorder", remove "disorder". Former President George W. Bush

stated -- or started an initiative to take the "D" out of PTSD because our veterans, as my buddy at Walter Reed once said, who's also a medic and lost his right arm and right leg, said that "Our veterans are not broken beyond repair."

They made the word-change with bipolar, as well, if you'd notice that it is no longer "bipolar disorder". President Obama said this after signing just recently the Clay Hunt Suicide Act, "Every community, every American can reach out and do more with and for our veterans. This has to be a national mission, as it is a nation. We would not be satisfied, will not be satisfied, until every man and woman in uniform, every veteran, gets the help that they need to stay strong."

TBI and PTS, post-traumatic stress, symptoms often overlap and are misdiagnosed. And as Representative Alexander had pointed out, as he sits on a Administrative Separation Board, I'm also in the separation process and it isn't just one year or two years. I'm currently going on two and a half years of going through this whole process because they've done things wrong like get my wrong arm wrong or have my 12-inch scar labeled as "four inches long and superficial".

On Raised Bill Number 903, I am in full support, AN ACT CONCERNING VETERAN AFFAIRS. Too many times, soldiers get caught in what we call the "paperwork shuffle", as you guys get caught in all the paperwork that you guys have. It can be daunting and overwhelming. This bill would ease the family suffering financially in the event of a tragic loss.

SB903

It is my understanding such was the case last year with a Connecticut National Guardsman's

family. He was driving in New York and he was killed, but his wife was not set up financially. And I know you -- this bill would give the Commissioner of Veteran Affairs the ability to provide emergency financing to that family and I am in full support of that.

SB 523

Proposed Bill Number 523, I propose an amendment. It's waiving the interest and penalties for delinquent property taxes. This I originally proposed to Representative Ackert as the "Camilla Bill" for my wife. The proposed substitute, change and add "spouse" or "next of kin" in soldiers who are wounded and hospitalized stateside.

Every wounded soldier ends up at Walter Reed or in San Antonio. This happened to my wife while I was at Walter Reed and I -- as I stated, being shot and hit by a -- a suicide bomber, I was in critical care for a long time.

She had to leave my side at Walter Reed, pregnant, to come home so she wouldn't be delinquent on her taxes, an eight-hour drive. And I'm sure I'm pretty close to being out of time, and if the Chair would allow me to address Proposed Bill 6383, THE MEDICAL COST OF CERTAIN AMPUTEES?

HB 6383

REP. HENNESSY: Please proceed.

MICAH WELINTUKONIS: Mister Chair, concerning amputees, this involves a personal friend of mine who's an amputee. He lost part of his right leg in the battle of Fallujah and he is a Marine.

HB 6383

And I proposed this bill, once again, through Senator -- State Rep. Ackert. In regards to this issue, he lost his leg in part in Fallujah. He gets hospitalized roughly once a

CT Veterans Affairs Committee.

17 February 2015

Micah Welintukonis
1143 Grant Hill Rd
Coventry, CT
Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan Veteran
Purple Heart Recipient
Town Councilman - Coventry

p. 5, line 8

Raised Bill No. 905. Amendment:

Proposed substitute change on the wording. POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER. Remove "Disorder" Former President George W. Bush started an initiative earlier in the year to take the "D" out of PTSD because our Veterans are not broken beyond repair. They made the word change with Bipolar. President Obama said this after signing the Clay Hunt Suicide Act.....Every community, every American, can reach out and do more with and for our veterans,"..... "This has to be a national mission. As a nation, we should not be satisfied -- will not be satisfied -- until every man and woman in uniform, every veteran, gets the help that they need to stay strong and healthy."

Raised Bill No. 903. Full Support.

To many times soldiers get caught in paperwork shuffle, this bill would ease the families suffering financially in the event of a tragic loss, it is my understanding such was the case last year with a CT National Guardsman family.

Proposed Bill No. 523. Amendment:

Proposed substitute change and add Spouse, or Next of kin, and soldier who are wounded, and hospitalized stateside. This happened to my wife, while I was at Walter Reed, after I was shot, and hit by a suicide bomber, Being Critically Injured while serving in Afghanistan. She had to leave my side to go pay taxes, to avoid penalties.

I'm sure I'm out of time, and if the Chair would allow me to address Proposed Bill No. 6383 Concerning Amputees. It involves a personal friend who's an amputee, and I proposed this bill through my state Rep.....

In Regards to this issue. A friend of mine, lost part of his right leg in Fallujah. He is hospitalized at least once a year because the Federal VA only provides him with 2 specialized socks a year. The issue is that due to wear and tear, and quality of life, ie being able to walk. The "socks" wear through. As the wearing increases it rubs against the veterans skin, causing skin breakdown, sores, infection, and the hospitalization.