



National Guard Association of Connecticut
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Good morning Committee Co-Chairs, Senator Maroney and Representative Borer, and the distinguished members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I am Justin Simpson and I am the legislative liaison for the National Guard Association of Connecticut. The National Guard Association of Connecticut or NGA CT is a private, not-for-profit professional association that exists to improve the welfare and efficiency of the Connecticut National Guard, as well as to ensure the welfare of past and present members in recognition of their service and sacrifice to our state and nation. Thank you for your past support of the Military Department and Connecticut National Guard. In order for our National Guard to maintain its strength, readiness, and capabilities, we require the support of the state. The state benefits you have conferred to our Guardsmen and women and your support of the efficient operation of the Military Department are necessary for the continued success of the Guard. Our goal is to expand these benefits in the future in order to help ensure the Connecticut National Guard can maintain or increase its troop level and associated capabilities well into the future. NGA CT stands to support and advocate for any and all state legislation that will positively impact Connecticut National Guard readiness and the welfare of its members. We look forward to our future endeavors together with this committee.

However, today, I am testifying in support of the four Military Department bills on your agenda. I'll address each in turn. First, **Raised House Bill 5263, "An Act Establishing a Service Ribbon for Members of the Armed Forces Providing Honor Guard Detail."** This bill would create a service ribbon for members of the National Guard or organized militia who perform honor guard details at funerals of qualified veterans. This is an amazing group of men and women who performed funeral honors for approximately 3,500 veterans across the state. I personally have done over 80 funerals, and still consider it one of the greatest honors of my career. I have been lucky enough to work with some amazing individuals who are dedicated to honoring these deserving veterans. I think it is only just and fair that Raised House Bill 5263 receive a joint favorable report to honor the individuals performing funeral honors at The Adjutant General's discretion.

H.B. 5265, “An Act Concerning the Organization of the Connecticut State Guard,”

This bill will clarify how the agency utilizes the State Guard on State Active Duty for short periods of time at a low cost to the state. The purpose of the State Guard is to utilize members, mostly retired members of the Guard, with unique skills and knowledge to accomplish specific projects and missions for which they are suited. They are paid at their federal pay rate and are covered by workers’s compensation. This program is a great way to increase mission success and efficiency without the high cost of hiring a state employee or engaging in a lengthy contracting process. This bill merely codifies current agency practice as supported by the Attorney General.

S.B. 221, “An Act Concerning A Military Permit for the Sale of Alcoholic Liquor,”

This bill is intended to align state law with the federal regulations governing the Army and Air Force Exchange Service outlets on our National Guard bases which permit the sale of wine, liquor and beer. Currently, our state law only currently permits the sale of beer. In addition to clarifying the ambiguity in the law, this bill is also a first step in planning for future similar state exchange operations for which the Department would have greater control and be able provide better goods and services to our members.

S.B. 222, “An Act Establishing a Law Enforcement Support Office Program Account,”

The last bill I came to speak on is S.B. 222. This bill would establish a proper state fiscal account for the established federal program through which state law enforcement authorities may acquire, mostly on loan, surplus Department of Defense equipment. Currently, there is no account for the money dedicated to this program to be deposited or withdrawn from by the CTMD – the agency designated by the Governor to run the program. The agency uses the funds to pay for a State Guard member to run the program at no cost to the state. The goal of the bill is to simply establish a means to properly account for programmatic funds

Thank you for your time. I respectfully request this committee act favorably upon these bills in support of our past and present Connecticut National Guard members. I’m happy to answer any questions you may have.

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