

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-634

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL VETERANS SERVICES.

Vote Date: 3/7/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 2/7/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Veterans' & Military Affairs Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill amends the law to provide municipalities with additional guidance on veteran services and the roles and responsibilities of municipal veteran representatives.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Thomas J. Saadi, Commissioner, Department of Veterans' Affairs](#): Supports this bill

The Municipal Veterans Representative program was established in 2013 and, through the efforts of the DVA, has been updated several times, including the addition of annual training and various reporting requirements, and that any volunteer must either be a Veteran or have experience handling Veterans issues. The Department continues to provide the required annual training, training materials and sends an annual notice to every municipality regarding the requirements of the law and to collect updated contact information from all municipal Veterans Representatives. These updates have been helpful however, our Veterans would benefit from the adoption of certain provisions proposed in this bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Senator John A. Kissel, 7th District, Chief Deputy Republican Leader, Connecticut General Assembly:

The concept for this bill originated from local officials in the town of Somers, which does an excellent job in providing services for our veterans. This bill aims to give municipalities additional guidance concerning the services veterans are required to be provided as well as how to provide those services. It will make municipalities aware of the availability of those responsible for providing such services, as well as their contact information. It will also provide municipalities with reports filed by those individuals as well as the training those individuals have received from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Overall, this bill aims to help towns follow the best practices the Town of Somers is exhibiting with regards to our veterans. I believe this bill's passage will help improve the quality of life for veterans across our state.

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST): Supports this bill

This bill will help ensure that municipalities have information regarding the scope of services available to assist veterans and their families. Recognizing the tremendous sacrifice that veterans have made in service to our country, COST supports efforts to ensure that veterans and their families receive the benefits and services available to them. Guidance regarding the array of benefits and services available would ensure that municipalities have the opportunity to share this information with veterans and their families. This includes information regarding education and training programs, housing programs, property tax exemptions, pension information, funeral and memorial services, home loan applications, mental health services, and dental benefits.

Diane Nadeau, Executive Director, Eastern CT Veterans Community Center: Supports this bill

We support this bill because it would give a clear definition of what a municipal representative is and what they are expected to do; the town must post the contact and provide a manner in which veterans can make contact with them; the Department of Veterans Affairs has a better understanding of what information and training they must provide to each representative and how they must provide it. The quality and scope of services should be equal in every town and every town should make it a priority to provide excellent service. Every representative should have access to the same information and should be given appropriate and accurate information in which to service our veterans.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None submitted

Reported by: Robert Mayne

Date: March 14, 2023