

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

March 17, 2005 Hearing Room C

8:30 A.M. Tapes 40 - 41

Corrected 10/17/05

MEMBERS PRESENT: **Rep. Donna Nelson, Chair**

Rep. Phil Barnhart, Vice-Chair

Rep. Debi Farr, Vice-Chair

Rep. Brian Boquist

Rep. Scott Bruun

Rep. Dave Hunt

Rep. Betty Komp

STAFF PRESENT: **Jim Stembridge, Committee Administrator**

Erin Seiler, Committee Assistant

MEASURES/ISSUES HEARD:

Tribes and Military/Veterans' Issues – Informational Meeting

HB 2681 – Public Hearing

HB 2687 – Public Hearing

HJM 6 – Public Hearing and Work Session

HB 2516 – Public Hearing

These minutes are in compliance with Senate and House Rules. Only text enclosed in quotation marks reports a speaker's exact words. For complete contents, please refer to the tapes.

TAPE/# Speaker Comments

TAPE 40, A

001 Chair Nelson Calls the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. Opens the informational meeting on Tribes and Military/Veterans' Issues.

TRIBES AND MILITARY/VETERANS' ISSUES – INFORMATIONAL MEETING

020 Colonel Mike Caldwell Deputy Director, Oregon Military Department (OMD). Announces that the first lift of the 2-162 Infantry Battalion has arrived in Fort Lewis and all seven hundred will be home by March 19, 2005.

060 Caldwell Briefs the committee on the demobilization process.

127 Justin Martin Legislative Representative, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (CTGR). Submits written testimony about Military and Veterans' Issues within CTGR (**EXHIBIT A**).

171 Wes "Buddy" West Veteran, CTGR. Testifies to his experience as a soldier during Vietnam and the brotherhood that he has amongst his tribe and within the larger Veterans' community.

251 Leo Stewart Vice-Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR). Submits and summarizes written testimony about Veterans' Issues within CTUIR (**EXHIBIT B**).

330 Stewart Speaks to the need to ensure that all veterans have access to medical, psychological, and substance abuse treatment, regardless of locality.

366 Stewart Addresses the contribution of the CTUIR in preventing the closure of the Walla Walla Veterans' Administration Medical Center.

TAPE 41, A

010 Stewart

Explains the issues identified by CTUIR members and the Veterans' Services Coordinator as the most in need of resolution (**EXHIBIT A, Page 2**).

- 101 Chair Nelson Addresses the importance of ensuring that all veterans' have access to medical, mental, and rehabilitative services.
- 114 Stewart Restates the importance and necessity of providing adequate healthcare services and facilities for veterans, in particular medical and mental healthcare parity.
- 143 Chair Nelson Closes the informational meeting on Tribes and Military/Veterans' Issues. Opens the public hearing on HB 2681.

HB 2681- PUBLIC HEARING

- 149 Jim Stembridge Committee Administrator. Explains HB 2681, which requires school districts to issue high school diploma upon request to veteran who served in United States Armed Forces during specified war or was present in specified operations if veteran attended high school before serving in Armed Forces, did not complete high school because of service in Armed Forces and was discharged or released under honorable conditions from the Armed Forces.
- 170 Mac MacDonald Representative, Veterans' Organizations. Testifies in support of HB 2681.
- 198 Chair Nelson Asks for clarification about deleting specific military operations from HB 2681.
- 210 MacDonald Explains that a change in the language regarding military operations would prevent having to have another bill in the future.
- 214 Chair Nelson Closes the public hearing on HB 2681. Opens the public hearing on HB 2687.

HB 2687 – PUBLIC HEARING

- 216 Jim Stembridge Committee Administrator. Explains HB 2687, which modifies the definition of "veteran" for certain purposes.

- 230 Mac Macdonald Representative, Veterans' Organizations. Addresses the need to change the language regarding military discharge because it too broad of a definition.
- 255 Rep. Hunt Asks for position on current definition of veteran, in particular on the 180 day stipulation.
- 257 MacDonald Believes that 180 day stipulation needs to be changed so one day in combat qualifies a soldier for veteran status.
- 278 Chair Nelson Clarifies the changes sought in the language regarding military discharge and definition of veteran.
- 300 Chair Nelson Closes the public hearing on HB 2687. Opens the public hearing on HJM 6.

HJM 6 – PUBLIC HEARING

- 303 Jim Stembridge Committee Administrator. Explains HJM 6, which urges Congress to amend specified section of Internal Revenue Code to allow military veterans who served after December 31, 1976, to participate in Oregon home loan program for veterans.
- 311 Paula Brown Deputy Director, Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA). Submits and summarizes written testimony in support of HJM 6 **(EXHIBIT C)**.
- 360 Rep. Hunt With regards to the variety of issues impacting Oregon veterans, in terms of priority, where does the Veterans' Home Loan Program rank.
- 369 Brown States that the Veterans' Home Loan Program is a "very high priority" because without the change to the Internal Revenue Code as written in HJM 2 the program will cease to exist.
- 379 Rep. Barnhart Asks if the issues being addressed in HJM 2 are about preserving the ability of veterans to obtain any type of home loan and the ability of others to obtain to a home loan at a reasonable cost.
- 386 Brown Addresses the negative impact on the ability of ODVA to provide below-market interest home loans to all veterans if the Internal Revenue Code is not amended.

TAPE 40, B

- 008 Rep. Komp Asks what distinguishes HJM 6 from SJM 6 (2003).
- 022 Brown Explains that HJM 6 has been updated to include the Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- 044 Brown Expresses concern with regards to the long-term consequences of losing the Veterans' Home Loan Program benefit.
- 063 Rep. Farr Asks what other states offer the Veterans' Home Loans Program.
- 065 Brown States that there five states who offer the Veterans' Home Loan Program: Oregon, Alaska, Texas, Wisconsin, and California.
- 092 Rep. Barnhart Verifies that it is appropriate for the Oregon Legislature to "nag" Congress to fulfill its duty to veterans.
- 103 Chair Nelson Closes the public hearing on HJM 6. Opens the work session on HJM 6

HJM 6 – WORK SESSION

- 115 Rep. Barnhart **MOTION: Moves HJM 6 be sent to the floor with a BE ADOPTED recommendation.**
- VOTE: 7-0-0**
- AYE: In a roll call vote, all members present vote Aye.**
- Chair Nelson **The motion CARRIES.**
- Rep. BARNHART will lead discussion on the floor.**
- 125 Chair Nelson Closes the work session on HJM 6. Opens the public hearing on HB 2516.

HB 2516 – PUBLIC HEARING

- 128 Jim Stembridge

Committee Administrator. Explains HB 2516, which eliminates requirement that Oregon Veterans' Home collect ten thousand signatures in order to qualify for instruction listing for charitable check-off contributions on personal income tax forms.

- 149 Walter Crews Legislative Representative, Non Commissioned Officers Association. Submits and summarizes written testimony in support of HB 2516 **(EXHIBIT D)**.
- 182 Rep. Hunt Asks if all entities that qualify for the charitable check-off program are required to obtain 10,000 signatures.
- 197 Mac MacDonald Representative, Veterans' Organizations. Clarifies that there are three entities that are statutorily exempt from obtaining the 10,000, but all other entities are required to have 10,000 signatures.
- 223 Paula Brown Deputy Director, Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA). Submits and summarizes written testimony in support of HB 2516 **(EXHIBIT E)**.
- 298 Chair Nelson Explains how there are additional bills relating to the charitable check-off program to be heard before any further action is taken on HB 2516.

The following written testimony is submitted for the record without public testimony:

- William Olson Advocacy Chair, Brain Injury Association of Oregon. Submits Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center report **(EXHIBIT F)**.
- 315 Chair Nelson Closes the public hearing on HB 2516. Adjourns the meeting at 9:51 a.m.

EXHIBIT SUMMARY

- A. Tribes and Military/Veterans' Issues, written testimony, Justin Martin, 1 p
- B. Tribes and Military/Veterans' Issues, written testimony, Leo Stewart, 3 pp
- C. HJM 6, written testimony, Paula Brown, 2 pp
- D. HB 2516, written testimony, Walter Crews, 3 pp

E. HB 2516, written testimony, Paula Brown, 2 pp

The following written testimony is submitted for the record without public testimony:

F. Veterans' Issues, Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center Report, William Olson, 2 pp