

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

March 24, 2005 Hearing Room C

8:30 A.M. Tapes 45 - 47

(Corrected 4/26/2005)

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rep. Donna Nelson, Chair

Rep. Debi Farr, Vice-Chair

Rep. Scott Bruun

Rep. Dave Hunt

Rep. Betty Komp

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Rep. Phil Barnhart, Vice-Chair

Rep. Brian Boquist

STAFF PRESENT: Jim Stembridge, Committee Administrator

Erin Seiler, Committee Assistant

MEASURES/ISSUES HEARD:

HB 2850 – Public Hearing

HB 2437 – Public Hearing

HB 2820 – Public Hearing

HB 2862 – Public Hearing

HB 3053 – 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
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TAPE 45, A

002	Chair Nelson	Opens the meeting at 8:38 a.m.
031	Chair Nelson	Submits and summarizes draft of Legislative Budget for the Committee on Veterans' Affairs (EXHIBIT A).
095	Chair Nelson	Opens the public hearing on HB 2850.

HB 2850 – PUBLIC HEARING

097	Jim Stembridge	Committee Administrator. Explains HB 2850, which permits school district to issue high school diploma to member of Armed Forces who served in Vietnam if member meets certain requirements.
101	Richard Crow	Korean War Veteran, Toledo, Oregon. Testifies in support of HB 2850. Speaks to receiving his high school diploma in 2004, more than fifty-seven years after leaving high school to fight in the Korean War.
190	Mike Ryan	Korean War Veteran, Lebanon, Oregon. Testifies in support of HB 2850. Speaks to receiving his high school diploma, more than sixty-two years after leaving high school to fight in the Korean War.
379	Mac MacDonald	Representative, Veterans' Organizations. Testifies in support of HB 2850. Asks that line 21 of HB 2850 be changed from "and January 27, 1973" to "and May 7, 1975."
404	Chair Nelson	Closes the public hearing on HB 2850. Opens the public hearing on HB 2437.

HB 2437 – PUBLIC HEARING

TAPE 46, A

001	Jim Stembridge	Committee Administrator. Explains HB 2437, which removes certain limitations on eligibility for educational aid for veterans. Submits and summarizes -1 amendments (EXHIBIT B), -2 amendments (EXHIBIT C), and -3 amendments (EXHIBIT D).
038	Val Conley	Veterans' Services Division Administrator, Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA). Submits and summarizes written testimony in support of HB 2437 (EXHIBIT E).
070	Conley	Submits brochure about Oregon Educational Aid for Veterans (EXHIBIT F).
084	Colonial Mike Caldwell	Deputy Director, Oregon Military Department (OMD). Testifies in support of HB 2437.
091	Chair Nelson	Closes the public hearing on HB 2437. Opens the public hearing on HB 2820.

HB 2820 – PUBLIC HEARING

093	Jim Stembridge	Committee Administrator. Explains HB 2820, which directs public post-secondary institutions to grant veterans and surviving family member's tuition waivers.
110	Cam Preus-Braly	Commissioner of Community College and Workforce Development, Oregon State Board of Education. Submits and summarizes written testimony in opposition to HB 2820 (EXHIBIT G).
140	Rep. Hunt	Asks if fiscal estimate is based only on current number of veterans enrolled in a university or college in Oregon and does not consider those soldiers currently in Iraq or Afghanistan.
147	Preus-Braly	Confirms that the fiscal estimate of \$21million dollars per year is a conservative estimate based only on current veteran enrollment.
149	Rep. Farr	Asks how HB 2820 could be amended to make it more fiscally feasible.
153	Preus-Braly	Suggests limiting tuition waivers to those soldiers returning from Afghanistan and Iraq and for the waivers to be part of a cascading of awards plan, serving to fill the final tuition payment gap.

176	Preus-Braly	States the need to recognize the effects of extending the tuition waivers beyond those veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan, in particular the large economic impact.
203	Rep. Farr	Confirms that if HB 2820 were amended making the tuition waivers the final stop gap, it would have support from the commissioner.
212	Julie Suchanek	Government Relations Specialist, Oregon Community College Association (OCCA). Submits and summarizes written testimony in opposition to HB 2820 (EXHIBIT H) .
236	Suchanek	Addresses the two primary concerns OCCA has with HB 2820, the fiscal impact and loss of revenue to community colleges and the ability of local community college boards to set tuition and tuition policy.
274	Suchanek	Explains the educational programs and services that OCCA and community colleges in Oregon provide to veterans.
298	Lisa Zavala	Senior Associate Director, Oregon University Systems (OUS). Introduces David McDonald and the programs that OUS offers for veterans.
304	David McDonald	Director of Enrollment and Student Services, OUS. Submits and summarize written testimony in opposition to HB 2820 (EXHIBIT I) .
337	McDonald	Submits and summarizes issue brief about the Voyager Tuition Assistance Program (VTAP) (EXHIBIT J) .
374	McDonald	Addresses OUS concerns about the fiscal impact of HB 2820. Explains that the mandate to waive tuition in HB 2820 could result in a loss of \$10 million dollars per year in revenue to OUS institutions, adding that this estimate does not include surviving family members because it is not well-defined in the bill.
406	Rep. Hunt	Asks if the VTAP is already in place.

TAPE 45, B

001	McDonald	States that VTAP has been approved and will be effective in Fall 2005.
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002	Rep. Hunt	Verifies that OUS will be able administer the VTAP within existing OUS resources.
006	Rep. Farr	Clarifies that HB 2820 states specifically that Guard and Reservists must have been called to active duty and stationed in an area of combat to receive tuition waivers.
013	Chair Nelson	Asks for clarification about whether the VTAP includes all soldiers who have been deployed.
018	McDonald	Explains that the VTAP was designed to specifically target National Guard and Reservists who have been deployed.
023	Rep. Farr	Asks for statistics on soldiers currently attending college, in particular those who have been on active duty, but were not in an area of combat.
029	Chair Nelson	Clarifies that testimony is on behalf of all institutions in the OUS system.
033	McDonald	Details the benefits and services that are available to veterans and military officers on Oregon college campus.
049	Chair Nelson	Asks how much of the tuition costs are covered by military benefits.
052	McDonald	States that the maximum tuition assistance benefits that all the branches provide is \$4,500 per year and tuition costs on OUS campuses range from \$4,300 to \$5,500.
066	McDonald	Explains OUS residency requirements.
072	Chair Nelson	Asks what constitutes a full-time student.
082	McDonald	States that twelve hours is a full-time student and the reason the VTAP covers only the full-time student is the tuition benefits are sufficient to cover all the tuition costs of a part-time student.
092	Mac MacDonald	Representative, Veterans' Organizations. States that the VTAP does not cover regular members of the active Armed Forces, therefore, it is discriminatory. Asks that HB 2820, lines 17 and 18 be changed "to discharged under honorable conditions."

111	Craig Campbell	Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor.
118	Chair Nelson	Comments that it was her understanding Governor Kulongoski had directed that all veterans would be able to go to an OUS institution tuition-free and was unaware of full-time student and residency requirements.
120	Campbell	Explains that Governor Kulongoski's National Guard Appreciation Package was created with information from OUS and OCCA about how to best utilize the limited funds. States willingness to work with committee on HB 2820 provided it is done within "our limited means."
138	Chair Nelson	Asks if Governor would work with committee on defining who would qualify for the benefits.
141	Campbell	In reference to definition of residency and being from Oregon, then the Governor would be willing to work with the committee "to take care of our folks."
144	Rep. Hunt	Asks if the focus of the Governors' package and top priority, in terms of dollars, would be on those returning from recent service, whether it is combat or deployed, as opposed to all veterans.
153	Campbell	Confirms that, yes that was the initial intent because with only \$700,000 dollars in the budget, attention needed to be focused very narrowly.
164	Chair Nelson	Closes the public hearing on HB 2820. Opens the public hearing on HB 2862.

HB 2862 – PUBLIC HEARING

175	Jim Stembridge	Committee Administrator. Explains HB 2862, which directs post-secondary institutions to award credit for education and training obtained while serving in Armed Forces of United States.
178	Colonial Mike Caldwell	Deputy Director, Oregon Military Department (OMD). Testifies in support of HB 2862, stating that Oregon universities and community colleges already take certificates of completion of military training and converts them to college credit.

207	Mac MacDonald	Representative, Veterans' Organizations. States support for HB 2862.
222	David McDonald	Director of Enrollment and Student Services, Oregon University System (OUS). Explains that all seven Oregon colleges are already engaged in this practice and all OUS institutions use the same guidelines for assessing and awarding credits.
241	Chair Nelson	Asks if there is a statute regarding this provisioning.
245	McDonald	States that there is no statute, but an Oregon Administrative Rule could be developed internally to ensure that the practice continues.
250	Julie Suchanek	Government Relations Specialist, Oregon Community College Association (OCCA). States that Oregon Community Colleges are also already engaged in this practice, but that OCCA is concerned that HB 2862 mandate that credit be granted, which would interfere with accreditation process.
279	Rep. Bruun	Asks how the American Council of Education classifies credits.
283	McDonald	Responds that classifications are dependent upon the activity that soldier wants credit for, the type of service completed, and duties of officers.
290	Chair Nelson	Asks if there are a maximum number credits that can be awarded.
292	McDonald	Explains that the maximum given is less important then the maximum number used because the graduation requirements are what are looked at when completing their degree, not the mere number of credits.
306	Chair Nelson	Closes the public hearing on HB 2862. Opens the public hearing on HB 3053.

HB 3053 – PUBLIC HEARING

310	Jim Stembridge	Committee Administrator. Explains HB 3053, which establishes Oregon Troops to Teachers program within Oregon Student Assistance Commission.
323	Margie Lowe	Interim Director, Oregon Students Assistance Commission (OSAC). Provides background on how OSAC administers its various programs

and how the program created by HB 3053 would be administered.

- 341 Lowe Explains two programs, rural health services and nursing services, which are similar loan-forgiveness programs currently being administered by OSAC.
- 381 Chair Nelson Asks about financial resources for the rural health services and nursing services programs.
- 384 Lowe States that each program receives a half-million dollars from the General Fund.
- 403 Lowe Speaks to concern about fiscal impact and that HB 3053 currently does not have any appropriation and without an appropriation OSAC would not be able to administer the program.

TAPE 46, B

- 020 Lowe Addresses how HB 3053 requires the state to pay for educational costs prospectively and the need to establish parameters that would allow for changing the educational grant to an educational loan if the individual decides to end their participation in the program.
- 034 Rep. Betty Komp House District 22. Submits and summarizes written testimony in support of HB 3053 **(EXHIBIT K)**.
- 082 Rep. Farr Asks how high poverty area is defined.
- 086 Rep. Komp Answers that the State Department of Education has criteria to define high poverty area.
- 100 Rep. Bruun Expresses appreciation to Rep. Komp for bringing forth HB 3053.
- 105 Rep. Komp States that this is a federal program and there are matching funds that are attached to it, therefore Oregon would not be responsible for all the cost.
- 128 Karyn Chambers National Troop to Teachers Program State Director, Oregon Department of Education. Submits and summarizes written testimony in support of HB 3053 **(EXHIBIT L)**.

167	Chambers	Identifies the differences between the federal Troops to Teachers Program and the one established by HB 3053.
207	Chambers	Explains the different levels of assistance provided to participants and how to maximize the benefits to veterans.
246	Mac MacDonald	Representative, Veterans' Organizations. States that in HB 3053, lines 14 and 15 should read "released from activity duty under honorable conditions" and "September 11, 2001" should be deleted on line 20.
274	Chair Nelson	Closes the public hearing on HB 3053.

TAPE 47, A

The following informational material was submitted without public testimony:

	Jim Stembridge	Committee Administrator. Submits Veteran Population Data charts on behalf of Val Conley (EXHIBIT M).
110	Chair Nelson	Adjourns the meeting at 10:38 a.m.

EXHIBIT SUMMARY

- A. Veterans' Issues, Veterans' Affairs Committee Budget Draft, Donna Nelson, 1 p
- B. HB 2437, -1 amendments, staff, 2 pp
- C. HB 2437, -2 amendments, staff 1 p
- D. HB 2437, -3 amendments, staff 2 pp
- E. HB 2437, written testimony, Val Conley, 3 pp
- F. HB 2437, Oregon Educational Aid for Veterans Brochure, Val Conley, 2 pp
- G. HB 2820, written testimony, Cam Preus-Braly, 1 p
- H. HB 2820, written testimony, Julie Suchanek, 1 p
- I. HB 2820, written testimony, David McDonald, 2 pp
- J. HB 2820, Voyager Tuition Assistance Program Issue Brief, David McDonald, 1 p
- K. HB 3053, written testimony, Betty Komp, 2 pp
- L. HB 3053, written testimony, Karyn Chambers, 1 p

The following informational material was submitted with public testimony:

M. HB 2860, Veteran Population Data Charts from Val Conley, staff, 5 pp