

Testimony by Martin Dempsey, 31 January 2013

Kansas House State Committee on Veterans, Military and Homeland Security HB 2077

Mister Chair and committee, thank you for this opportunity to express Department of Defense (DoD) support for the veterans credit House Bill 2077. My name is Martin Dempsey, Department of Defense Regional Liaison for Military Families for the Midwest, working for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Family & Community Policy. It is a pleasure to be here issue today. First off, we thank you for considering HB 2077 so quickly.

Separating service members leave the military with documented training and experience that can prepare them for civilian employment; however, this documentation is not always used by state entities to qualify them for licenses required for their occupation or to provide them academic credit. Reported unemployment rates of separating service members that are higher than national averages have brought attention to supporting issues such as expedited licensure and increased academic credit recognition to alleviate this problem.

As of September 2012, 736,000 veterans were unemployed and the jobless rate for post-9/11 veterans was 9.9 percent, with young male veterans (ages 18 to 24) experiencing an unemployment rate of 18.1 percent. The Department of Defense began supporting efforts in the states to ask states to give separating Service members credit, so that they may not be held back from finding employment or finishing a degree.

We are asking legislative leaders to establish policies that ensure separating Service members do not have to repeat requirements completed during their military career to obtain an occupational license.

In 2011, four states enacted new laws to help grant our veterans credit towards licensing and/or academic credit. So far for the 2012 session, there are 27 bills in 15 more states resembling the one before you today that we ask you to support.

It is important to us that you know we are not asking for direct licensure if it is not equivalent. In cases where the regulatory agency or board determines partial credit but it saves time and expense and helps get them there, even if not completely, that is what we seek. We only seek credit where credit is due.

A couple of other points to consider: You and I have *already* paid for this veteran's training within the DoD schools and with years of experience while serving our Nation with our *federal* tax dollars.

Also, the more credit given to a veteran towards licensing, the more school slots can be made available to civilians, especially in programs where may be waiting lists to get in.

The Department of Defense is also, *right now*, working feverishly with the US Department of Labor to link service transcripts of military occupations with civilian to private sector licensure requirements.

Veteran/Military/Homeland Security Comm

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Also, DoD is *right now working with the military services* to simplify the process on POIs to help with the evaluation of academic transcripts.

As you very well know, Kansas is home to thousands of veterans, and is a desired location for separating and retiring military members when choosing where to live after leaving the military.

At around 1,286 annually, we can expect that highly qualified ex-military people will continue to enjoy Kansas's quality of life, and many will continue to choose Kansas when transitioning into civilian careers.

Previous State's accepted this challenge in legislation with a 'zero' fiscal impact. Some have the demands of a big military state with over 6,000 veterans annually choosing to separate or retire from the military and live there.

We ask this committee and this legislature in Kansas to join the other four states currently recognizing military experience; and the 22 States now in session and considering this help for our veterans.

Thank you for taking up this issue so quickly, and for your consideration. I stand by for any questions you may have.

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