

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2072
A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO VETERANS

PRESENTATION TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
AND
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

BY

MAJOR GENERAL ROBERT G. F. LEE
ADJUTANT GENERAL
February 14, 2008

Chair Evans, Chair Green, and Members of the Committee:

I am Major General Robert G. F. Lee, State Adjutant General. I am testifying on House Bill 2072. This bill requires the Office of Veterans Services to help inform certain members of the Hawaii National Guard of federal services for depleted uranium (DU) exposure. Requires the OVS to implement outreach and requires the Adjutant General to certify annually that the Hawaii National Guard members are informed. This bill also prohibits the use of State funds.

We strongly oppose House Bill 2072.

The Office of Veterans Services continues to accomplish its mission by providing outstanding services to veterans. Veterans are individuals who have served in the active military and federalized members of the National Guard and Reserves. National Guard and Reserve members who served in Iraq and Afghanistan are eligible for VA medical care for injuries or illnesses related to that service for a period of 5 years. OVS must refer these individuals to VA for medical care. However, OVS provides support to these individuals by assisting them in the completion of the necessary processes to file a claim for injury or illness.

Outreach services to our members are currently provided by a Transitional Assistance Advisor. This position is provided by the National Guard Bureau.

Outreach information regarding depleted uranium could also be published periodically in the Veterans newsletter published by OVS.

Annual certification by the Adjutant General to the Legislature that member of the Hawaii National Guard have been informed of the possible health risks associated with exposure to DU is unnecessary for the following reasons.

In September 1997, the U. S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command published training support packages regarding soldier and leader awareness on the battlefield use of depleted uranium munitions. In turn, the Deputy Secretary of Defense directed all military service Chiefs to ensure that depleted uranium awareness training is incorporated into the general military training program. Soldiers are well aware of the risks regarding depleted uranium and given a very thorough physical examination prior to their release from active duty.

Since the Veterans Administration has the sole authority to provide medical care for our veterans with service related injuries and illnesses, coupled with the information provided above, we humbly ask that this measure be held.

Chair Evans, Chair Green thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Are there any questions?