

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2213
RELATING TO VETERANS

SENATE COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL
AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

JANUARY 28, 2008

BY

OFFICE OF VETERANS' SERVICES

Good afternoon Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Tsutsui and Members of the Committee:

I am Mark Moses, Director for the Office of Veterans' Services (OVS). We understand that the intent of Senate Bill 2213 is to include female veterans on the Advisory Board on Veterans Services, and to increase the term of board members to three years.

The Advisory Board on Veterans Services has been active since 1988 when the OVS was created. Since its beginning, the representation of a female member has always been a part of the Board's composition. The 2007 Legislature increased the total number of board members from seven to nine; and we now have four female veterans on the Advisory Board on Veterans Services.

The U.S. military is composed of individuals from every segment of the population. It represents the fabric of America and reaches out to members of every ethnic group, race, religion, skin color, and gender. The role of advisory board members is to represent the diversity that comprises our military.

Therefore, we attempt to make no distinction, such as "female veteran", or "male veteran"; we only recognize those who have honorably served, are **veterans**.

We are dedicated to advocate for **all** veterans and endeavor to ensure that each veteran is equitably treated, respected, and honored. Yet we do understand that there are certain issues that are gender specific, and that is why females have always been included in the Board's make-up. This has been, and will remain the policy of OVS.

To mandate the participation of one group over the participation of others is clearly unfair to all members of the military who serve this great nation.

We believe that establishing the number of females on the board raises concerns about quotas for other characteristics such as ethnicity, branch or component of military service, rank or grade attained, length of service or if retired, and many other distinctions.

Thank you for allowing me to testify, this concludes my testimony.