

# HB 632, HD1

**Measure Title:**

RELATING TO POLICY ADVISORY BOARD ON VETERANS' SERVICES

**Report Title:**

Policy Advisory Board on Veterans' Services

**Description:**

Requires the Governor, in making appointments, to ensure that members of the Policy Advisory Board on Veterans' Services represent all minority viewpoints, including issues of concern to women veterans. (HB632 HD1)

Aloha Honorable Senator Espero:

In strong support of HB632 HD1.

To honor the women who serve in the armed services it is only fitting to appoint male and women veterans to the State's Advisory Board and to require it in our state policy. As you know women need an advocate on the advisory board who can assess the needs of women veterans with respect to issues including, not limited to, compensation rehabilitation, outreach, health care, and other issues facing women veterans in the community.

I read the testimony by Office of Veterans Services quoting General Shinseki saying "veteran is a veteran is a veteran". Without a doubt this has been taken out of context. The federal government has "THE CENTER FOR WOMEN VETERANS" established by Congress in November 1994 to oversee programs for women veterans. Stated in their mission, among other things, is ...to ensure that VA programs are responsive to gender-specific needs of women veterans and women veterans receive benefits and services on par with male veterans.

I applaud General Shinseki implying women veterans will get no less than male veterans, but as you can see Congress created an entity to ensure oversight because they understood healthcare needs and military sexual trauma needs, for example, require gender-specific programs.

To add women veterans in state policy is respectful. To add women veterans acknowledges that women veterans have needs and concerns not experienced by the male veteran population. To add women veterans recognizes the invaluable and indispensable role of women in our nation's military campaigns.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Representative Cindy Evans

District 7/North Kona, South Kohala  
Tel: (808) 586-8510

STATE OF HAWAII  
OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES  
TESTIMONY ON H.B. 632, HD1, RELATING TO POLICY ADVISORY ON  
VETERANS' SERVICES

SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

March 24, 2009

Good afternoon Chair Will Espero, Vice-Chair Robert Bunda, and members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs.

I am Mark Moses, Director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS). I appreciate this opportunity to testify on the intent of H.B. 632, HD1 which requires the governor, in making appointments, to ensure that members of the policy advisory board on veterans' services represent all minority viewpoints, including issues of concern to women veterans.

The OVS does not support this measure. As presently constituted the nine voting member Advisory Board on Veterans' Services represents minority views of veterans through the appointment of members who are female (three), retirees from the active duty military (three), National Guard/Reserves (two), and ethnic minorities (seven). The board also includes ex-officio members representing positions of the DOD, DLIR, DHS, and DOH; other special members are representatives from VA Benefits, VA Medical, and a Federal Department of Labor, Veterans Employment Service member.

At the Directors invitation, a representative of the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home was previously requested to become an active participant on the Board to provide information and veteran input in resolving issues that may arise at the home. Passage of H.B. 687 relating to the Home as well as other pending legislation relating to the Department of Health, Hawaii Health Systems Corporation (HHSC) may further dictate this participation.

Given the above and our current economic circumstances, there is no need to pass this legislation since it duplicates what is presently in place, and would require a costly rulemaking process.

A few weeks ago, I met with General Shinseki, VA Secretary who while addressing the NASDVA conference in Washington, D.C., was adamant that a **"veteran is a veteran is a veteran."** All veterans are the same and are to be treated equally.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of Hawaii's veteran community.

I will respond to questions from the committee.

March 23, 2009

To: Chair Espero, Vice Chair Bunda and members of the Public Safety and Military Affairs committee,

**I am writing in strong support of HB632 HD1**

I am proud to say that I am a U.S. Navy Women Veteran and I feel that it is very important to me and all other female veterans living in Hawai'i to have the State's Advisory Board to include issues of concern to women veterans. Women have come a long way in the military, although I can only speak for the Navy I am sure all women in the other branches of the military feel the same way; that we faced the same challenges as men, we held the same positions along side men, and we fought and still fight and die along side men. Yes, it may seem that we are fairly treated but as women we have overcome enormous odds to serve our country.

Adjusting to civilian life is hard for any military person who has already adjusted to "the military way" but we depend on outside affiliations like the Department of Veteran Services, the Center for Women Veterans but at state level, we need more help with services for women in Hawai'i. To add women veterans in state policy will insure women veterans we are being individually considered in areas including but not limited to health care, rehabilitation, outreach, support programs, etc.

In the Sailors Creed, I vowed to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America and to obey the orders of those appointed over me, to represent the fighting spirit of the Navy and all who have gone before me to defend freedom and democracy around the world. I promised to proudly serve my country's Navy combat team with Honor, Courage and Commitment and I am committed to excellence and the fair treatment of all. Please make it state policy to add women veterans and acknowledge the dedication and fighting spirit of all females who have served, are serving, and will serve.

Please support this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'TP', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Ms. Teri'i Perez  
Veteran YN3, US Navy  
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Kaneohe, HI 96744