

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

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION, BUSINESS &  
MILITARY AFFAIRS

February 24, 2009

Good morning Chair Angus McKelvey, Vice-Chair Isaac Choy, and members of the House Committee on Economic Revitalization, Business and Military Affairs.

I am Carswell Ross, Acting Director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS). I appreciate this opportunity to support the intent of H.B. 632 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. It also requires one member to be a representative of the Yukio Okutsu veterans home.

The OVS supports the intent of this measure, however as presently constituted the nine voting member Advisory Board on Veterans' Services represents minority views of veterans by appointing members who are female (three), retirees from the active duty military (three), National Guard/Reserves (two), represent ethnic minorities (seven), and are politically diverse (eight) to include the director of OVS. The board also includes ex-officio members such as DOD, DLIR, DHS, and DOH; other special members are VA Benefits representative, VA Medical representative, and Federal Department of Labor, Veterans Employment Service member. The board presently has representation from the Yukio Okutsu veterans' home, and with the passage of H.B. 687, HD 1, Relating to the Yukio Okutsu, that requires the Department of Health, Hawaii Health Systems Corporation (HHSC) to provide information and veteran input, its members will be able to play an active role in resolving issues that may arise at the home. Given the above, there is no need to pass this legislation since it duplicates what is presently in place.

Director Moses met yesterday with General Shinseki, VA Secretary who while addressing the NASDVA conference in Washington. DC, was adamant that a **"veteran is a veteran is a veteran."** All veterans are the same. Director Moses is scheduled to meet the Secretary, in his office, on Thursday to discuss Hawaii specific veteran issues.

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

I will respond to questions from the committee.