

STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES
TESTIMONY ON H.B. 658, RELATING TO MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR
THE MAUI OFFICE OF VETERANS' SERVICES

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

March 2, 2009

Good morning Chair Marcus Oshiro, Vice-Chair Marilyn Lee, and members of the House Committee on Finance.

I am Carswell Ross, Acting Director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS). We appreciate this opportunity to support H.B. 658 which appropriates funds to establish one additional full-time counselor position at the Maui OVS.

The OVS supports the intent of this measure as long as its implementation does not impact or replace the priorities set forth in the Executive Biennium Budget for Fiscal Years 2009-2010.

I would like to share background information on what has occurred in the past. The Maui OVS was responsible for making itinerant visits to Molokai and Lanai. Suddenly, the Maui Veterans Services Counselor applied for retirement and the OVS requested to refill this position. Since the Maui Counselor position is technically still filled by the individual seeking retirement, the OVS was required to establish an identical position, which we accomplished. After some delay, we were able to employ an individual as a "temporary appointment outside of the list" to provide counseling services to Maui veterans and their family members. Additionally, as requested and granted by the Legislature, the OVS created and filled a roving counselor position that visits Molokai two times a month and Lanai once a month.

The OVS will hire a counselor once the previous position holder's retirement issues are resolved. Unfortunately, during the time period between the hiring for the above mentioned counselor positions, the Maui Office Assistant, filed for and was granted retirement.

The OVS can understand the need of the Maui veterans and their families for permanent staffing of the office and this request for an additional counselor, however, *given our current economic circumstances, it may not be practical to implement this measure at this time. It most definitely is a matter worthy of consideration when the state's fiscal situation improves.*

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

I will respond to questions from the committee.