

SB 1212

Measure Title:

RELATING TO VETERANS

Report Title:

Office of Veterans' Services; Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home

Description:

Transfers Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home from department of health, Hawaii health systems corporation, to department of defense, office of veterans' services.

STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES
TESTIMONY ON S.B. 1212, RELATING TO VETERANS
SENATE COMMITTEES ON HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

FEBRUARY 17, 2009

Good afternoon Chairs David Ige and Will Espero, and Vice-Chairs Josh Green and Robert Bunda, and members of the Senate Committees on Health and Public Safety and Military Affairs.

I am Mark Moses, Director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS). I appreciate this opportunity to make some brief comments in opposition to S.B. 1212. The intent of this measure is the transfer of the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home from the Department of Health, Hawaii Health Systems Corporation (HHSC) to the Department of Defense, Office of Veteran Services.

There is some merit to such a change as veterans are concerned about the present positioning of the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home under the East Hawaii Regional Board, and the appearance, to veterans, that the perspective of the Home has shifted from statewide to regional.

This concern is further bolstered by the fact that as of 2007, there were 93 Veterans Homes in the 50 states, the Territories, and the District of Columbia. In 24 of them the Homes fall under a state department of Veterans Affairs, in 17 they fall under some type of State Board of Trustees, and in 9 they fall under some type of Department of Health or Human Services.

Governor Linda Lingle in a letter sent to Mr. Frank K. Salvas, Chief, State Home Construction Program, VA, Geriatrics and Extended Care, dated June 28, 2004, stated, *"the Director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS) along with the Advisory Council (Board on Veterans Services), will be and is serving a major advisory role in this important new initiative, which will result in increased access to high quality long-term care services for our veterans in Hawaii."*

As a result of this, as well as this offices responsibilities as contained in HRS 363, it is not necessary for the Office of Veteran Services to operate the Home, rather the Office of Veteran Services stands ready to advise and assist the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation on the operation of the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home, and in developing the strategic planning required to serve all Hawaii's veterans and eligible dependents. We look forward to continuing our ongoing dialog with HHSC to achieve these objectives.

Thank you for allowing me to present the Veterans' perspective on the need to keep the Yukio Okutsu State Veteran Home a State asset.

I will respond to any questions.



HAWAII HEALTH SYSTEMS
C O R P O R A T I O N

"Touching Lives Every Day"

The Senate

Committee on Health
Senator David Y. Ige, Chair Senator
Josh Green, M.D., Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 17, 2009
3:30 p.m.
Conference Room 229
State Capitol

SB 1212 RELATING TO VETERANS

Transfers Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home-Hilo from department of health, Hawaii health systems corporation, to department of defense, office of veterans' services

By Keith T. Ribbentrop
State Veterans' Home Liaison Officer
Hawaii Health Systems Corporation (HHSC)
Hilo Medical Center

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 687 relating to the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home-Hilo. The Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home-Hilo was established in 1 July 2003 by the twenty second legislature with a combination of federal and state funding and is operated at no cost to the state under contract to Avalon Care Center Hawaii, LLC

I believe that this program is appropriately placed in the state's system of healthcare, and that Veterans throughout the state are best served by the program's management and operations. The Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home-Hilo is committed to providing the highest quality long-term care to the veterans of our state for the services they have freely given to preserve our freedom. The East Hawaii Regional Board, Hawaii Health Systems Corporation and the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home - Hilo most certainly welcomes any further coordination with the department of defense, the office of veterans' services, The Advisory Board on Veterans Services as well as veterans across the state regarding concerns and interests in serving veterans but does not believe a transfer of facility would be necessary. Thank you.

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The Twenty-Fifth Legislature
Regular Session of 2009

THE SENATE

Committee on Health

Senator David Y. Ige, Chair
Senator Josh Green, M.D., Vice Chair

Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs

Senator Will Espero, Chair
Senator Robert Bunda, Vice Chair

State Capitol, Conference Room 229
Tuesday, February 17, 2009; 3:30 p.m.

**STATEMENT OF THE ILWU LOCAL 142 ON S.B. 1212
RELATING TO VETERANS**

The ILWU Local 142 opposes S.B. 1212, which transfers the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home from Hawaii Health Systems Corporation to the State Office of Veterans Services.

The ILWU represents 45 workers at the State Veterans Home in Hilo, which is operated by Avalon Care Center, an organization with a wealth of experience in managing long-term care facilities, two of which are located on Oahu. The State Veterans Home opened in phases from November 2007 but is not filled to capacity as yet.

The facility is currently under the jurisdiction of the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation, which runs several hospitals with long-term care facilities throughout the State. HHSC has experience in hospitals and health care and understands the long-term care needs of the community.

The ILWU believes that, while the clients served by the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home may be veterans and their spouses, the Home is nonetheless a health facility that must meet specified requirements for accreditation and fulfill specified responsibilities to its clients. Because of its experience, Hawaii Health Systems Corporation may be better equipped than the Office of Veterans Services to provide the necessary oversight for this health facility.

The ILWU, therefore, urges that S.B. 1212 be held. Thank you for the opportunity to share our views and concerns.