

LATE TESTIMONY

STATE OF HAWAII OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

TESTIMONY ON H.C.R. 280 & HR 202, URGING THE OFFICE OF VETERANS' SERVICES OF DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO INCLUDE A SECTION DEDICATED TO VETERANS OF THE CONFLICTS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN IN THE HAWAII STATE VETERANS CEMETERY AND ALLOW FOR PHOTOS AND OTHER MEMORIAL OBJECTS OF VETERANS TO BE PLACED AT GRAVESITES IN THE HAWAII STATE VETERANS CEMETERY

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION, BUSINESS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

March 25, 2010

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

I am Mark Moses, Director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS). I appreciate this opportunity to testify on HCR 280 and HR 202 which urges the OVS of the DOD to include a section dedicated to veterans of the conflicts to Iraq and Afghanistan in the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery and allow for photos and other memorial objects of veterans to be placed at gravesites in the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery. I oppose these two measures due to their potential devastating impact on the State's financial situation.

In regard to allowing pictures and other memorial objects on graves at the Hawaii State Veteran's Cemetery, it raises safety concerns for employees and visitors; adds to the maintenance workload; lends to a non-uniform cemetery appearance; and is not allowed by the Department Veterans Affairs (VA). This issue was previously addressed to VA and the above position was confirmed.

As for a set aside cemetery area for veterans of a particular conflict, Veterans Administration, National Cemetery Administration regulations prohibit any form of intentional segregation of Veterans Cemeteries into sections by grade, race, religion, service periods, character of service, location of service, or manner of death, or for any other reason.

Veterans are Veterans!

Finally, as the director of State Cemetery Granted cemeteries, I must advise this body that if these measure were to pass it would cause Hawaii to lose approximately \$10 million in ongoing, currently approved, and pre-approved VA cemetery grants. Possibly more onerous is that such passage would trigger an effort by VA to recapture all previous cemetery grants to Hawaii, and to discontinue the payment of burial allowances.

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

I will respond to questions from the committee.

OAHU VETERANS COUNCIL
 President - Fred Ballard
 1st V.P. - Cecil Meadows
 2nd V.P. - Jim Santos
 Secretary - John Harms
 Treasurer - Eugenia Woodward
 Chaplain - Frank Lamson



"a gathering place for veterans"
OAHU VETERANS CENTER

OAHU VETERANS CENTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
 Sandy Ballard

March 24, 2010

**TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION
 280 AND HOUSE RESOLUTION 202**

**URING THE OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES OF THE DOD TO INCLUDE
 A SECTION DEDICATED TO VETERANS OF THE CONFLICTS IN IRAQ
 AND AFGHANISTAN IN THE HAWAII STATE VETERANS CEMETERY AND
 ALLOW FOR PHOTOS AND OTHER MEMORIAL OBJECTS OF VETERANS
 TO BE PLACED AT GRAVESITES IN THE HAWAII STATE VETERANS
 CEMETERY**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION, BUSINESS &
 MILITARY AFFAIRS**

HEARING THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 2010, 10:00 AM, ROOM 312

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS
 5th Regimental Combat Team
 15th Infantry Division Assn.
 Air Force Assn. - Chapter 138
 Air Force Sergeants Association
 American Legion Aux. Dept. of HI
 American Legion - Dept. of HI
 American Legion Post 32
 American Veterans Empowerment &
 Support Community Operations
 BPOE VAVS Hawaii Dist.
 China-Burma-India Veterans Assn.
 Chosin Few - Aloha Chapter
 Combat Infantrymen's Assn.
 Combat Veterans Motorcycle Club
 Disabled American Veterans -
 Chapter 3
 Fleet Reserve Association Branch
 And Unit 46
 Hawaii Multiple Schools Unit - Jr. ROTC
 Korean War Veterans Assn -
 Chapter 1
 Military Officers Assn. of America -
 Aloha Chapter
 Military Officers Assn. of America -
 Hawaii State Chapter
 Military Order of the Purple Heart
 Military Order of World Wars
 National Assn. for Atomic Veterans
 National Assn. of Uniformed Services
 National Sojourners - Hawaiian # 9
 National Sojourners - Honolulu # 11
 National Sojourners - Kamehameha #439
 Pearl Harbor Survivors Association
 Radiated Veterans
 Samoan Providers
 Society of Military Widows -
 Aloha Chapter
 Sons & Daughters of
 Pearl Harbor Survivors
 Special Forces Assn. - Chapter VIII
 State Office of Veterans Services
 Veterans of Foreign Wars
 Dept. of Hawaii
 Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 970
 Vietnam Veterans of America
 Chapter 858
 Waves National - Unit 131
 Women Veterans of America #26

Aloha Representatives Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair, Isaac W. Choy Vice Chair, and members of the Committee. My name is Fred Ballard, President Oahu Veterans Council. The Oahu Veterans Council is comprised of over 35 Oahu veteran organizations that in turn represent over 80,000 veterans and their families. The Council voted unanimously at its meeting last Saturday, January 23rd to communicate our complete support of House Bill 1945.

The Oahu Veterans Council opposes the passage of HRC 280 and HR 202. The Council strongly supports our troops and is humbled by the sacrifice they make for our country. We deeply grieve the loss of every member of our armed services who give up their life in defense of our ideals, especially from the current war on terror. However, creating special burial sections by category, when none exist today, is discriminatory and wrong. National Cemetery policy is that all veterans are equals without preference as to rank, military organization, war period, etc. State Veteran Cemeteries are the recipient of VA grant monies, from building to expanding, to repairing the cemeteries. The agreement is that the State cemeteries comply with National Cemetery directives, one of which is no special burial areas. Failure to comply would mean that future grant monies would be lost. For these resolutions to take effect, national cemetery administration directives would have to be changed.



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**OAHU VETERANS COUNCIL TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 280 AND HOUSE RESOLUTION 202
HEARING THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 2010, 10:00 ROOM 312**

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The Council also opposes the second part relating to the placement of photos and other memorial objects on grave sites. While the council concurs with the intent of this, for practical, safety and legal reasons the items should be left off the grave site. If a mower hits one by accident, glass and other pieces could be dangerous to the driver and others not to mention the possible damage to expensive mower equipment. Repair or replacement costs the cemetery should not have to bear. Again, the National Cemetery Administration directives (that must be followed by the state veterans' cemeteries) do not allow for such placement as it is in violation of national standards of appearance.

In conclusion, the Oahu Veterans Council grieves the loss of each of our active duty personnel and veterans; however, the Council does not support the passage of HCR 280 and HR 202 for the reasons above.

Mahalo for allowing us the opportunity to testify in opposition to these resolutions.

Fred Ballard

Fred Ballard

President

Oahu Veterans Council

808-423-6265 - Home

808-422-4000 - OahuVeterans Center

LATE TESTIMONY

Public Testimony

Representative Angus L. K. McKelvey, Chair
Representative Issac W. Choy, Vice Chair

Committee on Economic Revitalization, Business & Military Affairs

Representative Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn B. Lee, Vice Chair

Committee on Finance

Allen K. Hoe, Vietnam Combat Veteran, Gold Star Father, Patriot

Thursday, March 25, 2010, at 10:00 a.m., Conference Room 312

Support for HCR 280 and HR 202, Urging the Office of Veterans' Services of the Department of Defense to Include a Section Dedicated to Veterans of the Conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan in the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery and allow for photos and other Memorial objects of Veterans to be placed at gravesites in the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery.

Aloha my name is Allen Hoe, I am a Combat Veteran, I served my Country in War and bore the honor of duty and sacrifice of service to my beloved Hawaii. I am one of the lucky ones who completed my service obligation and was transformed from citizen soldier to that of a "Veteran." A grateful nation as seen fit to accord me certain "veterans" privileges for my service in uniform.

One of those privileges is a place of final resting when it is my time, which I envision to be the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery at Kaneohe, a most beautiful place.

If you are not familiar with the term, A.B.M.C. Ardennes, Belgium; Brittany, France; Cambridge, England; Epinal, France; Florence, Italy; Henri-Chapelle, Belgium; Lorraine, France, nearly a 100,000 of our country's finest young warriors rest in peace in those cemeteries, officially titled American Battle Monument Cemeteries.

What is the distinction between those young warriors and myself and perhaps yourself, as a veteran?

They are the ones who gave of their last full measure of devotion to duty honor country, they died as warriors on the battlefield in uniform, they nor their families ever got to enjoy the fruits of their service to live out their lives as "Veterans."

Do these names sound familiar, Josh Titcomb, Kaeo Fernandez, Metodio Bandonil, Kerstin Marino, Lewis Calapini, Nainoa Hoe and Jonathon Brostrom, they should for they are just some of the few heroes who called Hawaii home.

Each of these very young men gave of their last full measure of devotion in our country's cause of freedom. They like the thousands of America's finest warriors who now lie interred in one of the A.B.M.C. strung out across the historic battle fields of Europe, never enjoyed the fruits of their sacrifice for they like their battle brothers who fought in Europe, died wearing their boots, as young soldiers doing their country's bidding.

HCR 280 and HR 202 seeks to correct an inequity of sorts, which under the current Hawaii Office of Veterans' Services policy marginalizes the magnitude of their service to their country, by mixing them with the general populace of the deceased veterans and their dependents.

Hawaii now has the opportunity to correct this situation and thus bring the proper recognition of that age old phrase that "freedom is not free," as it is being done at places like, Arlington Cemetery's Section 60.

The following is an excerpt taken from a fascinating piece written by Lisa Hoffman in 2004. In it she shares the following:

"Arlington National Cemetery: Here, in a rolling meadow of America's most hallowed land, the country's ledger of loss from the war in Iraq is slowly being filled.

Tucked in a pocket far off the regular tourist route, Section 60 of the historic cemetery has been reserved as the final resting place for those who die in Iraq.

Here lie, among others, the first Coast Guardsman to die in combat since the Vietnam War, a 26-year Army officer on her last assignment before retiring, a young Sikh from India who had dreamed of being a U.S. soldier, and a Marine lieutenant who perished trying to help his wounded men.

Here, too, are soldiers from Saipan, Samoa, Cambodia and India, others from Virginia to Ohio, Colorado to California - all hailed at their funerals as decent, patriotic individuals willing to sacrifice their lives to bring freedom to a far-off land.

These graves, of which three on a recent visit were too fresh to have marble markers yet, represent just 8 percent of the 800 Iraq war dead. Any active-duty service member who dies in the Iraq conflict, by combat or by other means, is entitled to be laid to rest at Arlington. Most, however, opt to be buried in family plots or national cemeteries closer to home.

Family members of these 64 men and one woman say that, to their loved ones, burial in the same sacred earth that holds presidents, Supreme Court justices and legendary generals John J. Pershing and George C. Marshall would be the ultimate honor.

That is particularly true for the families of a half-dozen immigrant troops who lie in Section 60. The mother of a Marine who came to America with his family from Thailand at age 9, said she was awed at the egalitarian nature of Arlington, where an ordinary man like her son could be laid to rest in the same cemetery as John F. Kennedy.

"I never dreamed that I could ever step into a place like that," Tan Patchem told reporters last year after her 22-year-old son, nicknamed "Chuckles" by his Marine buddies for his sunny nature, was killed in an ambush near Nasiriyah in the early days of the war. "This is the best place for him to stay."

Section 60 is a five-acre sanctuary where dozens of rows of white headstones spill down a gentle slope to a manicured field dotted with cherry trees and hardwoods, songbirds and squirrels.

Formerly the site of temporary military housing, the section is one of the few remaining open expanses in the rapidly filling cemetery. Officials said the plot was chosen for the Iraq dead because it can accommodate the large number of mourners and military honor formations these funerals bring.

When full, the section will hold more than 13,000 souls - twice as many as rest there today. The Iraq dead form little more than one row, dwarfed by phalanxes of World War II, Korea and Vietnam War vets.

Also sharing the section are casualties from the war in Afghanistan, the first Persian Gulf War, the 2000 al Qaeda attack on the destroyer USS Cole, the 1992-93 Somalia intervention, Iraq's 1987 attack on the frigate USS Stark, and the terrorist bombing of a U.S. barracks in Beirut in 1983.

What unites this disparate mix is the universal belief held by the fallen in the rightness of their mission in Iraq, their dedication to the defense of freedom even at the cost of their own lives and their devotion to duty, honor, country.

"Please know that I died defending my family and my beliefs," Army Staff Sergeant Livaudais, 23, wrote in a last letter to his loved ones. An elite Army Ranger, who died, in a suicide bomb attack in western Iraq.

"I just hope in the event of my death, that a lot more of my comrades and fellow Americans' lives will be saved," Livaudais wrote in a letter released after his death by Fort Benning, Georgia, officials.

Tom Sherlock, the cemetery's historian, says that is the essence of Arlington, and of Section 60 within it. It is here that those who fall on the battlefields of Iraq are being woven into the permanent fabric of American history, Sherlock said.

"If a loved one is buried here, we can guarantee that their loved ones will never be forgotten," he said. "As long as there is an Arlington Cemetery, their sacrifice will be remembered."

Hawaii's young men and women have for decades led the way in service to their country, it's goals and ideals of freedom and democracy, my grandfathers served in WWI, my father in WWII my cousins in Korea and Vietnam, from the historic legacy of the Go For Broke warriors of the 100th Battalion, to the many who made up the "Army All Hawaii Company" of the 60's.

As our political leaders you have also demonstrated your commitment to the same ideals. One of which I am most grateful was repeated earlier this week with the presentation of the Hawaii Medal of Honor to the family and loved ones of those who gave the most precious gift to us who are here today, the gift of their last full measure of service to their country.

The Measure being considered presents another once in a life time special opportunity, worthy of your consideration and support. I humbly request that you once again demonstrate your leadership to the rest of the Nation, showing Hawaii's resolve and commitment to honor those whose memory we will cherish for ever for their gift of freedom to the world.

The proposal before you directs that a special place within the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery be dedicated to Hawaii's own warriors, whose sacrifice is memorialized upon the center column upon the plaza by the simple phrase "they gave their todays for our tomorrows."

On a technical note, I would respectfully request that the title be amended to conform to the facts which we are dealing with, i.e., that we seek to honor those young American warrior heroes who were killed in action, KIA, and not the fiction that they are some how deemed to be a Veteran who is buried within the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery at Kaneohe.

Thus, it is a very small tribute by a grateful State in honor of her keiki o ka aina who have given to each one of us the gift of freedom.

I would designate and refer to this place as "freedoms garden."

Ulu Ku Oko `a
(freedom's garden)

freedom's garden tilled in blood
with the seeds of youth in glory grown
the tears of dreams
lost on foreign land
with hope of blessings to be shared
with those whose names remain unknown
but for our angels their work undone
this place this home this sacred
ground...

Lastly I would also urge that adjustments to the cemetery protocols and or rules be made to accommodate the placement of simple non permanent photographic memorials upon the grave site the fallen warrior

Respectfully,

Allen K. Hoe
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From: EBMtestimony
Subject: FW: HCR280 / HR202; Opposition to

LATE TESTIMONY

From: Norm Stahl [mailto:dr.norm@hawaiiantel.net]
Sent: Thursday, March 25, 2010 9:43 AM
To: EBMtestimony
Subject: HCR280 / HR202; Opposition to

Ladies & Gentlemen:

I am writing to express my opposition to HCR280 / HR202. If these measure were to pass it would cause Hawaii to lose approximately \$10 million in ongoing, currently approved, and pre-approved VA cemetery grants. Possibly more onerous is that such passage would trigger an effort by VA to recapture all previous cemetery grants to Hawaii, and to discontinue the payment of burial allowances.

As a member of the County of Hawaii Veterans Advisory Board, the state Veterans Advisory board and a veteran of the Vietnam War and 22 years active military service, I urge you to vote no.

Norman S. Stahl
1176 Puhau Street
Hilo, HI 96720