

SB 879

RELATING TO UNIFORM MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE.

Repeals the uniform maintenance allowance for enlisted personnel.
Effective July 1, 2112.

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 879
A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO UNIFORM MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE

PRESENTATION TO THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS,
AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

BY

MAJOR GENERAL DARRYLL D. M. WONG
INTERIM ADJUTANT GENERAL
February 3, 2011

Chair Espero, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

I am Major General Darryll D. M. Wong, Interim State Adjutant General. I am testifying on Senate Bill 879.

We support the intent of Senate Bill 879 which repeals the uniform maintenance allowance for enlisted personnel of the Hawaii National Guard. As my highest priority and for the majority of our airmen and soldiers as well, we would recommend that monies that are earmarked for the uniform maintenance be reallocated to the Hawaii National Guard Tuition Assistance program. This program allows the Adjutant General to award tuition assistance to qualified enlisted, warrant officers, and officers up to the rank of captain who are residents of the State and undergraduate students working towards a degree on any campus of the University of Hawaii.

This concludes my testimony. Are there any questions?

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Sent: Tuesday, February 01, 2011 1:24 PM

To: PGM Testimony

Subject: SB 879 Relating to Uniform Maintenance Allowance: Hearing by Senate Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations, and Military Affairs, Thu, 3 Feb 11, 2:45PM

Dear Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations, and Military Affairs, I appreciate the opportunity to testify in opposition to S.B. 879 - RELATING TO UNIFORM MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE. "Repeals the uniform maintenance allowance for enlisted personnel. Effective July 1, 2012."

I'm Senior Master Sergeant Ramon Maui Quizon, a member in good standing with the Hawaii Air National Guard, and current Vice President-Air, Hawaii National Guard Enlisted Association, representing over 4,000 enlisted men and women of the Hawaii Army and Air National Guard.

As previously stated in the bill, modernization of the (Hawaii National Guardsmen) service uniforms (wherein they are designed wash and wear fabric) no longer requires dry cleaning. However, the uniform modifications to "wash and wear" fabric is a design feature of guardsmen utility uniforms, i.e., battle dress uniforms.

The intent of the uniform maintenance allowance for enlisted personnel in the Hawaii National Guard (established in 1967 to assist with certain expenses) still remains an important source of uniform maintenance allowance, as guardsmen are still responsible for covering anticipated costs (e.g., dry cleaning, alterations) in maintaining SERVICE DRESS, DRESS, AND STANDARDIZED FUNCTIONAL UNIFORMS.

Service dress, dress, and standardized functional uniforms include multiple combinations of pant/trousers, short/long sleeve shirt, jacket, coat, as well as physical training uniforms.

Aside from the benefit of receiving an allowance to help subsidize the cost of maintaining service dress, dress, and standardized functional uniforms, the uniform maintenance allowance continues to be a valuable tool of recruitment for the Hawaii Army and Air National Guard. The uniform maintenance allowance is one of several proven tools setting the foundation to provide the State of Hawaii the best possible means to recruit and retain citizen-soldiers.

Recruiting and retaining Hawaii National Guardsmen means we will continue to have a Guard able and equipped to respond to emergencies/natural disasters, that not only helps our local government, but ultimately the people of the State of Hawaii.

I fully recognize the budget crisis faced by the State government, yet firmly believe the uniform maintenance allowance continues to be warranted. Serving in the guard (now more than ever) is a difficult and demanding duty, especially when service members make every effort to balance their finances, their jobs, their

families, and - maintain service dress, dress, and standardized functional uniforms.

Our enlisted membership knows from years of experience how vital it is to the State of Hawaii that we maintain an effective National Guard presence. We are fortunate to have a balanced joint force of guardsmen throughout our great state, with Hawaii National Guard Soldiers and Airmen located on each major island (Oahu, Kauai, Maui and the Big Island).

With their presence, you have seen time and again the people of Hawaii can count on the Hawaii National Guard to respond quickly and effectively across a wide range of natural or man-made disasters, providing soldiers and airmen trained and equipped to deal with any emergency that may threaten the citizens of Hawaii and our "malahini".

I strongly oppose S.B. 879, to repeal the uniform maintenance allowance for enlisted personnel. I enlisted in the Hawaii Air National Guard in 1984, when the uniform maintenance allowance was \$1.50 per annual training day (15 annual training days per year). That was 27 years ago, and the allowance rate has not changed. Today it costs me nearly \$20.00 to clean and service one set of standardized functional uniforms (and even more for service dress/dress uniforms), a substantial difference compared to the \$1.50 annual training day daily rate uniform maintenance allowance.

This bill will negatively impact the real life requirements of our guardsmen, as it eliminates our ability to help absorb some of the direct personal cost to us and our families. Passing this bill may also send a message to our soldiers and airmen that, after many long years, we may be losing the support of the State of Hawaii.

As our guardsman (continue to) return from active duty deployment and transition back to their families and civilian life, I strongly believe we should (continue to) honor and take care of our men and women, ensuring the State of Hawaii is and will remain prepared and ready to deal with any emergency that could harm us.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations, and Military Affairs, thank you for your time, commitment and dedication to the well-being of our State of Hawaii and the Guardsmen who defend it.

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