

LATE TESTIMONY

House Committee on Finance

Wednesday, March 30, 2011, 10:00am

Room 308

TO: Chair Marcus Oshiro and Finance Committee Members

RE: SB883 SD2 HD1 RELATING TO SPECIAL NUMBER PLATES- STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha Chair Oshiro and Committee Members,

My name is Lieutenant Colonel (ret.) Patrick B. Collins and I am a three-time combat veteran and Gold Star father and I am in strong support of this measure.

I have always stayed away from personalized license plates designating myself as a combat veteran because that is a personal identification that didn't need to be made however the opportunity to have a Gold Star Plate provides me the chance to honor my son's sacrifice and I appreciate the opportunity to do so.

My son did not live long enough to ever own his own vehicle and having the ability to put a Gold Star Plates on my vehicle representing his service presents a unique chance, in my mind, to honor my son's sacrifice and give him the opportunity of driving down a freeway.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LATE TESTIMONY

State of Hawaii
House Committee on Finance
Testimony in Support for SB 883 SD2 HD1 Relating to Special License Plates
Wednesday March 30, 2011 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 308
Chair Marcus Oshiro; Vice Chair Marilyn Lee

By Colonel James M. Olsen, MD
(Father of Corporal Toby R. Olsen)
March 30, 2011

Aloha Chairman Oshiro, Vice Chairwoman Lee and Members of this Committee:

As a Gold Star Father I fully support the initiative to authorize Gold Star License Plates for immediate family members of service members killed in action. My wife, Elisabeth (Lis) Olsen, is the director of the Army's Survivor Outreach Services Center at Ft. Shafter. On the walls of this center are individually mounted pictures of the many young men and women with Hawaii ties who gave their lives in the defense of our country. Many Ohana of these fallen came on opening day to hang the picture of their loved one and to say a few words in their memory. Their pain and sadness was very evident, but so was their great pride in the service and sacrifice that their husband, son, daughter, father or mother had provided. The Gold Star License Plates are but another way for these families and for all of Hawaii to honor the memories and sacrifice of our fallen Ohana of Hawaii.

I was not born in Hawaii but consider myself a local boy. I moved here when I was 10 years old. Upon graduation from Leilehua High School the late Senator Spark Matsunaga gave me an appointment to West Point that was the start of my military career. I retired from the service after 34 years but volunteered to come back on active duty as a recalled retiree in order to continue to serve the fine young men and women who volunteer for our Armed Services. Toby, my eldest son, graduated from Mililani High School and considered Hawaii home as well. After graduating from college Toby joined the Army and was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 509th Infantry (Airborne), 4th Brigade Combat Team of the 25th Infantry Division, located at Fort Richardson, Alaska. He was killed on January 20, 1997 in Karma, Iraq, of wounds sustained when a massive improvised explosive device detonated under his Humvee and he is now interred at National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Puowaina. His death was a tremendous blow to our family and his close friends. We are sad that he died and will never forget his presence in our lives but we too are very proud of his commitment and service to our country in time of war.

The current initiative to authorize Gold Star License Plates for immediate family members of service members killed in action may not seem important in face of the many problems your Committee and the State Legislature has to address this year but it is a significant recognition that you care for the Ohana of these fallen servicemen. I request that we be given the same ability to recognize the service and sacrifice of our fallen servicemen that many other States have already legislated.

Respectfully,

James Olsen, MD