

House Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
Testimony in Support for HB1 Relating to Special License Plates
Thursday, February 17, 2011 at 8:30 a.m. in Room 309
Chair Henry Aquino; Vice Chair Ty Cullen

Presented by
Linda Keller
State President Association of the United States Army

As the Hawaii State President for the Association of the United States Army I want to go on record that local Hawaii Chapter and AUSA National strongly support the Gold Star License Plate initiative. In addition to Hawaii AUSA National has voiced our strong support in other states that have been successful in honoring our fallen heroes by allowing authorized family members display Gold Star plates. The Hawaii Chapter of the Association of the United States Army has approximately 1000 members who are active, guard, and reserve, DoD civilian and retired. AUSA is the voice for the soldier and their family members. Authorizing the Gold Star License Plate is the right thing to do. The production and distribution of these Gold Star Plates historically have had little if any impact on state budgets. Most important is that the majority of the other states have initiated similar programs with the intent of honoring the surviving family members as well as their fallen loved ones. The Gold Star Plate is a daily reminder for the American public of the sacrifices that both our soldiers and their families are making every day in defense of this great country of ours.

STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF VETERANS' SERVICES
TESTIMONY ON HB 1, RELATING TO SPECIAL NUMBER PLATES
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

February 17, 2011

Good afternoon Chair Henry Aquino, Vice Chair Ty Cullen, and members of the House Committee on Public safety and Military Affairs.

The interim Director of the Office of Veterans' Services (OVS), Mr. Mark Moses, appreciates this opportunity to support the intent of H.B. 1, as long as it does not replace or adversely impact priorities established in the Executive Biennium Budget Request. The intent of this measure, which is to provide a special license plate for Gold Star family members, is an excellent way to recognize these family members who experienced the loss of a loved one.

We defer to the director of finance of the city and county of Honolulu who has direct responsibility for program implementation.

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

I will respond to questions from the committee.

DEPARTMENT OF CUSTOMER SERVICES
CITY & COUNTY OF HONOLULU
DIVISION OF MOTOR VEHICLE, LICENSING AND PERMITS
ADMINISTRATION
P.O. BOX 30300
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96820-0300

PETER B. CARLISLE
MAYOR



GAIL Y. HARAGUCHI
DIRECTOR

DENNIS A. KAMIMURA
LICENSING ADMINISTRATOR

February 15, 2011

The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair
and Committee Members
Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
House of Representatives
State of Hawaii
State Capitol, Room 323
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Aquino and Committee Members:


Subject: H.B. No. 1, Relating to Special Number Plates

The City and County of Honolulu has no objections to H.B. No. 1, which will allow the issuance of the Gold Star Family license plates to qualified applicants.

The letter numeral combination that will be used will not duplicate any other issued license plates.

The City and County of Honolulu urges your favorable consideration of H.B. No. 1.

Sincerely,


for Gail Y. Haraguchi
Director

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1
RELATING TO SPECIAL NUMBER PLATES

by
Allen K. Hoe
Vietnam Combat Purple Heart Veteran

GOLD STAR FATHER
of
1LT NAINOA K. HOE

1st Brigade 25th Infantry Division
KIA, Iraq January 22, 2005

Committee on Public Safety & Military Affairs
Representative Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair
Representative Ty Cullen, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 17, 2011; 11:15 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

Aloha Chair Aquino and Vice-Chair Cullen and Members of the Committee:

I am a Proud Vietnam Combat Veteran. I was just a young local boy raised in the tradition and belief that each one of us owed a duty of service to our country. We were not unlike the millions of other young American men who proudly served our nation's interests in Vietnam.

The legislation pending before you today proposes to amend the Hawaii Revised Statutes, Section 249-9.2 which upon becoming law will authorize the issuance of a very unique motor vehicle License Plate; "The Gold Star Family."

Yes, I have heard some say, oh, don't you think we have to many license plates already? If that is the criteria upon which this Bill is measured, then perhaps we have done this backwards. The very essence of why we have the privilege to live in a free society is the direct result, of the bravery by the heroes this License Honors. Those who have died in combat or while on duty in uniform.

I was wounded in Vietnam during the TET Offensive in 1968 which allows me to have a Combat Wounded or "Purple Heart" license plate instead of a numbered plate. You do not see that many Purple Heart plates, in Hawaii, but it links each of us who have them, WW2, Korea, Vietnam, Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq survivors, together in a special brotherhood of American Patriot. I am very proud of and deeply grateful to the legislature for authorizing its use.

Six years ago, in addition to my combat wounded veterans status, I became a Gold Star Father. It is an official USA Department of Defense, title, which I would not wish upon

any of you sitting here today. It represents perhaps the highest honor one can achieve in service to their country for it means that one of America's finest has given his or her life in combat or in service, for a higher purpose: the cause of liberty and freedom.

Six years ago on January 22, 2005 my son 1Lt. Nainoa Hoe, a proud U.S. Army Ranger, following in a long family tradition of military service, was killed in combat on the battlefield of Mosul, Iraq. Nainoa gave his last full measure of devotion, to his country's cause of freedom. He understood fully the risks, yet he choose to lead warriors in combat, not as a political statement of any sort, but simply because his country had asked him to do so.

Nainoa's legacy is part of a special "Hawaii" tradition. Our keiki kane and wahine who continue to serve their country's ideals of freedom and democracy; my kupuna's service in WWI, my father's in WWII, and my cousins in Korea and Vietnam. From the historic legacy of the Go For Broke Warriors of the 100th Battalion, to the thousands of young men who comprised the All Hawaii Company of the 60s Hawaii's warrior culture and traditions of service are strong.

House Bill 1 proposes to add an additional provision which would establish a "Gold Star Family" category which would allow all of Hawaii to recognize and honor the family members who have given up one of their own upon that most sacred alter of freedom. HB 1, presents a very unique statement that the Hawaii House of Representatives have determined that it's first act as a body is to honor those who have died in service to Hawaii and our Country.

The gold star legacy is part of the traditions of our country which is traced back to WWI when an Army Capt. Robert Queissner of the 5th Ohio Infantry created the flags to honor his two sons serving on the front lines in 1917. The flags were quickly adopted by families with sons in the army. With President Wilson's support the Council of National Defenses proposal permitting mothers who had lost a child serving in the war to wear a gold star on a black arm band while in mourning. The black arm band was exchanged for a small flag and the gold star was outlined in a thin blue outline signifying that the service member had died in battle.

Service flags were widely used in World War II, as most families had at least one member serving in the military. Though it was common to see flags containing one star, the most famous gold star flag had five stars – one for each of the Sullivan brothers who perished on the U.S.S. Juneau, a light cruiser. Albert, Francis, George, Joseph and Madison Sullivan of Waterloo, Iowa, were all on the Juneau when it was sunk during a battle with Japanese naval ships in November 1942 near the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific.

The single most important aspect of the adoption of HB 1 will be the Legislature's declaration that the Gold Star License Plate represents a life that has been lost and to remind everyone that freedom is not free. There is no better way to honor the lives of all

of our fallen warriors then by recognizing their families who wear that badge of duty honor and country each day so that their loved one will never be forgotten.

Hawaii's Legislature has a proud history of support for Hawaii's service members and their families. The Purple Heart, Combat Veteran, Pearl Harbor Survivor, Prisoner of War License Plate and the precedent setting creation of the Hawaii State Medal of Honor, presented to the next of kin of those who died in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

We need to continue that legacy. Currently 47 other States and Guam have adopted this measure, let's not let Hawaii go down in history as being the last State to do so.

With that legacy in mind, I humbly request that HB 1 be approved.

Respectfully,

Allen K. Hoe

PO Box 3589
Honolulu, HI 96811

(808) 521-6927
<ahoe@pixi.com>



TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1
RELATING TO SPECIAL NUMBER PLATES

by
Mervyn M. Kotake

Committee on Public Safety & Military Affairs
Representative Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair
Representative Ty Cullen, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 17, 2011; 8:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

Aloha Chair Aquino and Vice-Chair Cullen and Members of the Committee:

There were 58,178 casualties in the Vietnam War; 276 from the State of Hawaii. I personally knew two (2) young men who had bright, promising futures, but gave their lives in the Vietnam War and are now enshrined on The Vietnam Veterans Memorial:

- o Brian Wallace Kong, 1LT, 1st Cav. Division, Hostile Ground Casualty Feb. 20, 1971
- o Algernon P. Kaakimaka, SGT, 173 Airborne Brigade, Hostile Ground Casualty, June 1, 1968

I am a Vietnam Veteran who served as a medic (91-C) for one tour at the 85th Evacuation Hospital, Phu Bai, South Vietnam in 1970-71. During my tour, I witnessed the supreme sacrifice of several young soldiers who, even with the heroic efforts by our medical personnel, died from severe, devastating combat injuries while being treated in our intensive care unit. I remember vividly the young soldier who lost both legs from a large booby trapped bomb who survived three (3) days in our ICU before succumbing to his injuries. It was my privilege and duty to cleanse his body and place him in a body bag for the trip home. I cannot imagine the lost that his family felt when they learned of his death. I sincerely hope that he was given a heroes' welcome, but I suspect that he and his family, like many others at that time, were maligned and mistreated because of the unpopularity of the war.

My own son has served two (2) tours in Iraq and Kuwait with the Hawaii National Guard. I am thankful and blessed that he returned safe and unharmed. But he too experienced the loss of some of his comrades, and this Bill will help honor their families as well.

This bill is one small, but meaningful way in which Hawaii can honor the sacrifices made by our young soldiers and their families, and, hopefully, can make amends for how we failed to honor their supreme sacrifice in the past.

I respectfully request that HB 1 be approved.

Respectfully,

Mervyn M. Kotake
8th Floor, C.R. Kendall Building
888 Mililani Street
Honolulu, HI 96813
mkotake@m-klawyers.com
(808) 526-9566

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1
RELATING TO SPECIAL NUMBER PLATES
by
Fred Kobashikawa
Vietnam Veteran

**Thursday, February 17, 2011; 8:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 309**

Chairman Aquino, Vice-Chairman Cullen and Members of the Committee:

My testimony is in support of House Bill 1.

House Bill 1 proposes to amend the Hawaii Revised Statutes, Section 249-9.2 which upon becoming law will authorize the issuance of a very unique motor vehicle License Plate; "The Gold Star Family."

The reason we have the privilege to live in a free society is the direct result, of the bravery by the heroes this License Honors. Those who have died in combat or while on duty in uniform.

House Bill 1 correctly proposes to add an additional provision which would establish a "Gold Star" category which allows all of Hawaii to recognize and honor the family members who have given up one of their own upon that most sacred alter of freedom. HB 1, presents a very unique statement that the Hawaii House of Representatives have determined that it's first act as a body is to honor those who have died in service to Hawaii and our Country.

The single most important aspect of the adoption of HB 1 will be the Legislature's declaration that the Gold Star License Plate represents a life that has been lost and to remind everyone that freedom is not free. There is no better way to honor the lives of all of our fallen warriors then by recognizing their families who wear that badge of duty honor and country each day so that their loved one will never be forgotten.

I humbly request that HB 1 be approved.

Respectfully,

Fred Kobashikawa

1261 Kaluawaa Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96816
(808) 741-0583
fkobashi@ieee.org

State of Hawaii
House Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
Testimony in Support for HB1 Relating to Special License Plates
Thursday, February 17, 2011 at 8:30 a.m. in Room 309
Chair Henry Aquino; Vice Chair Ty Cullen

By Colonel James M. Olsen, MD
(Father of Corporal Toby R. Olsen)
February 17, 2011

Aloha Chairman Aquino, Vice Chairman Cullen 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

State of Hawaii
House Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
Testimony in Support for HB1 Relating to Special License Plates
Thursday, February 17, 2011 at 8:30 a.m. in Room 309
Chair Henry Aquino; Vice Chair Ty Cullen

By Col (Retired) David P. Brostrom
February 17, 2011

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. The State of Hawaii has a very active license plate program that honors only living - Veterans, POW's, ect. Hawaii is one of a few remaining states that has not put into place a license plate that honors our fallen heroes through their living family members. The Gold Star was authorized in 1947 by an act of Congress. It is an embarrassment that this great state of ours has not taken action in giving equal recognition to the families that raised the great Americans who have given the ultimate sacrifice. The license plate recognition program is one of the most visible ways to remind the American public every day of the sacrifices of our military. Less than one percent of the American public will ever serve in the United States Military but we are currently engaged in two wars, with thousands of our young men and woman deployed all over the world. The American people are for the most part oblivious to the dozens of brave Americans that are killed in action every month. They are even more ignorant of the worry and grief that is born on the shoulders of the military families. A constant reminder of these sacrifices is always a good thing and I am very proud of those who display license plates that recognize their sacrifices given in defense of our country. However, as a Gold Star family member I am deeply saddened that we are not given the same opportunity to display the pride we have for the sacrifices of our loved ones who died in combat. The grief, pain and sacrifices of the Gold Star families are far different but more significant than those veterans who have been wounded, captured or lost friends in combat and survived to tell their stories. Our Gold Star families have to live with the fact that their sons, daughters, brothers and sisters will never return and never had a chance to say goodbye or enjoy the freedoms that they fought to gallantly to preserve. Therefore I strongly request that a simple thing as a Gold Star License Plate be approved to honor the valor of the fallen through their surviving family members. It is the least we can do.

PBMtestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, February 15, 2011 5:32 PM
To: PBMtestimony
Cc: Steve.Molnar@va.gov
Subject: Testimony for HB1 on 2/17/2011 11:15:00 AM

Testimony for PBM 2/17/2011 11:15:00 AM HB1

Conference room: 309
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Stephen T. Molnar
Organization: Individual
Address:
Phone:
E-mail: Steve.Molnar@va.gov
Submitted on: 2/15/2011

Comments:
TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1
RELATING TO SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES
by
Stephen T. Molnar
Vietnam Veteran - 1967/68

Committee on Public Safety & Military Affairs Representative Henry J. C. Aquino, Chair
Representative Ty Cullen, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 17, 2011; 8:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

Aloha Chairman Aquino, Vice Chairman Cullen and Members of this Committee:

I submit this testimony in support of HB 1 which will authorize the issuance of Gold Star license plates. I am a Vietnam veteran, and a lucky one - I had the opportunity to return home to my family and my community. Sadly, over 58,000 of my comrades did not have that same opportunity - their families were not so lucky.

Our nation has always remembered our veterans and sought to provide comfort to their families. To date, 47 states have authorized Gold Star license plates. Unfortunately, Hawaii remains one of three that have not.

Hawaii has always had a proud history of patriotism and sacrifice. Our citizens, long before statehood, volunteered and died for our nation's freedom. Let us now properly recognize the families of our fallen men and women. Let us not be the last state to do so.

For over 30 years, I have had the privilege of serving Hawaii's warriors and families in my capacity as Director of the Honolulu Vet Center, a national counseling program providing readjustment counseling for those transitioning from the war front to the home front. We also provide bereavement counseling for those families whose loved one died while on active duty.

The loss of a loved one creates a deep, painful and often permanent void for the family. As a community, we can and should do more to acknowledge their loss and the contribution of their loved ones who died in the service of our nation.

I was extremely proud of Hawaii's initiative in 2005 when the Hawaii Legislature acted to create the Hawaii Medal of Honor to recognize those members of the Armed Forces who were killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was a fitting tribute to the memory of those who died, as well as to the sacrifice of their families.

Let us now take the next needed step forward, as have 47 other states, in recognizing the contributions made by the families of our military personnel who died for us. Let us continue by rightfully honoring the families of Hawaii's fallen by adopting HB 1.

Respectfully,

Stephen T. Molnar

(808)262-4497

PBMtestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, February 15, 2011 9:59 PM
To: PBMtestimony
Cc: jdlwilliams@hawaii.rr.com
Subject: Testimony for HB1 on 2/17/2011 11:15:00 AM

Testimony for PBM 2/17/2011 11:15:00 AM HB1

Conference room: 309
Testifier position: oppose
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: June Williams
Organization: Individual
Address:
Phone:
E-mail: jdlwilliams@hawaii.rr.com
Submitted on: 2/15/2011

Comments:

I find the information about the proposed taxation of retirement income confusing. I have a fixed income and would, of course, prefer that my rather meager state retirement be not taxed. I do understand that every citizen must make some sacrifices in the dire financial circumstances in which we find ourselves. When I clicked on latest hearings, I got no response. I would be glad present at a hearing that was publicly announced. I would hope that fairness is the ultimate goal.