

SB 880

RELATING TO VETERANS RIGHTS AND BENEFITS.

Prohibits protests within 300 feet of the entrance of any state or county veterans cemetery from 60 minutes before to 60 minutes after the funeral.

**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES
Department of Hawaii**

**TESTIMONY TO THE
Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations
And Military Affairs**

**Relating to Veterans Rights and Benefits
Veterans Funerals; Protest**

SB880

**Thursday, 3 February 2011
2:45P.M.
Conference Room 224**

FROM

**Stanley Y. Fernandez
State Senior Vice Commander
Department of Hawaii
Veterans of Foreign Wars**

TO

**Senator Will Espero, Chair
Senator Michele Kidani, Vice Chair**

**IN SUPPORT OF SB 880, Relating to Veterans Rights and Benefits,
Veterans Funerals; Protest**

For those that have served our country defense and have made the ultimate sacrifice to their loved ones, their state, and to their nation, "we" the people of the United States should demonstrate and display our ultimate homage and respect for their service. For the sake of their families, their funeral service

should not be marred by political or religious protesters. We owe their families and loved ones the respect and love for their loss. It for this, that I am urging your support for passage of SB-880. Thank you for allowing me to express my comments.

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STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF VETERANS' SERVICES
TESTIMONY ON S.B. No. 880, RELATING TO VETERANS RIGHTS AND
BENEFITS

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, AND
MILITARY AFFAIRS

February 3, 2011

Good afternoon Chair Will Espero, Vice Chair Michelle Kidani, and members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations, and Military Affairs.

The interim Director of the Office of Veterans' Services (OVS), Mr. Mark Moses, appreciates this opportunity to support S.B. No. 880, as long as it does not replace or adversely impact priorities established in the Executive Biennium Budget Request. This measure prohibits protest within 300 feet of the entrance of any cemetery under the control of the Office of Veterans' Services from 60 minutes before and 60 minutes after a funeral.

The OVS has direct control of only the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe; however, this bill includes the seven county veterans cemeteries located on the neighbor islands. Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of Hawaii's veteran community.

I will respond to questions from the committee.



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Nana I Ka Pono Na Ma

Papa Ola Lokahi

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Papa Ola Lokahi
Non-profit Native Hawaiian organization founded in 1988 for the purpose of improving the health and well-being of Native Hawaiians and other native peoples of the Pacific and continental United States.

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Hardy Spoehr

TESTIMONY: SB 880, RELATING TO VETERANS RIGHTS AND BENEFITS

SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

Sen. Will Espero, Chair
Sen. Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 3, 2011
2:45 pm
Conference Room 224
State Capitol

Hardy Spoehr, Executive Director

Aloha Chairman Espero, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations, and Military Affairs. Papa Ola Lokahi (POL) strongly supports for this measure.

Native Hawaiians and others from our island community have served in the military with great distinction from the War of 1812 to the present day. At a time of great loss and sadness there are those that would infringe upon a family's farewell to a loved one. It is a sad commentary that a bill (and law) is needed to protect the ability of the family and friends to mourn in peace but given the fact that there are others who are not from our island community who would place their political agendas ahead of this, POL strongly supports this legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide supportive testimony for this important measure.



Hawaii Chapter, MOAA
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**Testimony of
Thomas Smyth, President
Military Officers Association of America, Hawaii Chapter
Before the Committee on
Public Safety, Government Operations and Military Affairs
Thursday, February 3, 2011, 2:45 pm, Room 224
SB 880 Relating to Veterans Rights and Benefits
Chair Espero, Vice Chair Kidani and Committee Members**

Our chapter, with over 400 retired and currently serving officers of the Uniformed Services, strongly supports the careful and legal restriction on visual and vocal protests at funerals of military personnel at our veteran's cemeteries.

We have watched with great sorrow the tragic efforts of a very small number of misguided and uncaring people to use the sad occasion of a military funeral for their own narrow political and philosophical purposes. We support any effort to restrain and restrict this activity.

There is certainly a fine line between America's cherished right to "free speech" and the right of the family and friends of a deceased military person to be buried in a ceremony free of distractions and disparagements.

We hope that this bill will move forward and be given careful legal review to ensure that no litigation arises because of it. We understand that earlier court decisions around the country have been somewhat mixed on this matter and we sincerely believe this bill can achieve its full purpose if carefully prepared.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.