

My name is Chelsea Fernandez and I am writing a testimony because I would like to be confirmed as the a member of the Advisory Board on Veteran Services.

My family is a military family. I have 2 grandfathers that served in the Army, 2 Uncles that served in the Vietnam War, 2 Uncles that have served in the Gulf Era, and 2 cousins that have also served. Being among that military influence and being the smallest in the family and a girl, I wanted to keep our military legacy going and prove that girls can do it too! So my junior year of high school I decided to join the Army Reserve.

In 2003, our unit, the 411th Engineer Combat Battalion, was called to active duty. We served a year tour in Iraq. During that tour I was honored to work with an amazing group of soldiers. Those relationships that I developed and experiences we went thorough, help me to push forward to do what is right for all of us. In 2009, I decided to leave the military, and became an Army wife. I then served on the Family Readiness Group for our company and helped put together many family events for our soldiers.

The saying 'once a soldier always a soldier' stuck with me. I knew that even though I wasn't still in the military, I wanted to be apart of it somehow. As I watched my fellow battle buddies all come to the end if their contract and made the transition to civilian life, I heard stories of divorce, violence, unemployment and so much hardship. I thought there has to be something that we can do to help them. They served their country with honor, did things and saw things that only a strong soldier can do and yet they are home now suffering. It wasn't right. I spoke with a few fellow veterans and they has stated they weren't feeling like they were supported. I made a few calls and connections but had no success in my mission to bring awareness for our young veterans and the different needs that needed to be met. It was a few weeks later that I would receive a phone call that would start me in that direction that would change that forever.

I got a phone call from Don Mitsuyuki because a group of women was looking for a women veteran that had served in the recent war, and he thought of me. So I made a connection with the Business and Professional Women Hawaii. I had the honor of being their guest speaker at the state convention. They were pushing forward a program called Joining Forces for Women Veterans. I went to another conference speaking on women's rights in the workplace and how being a women veteran is not only a great thing but a distinct group that needed attention. From

there I was able to speak at the 2012 Women's Legislative Caucus on behalf of other women veterans, as that packet was dedicated to women veterans.

Since then I have been chosen to serve on the Hawaii Women's Military Veterans Task Force. This task force has met since March of 2012 and together working with other veterans, we were able to put together a very informational legislative report in the issues that women veterans face and what we as a task force would like to do to move forward to resolve some of these issues.

My involvement with the veteran community continues to grow. In the past six months, there were numerous events that I helped coordinate for our veterans. I was able to help with the Hire our Heroes job fair on Maui, it was a great gathering of our young veterans that are searching for jobs and the cooperation of our local employers made it a great turn out.

I was able to work with the Strategist, Maui Economic Development Board's Women in Technology team and Business and Professional Women Hawaii, to put together Maui's first women veteran stand down event. It was a great turn out and we were able to make new ties with women veterans on Maui.

I also worked with a community organization called We Love Veterans in their efforts to honor veterans on Veterans Day weekend. Yet another connection was made with MG Anthony Taguba, and he was able to come to Maui for the weekend. A picnic in his honor was planned and also a luncheon, where he was able to share with us his efforts to develop leaders.

I worked with the Korean War Veterans, as they were in charge of Veterans Day events on Maui and got to have MG Taguba be their guest speaker at their ceremony.

My latest task that I am so very honored to be a part of is the creation of the Military Student Club at the University of Hawaii Maui Campus. The efforts of the faculty and veteran counselors, this club was formed within two meetings with the Clubs Constitution already submitted to the Student Life Coordinator. In the workings of this is also the plan to open a Student Veteran Resource Center on campus. It will be a place where student veterans can gather and get help with benefit questions, tutoring, and just a place to be together as comrades. The leadership of this veterans group is tremendous and their drive to push forward is amazing.

I hope that you will consider me a good candidate to fill the position in the Advisory Board on Veterans Services because I feel that I will represent our young veterans well and hopefully draw more veterans like myself to get more

involved and stand with pride to hold the title of being a Veteran.

LATE TESTIMONY

GM573

Submitted on: 2/26/2013

Testimony for PSM on Feb 26, 2013 14:45PM in Conference Room 224

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Rachel James	Individual	Support	No

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY

GM 573 Submitting for consideration and confirmation
To the Advisory Board on Veterans Services,
Gubernatorial Nominee,
CHELSEA ANN FERNANDEZ for a term to expire
6-30-2016

PRESENTATION TO THE

SENATE COMMITTEE PUBLIC SAFETY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND
MILITARY AFFAIRS

February 26, 2013

Chair Espero, Vice Chair Baker and Committee members:

I am Rachel James, Hawaii Women's Military Veterans Task Force Secretary. I support GM 573 confirmation of Chelsea Ann Fernandez to be appointed to the Advisory Board on Veterans Services for a term to expire June 30, 2016.

I have had the pleasure of working with Chelsea Ann on the Hawaii Women's Military Veterans Task Force since April of 2012. From then to now, Chelsea Ann has consistently attended monthly meetings on the island of Oahu and since accepting the position of Treasurer has excellently attended to the pecuniary matters of the Task Force. As a female Veteran of recent conflicts, Chelsea Ann brings a unique and readily applicable perspective to matters dealing with Veterans. Her service in the community and personal experiences in transitioning to veteran from service accumulate to lend a unique perspective that links the knowledge of the past with the innovative opportunities of today.

Chelsea Ann Fernandez is an exemplary individual who will surely serve well as an Advisory Board member on Veteran Services. She is well versed, competent, empathetic and well aware of the circumstances of Military Veterans throughout the

islands of Hawaii. Her current career success is not only an indicator of her drive, dedication, and remarkable acumen in business matters, but is also evidence of her compassion and commitment to service. These qualities will serve her well as an Advisory Board member.

During such and tumultuous time in our Nation's military, it is important for the Advisory Board on Veteran Services to have a person who is well aware of the current service issues facing our Nation's newest Veterans, and who also has an understanding of and respect for the plight of our Nation's older military Veterans. This person is Chelsea Ann Fernandez. I believe the Advisory Board on Veterans Services would benefit greatly from Chelsea Ann's inclusion. I fully support her appointment, as I believe it to be a fortuitous opening for mutual benefit.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Chelsea Ann Fernandez's confirmation and consideration.