

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
Senator Will Espero, Chair
Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair

Hearing on HB2072, Requesting the creation and funding of a veteran women services coordinator position within the Office of Veteran's Services, the State Department of Defense.

DATE: Thursday, March 13, 2014
TIME: 2:45 p.m.
PLACE: Conference Room 224

Aloha Chair Espero, Vice Chair Baker and Committee Members,

I am Ann S. Freed, member of The Hawaii Military Women's Task Force Committee and, we are in strong support of this measure.

The Task Force was formed by the Legislature in 2012 to address the needs of women veterans in Hawaii. We submitted a report to the 2013 Legislature that detailed preliminary findings concerning our women warriors. We found that military sexual trauma (MST) is rampant in the armed services and that homelessness and joblessness along with PTSD are some of the major attendant problems that our women face.

We support the HD1 version of this bill, which would amend the original language that required the coordinator to only serve women veterans and required applicants to have an honorable discharge. As to the first point, some victims of MST are men and we would want the coordinator to help them as well. As to the second point, many women who have suffered MST are forced out of the service with other than honorable discharges as part of the rape culture that exists in the current military environment. We would not want these women to be excluded from applying for the position, as they might be uniquely qualified.

Some Background: Last year's report to the Legislature included a recommendation to create a Women's Services Coordinator position. The position was created as an "additional duty". This year we would like the position to be created and funded within the Office of Veteran's Services (OVS).

If anything the need for the position has become more dire, with ever increasing revelations of trauma and abuse suffered by military women at home and abroad. This coupled with the fact that with our longest war winding down, we can expect a flood of women veterans in need of services in our state.

Additionally, some of our women veteran's report that the VA Pacific Islands Health Care System has difficulty hiring and retaining a Women Veterans Program Manager. A social worker is currently the "acting" manager.

The coordinator will fill a gap in care and will aid with the process of helping the approximately 12,000 women veterans in Hawaii to move forward in their lives. She can help the OVS to collect data, integrate services and move forward on the Task Force's recommendations.

Hawaii's military women have served our nation often at great cost to their health, their lives and too often to their human dignity. As a state we need to recognize their sacrifice by addressing their needs.

Mahalo for allowing me to testify

Ann S. Freed

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LATE TESTIMONY

**GAY LESBIAN
BISEXUAL AND
TRANSGENDER
CAUCUS**



**DEMOCRATIC
PARTY OF HAWAII**

Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental and Military Affairs

Senator Will Espero, Chair

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HEARING ON HB 2072, HD1 (HSCR605-14)

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RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE. Establishes a Women's Veterans Coordinator position within the Office of Veterans' Services to assist women veterans who served on active duty for the full period they were activated and who were discharged with other than a dishonorable discharge,

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

The Task Force was formed by the Legislature in 2012 to address the needs of women veterans in Hawaii. The task force submitted its report to the 2013 Legislature, which that military sexual trauma (MST) is rampant in the armed services and that homelessness and joblessness along with PTSD are some of the major attendant problems that our women face.

We support the HD1 version of this bill. Some MST victims are men: we would want to get. Many women who have suffered MST are forced out of the service with other than honorable discharges in the current military environment. We would not want these women to be excluded from applying for the position, as they might be uniquely qualified.

The Task Force report recommended the creation of a Women's Services Coordinator position. We ask that the position to be created and funded within the Office of Veteran's Services (OVS).

With additional revelations of abuse suffered by military women at home and abroad, the position is crucial. Furthermore, our longest war is winding down, and we should anticipate a flood of women veterans returning and in need of services.

Additionally, some women veteran's report that the VA Pacific Islands Health Care System has difficulty hiring and retaining a Women Veterans Program Manager. A social worker is currently the "acting" manager.

The coordinator will fill a gap in care and will aid with the process of helping the approximately 12,000 women veterans in Hawaii to move forward in their lives. She can help the OVS to collect data, integrate services and move forward on the Task Force's recommendations.

Hawaii's military women have served our nation often at great cost to their health, their lives and too often to their human dignity. As a state we need to recognize their sacrifice by addressing their needs.

Mahalo for allowing me to testify.

Jo-Ann M. Adams
Legislative Liaison