



**LATE**

# SB3113

Measure Title: RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.

Report Title: Office of Veterans' Services; Veterans Services Counselor IV; Appropriation (\$)

Description: Appropriates funds for the establishment of a veterans services counselor IV position within the Office of Veterans' Services to assist all veterans, with a primary focus on female veterans.

Companion: [HB2489](#)

Package: None

Current Referral: PSM, WAM

Introducer(s): NISHIHARA, ESPERO

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Subject: Submitted testimony for SB3113 on Feb 16, 2016 13:18PM  
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### **SB3113**

Submitted on: 2/16/2016

Testimony for PSM on Feb 16, 2016 13:18PM in Conference Room 229

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Rachel James	Women veterans subcommittee	Support	No

Comments: 蜂 COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS Senator Clarence Nishihara, Chair Senator Will Espero, Vice Chair DATE: Tuesday, February 16, 2016 TIME: 1:18 p.m. PLACE: Conference Room 229 STRONG SUPPORT FOR SB3113, that establishes and funds a veterans coordinator (counselor IV) position within the Office of Veterans' Services, to assist all veterans, with a primary focus on female veterans who served on active duty for the full period they were activated. Aloha Chair Nishihara and committee members, I am Rachel James, Secretary of The Hawaii Military Women's Task Force Committee. We are in strong support of this measure. The Task Force was formed by the Legislature in 2012 to address the needs 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, that homelessness and joblessness along with PTSD, are some of the major problems that our women face. The 2013 report included a recommendation to create a Women's Services Coordinator position. Last year HB2072 was introduced to create and fund this position as a "veterans service coordinator" focusing on women. Sadly the bill died in conference as the legislative clock ran out. We feel there is some urgency to create this position, based on our research. In order to assess the scope and type of needs, we did an informal survey of women veterans throughout the state. We found that women don't know what benefits they have, that they need services for PTSD and Military Sexual Trauma, that they need re-entry services and employment services, and that they would like help getting educational benefits. Some of them had questions about eligibility. Some complained of lack of access to OB/GYN and breastfeeding among others services, many of which are provided but the veterans were unaware. Our results match those of two more extensive surveys by Disabled American Veterans and CalVet. All of the surveys demonstrated a need for continuous education about benefits and constant outreach. The coordinator/counselor will provide a focus with which to address the specific needs of women veterans, bridging gaps in care. It will aid with the process of helping the approximately 12,000 women veterans in Hawaii to move forward in their lives. It will help the OVS to collect data, integrate services, educate women veterans on their benefits, assist women veterans in getting access to appropriate

health care, assist the task force in outreach efforts and a host of other duties. But, probably most important, the counselor will help the Office of Veterans Services to assess what services are lacking or inadequate. 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. This position is the first step in doing that. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify  
Rachel James Secretary, Women's Military Task Force Committee Office of  
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