



TESTIMONY BY:

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STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
869 PUNCHBOWL STREET  
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February 15, 2022  
3:15 P.M.  
State Capitol, Teleconference

**S.B. 355**  
**RELATING TO REGISTRATION FEES**

Senate Committee(s) on Transportation and  
Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs

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The Department of Transportation (DOT) provides **comments** to this bill that proposes a reduction of the annual vehicle registration fee by 50% for disabled veterans who have 50% or more but less than 100% service-connected disability rating.

The DOT generally does not support reductions in revenue because reductions in revenue are detrimental to the state highway fund. The DOT supports all users of the state highway system and collected revenues provides safer infrastructure enhancements for all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and motorists and all funds positively impact the department's ability to qualify state matching funds for the highways federal-aid program.

The number of veterans with a service-related disability of 50% or more but less than 100% is unclear. The DOT understands that the Hawaii Office of Veterans' Services is reaching out to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for the information. The DOT will be able to determine the potential reduction in revenues this represents once we receive this information.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**  
**OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES**  
459 PATTERSON RD, E-WING, RM 1-A103  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96819

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 355  
RELATING TO REGISTRATION FEES

PRESENTATION TO  
THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY,  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL, AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

BY

RONALD P. HAN JR.  
DIRECTOR, STATE OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

FEBRUARY 15, 2022

Chair Lee and Chair Nishihara, Vice Chair Inouye and Vice Chair DeCoite and respective Members of the Committees on Transportation and Public Safety, Intergovernmental and Military Affairs.

I am Ron Han, Director, State Office of Veterans Services (OVS) and I am providing written testimony in **SUPPORT** with comments of SB 355.

This measure, if passed, would reduce the annual vehicle registration fee by fifty percent for disabled veterans who have a fifty per cent or more but less than a one hundred percent service-connected disability rating provided that this reduced fee shall not extend to any vehicle used for commercial purposes or to more than one vehicle owned by a disabled veteran. Currently, only one hundred percent rated service-connected veterans receive registration fee exemption. The State Office of Veterans Services has submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to Veterans Affairs to provide the number of 50%-90% service-connected disabled veterans who reside in Hawaii who may be able to utilize the benefits of this measure.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 355.

The OVS supports the intent expressed in this measure as long as its implementation does not impact or replace the priorities set forth in the Executive Budget.

Director Ron Han; [ronald.p.han@hawaii.gov](mailto:ronald.p.han@hawaii.gov) , (808) 433-0422

# TAX FOUNDATION OF HAWAII

126 Queen Street, Suite 305

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 Tel. 536-4587

SUBJECT: MOTOR VEHICLE, Reduced Registration Fees for Disabled Veterans

BILL NUMBER: SB 355 (Carried over from 2021 Session)

INTRODUCED BY: GABBARD, CHANG, FEVELLA, KEITH-AGARAN, MISALUCHA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Reduces the annual vehicle registration fee by fifty per cent for disabled veterans who are fifty per cent or more disabled. However, there is no showing that veterans are unfairly singled out by the tax or otherwise face undue hardship, so why should the rest of us be required to pay for repairs, maintenance, and similar charges on roads they use?

SYNOPSIS: Amends section 249-31.5, HRS, to provide that a disabled veteran who: (1) is a resident of Hawaii; (2) has been other than dishonorably discharged from the United States uniformed armed forces; and (3) is determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor to have a service-connected disability rating of fifty per cent or greater but less than one hundred per cent for compensation or a service-connected disability rating of fifty per cent or greater but less than one hundred per cent, shall pay a reduced annual vehicle registration fee as required by section 249-31 equal to fifty per cent of the amount required under that section; provided that this reduced fee shall not extend to any vehicle used for commercial purposes or to more than one vehicle owned by the disabled veteran.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

STAFF COMMENTS: Section 249-31.5 was added by Act 128, SLH 2015, and provides that 100% disabled veterans (except those dishonorably discharged) shall be exempt from the state motor vehicle registration fee provided the exemption shall not apply to commercial vehicles and be applicable to only one motor vehicle for vehicles registered or renewed after 1/1/2016. The present bill seeks to expand on the benefits offered to disabled veterans.

The motor vehicle weight tax and registration fees are user charges designed to recover the cost of construction and maintenance of Hawaii's highway system. It should be remembered that all motorists use the state highways and should, therefore, lend a hand in paying for good and safe roads. Note well, that any exemption granted to a select group of users requires that the lost revenues be made up by those who must continue to pay. Motorists generally will have to pick up the additional costs created by this proposed exemption.

Exemptions based solely on physical condition or age represent poor tax policy. So, while the exemption would provide relief to a disabled veteran, a single mom making minimum wage, barely making ends meet, must continue to pay these fees. Why is a 50% disabled veteran financially incapable of paying his or her fair share to maintain the state's highways?

Digested: 2/10/2022

**SB-355**

Submitted on: 2/14/2022 12:23:14 AM

Testimony for TRS on 2/15/2022 3:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Carolyn M Golojuch	Testifying for Rainbow Family 808	Support	No

Comments:

SB 355 is in keeping with respect of our Veterans.

**SB-355**

Submitted on: 2/10/2022 1:49:13 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/15/2022 3:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Carlos A. Santana	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**SB-355**

Submitted on: 2/12/2022 7:38:07 AM

Testimony for TRS on 2/15/2022 3:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly support SB355. Disabled veterans should be honored in every way possible and this is one way of showing support to disabled veterans. Please pass this bill.

Although I'm submitting this testimony as an individual, I'm the Vice-Chair of the Veterans Caucus and former Chair of the Advisory Board on Veterans Services.

Mike Golojuch, Sr., Lt Col, USAF(Ret)

TO THE SENATE  
THE THIRTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE  
REGULAR SESSION OF 2022

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Senator Chris Lee, Chair

Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL, AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Chair

Senator Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair

**HEARING SB355**

Re: **SB355**

POSITION: **STRONG SUPPORT SB355**

Aloha Chairs and Members,

I stand in strong support of as to the intent and language of SB355. We in Hawaii have a population Veterans that are considered 100% disabled in a service-connected manner. However, we also have a population of veterans that are not 100% disabled but fit the criteria but are 50% period service-disabled veteran. This bill seeks to provide these veterans with additional relief.

When deciding to support, oppose or provide comments on a bill I look at the intent of a bill and who it intends to serve. This bills intent to recognize veterans sacrifice to the people of this nation and the State of Hawaii. Additionally, what I support about this bill is that it is not without legislative overview, this bill directs the Office of Veteran's Services to the legislature to measure the success of this bill. This bill has board range of support to include the veterans caucus of the democratic party. Please pass this bill out of this joint committee. Passage will signify this legislative bodies commitment to recognize the service provided by veterans. Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony.

Mahalo,

Ken Farm

**SB-355**

Submitted on: 2/13/2022 10:36:13 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/15/2022 3:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Justin Wistinghausen	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

As a Veteran of the United States Marine Corps, I submit my SUPPORT for SB355. This will bring some relief to veterans that don't meet the 100% threshold but still receive disability from the VA.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Justin Wistinghausen

14-4



**LATE**

**SB-355**

Submitted on: 2/14/2022 4:19:09 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/15/2022 3:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Bryan Trumbower	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am a disabled Iraq WAR Veteran in support of this measure and more. I have had a rated disability since 2013 as a result of combat service going back to 2003. I have personally had to go a year without paying registration just maybe three years ago. I need the ability to travel to see a doctor and go to the VA. The VA relies more often now on community care where the Veteran must travel numerous places to seek care. I choose to drive illegally when I couldn't afford to pay. I had to go to where I needed and to hell with the law if it means I can't be treated for what I need care for. I also hope those deciding understand the complexities of the VA and how they rate Veterans. I personally am rated at 70% but have an unemployability rating so it's really 100%. Every time that needs explaining, it is never understood, and yet it is a very common rating for Veterans. Especially in instances like this designed to help but aren't thorough enough and because the VA never makes sense, it is used against the Veteran to prevent them from receiving this sort of relief. I also want to say that when a Veteran has to ignore the law, when they get in trouble it leads to an avalanche of disaster that leads to real consequences. Suicide, homelessness, incarceration and other family and medical problems that ruin honorable people destroyed by WAR. WAR should be enough reason for someone to not deserve homelessness or be denied medical care. Our state's cost of living and cost to drive is too much for real people. Police, teachers, firefighters, nurses... and real people suffer worse as time passes and nothing is done to make this better. This body must not only approve this, but do more, a lot more. If the state cares about its Veterans as it says, it must start challenging the local VA more and make sure they handle their end (VETERANS), so the state can focus on the rest. One third of the homeless in this state are Veterans, why aren't local leaders making noise about a failing VA like they do about the NAVY and Red Hill. It's the same story, the Navy is in it for itself against the state and people's wishes. The VA is very similar we just don't care about Veterans here in this state. The condition of the Waikiki Memorial is very representative of how the state cares about Veterans. Maybe because there is too much military and Veterans and the military get lumped together but we are very different and feel we have gotten lost. A lot of the resources are already in place for helping Veterans it the institutions that need to be called out. The VA has the money. The law makers passed the laws. The VA uses Veteran resources to lie to the state about how great they are, YET nothing improves in the Veteran community and the VA pretends they aren't the problem. Just like the NAVY and Red Hill pretends they aren't the problem, even though it is obvious to everyone they are. The problem at the local VA is just as obvious if our leaders and media take the time to focus on results, data, truth. Just as we are doing with Red Hill, we are refusing to let the Navy tell us everything is ok. We must pressure the VA the same, because things are not ok, and will never improve until we take real action and commit to following through for those who have shouldered the burdens of WAR for

Decades. We are more than homeless, mentally ill, irrational people. We are honorable, experienced WAR fighter who deserve far more than anything currently offered to the Veterans of this state like myself who are literally getting worse because of how terrible our local service are. THis bill is the least we deserve, free registration woudn't be unreasonable. You may not have the capacity to comprehend WAR but I assure you, half-off isn't charity.

**LATE**

**SB-355**

Submitted on: 2/15/2022 9:55:22 AM

Testimony for TRS on 2/15/2022 3:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
ROLINA FAAGAI	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

In support of this measure to provide disabled veteran a discount on motor vehicle registration fees for primary vehicle.