

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS, MILITARY AND HOMELAND
SECURITY

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Myers at 1:30 P.M. on February 6, 2007 in Room 241-N of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Representative L. Candy Ruff- excused
Representative Bob Bethell- excused
Representative Dick Kelsey- excused
Representative Kenny Wilk- excused

Committee staff present:

Art Griggs, Revisor of Statutes Office
Athena Andaya, Kansas Legislative Research
Betty Caruthers, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Representative Goico
Ken Stodgell, VFW State Legislative Chairman
Diane Duffey, Vice President of Finance, Board of Regents

Others attending:

See attached list.

Representative Goico moved, seconded by Representative Goyle for approval of Minutes of the House Committee on Veterans, Military and Homeland Security held on January 30, 2007, January 31, 2007, and February 1, 2007 be approved.

Motion carried.

Chairman Myers opened hearings on **HB 2209 - Scholarships for Military Service in Iraq and Afghanistan.**

Chairman Myers recognized Art Griggs, Revisor to give an explanation of the bill. The bill applies to State institutions and applies to anyone who has graduated from a Kansas high school with at least a 90 day military service in Iraq or Afghanistan beginning after 9/11/01.

Chairman Myers recognized Representative Goico who gave testimony as a proponent on the bill. This bill intends to honor returning Kansans who have actively served for at least 90 days before the service benefits would apply. He stated that this would apply to high school graduates or those who have received a GED. Questions centered around this vs. the GI Bill and whether there would be an overlap. There was a recommendation made regarding the State funding covering what the Federal Government funding would not. Wording changes were recommended to cover those who may become wounded thereby not being able to fulfill the full 90 days.

Chairman Myers recognized Ken Stodgell for testimony as a proponent for the bill. (Attachment 1) He strongly gave the VFW's endorsement to the bill. He believes this bill would help assure Kansas to have a strong work force and provide a higher quality of life.

Chairman Myers recognized Diane Duffey who gave testimony from a neutral standpoint. (Attachment 2) There was a correction made to the submitted testimony which is as follows: Paragraph 2 after Afghanistan put a period and delete 'and their spouses and dependents.' Also in paragraph 2 delete the entire last sentence. Thirty-six State institutions would be involved in this program; 6 State universities, 19 Community Colleges, 4 Technical Schools, 6 Technical Colleges, and Washburn University. This bill would cover a full tuition waiver.

A time of questions and answers followed with a number of recommendations being made for changes in the bill. With these recommendations in mind the Revisor will be working on a balloon to be presented to the

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE House Committee on Veterans, Military and Homeland Security at 1:30 P.M. on February 6, 2007 in Room 241-N of the Capitol.

Committee at a later date. Diane Duffey volunteered to assist Art Griggs with some rewording in the bill.

Chairman Myers closed hearings on **HB 2209**.

Chairman Myers adjourned the meeting at 2:20.

Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, February 7, 2007.

Veterans, Military & Homeland Security Testimony

Chairman Myers, Committee member's good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Kenneth Stodgell and I am the State Legislative Chairman for the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

My purpose for being here today is to support HB 2209. This proposed legislation would pay the tuition and fees for Kansas's high school graduates who served in Afghanistan or Iraq at Kansas's public colleges, universities and trade schools. We believe the cost to the state is a small price to pay, given the sacrifices these young men and women made in order to serve their country. Oftentimes these young people left their families, homes, and jobs and put opportunities of getting a higher education or training aside to be a part of our war effort.

This proposed legislation would help assure Kansas will continue to have a strong work force, will contribute to a viable economy and provide a higher quality of life.

We all need to remember the opportunities the GI Bill afforded those returning service men and women who served in WWII, Korea and Viet Nam. This proposed legislation is not nearly the magnitude of the GI Bill, but it would be a major contribution to Kansas and reflect many success stories as the GI Bill.

When one measures the initial economic impact for providing these educational opportunities for our veteran community, we believe the initial impact is small compared to our debt we owe these soldiers and their families for their sacrifices. The tragedies of war are sometimes these soldiers do not return home and because of the stress of war sometimes these returning soldiers do not have a home to come home to. War does not discriminate. Over the past couple years we have attended funerals in small towns like Tonganoxie and larger towns such as Leavenworth and Topeka. For those who return let's give them every opportunity we can.

We commend those legislators for having the concern, the compassion and foresight for proposing this legislation. The VFW endorses this bill.



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House Committee on Veterans, Military, and Homeland Security February 6, 2007

Regarding H.B. 2209 **Diane Duffy, Vice-President, Finance & Administration**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, good afternoon, my name is Diane Duffy, and I am here on behalf of the Kansas Board of Regents to testify regarding H.B. 2209.

This bill creates a tuition and fee waiver program for persons who have served in the military service in Iraq or Afghanistan and their spouses and dependents. Specifically, any person who graduated from high school in Kansas and who served in military service in Iraq or Afghanistan at least 90 days after September 11, 2001 would be eligible for the waiver. The spouse and dependents of any person serving any time in Iraq or Afghanistan would also be eligible for the waiver.

The eligible individuals would be entitled to a full tuition and fee waiver, up to 10 semesters, while attending a state university, community college, technical school or college, or Washburn University. Subject to appropriation, these state educational institutions would be reimbursed by the Kansas Board of Regents for the amount of the actual tuition and fee waivers.

Under the bill, this program would be administered in the same manner as the tuition and fee waiver program provided to the following groups: (1) dependents and spouses of public safety officers who die as a result of injury sustained while performing duties as a public safety officer; (2) dependents and spouses of Kansas residents who have died on or after September 11, 2001, while, and as a result of serving in military service; and (3) prisoners of war. In 1996 the Legislature initiated the waiver program for dependents of public safety officers killed in the line of duty. In 2001 and 2003, the law was amended to expand the program to include dependents of emergency medical services attendants and volunteer firefighters. Most recently in 2005 language was added to include: (a) a spouse of a public safety officer, (b) dependent or spouse of a Kansas resident who died on or after 9/11/01 while and as a result of serving in the military, and (c) POWs.

The Legislature intended to provide this benefit because of the service these individual's have provided to their state and country. By choosing this type of benefit, the Legislature recognizes that access to postsecondary education is an important tool to provide to a person who has gone through this very difficult experience. Currently, the Legislature appropriates an estimated \$62,000 annually for these three categories of persons. These policies have been successful in providing access, as our data shows that 23 people have taken advantage of the waivers since 1999.

The fiscal impact of this bill is estimated to be \$3,360,000 (State General Fund) to cover the tuition and fees for an estimated 700 soldiers and \$47,000 for a position in the Board office to

House Committee on Veterans, Military
and Homeland Security

2/6/07

Attachment 2

administer the program. The estimate is based upon information we gathered from the Kansas Army National Guard and Kansas Air National Guard indicating that to date 2,800 persons have been deployed since September 11, 2001 and would be eligible for a tuition and fee waiver under this bill. In our estimate, we assumed that only 25 percent or 700 of those eligible would participate based on the participation rates with the Kansas Air National Guard tuition assistance program. We used the average tuition and fee waiver amount for a full-time student in the current programs of \$4,800 per year to calculate an estimated annual cost in today's dollars of \$3,360,000.

Tuition revenues are important and critical to all public postsecondary institutions. Because of the potential magnitude of the fiscal impact of this legislation, the Board would request that consideration be given to amending the bill to require an annual revenue transfer from the State General Fund to the Kansas Board of Regents based on certified enrollments in order to reimburse the institutions for eligible applicants rather than making the program subject to the annual state appropriation process.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear on this bill. I'll be pleased to answer any questions you may have.