

MINUTES OF THE SENATE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dwayne Umbarger at 10:35 A.M. on February 6, 2006, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Senator Jim Barone- excused  
Senator David Wysong- excused

Committee staff present:

Jill Wolters, Revisor of Statutes Office  
Michael Corrigan, Revisor of Statutes Office  
Alan Conroy, Director, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
J. G. Scott, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
Reagan Cussimano, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
Amy Deckard, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
Audrey Dunkel, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
Judy Bromich, Chief of Staff  
Mary Shaw, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Charles M. Yunker, Adjutant, The American Legion Department of Kansas  
Darrell Bencken, Veterans of Foreign Wars  
David Brader, Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans, Department of Kansas  
James A. Bunker, Combat Veteran  
George Webb, Executive Director, Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs  
Edward F. Wieggers, Marysville, Kansas (written)

Others attending:

See attached list.

### **Bill Introduction**

Senator Schodorf moved, with a second by Senator Schmidt, to introduce a conceptual bill clarifying language that a principal of a school is informed of juvenile justice children if deemed necessary (No Revisor of Statutes Number). Motion carried on a voice vote.

The Chairman opened the public hearing on:

### **SB 428--Veterans service representatives, employment, compensation**

Staff briefed the Committee on the bill.

Chairman Umbarger welcomed the following conferees:

Charles Yunker, American Legion testified in support of the bill. (No written testimony was submitted.). Mr. Yunker mentioned that **SB 428** would restore the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars ability to supplement the wages of veterans service representatives who are accredited by the respective organizations. He detailed information on what the bill would provide.

Darrell Bencken, State Adjutant, Kansas Veterans of Foreign Wars, testified in support of the bill (Attachment 1). Mr. Bencken explained that **SB 428** was developed in response to recent changes implemented by the KCVA that veterans, partnering Veteran's service organizations, some staff at the VA on the local and at the national level, and members of this body of legislators have found detrimental to veteran services in Kansas. He detailed these changes in his written testimony.

David Brader, Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans Department of Kansas, testified in opposition of the bill (Attachment 2). Mr. Brader explained that veterans are a big concern to the Disabled American Veterans that they are treated with honor and respect that they deserve in saying that **SB 428** should be about the

## CONTINUATION SHEET

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veterans and not two service organizations. In closing, Mr. Brader mentioned that the State of Kansas should recognized all veterans organizations and not a select two. All veterans organizations should be treated equally.

James A. Bunker, Combat Veteran, testified as an opponent of the bill (Attachment 3). Mr. Bunker explained that there are many parts of **SB 428** that should be stricken and some parts that need to be changed are because of changes in other laws. These suggested changes are detailed in Mr. Bunker's written testimony. In closing, Mr. Bunker noted that there needs to be a quality control system working with the KCVA on all of the VSR's and this will help in setting training goals for all of the offices throughout Kansas. Copies of suggested amendments to **SB 428** were distributed by Mr. Bunker (Attachment 4).

George Webb, Executive Director, Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs, testified as a neutral conferee on the bill (Attachment 5). Mr. Webb submitted a suggested balloon amendment to **SB 428** (Attachment 6). Mr. Webb mentioned that he firmly believed that the changes proffered on the bill would have disastrous consequences for the Agency, for numerous veterans service organizations, and for the veterans of this state. Mr. Webb highlighted the primary criterion to any organizational decision must be the best interests of the veterans in the State of Kansas. However, other decision criteria should ensure that operations remain within the proper boundaries of legality, ethics and fairness. Mr. Webb noted that in addition to allowing poor management practices and statutory violations, the KCVA was not structured or organized to provide the best support to all veterans of Kansas. In closing, Mr. Webb noted that KCVA was not consulted on the bill when drafted, but they look forward to a positive, productive solution in which the KCVA can assist all veterans and veterans organizations in the best way possible—and in which the KCVA, as a state agency, functions within standards of conduct that are beyond reproach.

Written testimony was submitted by Edward F. Wieggers, Commissioner, Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs (Attachment 7).

There being no further conferees to come before the Committee, the Chairman closed the public hearing on **SB 428**.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m. The next meeting was scheduled for February 7, 2006.