

MINUTES OF THE SENATE FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Pete Brungardt at 10:30 a.m. on March 15, 2007 in Room 231-N of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Senator James Barnett- excused
Senator Anthony Hensley- excused

Committee staff present:

Kathie Sparks, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Dennis Hodgins, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Ken Wilke, Revisor of Statutes Office
Connie Burns, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Others attending:

See attached list.

Final Action:

SB 368 - Professional corporations, allowing licensed audiologists to form.

A technical amendment was provided by staff to the bill. (Attachment 1) The amendment was offered at the committee hearing which also adds to the list licensed speech-language pathologists.

Senator Reitz moved to adopt the amendment and to pass SB 368 out favorably as amended. Senator Ostmeyer seconded the motion. The motion carried.

HB 2210 - Kansas veterans affairs; service grant programs

SB 276 - Kansas veterans health program

SB 277 - Veterans programs; eligibility for

SB 376 - Kansas commission on Veterans Affairs; Senate confirmation of members; filling of vacancies

Chairman Brungardt opened the hearing and discussion on **HB 2210**, **SB 276**, **SB 277**, and **SB 367**.

Staff provided an overview of the bills in a table format of current law and the proposed legislation.

SB 276 would change the name from The Persian Gulf War Veterans Health Initiative Act to The Kansas Veterans' Health Act; items that would change are: the number of members on the board would increase, the Governors' appointments, what groups a member would be from, the number of meetings, and would mandate a follow up survey to collect information on any changes in the conditions or symptoms of the veterans' who were initially surveyed. (Attachment 2)

SB 367 deals with the membership of the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs, (Attachment 3) a list would be provided to the Governor and the Executive Director positions would be subject to Senate Confirmation. Currently only the VFW and the American Legion would meet the classifications as outlined in the bill.

The next table showed the differences between **SB 277**, **HB 2210**, and current law, which has been in effect since July 1, 2006. (Attachment 4) Qualified Veterans' Service Organizations under **HB 2210** is the American Legion; **SB 277** is American Legion, AMVETS, Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc., Vietnam Veterans' of America, Disabled American Veterans', and Paralyzed Veterans' of America, and under current law is the American Legion, AMVETS, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans of

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee at 10:30 a.m. on March 15, 2007 in Room 231-N of the Capitol.

America, and Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc. Under current law, the Disabled American Veterans' and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States would require a change in national policy. Disabled American Veterans' do not cross-accredit other veterans service organizations, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States do not accredit the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs. (Attachment 5) Fiscal Notes were provided for the bills. (Attachment 6)

Representative Candy Ruff provided written testimony in support of **HB 2210**. (Attachment 7) The bill spells out the eligibility of the Veterans Service Organizations and some tweaking from the bill last year. The claims program was designed to replicate the existing veteran services at the three veteran hospitals in Kansas, and using funds from the claims program the eligible Veterans' Service Organizations (VSO) would not only process VA benefit claims taken at the three hospitals, but also referrals from the KCVA.

Darrell Bencken, Kansas Veterans of Foreign Wars, provided written testimony in support of **HB 2210**. (Attachment 8) He asked the committee to give the present Grant Program a three year period to mature and prove to everyone that it is working beyond expectations.

George Webb, Executive Director, Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs, provided written testimony in opposition to **HB 2210**. (Attachment 9) The bill would take the veterans' assistance capability away from a state governmental agency and leave only the option of a private organization.

James Bunker, Chairman Kansas Persian Gulf War Health Initiative Advisory Board, provided neutral written testimony for **HB 2210**. (Attachment 10) If the bill is passed as is:

- may leave the American Legion as the only VSO able to be on the Granting Program
- Leaves veterans using the KCVA without a Power of Attorney. State may have a lawsuit
- Makes everyone use the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers training
- Leaving out "cross-accredit employees of Kansas Commission of Veterans Affairs (KCVA) and veterans' claims assistance representatives of other VSOs" lets the DAV and VFW use the program
- To allow other VSO in the program the bill would have to be amended
- The bill makes a lot of changes to a program that is less than a year old, and there are sections of the bill that ALL of the VSOs are not happy with

Joy Moser, Commissioner, Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs, provided written testimony explaining her concerns on **HB 2210** and **SB 277**. (Attachment 11) If **HB 2210** passes it would make it more difficult, if not impossible, for the KCVA to serve Kansas veterans. KCVA's goal is to help all Kansas veterans, this can be more easily done by expanding the numbers of veterans' organizations participating and thus can expect to reach greater numbers of veterans to help them in receiving the benefits they have earned and are entitled to. Veterans should be able to choose whom they give their power of attorney to, so that they may be helped. There are veterans that may go without benefits before they will give their power of attorney to certain veterans' organizations. Ms. Moser would recommend not passing **HB 2210**, as it is too soon to make changes to the law when not knowing for sure what changes are needed.

Chairman Brungardt closed the hearing and discussion on **HB 2210**, **SB 276**, **SB 277**, and **SB 367**, and told the committee that he would give them time to look over the material that was presented at the hearing.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 am. The next scheduled meeting is March 20, 2007.