

## **Testimony by Mark San Souci, February 21, 2012**

### **Oregon Senate Veterans & Military Affairs Committee on HB 4063**

**Mister Chair Senator Boquist and committee, thank you for this opportunity to express Department of Defense support for House Bill 4063. My name is Mark San Souci, Department of Defense Regional Liaison for Military Families for the Northwest, working for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Family & Community Policy.**

**First off, we thank you for considering HB 4063 in this compressed session.**

**Last year, with one million veterans unemployed; with a post 9/11 unemployment rate of 13.3%; and an unemployment rate for 18-24 year old veterans at 21.9%; the Department of Defense began supporting efforts in the states to ask states to give separating Service members credit, so that they may not be held back from finding employment or finishing a degree.**

**According a The White House press release of November 7, 2011 announcing the Wounded Warriors Tax Credit, "as we end the war in Iraq and wind down the war in Afghanistan, over one million service members are projected to leave the military between 2011 and 2016. Accordingly, there is more work to do to ensure these men and women can find jobs at home when they return."**

**We are asking legislative leaders like you to establish policies that ensure separating Service members do not have to repeat requirements completed during their military career to obtain academic credit or an occupational license.**

**Last year, four states enacted new laws to help grant our veterans credit towards licensing and/or academic credit. So far for the 2012 session, there are 24 bills in 14 other states resembling the one before you today that we ask you to support.**

It is important to us that you know we are not asking for direct licensure if it is not equivalent. In cases where the regulatory agency or board determines partial credit but it saves time and expense and helps get them there, even if not completely, that is what we seek. We only seek credit where credit is due.

A couple of other points to consider: You and I have *already* paid for this veteran's training within the DoD schools and with years of experience while serving our Nation with our *federal* tax dollars.

Also, the more credit given to a veteran towards licensing or a degree or certification, the more school slots can be made available to civilians, especially in programs where may be waiting lists to get in.

In response to the White House Task Force on Veterans Employment, and from passage of the VOW to Hire the Heroes Act of 2011, the Department of Defense is also, *right now*, working feverishly with the US Department of Labor to link service transcripts of military occupations with private sector licensure requirements, while concurrently asking state regulatory authorities in pilot states Washington, Illinois, and Maryland, to review select military occupations to determine whether the training and experience are sufficient to be useful in rendering licensing credit in a given occupation.

As is well known, Oregon is home to thousands of veterans, and is a desired location for separating and retiring military members when choosing where to live after leaving the military. A 2010 Defense Manpower Data Center Study reported that Oregon had 1,296 military separate or retire back to Oregon in Fiscal Year 2010. (Awaiting 2011 data).

At around 1,296 annually, we can expect that highly qualified ex-military people will continue to enjoy Oregon's quality of life, and many will continue to choose Oregon when transitioning into civilian careers.

Finally, I'm frequently asked what other states are doing in this area. In May 2011, Washington state passed two bills – one for medical occupations and one for non medical occupations, into law as of July 22nd. Washington modifies the statutory chapters of 21 commercial occupations and 14 healthcare related

occupations. It is considered by us as Best Practice legislation. Your bill is modeled after Washington state and also would be a BP.

We ask this committee and this legislature in Oregon to join the other 14 states and rising now in session and considering this help for our veterans, along with the four (WA, UT, CO, WV) that did it last year.

Thank you for taking up this issue, and for your consideration. I stand by for any questions you may have.