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To: [Malone Debbie](#)
Subject: FW: SB281 testimony
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For OLIS

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From: greg Byers [mailto:kgregb151@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, May 14, 2013 8:51 PM
To: Larson Tyler
Subject: SB281 testimony

Please accept this as my testimony regarding SB281, adding PTSD to the OMMP list of accepted maladies/conditions treatable with Cannabis.

My name is Kenneth Gregory Byers, I live at 33523 Bloomberg Rd, Eugene, Oregon.

I am a 61 year old, 100 percent disabled US Navy veteran that served in the SE Asian theater of war aboard the USS Kitty Hawk, CVA-63 off the coast of Vietnam, in 1970/71. I served as an Electrician's Mate 3rd class, a Petty Officer, with an obligation to do my duty regardless of what I was ordered to do, i.e.: climb a control tower lighting mast 11 stories above the flight deck in heavy seas to service the system, drop down a sixty foot ladder without safety gear (to save weight) into a strength sapping, super hot, high humidity space to service the lighting system/electrical circuitry, rewire compartments with better lights and outlets or some such thing as a regular part of your daily job, then one would be assigned additional duty such as to generate power via a "Generator Switchboard Control Panel", to make it so a different Helmsman could steer the ship in "After Steering" by sitting in a stuffy phone booth waiting for orders to shift control from main steering to aft steering, deep in the hot noisy bowels in the stern of the ship by moving a switch no one else but an Electrician's Mate was allowed touch, to name a few jobs and duties an Electrician like myself might be assigned during a West Pacific cruise in those days.

During one "Line Period", it is the length of time a ship would be out on "The Line" fighting/supporting efforts on shore usually from only a few miles at sea, just over the horizon so as to be unseen from shore yet close enough to be efficiently affective at running cover or on direct attacks on specific sites, I was assigned the duty of Bomb Underway Replenishment Petty Officer.

As it turns out on our longest line period of the cruise, one of forty five days, I became a direct link in the replenishment chain of 500lb and 1,000lb bombs of all types, straight explosives, phosphorus, chemicals of some sort and others, with all kinds of fuses or triggering devices when armed and ready for delivery. I led a small crew of three other sailors moving pallets of 3,000lbs of bombs on a pallet at a time for as many as 20 hours in a day, usually 16 hours to 18 hours most shifts. We did this for 45 days handling these devices of destruction and death without cease except to wait for the next wave coming down to the Armory from the deck above or going up topside to be attached to Fighters and Bombers for

air express delivery in anywhere SE Asia from the border with China down and around the corner to near Thailand.

I knew what was happening as these pieces of ordinance left our manual fork lift and disappeared behind the elevator door going up, they were being dropped by our jets and their pilots deep into SE Asia causing a lot of mayhem and death; as it turns out this equaled sixty nine million pounds of bombs and was mostly dropped on Laotians and Cambodians not actually involved in the conflict we were fighting in Vietnam. This came to known as the "illegal bombing of Cambodia and Laos" that helped to end the conflict sometime later.

When not busy doing this or some other daily task, one was allowed to observe "Flight Ops", from the aptly named "Vultures Gallery", a pair of catwalks above the flight deck on the side of the control tower/island, when jet aircraft were being launched or recovered from their current sorties. It was a "safe" place to see what our mission was, to launch and recover jet aircraft after delivering their rain of death. It made me very conscious of my role in this, I was following my orders but not my conscience, that of a pacifist trying to safely fulfill his contract with the US Government by being a good Sailor, looking 4.0, doing my assigned tasks without question or hesitation, so I could earn my way out of poverty by keeping my eligibility for the GI Bill and it's benefits with an Honorable Discharge, which I earned in late 1975 with a few Medals and other Citations for jobs well done.

I volunteered to become a Naval Adviser in the Small Boat/Brown Water Navy of PBRs (Patrol Boats River), and Swift Boats (they are real) "In Country" as a way to stop being assigned this or similar duty again. I was an Electrician's Mate not an Ordinance Man, my rating had me doing electrical work of all sorts but I was not assigned to not even one day of Bomb Handling School. I was well trained in my rating and yet accidents do happen even with electricity but the likelihood of any one, more than yourself, being injured or killed were small. There are many very serious "accidents" that have occurred in US Naval history while handling ammunition, bombs, rockets, fuel and so many other dangerous substances while on a ship either underway replenishing, like we were doing or regular Naval operations in our case with fully armed and fueled airplanes waiting to take off to fly sorties or landing for the next twelve hours straight, whether day or night. All the while there was the very great risk of something going wrong with the innate ability to cause great harm to hundreds of Sailors and dozens of planes.

After completing the over one year of training required to be a successful Adviser in my rate, Electrician's Mate on a small craft I was, as the term is known, "Vietnamized", meaning my mission had changed and even though I had survived the process to get where I was, outlasting 191 Officers and Sailors with a few Marines as about 130 washed out at various levels with only 61 actually graduating from the course work able to do the job required. While in final days of our training we were allowed access to top secret documents detailing the casualties of the Brown Water boats. Those reports showed extremely high rates of death and injury to ALL US Naval advisers serving in the previous months and years. It made me very nervous and anxious for having volunteered for this assignment. The Vietnamization of rates happened across the job rates involved with Small Boats, so the Electrician Mates in my training class were all reassigned to new duty out in the fleet.

This means that 41 others that I trained with and got to know and trust with MY life were sent to their likely death or injury. This was a new type of trauma for me, I spent the rest of my active duty service in the Philippine Islands having an "easy" time of it, climbing radio

antennae up to 675 feet tall, just working with lighting circuits or some other relatively safe duty all the while having no idea of how my ex-classmates were doing. After being discharged I had no way of contacting any of my best friends or knowing if they made it or not.

After my official discharge and my return home, I spent a great deal of time depressed and having terrible nightmares, I spent time in the some therapy at my own expense that did nothing but cost me my wife of twenty years and the respect of my only child. I drank almost like an alcoholic, heavily and without much regard for others unless they were Veterans, yet was able to acquire an Associates of Science in Automobiles degree not one in my desired field of Electricity, so I could earn a living in the very tight days after the end of the Vietnam fiasco.

I found on my own that I could slow down my alcohol consumption and was actually able to stop drinking when I found out Cannabis helped to combat much of my symptoms and cut my desire for alcohol and other mind numbing substances. I lost over 60 pounds of alcohol fat, my health improved by leaps and bounds by not drinking and slowly trying to kill myself with the latent guilt of helping kill how many and to destroy so much in SE Asia for what, a falsified report saying we were attacked by North Vietnamese vessels, the Tonkin Gulf Incident, leading to 58,000 plus of us dieing for Corporate profits.

All my life I had been taught to be kind, fair, just, honest etc, per the Boy Scouts and a Catholic upbringing and being second oldest in a very large family. I was especially taught not to kill and I respected that commandment most of all. I suffered for that position throughout my life as a resister of the draft and the carnage we were seeing most any night on the Television news. I survived my enlistment but lost respect for myself for what I did and what I was not able do as a US Navy Sailor.

I am now well educated by having had access to the GI Bill, it allowed me access to an inexpensive housing loan, covers all of my medical and psychological treatment needs, other benefits and allows me access to medical cannabis by not saying no. The VA knows so many of us on our own have discovered that we are in better shape if we use cannabis on a regular basis and the VA has decided to not penalize us in our treatment of what ails so many of us, PTSD. They have seen many of us Vietnam War Vets, and the more recent Iraq 1 and 2 and Afghanistan Vets, living better with less need of anti-pain meds and strong psych meds to be able to sleep better, and in general live better lives with our families, doing many of the things that give us a better quality of life we previously were unable to participate in doing because we were not "fun" to be around.

It would be in the better interest of our Veterans and their PTSD, if they were permitted legal protection for something the US Dept. of Veteran Administration has admitted helps most of those using it in a supervised manner. The use of cannabis will not lead to more suicides or domestic violence or arrests for violence against society. It will allow those of us using it to relax, ease our minds of memories of circumstances that were outrageous and out of our control. Also the added numbers that would likely enroll in the OMMP would bolster the income for the program allowing lower fees for participants yet permit the OHA to supply services to other needy programs currently not or underfunded by the GF.

There fore I ask you to approve SB281 to add PTSD to the conditions served by the OMMP.

Thank you for your support,
Sincerely,

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