



PETER COURTNEY
President of the Senate

House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness Committee

Representative Greg Matthews, Chair
Representative Shemia Fagan, Vice Chair
Representative Julie Parrish, Vice Chair
Representative Deborah Boone
Representative Sal Esquivel
Representative John Huffman
Representative Brad Witt

*TESTIMONY BY SENATOR PETER COURTNEY
SUPPORTING SB 1
MARCH 12, 2013*

My name is Peter Courtney. I live in NE Salem. I am a state Senator and represent Woodburn, Gervais, and east Salem. In fact, this very building is in my district.

Chair Matthews, Vice-Chairs Fagan and Parrish, members of the committee: thank you for hearing my testimony today.

I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 1. This bill seeks to rectify the contradiction of having a holiday that honors veterans, yet some veterans do not have the option of taking the day off.

On November 11, 2010, Veterans' Day, I went to the 76 gas station near my house to get my morning coffee. Lucy was working that morning and we started talking about Veterans' Day. During the conversation, she asked me a question that I couldn't answer: "If it's Veterans' Day, how come veterans don't get the day off?"

Lucy then told me about her late husband, Steven, and her current husband Daniel. Both are veterans and neither have ever had the day off. The story she told me is the reason I sponsored this bill in 2011 and the reason I'm sponsoring it now. I wish Lucy could be here today to tell you her story in person, but like so many veterans, she had to work – even on a day as special as this.

If approved, Oregon would not be the first state to enact such a law. Iowa enacted similar legislation in 2010, now Iowa statute 91A.5A. This bill simply seeks to give veterans a holiday on Veterans' Day. Veterans who want the day off would be required to make a request in advance and provide documentation proving their veteran status.

Please note: we have worked with the business community to address their concerns and have amended the bill significantly from the original to give discretion and flexibility to the employer.

As such, the bill allows employers to decide whether the day off is paid or unpaid. Furthermore, it allows employers to deny the request altogether if the employee/veteran's absence will cause a "significant economic or operational disruption" to the business. Most importantly, it allows flexibility – if Veterans' Day isn't convenient for the employer, he or she can offer the veteran a different day off.

Giving our nation's service men and women "their day" off is a special way of saying thank you. Our veterans risked their own lives and limbs to protect our way of life. To honor their service in this way is the least we can do.

I asked several veterans to tell their stories here today. I ask that you listen and I sincerely hope that you'll support this bill.

I thank you respectfully.