

Submitter: Thomas Weiss
On Behalf Of: Disabled veterans
Committee: Joint Committee On Tax Expenditures
Measure: SB884

Good morning Co-Chair Senator Mark Meek, Co-Chair Representative Nancy Nathanson and committee members.

I have prepared this document in regard to SB 884 and the Public Hearing scheduled for April 28, 2023.

This bill changes the requirements for a Disabled Veterans Property Tax Exemption, the amount that may be granted, and certain deadlines.

First, the increase from the current statute to \$60,000 for disabled veterans is warranted. The yearly increase of 3% has not matched the actual increase in the cost of housing and resulting taxable value.

Second, the measure proposes a higher tax exemption for veterans who are officially certified with a VA rating or 100% service connection. The proposal goes on to further define service-connected disabled veterans who have a combined VA rating of 100%. This proposal eliminates certain other service-connected disabled veterans who have a combined rating of 60%, 70%, 80%, and 90% and the VA has recognized that their combined ratings which keep the service-connected disabled veteran from getting and keeping a job. Please see the excerpt from the Code of Federal Regulations below.

In plain English, the VA on an individual basis reviews each claim to make a decision that the disabled veterans service-connected disabilities (only) keep him or her from being able to secure or follow a substantially gainful occupation as a result of service-connected disabilities.

Please take note of the last paragraph in § 4.16. which states in part: "It is the established policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs that all veterans who are unable to secure and follow a substantially gainful occupation by reason of service-connected disabilities shall be rated totally disabled."

I submit to you that there is no difference in the ability of a disabled service-connected veteran as currently defined in this proposal, then service-connected disabled veteran rated Total Disability with Individual Unemployability to work and make a living.

Excluding service-connected disabled veterans who the VA has awarded an extra-schedular totally disabled rating of 100% is a major disservice to this group of our most severely disabled veterans.

This bill must list veterans rated service connected at 100% and those veterans rated 100% as a result of an individual unemployability rating totaling 100%. There will be much confusion at the county level about who is eligible for the Disabled Veterans PTE with listing Service-connection rated 100% due to Individual Unemployability.

Thank you for your time.

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PS I would be at this important legislative if I was not at the VA Medical Center this morning.