

HOUSE BILL 2078 TESTIMONY
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
By Charles M. Yunker, Adjutant
The American Legion Department of Kansas
March 7, 2013

Thank you for granting me the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill 2078. My name is Charles Yunker and I represent the American Legion as its Adjutant for the state of Kansas.

When The American Legion presented testimony before the House Committee on Veterans, Military and Homeland Security in favor of House Bill 2078 we did so because in its original form it provided a means for everyone who served honorably to benefit from its provisions.

However our organization is concerned with how the Bill was amended by providing slightly different treatment of those veterans who receive General under Honorable Discharges. Also it occurred to us that HB 2078 completely ignores those who, after serving our nation honorably, receive Medical Discharges.

There are two categories of veterans: those who serve honorably and those who did not. Those who do not serve honorably receive Dishonorable or Bad Conduct discharges and by and large those individuals are not entitled to veterans benefits. Veterans who serve honorably receive Honorable, General under Honorable Conditions and Medical discharges and are entitled to veterans benefits. While the reasons for Honorable and Medical discharges are apparent (the fulfillments of contractual enlistments or injuries with prevent future military service) the reasons for General under Honorable Conditions can vary. Today the reasons for General Discharges can range from simple draw downs in various military units to the service person failing to meet the

military's height and weight guidelines which often vary from one command to the other and from one branch of the military to another. Unfortunately they have also been misused for the convenience of the government.

It must be remembered those veterans who receive General Discharges under Honorable Conditions served honorably. They deserve the same treatment as those who receive Honorable Discharges and should not be singled out as anything less than anyone else who volunteered to serve their country and did so in an honorable manner. The same holds true for those whose injuries prevent further military service so they receive Medical Discharges.

House Bill 2078 presents a unique opportunity for the Legislature to ease nursing shortage and at the same time provide the means to increase employment of fully trained and capable veterans. Therefore the American Legion urges your support and passage of House Bill 2078. At the same time we implore you to even the playing field for all who served honorably by including those who have received Medical and General under Honorable Conditions discharges by amending lines 3 through 8 of page two to read "of the United States, and separated from such military service upon completion of honorable service including general under honorable conditions or whose honorable military service was terminated for medical reasons." We also urge the elimination of any reference which establishes a difference between Honorable, General under Honorable Conditions and Medical discharges. Page 3 lines 32-33; and page 3 lines 40-43 and continuing to page 4 line 1.