

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS, MILITARY AND HOMELAND
SECURITY

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Myers at 1:30 P.M. on January 22, 2007 in Room 241-N of the Capitol.

All members were present.

Committee staff present:

Art Griggs, Revisor of Statutes Office
Athena Andaya, Kansas Legislative Research
Heather O'Hara, Kansas Legislative Research
Betty Caruthers, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Representative Ruff
Senator Ostmeyer
David Warnken, KS Veterans Claims Assistance Program
Ken Stodgell, Legislative Chairman of VFW
George Webb, Director of KS Commission on Veterans Affairs
Representative Goico
Jack Alexander, Fire Marshall
Chris Bannister, Bomb Squad Commander, City of Wichita

Others attending:

See attached list.

Moved by Representative Kelsey, seconded by Representative Bethel for approval of Minutes of the House Committee on Veterans, Military and Homeland Security held on January 18, 2007 be approved.

Motion carried.

Chairman Myers recognized Representative Ruff for a briefing on the Veterans Claims Assistance Program. (Attachment 1) She reported on a rather smooth transition with the creation of the Veterans Claims Assistance Program which was a grant to the VFW and American Legion allowing them to hire their own veteran service officers for VA Hospitals. There has also been an advisory council set up to oversee the implementation of the program. It is believed that the need for veteran services will continue to increase.

Chairman Myers recognized Senator Ostmeyer who continued the briefing. He pointed out that "this is not a Democrat or Republican issue, it's rather a Veterans issue." Senator Ostmeyer is proud of what is happening across Kansas with the care for Veterans and believes we are heading in the right direction.

Chairman Myers recognized David Warnken who spoke on behalf of the American Legion. (Attachment 2) He pointed out some positive issues with the Veterans Claims Assistance Program as well as some concerns. Overall he believes the program has worked well and that funding for it is essential.

Chairman Myers recognized Ken Stodgell, Legislative representative with the VFW. He is very proud of the accomplishments within our State. He reported that for every \$1.00 of the grant program being spent through grants received, \$105.00 is being returned back to the State. (Attachment 3)

Chairman Myers recognized George Webb, the Executive Director of the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs. He spoke to what the grants do and where the money comes from. The Legislature last year appropriated \$500,000 to support the grant program. The Statute laid out the requirements of the program. The Commission allocated \$250,000 to the VFW and \$250,000 to the American Legion. The grant money essentially goes to run the offices and pay the salaries of the veterans service representatives and office assistants who are in the VFW and American Legion who are in the VA Hospitals in Leavenworth, Topeka, and Wichita. Wichita serves as a regional office and all claims are filed through them. There are a number of smaller Veterans Service Organizations in Kansas and there was discussion around how they could be assisted. This may be an issue brought before the Legislature later this session. The wording in the Statute may need to be changed and the VSO's would need to be Nationally chartered by the VA. In the ideal

CONTINUATION SHEET

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situation they would look at cross accreditation as well as quality assurance.

Chairman Myers asked for any bill introductions and there were none.

Chairman Myers opened hearings on **HB 2062 Criminal use of explosives.**

Chairman Myers requested Revisor, Art Griggs, to give a summary of the bill.

Chairman Myers recognized Representative Goico to testify as a sponsor of the bill. (Attachment 4) This bill clarifies defining language of chemical reaction bombs and simulated explosive devices.

Chairman Myers recognized Jack Alexander, State Fire Marshall to testify as a proponent of the bill. (Attachment 5) His concern is materials and devices being in the hands of the wrong people. Safety is foremost for all citizens of Kansas.

Chairman Myers recognized Chris Bannister, Bomb Squad Commander for the city of Wichita who also testified as a proponent for this bill. (Attachment 6) He sees the problem with the current wording in the statute of “explosive” versus “explosion” as well as how easily a chemical reaction bomb can be constructed. To receive a license for fireworks someone must go through a training and testing program and a criminal history background check. They may be renewed every 4 years and must retest. For high explosives someone must also go through a criminal history background check, training, and testing program with licenses being renewed every 3 years. Inspections are also done on the storage sites.

Chairman Myers closed hearings on **HB 2062.**

Chairman Myers announced the working of **HB 2062.**

Chairman Myers recognized Representative Goico who presented an amendment to **HB 2062** replacing the word “hoax” with “simulated”, and changing for the bill to take effect upon publication in the Kansas Register.

Moved by Representative Groico, seconded by Representative Bethell to adopt the amendment.

Motion carried.

Moved by Representative Goico, seconded by Representative Colloton to pass **HB 2062** favorably as amended.

Motion carried. 13 Yea, 0 Nay

Chairman Myers requested that Representative Goico carry the bill on the House floor.

Chairman Myers adjourned the meeting at 3:05.

Next meeting is scheduled for January 23.