

HOUSE BILL 2212 TESTIMONY
Senate Federal and State Affairs
By Jeff Bond, Finance Officer
The American Legion Department of Kansas
March 12, 2013

Thank you for granting me the opportunity this morning to testify on behalf of House Bill 2212. My name is Jeff Bond and I am the Finance Officer for the Kansas American Legion.

The American Legion wholeheartedly supports the intent of House Bill 2012 and endorses the proposed modifications to the provisions of the Veterans Claims Assistance Program. House Bill 2212 will provide needed relief to both veterans' service organizations currently participating in the VCAP program because the current regulations simply cannot be sustained and in fact we are fast approaching the breaking point at this time unless HB 2212 is adopted.

Currently continued participation in the VCAP grant program requires Veteran Service Organizations to increase their monetary contribution each year. That requirement in itself is unsustainable in the long run. However the State is not burdened with that same requirement, and in fact has on occasion reduced the size of the grant thereby placing an even heavier burden on the participating VSOs to at least maintain the previous year's services to veterans and their families.

I might point out that the VA has stated on average it takes at least three years to fully train someone who processes claims for veterans. The American Legion feels five years more accurate therefore it's in everyone's best interest to retain employees trained at great expense to VSO as Veteran Service Representatives. So in the past whenever the State has reduced the grant in

order to retain our trained staff we've had to resort to our organization's reserves. Routine increases such as the cost of health insurance, cost of living salary increases, and training have also contributed to our organization reducing our reserves by \$196,000.00 in the past three years. Earlier I mentioned we were fast approaching a breaking point; due to the lack of available funding we were forced to close our office at Ft. Riley where we primarily assisted those attached to the Wounded Warriors Battalion. We did so because it was the only office not in the VCAP program; we do not wish, nor can we, close any of our three offices in the grant program. To do so would eliminate our organization from participating in the program.

Due to system changes being implemented by the VA we will be required to purchase at least four to five thousand dollars in new computers. Under the current system that will force us to spend an additional four to five thousand dollars each year because this year's expenditures will have to be increased to pay for those new computers. We don't get to go back to our pre-computer purchase level. Likewise, should a method of doing something cheaper arise we are basically prevented from taking advantage of such savings.

Thank you once again for this opportunity to testify before you today. The American Legion asks that you support House Bill 2212 and I stand for any questions you may have.