



***Connecticut State Council
4 Bluebell Lane
Simsbury, CT 06070-1001***

Thank you Sen Maynard and Rep Graziani and committee members in providing me with the opportunity to speak to you about Raised House Bill 5253.

I am Billee Culin and am President of the Connecticut State Council of Vietnam Veterans of America. About 5 years ago I met a fellow Vietnam veteran in Dunkin Donuts in Simsbury. I greeted Fred with Welcome Home. Fred looked at me and said that I was the first person to ever welcome him home since he returned from Vietnam. What is wrong with this picture.

43 years ago I entered the Army following in my Dad's footsteps. I was a very naive young women and thought I could end the war in Vietnam if I enlisted. Boy, was I ever wrong!

Over 2/3d of the troops in Vietnam were volunteers. They were over 1,000 miles away from home facing a fierce enemy. There were 612 killed or missing from CT and many returned home physically wounded and/or mentally wounded.

They came home to fellow Americans despising them. Called our young boys who became men too soon baby killers. Spat upon. Dejected amongst their piers. Some went to the Legion or the VFW and were told that they could not join their organizations. There were no ticker tape parades or large groups welcoming our men and women home. We were told not to wear our uniforms, so we could literally "sneak" home. Many still to this day do not want to talk about their service to our country because of how they were treated when they came home.

Today the Vietnam Veterans have a motto of NEVER AGAIN WILL ONE GENERATION OF VETERANS ABANDON ANOTHER.

Vietnam Veterans are at the sending offs and comings home of our present day soldiers. VVA has worked with our young men and women to start

Veterans of Modern Warfare and are helping them to understand the ins and outs of congress and benefits due to them.

Vietnam Veterans of America has started the Veterans Health Organization along with pharmaceutical companies and medical personnel to help veterans get the best medical assistance as possible by informing doctors and hospitals of their particular needs.

VVA works with CT DVA at Rocky Hill with stand down, which provides help and services to homeless and needy veterans, and other programs. We have 4 homes in Connecticut that we have provided for homeless veterans. We go into the classrooms and speak with our young children, so they know what it means to be a veterans.

Ladies and gentlemen, I beg of you to give our men and women here in CT the Welcome Home that they proudly deserve and have never received. It is a long time coming and rightly due. To those of you sitting before and behind me that are Vietnam Veterans, I personally Welcome You Home.

Thank you.

Billee Culin
President