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**Testimony on AB 52 Presented to:
Committee on Human Resources and Facilities
April 28, 2003
By Dr. Steve Mulvenon
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Good afternoon, Chairman Rawson and members of the committee. For the record, I am Steve Mulvenon, Director of Communications for the Washoe County School District and I am speaking on behalf of the district.

I am here to lend our wholehearted and unqualified support to AB 52. This legislation recognizes and honors the sacrifices which hundreds, if not thousands, of Nevada young people made in defense of their country during World War II and other conflicts. They heard their nation's call and responded, leaving high school behind. Many did not return. Many of those who did were interested in getting a job, getting back on their feet and getting back to normal. High school was behind them. They saw themselves as either too old or perhaps too worldly to return to the classroom, so they went through life without a high school diploma. Filling that void now, even though it's more than 50 years late, is the right thing to do. It would be one way for this state to say "thank you for your service to our country." In doing so, Nevada would join at least 24 other states who have joined "Operation Recognition" started in Massachusetts in 1999.

The Washoe County School District would be proud to work along side of the Nevada Office of Veterans' Services to locate these veterans and organize the appropriate ceremonies in the North. In fact, if our neighboring school districts were interested, we'd be pleased to coordinate a joint ceremony for multiple districts in Reno.

On a personal note, allow me to tell you the story of one such veteran; Karl Berndt of Kansas. "Karl Berndt left the halls of Hoxie High School just before the end of his junior year in 1942. He was the first Hoxie student drafted to serve in World II. While his classmates learned algebra, English and science, Berndt worked in the U.S. Army's 27th General Hospital Unit in New Guinea and the Philippines. After his military service was completed in January 1946 Berndt returned to Kansas where became an aircraft welder, then a mechanic. He never did finish high school, but the strains of "Pomp and Circumstance" played Saturday for him and 13 other Hoxie students drafted into service. All were given the diplomas they would have earned if the war had not called them away." (Hays Daily News)

Karl Berndt is my father in-law and I'm sad that my work kept me from attending that ceremony 2 years ago. My wife and daughter attended, and when I asked my daughter what she remembered about that day, she said, "I remember crying. It was really nice to see grandpa up there on that stage. I was proud for him."

There is another benefit to be gained from such a program. My daughter also remarked that it was fascinating to hear her grandfather talk about his experiences in the war, to hear stories she had never heard, to learn what war is really like. Most of the veterans I know are reluctant to tell those stories. They think it's bragging. They do not see themselves as heroes. But these ceremonies give them the opportunity to relate to a younger generation in a whole new way. It's one thing to read Tom Brokaw's "The Greatest Generation" or go to the movies to see "Saving Private Ryan" and quite another thing altogether to look into the eyes of your grandfather as he describes treating the wounds of his comrades in the South Pacific.

I can only imagine how many other daughters, granddaughters, sons and grandsons would react the same way. The Washoe County School District would be proud to assist in that effort. Please give this bill your support. It's the right thing to do.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the Washoe County School District fully supports the amendments proposed to this bill and we thank Assemblywoman Leslie for carrying this bill forward.

Thank you. I'd be pleased to respond to any questions.