

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS**

**Seventy-Fifth Session
May 20, 2009**

The Committee on Government Affairs was called to order by Chair Marilyn K. Kirkpatrick at 9:05 a.m. on Wednesday, May 20, 2009, in Room 3143 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda ([Exhibit A](#)) and the Attendance Roster ([Exhibit B](#)), are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at www.leg.state.nv.us/75th2009/committees/. In addition, copies of the audio record may be purchased through the Legislative Counsel Bureau's Publications Office (email: publications@lcb.state.nv.us; telephone: 775-684-6835).

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Marilyn K. Kirkpatrick, Chair
Assemblyman David P. Bobzien, Vice Chair
Assemblyman Paul Aizley
Assemblyman Jerry D. Claborn
Assemblyman Ed A. Goedhart
Assemblywoman April Mastroluca
Assemblyman Harvey J. Munford
Assemblywoman Peggy Pierce
Assemblyman James A. Settelmeyer
Assemblywoman Ellen B. Spiegel
Assemblyman Lynn D. Stewart
Assemblywoman Melissa Woodbury

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Assemblyman Kelvin Atkinson
Assemblyman Chad Christensen

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

None

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Scott McKenna, Committee Counsel
Susan Scholley, Committee Policy Analyst
Cyndie Carter, Committee Manager
Denise Sins, Committee Secretary
Olivia Lloyd, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jeanette Rae, Program Manager, Office of Veterans' Services, Reno, Nevada
Gerry Saich, Service Officer, Disabled American Veterans, Carson City, Nevada

Chair Kirkpatrick:

[Roll taken.] We will open the meeting on Senate Bill 408 (1st Reprint).

Senate Bill 408 (1st Reprint): Authorizes payments from the Patriot Relief Account in the State General Fund to certain members of the Nevada National Guard who return from deployment in a combat zone. (BDR 36-1183)

Jeanette Rae, Program Manager, Office of Veterans' Services, Reno, Nevada:

I was not prepared to present the bill, but I can certainly provide you with some comments to support it. You have heard us previously testify that many veterans do not know that they are actually veterans, or that they are eligible for benefits, or how to apply and obtain those benefits.

We have described why it is so important for our agency to reach out to as many veterans as possible in as many venues as possible to raise this awareness. This is especially true for our National Guard members. They work for our state and serve under the orders of our Governor, except when they are called to federal active duty. Once they report on federal orders, a whole new slate of veterans federal benefits are enabled, and the longer they serve the more benefits they are eligible for. These benefits are entirely different from what they are used to under the National Guard program.

Due to the length and place of service, the eligible benefits vary from person to person. Each individual requires an individualized interview to determine exactly what they are eligible for.

When our guard members return from combat, the last thing they are interested in is sitting through another briefing on benefits. They just want to get out of their uniform, be with their family, unwind, and get on with life. Through trial and error, we have found that if we bring unit members back for a briefing 60 to 90 days after they have demobilized, their attention span is greater. If their families are present, the information receives more interest. We have found it is frequently the spouse who will keep the veteran on track to make and keep needed appointments, follow up on benefits or medical attention, and seek employment opportunities.

A yes vote on S.B. 408 (R1) would give support and incentive to encourage unit members to attend these very important briefings with their families to assist in each veteran's reintegration into his family and the community.

Assemblyman Stewart:

Last session I had a similar bill that did not make it, so I appreciate your bringing this forth. I would like to acknowledge the veterans in the back of the room. We appreciate your active duty service. The National Guard used to be the weekend warriors, and now they are the year-long warriors going on two and three tours to Iraq. I do not think we realize what the Nevada National Guard has done. They are on a par in many ways with our regular Army and other military services.

Assemblyman Aizley:

I was wondering about the 45-day service requirement; why not just one day of active duty to receive the same benefit?

Jeanette Rae:

The federal law in Title 38 has different length of duty requirements to collect different benefits. For example, it is two years for medical benefits. That is why we need to meet individually with each person, look at his DD214 form—his discharge papers—and see how much time he served in federal duty in order to determine his specific benefits. That is what Congress put in place, which is always subject to change.

Chair Kirkpatrick:

This will use currently existing funds and is just adding the National Guard to those already covered by this, correct?

Jeanette Rae:

It is an existing fund that will enable them to use some of that money for this purpose, to bring these individuals back into a pay status. That is the incentive

to get them to come back to these briefings, because it would be a paid work day for them.

Chair Kirkpatrick:

Is there anyone else who would like to testify in support of S.B. 408 (R1)?

Gerry Saich, Service Officer, Disabled American Veterans, Carson City, Nevada:

I am a retired Navy chief. I was in the Navy for 20 years, and I am also a disabled veteran. I have been taking care of the vets at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Hospital in Reno for the past few years. It is amazing how many doctors tell these people to come in and see us because they do not know they are entitled to any benefits. I have been transferred out of the hospital and will be going to work in Lyon County, Douglas County, and Carson City. I will be going to the vets to inform them of our program.

The VA Hospital sponsored a welcome home event to let the vets know what they are entitled to, but only a handful of people showed up. The veterans are not coming to us, so we will go to them. We are going to the senior centers, the welfare department, and Job Connect. If we are located at a Job Connect site, when veterans come in we can tell them to see our Veterans Service Officer and what they are entitled to. I have been at the Carson Senior Center for one year, and many of the World War II vets are finally coming forward.

When people come home, they want to get reacquainted with their families because they have lost contact. Whatever money you can offer these vets is a great benefit. Many of the vets who return home do not feel well because they have been in the atmosphere of the Middle East, which leaves a residue in their minds and hearts. Besides all of this, these vets have to find jobs, which is hard to do at the present time. Anything you can give our veterans will be a blessing.

Chair Kirkpatrick:

I do not think anyone here disagrees with that.

Assemblyman Aizley:

Ms. Saich, do you think 45 days is reasonable? Why not one day if they return from combat duty?

Gerry Saich:

I have no control over that situation and neither do you. It is under federal control. We are controlled by specific rules. When we put in a claim, it goes to the VA, and the VA comes under the United States government, not the state.

If you are wearing a uniform and you get hurt after only one day of service, you can put in a claim.

Assemblyman Aizley:

That is my point. It says you have to wait 45 days.

Gerry Saich:

Yes, it does, but when they are hurt on active duty, they can put in a federal claim. Years ago, I worked at the Hines VA Hospital in Chicago, Illinois, and several times we had sailors coming over from Great Lakes Naval Training Center. They were hurt and taken to the VA hospital for treatment, and after that, they were able to put in a claim. As far as the 45 days, I do not make that rule.

Chair Kirkpatrick:

Are there any other questions or comments? Is there anyone else who would like to testify in support of S.B. 408 (R1)?

Jeanette Rae:

I was asking the Colonel why the 45 days was put into the bill, and apparently, the guard and reserve here in Nevada take that amount of time to issue a DD214. If it is less than that, they usually do not receive a DD214, which enables many of the federal benefits. Certainly, they are eligible for some benefits if they are injured while on active duty, even for one day. They can file disability claims. We definitely want to reach out to those people, but for the purposes of this bill, we want to get them back for their benefit briefing when they have the 45 days.

Chair Kirkpatrick:

We will close the hearing on S.B. 408 (R1).

ASSEMBLYMAN STEWART MOVED TO DO PASS
SENATE BILL 408 (1st REPRINT).

ASSEMBLYMAN CLABORN SECONDED THE MOTION.

Is there any discussion? [There was none.]

THE MOTION PASSED. (ASSEMBLYMEN ATKINSON AND
CHRISTENSEN WERE ABSENT FOR THE VOTE.)

Assemblyman Stewart has the floor statement. Is there any public comment?
[There was none.] Is there anything from the Committee? [There was nothing.]

[Meeting adjourned at 9:18 a.m.]

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Denise Sins
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Marilyn K. Kirkpatrick, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Committee Name: Committee on Government Affairs

Date: May 20, 2009

Time of Meeting: 9:05 a.m.

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance Roster