

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS**

**Seventy-Seventh Session
March 15, 2013**

The Senate Committee on Government Affairs was called to order by Chair David R. Parks at 1:33 p.m. on Friday, March 15, 2013, in Room 2135 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator David R. Parks, Chair
Senator Pat Spearman, Vice Chair
Senator Mark A. Manendo
Senator Pete Goicoechea
Senator Scott Hammond

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Senator Mark A. Hutchison, Senatorial District No. 6

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Patrick Guinan, Policy Analyst
Heidi Chlarson, Counsel
Martha Barnes, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Robert Lauer, Nevada Chapter, Veterans in Politics International, Inc.
Caleb S. Cage, Executive Director, Office of Veterans' Services
Melody Howard, President, Nevada Chapter, Veterans in Politics International, Inc.

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Chair Parks:

I will open the hearing on Senate Bill (S.B.) 174 and invite Senator Hutchison to introduce the bill.

SENATE BILL 174: Creates the Citizen Commission on Veterans Memorials.
(BDR 27-853)

Senator Mark A. Hutchison (Senatorial District No. 6):

I am proud to present S.B. 174 to the Senate Government Affairs Committee as this bill is truly a bipartisan measure cosponsored by members of both Houses and parties. The bill is designed to help Nevadans pay tribute with a permanent, meaningful memorial to those who served in the armed forces and made the ultimate sacrifice in our defense.

Essentially S.B. 174 does two things: First, the bill as introduced creates the Citizen Commission on Veterans Memorials. The bill received a fiscal note, so we are working on an amendment to combine the duties of the proposed Commission with the existing Nevada Veterans' Services Commission.

The Nevada Veterans' Services Commission will recommend to the Governor the names of service members from Nevada who gave their lives during Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom in order to name a building, park, bridge or other piece of State-owned property in their honor.

Second, the bill creates the Nevada Will Always Remember Veterans Gift Account which will be empowered to accept donations, gifts and grants to fund the design, procurement and installation of markers, plaques or statues for these memorials as appropriate. There will be no money required from the General Fund for that purpose. The next person to testify is a veteran who was instrumental in assisting me to bring forward this legislation and has prepared a video for the Committee.

Robert Lauer (Nevada Chapter, Veterans in Politics International, Inc.):

I want to thank the Committee on behalf of the Veterans in Politics Nevada and the 330,000 voting veterans in the State. I have a video ([Exhibit C](#)) that brings to light the 55-plus members from our communities across the State who have given their lives on behalf of Nevada.

As an American soldier, I know what it means to lose friends. Our State has lost over 55 sons and daughters. The first person killed from Nevada was during Operation Enduring Freedom; Army Specialist Jason Disney died February 13, 2002.

If you are against the war, it is important to ensure people understand the true sacrifice and the true cost of war. If you are for the war, it is important to demonstrate and stand by our Gold Star Families to make sure their sacrifices have not been in vain.

In 2005, I enlisted in the U.S. Army and went to basic training. The next year I was in Washington, D.C., when I had time to visit Arlington National Cemetery during the winter. I was walking off the beaten path when I saw numerous fresh graves filled with American soldiers who died recently in war. It touched me greatly. I did not know how to deal with the experience, so on my return flight I wrote a poem that I would like to read.

Arlington

As I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
So cold I see no life, no love, only my breath
I walk off the beaten path
Away from all of the tourists and their laughs
Gravestones standing on a formation in a line
Just as soldiers once did so fine
Memories of wars long ago
And of armies on the go
The end of so many lives all around
With room for more to fill the ground.

Such an honored place
With all those names without a face
Sons and fathers never forgot
With their loss great pain was brought
For the ages here they will lie
The same place a grateful Nation said goodbye
Forever we shall remember the sacrifice they made
So you and I can live in peace and never be afraid.

It was after walking through that cemetery and seeing all of those faceless cemetery plaques that I decided it was critically important that I do my part to ensure, as a soldier and someone who has lost friends, that we never forget our brothers and sisters from Nevada. We should do the right thing, and I urge your support for S.B. 174.

Senator Hutchison:

I want to recognize the veterans who are in the room with us today and thank them for their service. There are also members of the Senate Committee on Government Affairs who served, and I appreciate their service as well. I would like to quickly tell you what the bill does.

Section 1 authorizes the Governor, upon recommendation from the Veterans Memorials Commission, to direct the Administrator of the State Public Works Division to name buildings, grounds or properties over which the Administrator has supervision and control after a deceased member of the armed forces of the United States. The Administrator shall do that once there is sufficient money in the Nevada Will Always Remember Veterans Gift Account.

Sections 1, 5 and 7 utilize the same language. Section 4 makes clear that the expenses incurred will come out of the Nevada Will Always Remember Veterans Gift Account and will not require the use of any General Fund money.

The new Citizen Commission on Veterans Memorials is created in section 9 of the bill. We are going to amend this language and are already moving the functions over to the existing Nevada Veterans' Services Commission.

Section 10 directs the Veterans Memorials Commission to make recommendations to the Governor about the names of deceased members of the armed forces who were residents of Nevada and killed in action during Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Veterans Memorials Commission will also recommend to the Governor the building, ground, property, park, monument, recreational area, highway, road, bridge or transportation facility to be named.

Section 11 creates the actual fund, Nevada Will Always Remember Veterans Gift Account.

Senator Goicoechea:

My question actually came up in the Senate Finance Committee yesterday when Senators voiced their concerns regarding those parks already named and the potential impact if they were renamed. Are you anticipating renaming existing parks, or will these be new parks and buildings?

Senator Hutchison:

The concern comes if State money has already been spent for marketing and promoting a certain park or area. Nothing in the bill would require a park be renamed but allows recommendations of the Veterans Memorials Commission to the Governor. The Governor would have the discretion, so we would not rename parks or well-known roadways.

Caleb S. Cage (Executive Director, Office of Veterans' Services):

I have known about S.B. 174 for some time, and we have been corresponding about how we could amend the bill to preclude the fiscal note. The Nevada Office of Veterans' Services currently staffs four veteran-related commissions, committees or councils. These meet quarterly and require extensive staffing to be in compliance with the Open Public Meeting Law and to ensure we are meeting the requirements of the commissioners, the committee members and the members of the council as well.

Senator Manendo sits on our Veterans' Services Commission and knows what work it completes on a regular basis.

Regarding Chair Parks' Senate Bill 230, we may need to add to the duties in *Nevada Revised Statute* (NRS) 417.190 that could be covered through the Veterans' Services Commission. Our overall recommendation to avoid the fiscal note was not to create a new commission but to add the duties to the existing Veterans' Services Commission. The Veterans' Services Commission meets quarterly and is made up similarly to the language in S.B. 174. It is already staffed. We have spoken with the Chair of the Veterans' Services Commission, and he is in favor of the additional duties being added.

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SENATE BILL 230: Authorizes the construction or installation of a memorial dedicated to Nevada's fallen soldiers. (BDR S-553)

Chair Parks:

Senate Bill 230 is really a companion bill to S.B. 174. I see many similarities and hope we can work these two bills together.

Senator Spearman:

This brought back unpleasant memories.

Mr. Cage:

We are doing this for veterans like you, Senator Spearman, and we appreciate your service.

Melody Howard (President, Nevada Chapter, Veterans in Politics International, Inc.):

I am here to support S.B. 174. My son served in the military, and he has also lost some of his friends. Throughout our Country's history, we have honored American heroes by preserving their names through the dedication of landmarks, memorials, buildings, highways, roads and in numerous other ways. We come before you today to ask that this body honor Nevada's fallen heroes by approving S.B. 174.

Our military is made up of less than 1 percent of our population, but it serves to protect the remaining 99 percent. While Nevada has lost at least 56 of its own during the operations listed in S.B. 174, I would encourage the Committee to amend this bill to include all of Nevada's fallen soldiers. There are brave young men and women who did not have to serve. Many chose to serve and ultimately gave their lives for not only our Country but for our State.

Senate Bill 174 is one way of honoring these men and women and their families who gave everything for their Country.

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In reference to section 10 subsection 1, paragraph (a), subparagraph (2), I would ask that this language be deleted to allow all of Nevada's veterans to be included in S.B. 174.

I would also like to direct Senator Goicoechea to section 6, subsection 1, paragraph (a) that shows NRS 407.065 would not allow the name of a State park to be changed without legislative approval. Senator Spearman, thank you for your service.

Senator Goicoechea:

Ms. Howard directed me to the language I was looking for in the existing statute.

Chair Parks:

No one has signed the attendance sheet in opposition to the bill. Senator Greg Brower is in the audience, and I would like to thank him for his service to our Country. Gus Nunez from the State Public Works Division is also in attendance.

Senator Hutchison:

I will work toward bringing you an amended bill and do it as quickly as possible to accommodate everyone's interests, especially Chair Parks, if we seek to combine our two bills. We all love our veterans, and this is an important and meaningful way we can demonstrate it.

Senator Hammond:

There is not a person in the State who has not been affected by the U.S. military engagement over the last few years. This issue is near and dear to my heart, as my father was a Vietnam veteran. I appreciate that these veterans give the ultimate sacrifice to protect the freedoms we enjoy.

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Chair Parks:

There is at least one other bill coming forward which extends benefits for recent veterans, such as for property tax exemptions, and other exemptions for veterans who have served during previous engagements. I will close the hearing on S.B. 174.

Since there is nothing further to come before the Committee, we are adjourned at 1:59 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Martha Barnes,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator David R. Parks, Chair

DATE: _____

<u>EXHIBITS</u>				
Bill	Exhibit		Witness / Agency	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	4		Attendance Roster
S.B. 174	C	NA	Robert Lauer	YouTube Video