



NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE REPORT FORM

Department: Rhode Island

Month: March 2024

Committee Member Name: Matthew Baldwin McCoy

Report:

1. On March 1, 2024, Senate Bill Number 2700 was introduced into the Rhode Island Senate. The bill was sponsored by Senator Walter S. Felag, Jr. (District 10), the Chairman of the Senate Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs Committee. It was co-sponsored by State Senators Jonathon Acosta (District 16), Jacob Bissailon (District 1), and Leonidas P. Raptakis (District 33). S. 2700 was referred to the Senate Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs Committee.
2. On March 3, 2024, I travelled to Washington, DC, to attend the 2024 VFW Legislative Conference. Joining me were National Council Member Eric Dukat, State Junior Vice Commander Joe Diniz, State Adjutant Joe Janeiro, VFWRI Auxiliary Vice President Stephen Doherty, and VFW/SVA Legislative Fellow Terren Wise (Brown University).
3. At 3:00 PM, March 4, 2024, the VFWRI delegation, accompanied by National Legislative Service Director Patrick Murray, met with Ryan Gallogly of U.S. Senator Jack Reed's (D-RI) legislative staff. We discussed the 2024 VFW Priority Legislation and obstacles to its passage during the 118th Congress. VFW/SVA Legislative Fellow Terren Wise discussed the Not Just a Numbers Act. This meeting was a follow up to my meeting with Senator Reed and Ryan Gallogly in September 2023.
4. At 3:30 PM, March 4, 2024, the VFWRI delegation, accompanied by National Legislative Service Director Patrick Murray, met with Colleen Costello and Andrew Szala of U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse's legislative staff. We discussed the 2024 VFW Priority Legislation and obstacles to its passage during the 118th Congress. VFW/SVA Legislative Fellow Terren Wise discussed the Not Just a Numbers Act. This meeting was a follow up to my meeting with Senator Whitehouse and Colleen Costello in September 2023.

DEPARTMENT OF RHODE ISLAND

One Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908

Cell: 401.447.0984
Fax: 401.574.8164

nlc@vfwri.org
www.vfwri.org



5. On March 5, 2024, the VFWRI delegation met with U.S. Representative Gabe Amo (RI-1) and Legislative Director Elizabeth (Lizzy) Obrand. We discussed the 2024 VFW Priority Legislation and obstacles to its passage during the 118th Congress. We asked Congressman Amo to become a co-sponsor of each of the VFW priority bills. VFW/SVA Legislative Fellow Terren Wise discussed the Not Just a Numbers Act. This was our first meeting with Congressman Amo and his legislative staff since he was elected to office in November 2023.
6. On March 6, 2024, I attended Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento's testimony to the Joint Session of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees at SD-G50 Dirksen Senate Office Building. A video of his verbal testimony may be found [here](#). A copy of his written testimony can be found [here](#).
7. On March 8, 2024, Veteran Benefits Guide (<https://www.vbg.com/>) hired Capitol Strategies Group (<https://csgri.com/>) to lobby for them within the Rhode Island General Assembly. Former State [Senator D. Alves](#) and former State Representative [Robert B. Jacquard](#) are the two lobbyists supporting Veteran Benefits Guide. Their firm is being paid \$5000/month until the end of the 2024 legislative session.
8. On March 27, 2024, the Senate Special Legislation held a hearing and considered Senate Bill Number 2700 (Felag). The Committee of eight Senators voted unanimously to hold S. 2700 for further study. This is generally considered a procedural move and not an intentional effort by the Committee to kill the bill. Mark Turner (VFWRI, State Senior Vice Commander) and I testified in favor of S. 2700. Both Capitol Strategies Group lobbyists were present for the hearing but did not testify. Two representatives from Veteran Benefits Guide, Ray Colas and Mark Christiansen, testified in opposition to S. 2700. You can watch the hearing at: <https://capitoltvri.cablecast.tv/show/9014?site=1>.
9. On March 28, 2024, the House Finance Committee held a hearing and considered House Bill 7690 (McEntee). This bill, introduced on February 15, 2024, would provide the Department of Rhode Island's Service Officer with \$100,000 in funding for Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025). The bill was co-sponsored by several members of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, including Chairman Samuel J. Azzinaro. Past State Commander Joe "Tiger" Patrick and I testified in favor of the bill. There was no testimony in opposition to the bill. This funding would continue \$100,000 in funding previously provided by the State of Rhode Island in FY24. You can watch the hearing at: <https://capitoltvri.cablecast.tv/show/9030?site=1>.

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10. On March 29, 2024, I met with U.S. Representative Seth Magaziner (RI-2) and members of his staff at his district office in Warwick, RI. Joining us were Jacob Rivelli and Emily Mercado (remote). VFW/SVA Legislative Fellow Terren Wise accompanied me to the meeting and briefed Congressman Magaziner on the Not Just a Numbers Act. The remainder of the discussion was on the VFW's anti-claim shark efforts, including legislative efforts at the state level. Congressman Magaziner expressed an interest in visiting the VFW Washington, DC, office and getting to know better the leadership and staff there.
11. I am scheduled to attend Congressman Magaziner's Military and Veteran's Advisory Committee (MVAC) meeting at his district office at 3:00 PM, Wednesday, April 3, 2024.
12. VFWRI's primary legislative focus is to get S. 2700 (Felag)/H. 7609 (Azzinaro) out of the Senate Special Legislative and Veterans Affairs Committee and House Corporations Committee, unamended, with Committee recommendations for passage by the Rhode Island Senate/House. Also to have H. 7690 (McEntee) approved by the House Finance Committee and a \$100,000 appropriation for the VFWRI VSO included in the enacted FY25 State Budget.

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Baldwin McCoy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Matthew Baldwin McCoy

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