
Public Hearing

before

ASSEMBLY MILITARY AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The public hearing is being held in compliance with Article IX, paragraph 1 of the New Jersey Constitution and Rule 19:3 of the General Assembly on the following Assembly Concurrent Resolution:

Assembly Concurrent Resolution 253

“Proposes constitutional amendment to extend veterans’ property tax deduction and veterans’ property tax exemption to certain veterans who did not serve in time of war or other emergency”

LOCATION: Committee Room 13
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: January 6, 2020
10:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Cleopatra G. Tucker, Chair
Assemblyman Wayne P. DeAngelo, Vice Chair
Assemblyman John P. Armato
Assemblyman Ronald S. Dancer
Assemblywoman DiAnne C. Gove



ALSO PRESENT:

Tracey F. Pino Murphy
Roshard Williams
Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aides

Sherwood T. Goodenough
Assembly Majority
Committee Aide

Hearing Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey

CLEOPATRA G. TUCKER
Chairwoman

WAYNE P. DEANGELO
Vice-Chairman

JOHN P. ARMATO
MATTHEW W. MILAM
RONALD S. DANCER
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PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The Assembly Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee will hold a public hearing on Monday, January 6, 2020 at 10:00 AM in Committee Room 13, 4th Floor, State House Annex, Trenton, New Jersey.

The public may address comments and questions to Tracey F. Pino Murphy, Committee Aide, or make bill status and scheduling inquiries to Sophia Love, Secretary, at (609)847-3890, fax (609)777-2998, or e-mail: OLSAideAMV@njleg.org. Written and electronic comments, questions and testimony submitted to the committee by the public, as well as recordings and transcripts, if any, of oral testimony, are government records and will be available to the public upon request.

The public hearing is being held in compliance with Article IX, paragraph 1 of the New Jersey Constitution and Rule 19:3 of the General Assembly on the following Assembly Concurrent Resolution:

ACR-253 Tucker/Benson/Lampitt/ DeAngelo	Proposes constitutional amendment to extend veterans' property tax deduction and veterans' property tax exemption to certain veterans who did not serve in time of war or other emergency.
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Persons wishing to testify should submit 15 copies of written testimony to the committee on the day of the hearing.

Issued 12/20/19

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**ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT
RESOLUTION No. 253**

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

218th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED DECEMBER 16, 2019

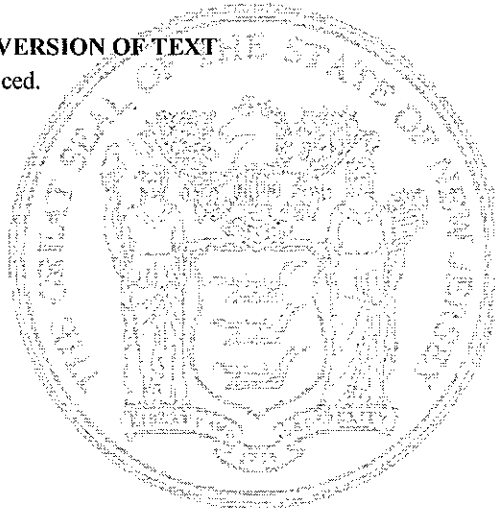
Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman CLEOPATRA G. TUCKER
District 28 (Essex)
Assemblyman DANIEL R. BENSON
District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)
Assemblywoman PAMELA R. LAMPITT
District 6 (Burlington and Camden)
Assemblyman WAYNE P. DEANGELO
District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

SYNOPSIS

Proposes constitutional amendment to extend veterans' property tax deduction and veterans' property tax exemption to certain veterans who did not serve in time of war or other emergency.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION proposing to amend Article VIII,
2 Section I, paragraph 3 of the New Jersey Constitution.

3
4 BE IT RESOLVED by the General Assembly of the State of New
5 Jersey (the Senate concurring):

6
7 1. The following proposed amendment to the Constitution of
8 the State of New Jersey is hereby agreed to:

9
10 PROPOSED AMENDMENT

11
12 Amend Article VIII, Section I, paragraph 3 to read as follows:

13 3. a. Any citizen and resident of this State now or hereafter
14 honorably discharged or released under honorable circumstances
15 from active service **[**, in time of war or other emergency as, from
16 time to time, defined by the Legislature,**]** in any branch of the
17 Armed Forces of the United States shall be entitled, annually to a
18 deduction from the amount of any tax bill for taxes on real and
19 personal property, or both, including taxes attributable to a
20 residential unit held by a stockholder in a cooperative or mutual
21 housing corporation in the sum of **[\$50 or if the amount of any such**
22 **tax bill shall be less than \$50, to a cancellation thereof, except that**
23 **the deduction or cancellation shall be \$100 in tax year 2000, \$150**
24 **in tax year 2001, \$200 in tax year 2002 and] \$250 in each tax year**
25 **[thereafter], or if the amount of any such tax bill shall be less than**
26 **\$250, to a cancellation thereof.** The deduction or cancellation shall
27 not be altered or repealed. Any person hereinabove described who
28 has been or shall be declared by the **[United States Veterans**
29 **Administration] United States Department of Veterans Affairs,** or
30 its successor, to have a service-connected disability, shall be
31 entitled to such further deduction from taxation as from time to time
32 may be provided by law. The surviving spouse of any citizen and
33 resident of this State who has met or shall meet his or her death on
34 active duty **[in time of war or of other emergency as so defined]** in
35 any such service shall be entitled, during her widowhood or his
36 widowerhood, as the case may be, and while a resident of this State,
37 to the deduction or cancellation in this subsection provided for
38 honorably discharged veterans and to such further deduction as
39 from time to time may be provided by law. The surviving spouse of
40 any citizen and resident of this State who has had or shall hereafter
41 have active service **[in time of war or of other emergency as so**
42 **defined]** in any branch of the Armed Forces of the United States
43 and who died or shall die while on active duty in any branch of the
44 Armed Forces of the United States, or who has been or may

EXPLANATION -- Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

1 hereafter be honorably discharged or released under honorable
2 circumstances from active service [in time of war or of other
3 emergency as so defined] in any branch of the Armed Forces of the
4 United States shall be entitled, during her widowhood or his
5 widowerhood, as the case may be, and while a resident of this State,
6 to the deduction or cancellation in this subsection provided for
7 honorably discharged veterans and to such further deductions as
8 from time to time may be provided by law.

9 b. A continuing care retirement community shall receive a
10 veterans' property tax deduction on behalf of eligible veterans. The
11 amount of the property tax deduction shall be the dollar amount of
12 the deduction multiplied by the number of eligible veterans
13 receiving the property tax deduction immediately prior to moving
14 into the continuing care retirement community. A person otherwise
15 eligible for the veterans' deduction who is a resident of a continuing
16 care retirement community shall receive the amount of the
17 deduction to the extent of the share of the taxes assessed against the
18 real property of the continuing care retirement community that is
19 attributable to the unit that the resident occupies. The continuing
20 care retirement community shall provide that amount as a payment
21 or credit to the resident. That payment or credit shall be made to
22 the resident no later than 30 days after the continuing care
23 retirement community receives the property tax bill on which the
24 credit appears. A veterans' property tax deduction shall not be paid
25 on behalf of any eligible veteran who resides in a continuing care
26 retirement community that is property tax-exempt. A resident
27 receiving a payment or credit pursuant to this subsection shall not
28 receive a veterans' property tax deduction on any other residence
29 owned in whole or in part by the resident, or any residence in which
30 the resident's spouse is living.

31 The surviving spouse of any citizen and resident of this State
32 who has met or shall meet his or her death on active duty [in time
33 of war or of other emergency as so defined] in any such service
34 shall be entitled, during her widowhood or his widowerhood, as the
35 case may be, and while a resident of this State, to the deduction in
36 this subsection provided for honorably discharged veterans. The
37 surviving spouse of any citizen and resident of this State who has
38 had or shall hereafter have active service [in time of war or of other
39 emergency as so defined] in any branch of the Armed Forces of the
40 United States and who died or shall die while on active duty in any
41 branch of the Armed Forces of the United States, or who has been
42 or may hereafter be honorably discharged or released under
43 honorable circumstances from active service [in time of war or of
44 other emergency as so defined] in any branch of the Armed Forces
45 of the United States shall be entitled, during her widowhood or his
46 widowerhood, as the case may be, and while a resident of this State,

1 to the deduction in this subsection provided for honorably
 2 discharged veterans.
 3 (cf: Article VIII, Section I, paragraph 3 amended effective
 4 December 5, 2019)

5
 6 2. When this proposed amendment to the Constitution is finally
 7 agreed to pursuant to Article IX, paragraph 1 of the Constitution, it
 8 shall be submitted to the people at the next general election
 9 occurring more than three months after the final agreement and
 10 shall be published at least once in at least one newspaper of each
 11 county designated by the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the
 12 General Assembly and the Secretary of State, not less than three
 13 months prior to the general election.

14
 15 3. This proposed amendment to the Constitution shall be
 16 submitted to the people at that election in the following manner and
 17 form:

18 There shall be printed on each official ballot to be used at the
 19 general election, the following:

20 a. In every municipality in which voting machines are not used,
 21 a legend which shall immediately precede the question as follows:

22 If you favor the proposition printed below make a cross (X), plus
 23 (+), or check (✓) in the square opposite the word "Yes." If you are
 24 opposed thereto make a cross (X), plus (+) or check (✓) in the
 25 square opposite the word "No."

26 b. In every municipality the following question:

		<p>PROPERTY TAX DEDUCTION AND EXEMPTION FOR PEACETIME VETERANS</p> <p>Do you approve amending the Constitution to give a \$250 property tax deduction to veterans who did not serve in time of war? Do you also approve amending the Constitution to give a 100 percent property tax exemption to certain totally disabled veterans who did not serve in time of war?</p> <p>The widow or widower of these veterans also would receive this \$250 deduction or 100 percent exemption after the veteran's death.</p>
	YES	

		<p style="text-align: center;">INTERPRETIVE STATEMENT</p> <p>This amendment would give a \$250 property tax deduction to veterans who did not serve in time of war. The widow or widower of a veteran who did not serve in time of war would receive this deduction after the veteran's death.</p> <p>The amendment also extends the 100 percent property tax exemption for disabled veterans to veterans who became disabled during peacetime military service. Persons who became disabled during peacetime military service and reside in a continuing care retirement community would not receive the 100 percent exemption for disabled veterans.</p> <p>Currently, these property tax deductions and exemptions are only given to veterans who served during time of war. The amendment would give the deductions and exemptions to veterans who did not serve in wartime.</p>
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NO

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STATEMENT

If approved by the voters of the State, this proposed constitutional amendment would make honorably discharged military veterans who did not serve during time of war or other emergency eligible for the \$250 property tax deduction and the property tax exemption granted by law to veterans with a service-connected disability. Currently, these property tax benefits are given only to honorably discharged military veterans who served during time of war or other emergency.

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ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLEOPATRA G. TUCKER (Chair):

Good morning.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TUCKER: We're going to call this hearing to order.

Could we stand, please, and have the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag? (all recite Pledge of Allegiance)

Good morning, and I thank everybody for coming out.

First of all, I'd like to wish everybody a happy and prosperous New Year's, and I hoped you enjoyed your holidays.

Today, we're here for a very important Resolution. And this hearing is to hear remarks from you, in reference to the hearing. Even though you didn't sign-- We only had two slips signed for our hearing, but today I want to just open the floor up for anybody who feels like they want to come up and have something to say.

So with that being said, we're going to have a roll call, and then we're going to go right into the hearing.

MS. MURPHY (Committee Aide) Assemblywoman Gove.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GOVE: Here.

MS. MURPHY: Assemblyman Dancer.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Here.

MS. MURPHY: Assemblyman Milam is absent.

Assemblyman Armato.

ASSEMBLYMAN ARMATO: Here.

MS. MURPHY: Vice Chairman DeAngelo.

ASSEMBLYMAN WAYNE P. DeANGELO (Vice Chair):

Here.

MS. MURPHY: Chairwoman Tucker.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TUCKER: Here.

MS. MURPHY: We have a quorum.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TUCKER: We have Luddie Austin, the Department of New Jersey VFW.

Could you please come up?

L U D D I E H. A U S T I N: Good morning, and thank you for having us and allowing me this opportunity.

I just briefly want to speak in regards to this constitutional amendment.

When most people look at the military, some forget that we have our military here in the State of New Jersey, which is our New Jersey National Guard. And members of the New Jersey National Guard, like other members of the military -- we don't get to choose where we want to go. But what is unique about the New Jersey National Guard is that we have two missions: a State mission and a Federal mission.

Myself, immediately following 9/11, I was deployed to the Holland Tunnel for force protection, as well as the Salem nuclear power plant. Later on, I did deploy to Iraq; but if I wouldn't have deployed to Iraq, I wouldn't be eligible for this current benefit. And certain members of my unit -- they also had to deploy to Fort Dix as gate guards to maintain that peace.

So this Bill would take care of all veterans, especially all veterans right here in the State of New Jersey.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TUCKER: You're welcome.

Ken Hagemann, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

K E N H A G E M A N N: Good morning, ma'am.

Madam Chair, thank you for having this hearing today.

As you know, we've been working a long time with you, getting this Resolution passed.

My name is Ken Hagemann; I'm a resident of Tuckerton, representing the 1.6 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. It's time for New Jersey to stop classifying veterans, and get in line with the 49 other states and grant every veteran -- without regard of dates of service -- the same benefits and opportunities.

The current definition of what a *veteran* is, is confusing for the veteran or family members, and they often question whether they are covered under Title 11, Title 43, the State Constitution, or even Title 39. They are unsure which State benefits they're eligible for, which ultimately results in veterans not taking advantage of the property tax savings; or worse, being left behind in PTSD treatments, homelessness assistance, and other health or quality of life options.

We have been talking about this for decades. I know how long this issue has dragged on, because I was working with then-State Senator Jim McGreevey in the 1990s to get this legislation passed. It's long past time to get this done.

Today, less than half-a-percent of the U.S. population is serving in uniform. These brave men and women will spend more time on overseas

deployments than previous veterans; but unfortunately, not all deployments will classify them as *veterans* for certain New Jersey benefits.

With a reduced force, the increased training and deployment tempo is very stressful on family life; it also affords less employment opportunities for Guard and Reserve troops and reduced educational opportunities. Today's all-volunteer force put their and their families' lives on hold to serve the greater good, and that service should be recognized.

It is often said that military service changes everyone. As someone in the veteran advocacy business, I can tell you that is true. Some of these changes -- such as leadership traits learned, self-discipline instilled, and a sense of duty -- are beneficial for the veteran, our community, and our country; but many changes are not. The severity and prevalence of injuries suffered by our veterans, both in training and combat, are not found in any other profession.

I recently toured the War Related Illness and Injury Study Center with Congressman Kim, where I learned from the staff that every veteran they evaluate has an enlarged aorta; but they couldn't explain the medical reasons for that condition.

The Veterans Administration reports that veterans are twice as likely to commit suicide as the general population; and in 2017, there were 919 suicides among never-federally activated National Guard or Reserve members. They would not be considered *veterans* in the State of New Jersey, and they would be precluded from State benefits, which would have improved their health, quality of life, and probably saved their lives.

As you've heard me testify before, I served as a Marine Corps scout/sniper in combat operations in the Middle East in the late 1980s

against Iranian Armed Forces. Despite having earned a Combat Action ribbon -- amongst other awards -- I was shocked to learn my home state did not consider me a veteran. What is more tragic is the fact that our state does not consider the 35 men who I served with, nor the 37 wounded in the operations, to be veterans. Their families get no benefits, those men who were killed and wounded do not get benefits in the State of New Jersey. Their sacrifice and service mean nothing here in New Jersey, all because of some arbitrary dates designated long ago by some bureaucrat or politician.

Money shouldn't be used as a roadblock or an excuse not to vote "yes" on this issue. There is always enough money flowing out of this building for pet projects, to reward constituents and voter blocks, or free college. Unfortunately, the huge numbers of brave World War II veterans who benefited from the tax break are no longer with us. The military has downsized, and the wars are fought with less personnel who endure numerous deployments. Every year, the veteran population decreases by 3.72 percent; and in 21 years, the New Jersey veteran population will have been reduced to a third of what it is today.

New Jersey's homeownership is among the lowest in the country. And for post-9/11 veterans, it stands at 51 percent, versus a civilian homeownership rate of 62 percent. We should be giving our veterans every opportunity to own a home and stay right here in New Jersey. If this Bill were passed today, there would be less veterans receiving this tax break today than when it was originally granted. Additionally, when this break was granted, the \$250 in a family's pocket went a whole lot further than it does today.

We are not asking for a raise in the tax exemption, we are asking that New Jersey honor all of our veterans' service equally.

We should all be thankful that, every day, residents of this state voluntarily enter military service knowing the hardships they will endure, the family separations, and, as a nation at war, the increased possibility of serious injury or death.

As a state, we need to honor our veterans and their families, regardless of when and where they served. We need to thank them for their sacrifices and putting their lives on hold.

Let's put the American veteran first, reward them for their service and sacrifice, and get this Bill passed.

Thank you for your time, Madam.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TUCKER: Thank you for your comments.

Now we'll open up the floor for anyone who has any comments; you can come up now.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: May I comment?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TUCKER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Yes; Ken, first of all, I'm assuming-- And I would like to have a copy of that -- we could all have a copy.

MR. HAGEMANN: Yes, I have copies for each of you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Okay.

So I know we've had, for a number of sessions, a *Vet is a Vet Bill*, that has been pending, with many co-sponsors. Is that the Bill that you were referring to -- that a Vet is a Vet?

MR. HAGEMANN: This is a constitutional amendment, sir, that would grant the tax exemption--

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Right.

MR. HAGEMANN: --the \$250 tax break.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: I understand that. But we are -- I think we are the only state in the nation that doesn't recognize all these benefits for vets. Is that correct?

MR. HAGEMANN: Yes, sir, that is true. The other 49 states recognize -- don't classify veterans for different benefits.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Right.

MR. HAGEMANN: They go to every-- All the benefits that the state provides are eligible for all veterans, regardless of service, except New Jersey.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Except New Jersey.

MR. HAGEMANN: Yes, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: And I know we've discussed that, Madam Chairwoman -- about that issue.

So Madam Chairwoman, I'm just saying that I know we've discussed that before, about the *Vet is a Vet*, and that New Jersey is the outlier -- the only one of the 50 states that doesn't provide these uniform and consistent benefits to our veterans.

So obviously this is a good step forward; but it seems like we do it in piecemeal here, rather than providing what the other states in our nation have provided to our vets.

MR. HAGEMANN: That is correct, sir.

And we've been doing piecemeal because all of the different laws were passed -- whether it be civil service, occupational licenses -- you know, I could go on and on about, you know, even Title 39, Motor Vehicle law, you know? It depends on whether you can get a license plate or not, or Disabled Vet plates. People don't know; they're told when they come home -- the first time they go to a Service Officer and seek a State benefit they're told they're not a veteran. They just-- The same thing happened to me, you know, in the early 1990s when I came home, I was told I was not a veteran in New Jersey. I never sought any benefit from the State since then because -- and I am eligible for a few. I can be buried in Arneytown; big deal, you know? But I'm not eligible for a lot of other benefits here in the State of New Jersey.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TUCKER: You're welcome.

Anyone else have any more questions? Come up; just come on up.

MR. AUSTIN: Luddie Austin again.

Sir, to your point -- I come from a line of military family; and currently my daughter is serving in the United States Army, and we had a conversation. She was recently stationed in Tennessee, and she changed her residency from New Jersey because of the benefits that Tennessee offers for the veterans, versus New Jersey.

So it's not only the veterans who are here in New Jersey who we should be looking out for, we should be looking out for those who are actively in the military from the State of New Jersey, wanting them to return back to

the State of New Jersey once they complete their military service. And this would draw veterans back into the State of New Jersey.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TUCKER: Do we have any other-- It's open; it's an open public hearing. You don't have to be in the military to come up and voice your opinion. And if you are in the military, and if you would like to come up and voice your opinion, we welcome all the input we can get on this particular Resolution.

So the floor is open. (no response)

No? So then we'll go to our Committee.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeANGELO: Thank you, Madam Chair, for a couple moments to speak on this Resolution.

Again, I support the Resolution wholeheartedly, as I believe most of the members here do. And hearing the conversations and testimony on *a Vet is a Vet* -- you know, obviously, maybe have a discussion in the new session that maybe we have a hearing on that -- have that kind of discussion from the interested parties, instead of trying to piecemeal.

We've done a lot for veterans, and active men and women in the military, from licenses, to allowing their family members their licenses, grandfathering them from other states as they're stationed here in New Jersey; and this is something for us to build on. But maybe a further discussion would be helpful.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ARMATO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The important thing I think we have to understand is that we don't pick where we go. Once you sign that contract, it's up for grabs wherever you're going to go or where you don't go.

But I always use the analogy that -- I signed the same contract, that you signed the same contract; that you would do anything for your country, including give your life for your country. Now, because you were stationed in Oklahoma, the same thing: You didn't choose to go there. So anybody who goes in should have that ability when you're serving in peacetime.

Covert operations -- they don't even consider those, because nobody knew about them. But they have injuries, they have deaths, and that should be recognized.

And I also support this Bill wholeheartedly. I went in the service in 1966; and like you said, when you go in you come out differently. I came out for the better. I went in as a boy with no occupation, and in four years I was a man who had an occupation that served me my whole life.

So I think this is the time; I think we have the time. It always comes down to dollars and cents which, when you're talking about veterans, that shouldn't come into the conversation at all. All vets are veterans.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GOVE: Thank you, Madam Chair; and thank you everyone for your service to our country so that we are sitting here in freedom.

And things are a little tense this time of year, right now, as you all know -- what's happened over the past weekend. So I thank those vets,

those soldiers who are over there now, and those vets who've been there. And we just need to support them in every way.

Whether you like getting there or not -- I mean, whether you like the situation -- our soldiers are over there now, and we need to support them, and we need to support them when they return to the United States. Just like the Assemblyman said, we need to support you, whether you were in Oklahoma, or in Vietnam, or Germany, or wherever they were sent throughout the years.

My father was a vet; I am very proud of that. He was a World War II vet. I, growing up in the 1960s, obviously was not part of that. Today, there are many, many women, as I see sitting out here today, and I thank them for their service.

I have friends, high school friends who served, and students of mine when I was teaching have served. And I appreciate everything they have done in the definition of democracy and the freedom. They've given their all, and I thank you all for that. And whether you are-- As I said, a vet is a vet; I think we all agree with that.

And money should not be a part of this, because they didn't ask about money going to serve. They served because they wanted to serve, as you all have.

So thank you again for that; and whatever we can do-- I think the Assemblyman said it right: I think it's time. I've been in here for 10 years, and we have been doing it piecemeal. Well, let's try to get it all right now, because it is time to say, "A vet is a vet."

Thank you.

And again, thank you for all that you've done for us to have our freedom, sitting here today. And I am supporting that; do I have to say that? Or do I say, "I am supporting--" Are we going to vote on this, too, then?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TUCKER: No.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GOVE: Oh; I am supportive of it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TUCKER: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GOVE: Ron, anything you want to say?

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Well, I have said--

No, I am fine; I'm good. I don't need to add to it.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TUCKER: You're good?

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TUCKER: Okay.

So I just want to say thank you to everyone who attended this public hearing today on Resolution ACR-253.

The proposed purpose of this constitutional amendment is to make sure that New Jersey veterans receive recognition for their deserved time that they served in our military; and our State to provide the same benefits that others are provided throughout the country, no matter what role you played or what time you served in the armed forces.

While the veterans didn't, indeed, choose whether they were peacetime operations or whatever, their paperwork had nothing to do with whether they are considered a vet or not, due to circumstances beyond their control. And this is especially true for our women veterans and other veterans; and especially for our women veterans, because up until 2015 they weren't allowed to go into the combat zones. So they were never really

considered *veterans* in the State of New Jersey, because they didn't have an opportunity to serve, at that time, in the war zone areas of whatever conflict was going on at that time.

So I just wanted to say that this is especially important for all our veterans, but especially for our women veterans, who didn't have the opportunity to be veterans because of the time, conflict -- until 2015.

So today we're going to make a great step; but we still have a lot to do. This is just the first step in a long fight that we've been fighting here in the Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee to make a wrong right. And by doing this Resolution today, we hope we're making one step towards the tax reduction, and we're looking forward to doing more work on all other matters that concern -- and making the New Jersey law that matches the other 49 states.

So with that being said, can I get a motion?

ASSEMBLYMAN DeANGELO: A motion to release ACR-253.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TUCKER: Okay; I was just told that this is a hearing and that we don't have to vote.

But we all are saying "yes," anyway. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GOVE: Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: That's right, that's right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TUCKER: So with that being said, the hearing is closed.

(HEARING CONCLUDED)