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PUBLIC MEETING

before

ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ASSEMBLY BILL 3527

(Establishes a Department of Veterans' Affairs  
and Appropriates \$1,000,000)

June 23, 1987  
Room 184  
AMVETS Civic Center  
Nutley, New Jersey

MEMBER OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblyman Peter J. Genova, Chairman  
Assemblyman Paul DiGaetano  
Assemblyman Rodney P. Frelinghuysen  
Assemblyman D. Bennett Mazur  
Assemblyman Thomas H. Paterniti

ALSO PRESENT:

Assemblyman Newton E. Miller, District 34  
Assemblyman Gerald Zecker, District 34

Brian S. Volz  
Office of Legislative Services  
Aide, Assembly Select Committee  
on Veterans' Affairs

New Jersey State Library

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Hearing Recorded and Transcribed by  
Office of Legislative Services  
Public Information Office  
Hearing Unit  
State House Annex  
CN 068  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625







PETER J. GENOVA

Chairman

CLORES G. COOPER

Vice-Chairman

AROLD L. COLBURN, JR.

AUL DIGAETANO

ODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

BENNETT MAZUR

THOMAS H. PATERNITI

## New Jersey State Legislature

### ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE

#### ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

STATE HOUSE ANNEX, CN-068

TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625

TELEPHONE: (609) 292-9106

## MEMORANDUM

June 9, 1987

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

FROM: Assemblyman Peter J. Genova, Chairman

SUBJECT: COMMITTEE MEETING - June 23, 1987

(Address comments and questions to Brian Volz, Committee Aide)

The Assembly Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs will meet promptly on Tuesday, June 23, 1987, at 7:00 p.m. in Room 184 of the AMVETS Civic Center in Nutley.

The Committee will receive testimony on the following legislation and consider making recommendations to the relevant standing reference committee:

A-3527/Genova

Establishes a Department of Veterans' Affairs and appropriates \$1,000,000.

#### Directions:

From Trenton - Take the Garden State Parkway north to Exit #150 and turn right onto Hoover Road. At blinking light turn left onto Bloomfield Avenue. At second traffic light turn right onto Center Street. At second traffic light turn left onto Passaic Avenue. At blinking light turn right onto Park Avenue. AMVETS Civic Center will be on the left, #184.



# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED DECEMBER 18, 1986

By Assemblyman GENOVA, Assemblywoman COOPER, Assemblymen Colburn, Littell, Villane, Assemblywoman Donovan, Assemblymen Marsella, Rooney, Schuber, Bennett, Assemblywoman Smith, Assemblymen Azzolina, Loveys, Palaia, Kelly, Assemblywoman Crecco, Assemblymen Zecker, Schwartz, DiGaetano, Hendrickson, Paterniti, Pellecchia, Baer, McEnroe, Hudak, Bocchini, Muziani, Assemblywoman Ogden, Assemblymen Kline, Shinn, Riley, Rafferty, Chinnici, Martin, Miller, Gargiulo, Moran, Dario, Catrillo, Arango, Singer, Collins, Assemblywomen Kalik, Randall, Garvin, Assemblymen Deverin, Girgenti, Zangari, Rocco, Haytaian, Felice, Mazur, Foy, Pelly, Smith, Otlowski, Naples, Penn and Kavanaugh

AN ACT establishing a Department of Veterans' Affairs as a principal department in the Executive Branch of State government, amending P. L. 1948, c. 448, and P. L. 1979, c. 443, supplementing chapter 52 of the Revised Statutes repealing sections 40 through 45 of P. L. 1944, c. 85, and making an appropriation therefor.

1 BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*  
2 *of New Jersey:*

1 1. (New section) This act shall be known and may be cited as  
2 the "New Jersey Veterans' Affairs Department Act."

1 2. (New section) The Legislature finds and declares:

2 a. Since the establishment of this State more than 200 years  
3 ago, New Jersey's veterans have maintained their proud allegiance  
4 to the United States and have fought and died to preserve and  
5 protect our freedom and way of life;

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 printed in italics thus is new matter.

6 b. Presently there are approximately 900,000 veterans residing  
7 in New Jersey, including more than 10,000 World War I veterans,  
8 406,000 World War II veterans, 202,000 veterans of the Korean  
9 conflict, 203,000 veterans of the Vietnam conflict, 30,000 women  
10 veterans, and veterans of the Lebanon and Grenada peacekeeping  
11 missions;

12 c. The Departments of Higher Education, Human Services,  
13 Labor, and Treasury provide special services and benefits to these  
14 veterans and their dependents;

15 d. The Department of Human Services, which is the principal  
16 government agency that serves this State's veterans, has done an  
17 especially commendable job attending to this special group of resi-  
18 dents;

19 e. Yet while 23 states in the United States have a separate  
20 cabinet-level Department of Veterans' Affairs, New Jersey lacks  
21 an executive department which is concerned solely with the needs  
22 and problems of veterans in this State;

23 f. It is in the public interest to incorporate all services and pro-  
24 grams which pertain specifically to veterans and their dependents  
25 into a single executive department which can serve their needs more  
26 efficiently than is possible at present.

1 3. (New section) As used in this act:

2 a. "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of the Department  
3 of Veterans' Affairs;

4 b. "Department" means the Department of Veterans' Affairs  
5 established by this act.

1 4. (New section) There is established in the Executive Branch  
2 of the State government a principal department which shall be  
3 known as the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

1 5. (New section) The Division of Veterans' Programs and  
2 Special Services in the Department of Human Services, established  
3 pursuant to section 40 of P. L. 1944, c. 85 (C. 52:27C-40), is  
4 abolished and the division together with all its functions, powers,  
5 duties and employees is reconstituted as the Department of Vet-  
6 erans' Affairs established pursuant to this act.

1 6. (New section) The administrator and head of the department  
2 shall be a commissioner, who shall be known as the Commissioner  
3 of Veterans' Affairs, and who shall be a war veteran qualified by  
4 training and experience to perform the duties of his office. The  
5 commissioner shall be appointed by the Governor with the advice  
6 and consent of the Senate and shall serve at the pleasure of the  
7 Governor during the Governor's term of office and until the ap-

8 pointment and qualification of the commissioner's successor. He  
9 shall devote his entire time to the duties of his office and shall  
10 receive such salary as shall be provided by law. Any vacancy  
11 occurring in the office of the commissioner shall be filled in the  
12 same manner as the original appointment.

1 7. (New section) The commissioner, as head of the department,  
2 shall have all of the functions, powers and duties heretofore vested  
3 in the Director of the Division of Veterans' Programs and Special  
4 Services and shall, in addition to the functions, powers and duties  
5 invested in him by this act or by any other law:

6 a. Administer the work of the department;

7 b. Appoint and remove officers and other personnel employed  
8 within the department, subject to the provisions of Title 11A of  
9 the New Jersey Statutes, and other applicable statutes, except as  
10 herein otherwise specifically provided;

11 c. Have authority to organize and maintain an administrative  
12 division and to assign to employment therein secretarial, clerical  
13 and other assistants in the department of his office and the internal  
14 operations of the department may require, in accordance with Title  
15 11A of the New Jersey Statutes;

16 d. Perform, exercise and discharge the functions, powers and  
17 duties of the department through such divisions as may be estab-  
18 lished by this act or otherwise by law;

19 e. Organize the work of the department in divisions, not incon-  
20 sistent with the provisions of this act, and in bureaus and other  
21 organizational units as he may determine to be necessary for  
22 efficient and effective operation;

23 f. Adopt, issue and promulgate, in the name of the department,  
24 pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P. L. 1968, c. 410  
25 (C. 52:14B-1 et seq.), such rules and regulations as may be autho-  
26 rized by law;

27 g. Formulate and adopt rules and regulations for the efficient  
28 conduct of the work and general administration of the department,  
29 its officers and employees;

30 h. Institute or cause to be instituted legal proceedings or pro-  
31 cesses as necessary to properly enforce and give effect to any of  
32 his powers or duties;

33 i. Make an annual report to the Governor and to the Legislature  
34 of the department's operations, and render other reports as the  
35 Governor shall from time to time request or as may be required by  
36 law;

37 j. Coordinate the activities of the department, and the several  
38 divisions and other agencies therein, in a manner designed to  
39 eliminate overlapping and duplicative functions;

40 k. Integrate within the department, so far as practicable, all  
41 staff services of the department and of the several divisions and  
42 other agencies therein;

43 l. Have access to all relevant files and records of other State  
44 agencies and require any officer or employee therein to provide  
45 information as necessary to assist in the performance of the func-  
46 tions of the department;

47 m. Maintain suitable headquarters for the department and such  
48 other quarters as he shall deem necessary to the proper functioning  
49 of the department; and

50 n. Perform such other functions as may be prescribed in this act  
51 or by any other law.

1 8. (New section) The commissioner may apply for and accept  
2 on behalf of the State any grants from the federal government or  
3 any agency thereof, or from any foundation, corporation, associa-  
4 tion or individual, and may comply with the terms, conditions and  
5 limitations thereof, for any purposes of the department. Any  
6 money so received may be expended by the department, subject to  
7 any limitations imposed in such grants to effect any of the purposes  
8 of the department, as the case may be, upon warrant of the Director  
9 of the Division of Budget and Accounting of the Department of  
10 the Treasury on vouchers certified and approved by the com-  
11 missioner. The power herein granted shall be in addition to and  
12 shall in no way limit the authority granted to the commissioner  
13 by this act or any other existing law.

1 9. (New section) The commissioner shall appoint a deputy com-  
2 missioner, who shall be designated to perform all of the powers,  
3 functions and duties of the commissioner during the absence or  
4 disability of the commissioner, and who shall perform such other  
5 duties as are assigned by the commissioner. Such appointment  
6 shall be subject to the approval of the Governor and shall be filed  
7 with the Secretary of State. The deputy commissioner shall be a  
8 person qualified by training and experience to perform the duties  
9 of the office.

1 10. (New section) The department and the commissioner through  
2 the deputy commissioner, the directors, divisions, bureaus and  
3 offices shall administer the following principal functions:

4 a. The supervision and operation of State veterans' homes and  
5 cemeteries;



6 b. The supervision and operation of the liaison office and the  
7 field offices which serve the federal Veterans' Affairs Medical  
8 Centers:

9 c. The application for federal grants and programs;

10 d. The administration of federally-funded educational assis-  
11 tance programs and education grants;

12 e. The administration of federally-funded training and reha-  
13 bilitation programs; and

14 f. The provision of current information to the general public  
15 on State and federal veterans' programs and benefits.

16 However, nothing in this section shall be construed as affecting  
17 or derogating from any provisions of law giving functions, powers  
18 and duties in these areas to other departments or agencies as  
19 giving additional functions, powers and duties to the commissioner  
20 or the department.

1 11. (New section) The department shall organize and administer  
2 a program of voluntary commitments by employers throughout  
3 the State to participate in a plan of veterans' preference in  
4 private employment and reemployment.

1 12. (New section) The plan of veterans' preference in private  
2 employment shall provide for the fixing of a quota of veterans  
3 by the commissioner for all participating employers, but may not  
4 require any employed worker to be discharged. The plan shall  
5 also provide for the classification of disabled veterans in occu-  
6 pations for which they would not be handicapped, and for first  
7 preference in such occupations for such disabled veterans.

1 13. (New section) In the organization and administration of the  
2 employment quota preference plan, the commissioner, through  
3 appropriate federal, State and local agencies, shall:

4 a. Enroll employers who voluntarily commit themselves to the  
5 plan and certify the right of such employers to approved forms  
6 of public recognition;

7 b. Register veterans desiring employment, according to their  
8 occupational experience and capacities;

9 c. Register labor unions which are willing to participate through  
10 appropriate adjustment of their membership and other require-  
11 ments, and certify the right of such unions to approved forms  
12 of public recognition;

13 d. Receive requests for workers from all participating em-  
14 ployers; and

15 e. Either refer qualified veterans (with preference to the dis-  
16 abled) in response to such requisitions or certify that veterans  
17 are not available.

1 14. (New section) The department shall review and approve  
 2 or disapprove all policies and work programs of State depart-  
 3 ments, agencies and instrumentalities relating to war veterans'  
 4 welfare, services or activities. No such activity or work program  
 5 shall be undertaken or continued after disapproval by the de-  
 6 partment without specific authorization from the Governor.

1 15. (New section) The Veteran Services Council, established  
 2 pursuant to P. L. 1948, c. 448 (C. 13:1B-20), together with all its  
 3 powers, functions and duties, is continued and transferred to the  
 4 Department of Veterans' Affairs. This act shall not affect the  
 5 terms of office of the present members of the commission, except  
 6 that if there are less than two women members of the council  
 7 following the enactment of this 1987 amendatory and supple-  
 8 mentary act, the Governor shall appoint such members upon the  
 9 expiration of the terms of two male members.

1 16. Section 22 of P. L. 1948, c. 448 (C. 13:1B-20) is amended  
 2 to read as follows:

3 22. There shall be within the [Division of Veterans' Services]  
 4 *Department of Veterans' Affairs*, a Veterans' Services Council  
 5 which shall consist of nine members *and shall include no less than*  
 6 *two women*. Each member of the council shall be a war veteran,  
 7 and shall be appointed by the Governor, with the advice and con-  
 8 sent of the Senate, for a term of four years and shall serve until  
 9 his successor has been appointed and has qualified, except that  
 10 of the first appointments hereunder, two shall be for a term of  
 11 one year, two for two years, two for three years, and three for  
 12 four years.

13 Each Governor shall designate one of the members of the  
 14 council as chairman of such council. Any member of the council  
 15 so designated shall serve as such chairman at the pleasure of the  
 16 Governor designating him and until his successor has been desig-  
 17 nated. The chairman of the council shall be its presiding officer.

18 Any vacancies in the membership of said council occurring other  
 19 than by expiration of term shall be filled by the Governor, with  
 20 the advice and consent of the Senate, for the unexpired term only.  
 21 Any member of the council may be removed from office by the  
 22 Governor, for cause, upon notice and opportunity to be heard.

23 The members of the council shall serve without compensation  
 24 but shall be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the  
 25 performance of their duties.

1 17. (New section) The MIA-POW Dependents Educational Pro-  
 2 gram, established pursuant to P. L. 1975, c. 331 (C. 18A:71-61

3 et seq.), shall be administered by the Department of Veterans'  
4 Affairs.

1 18. (New section) The Veterans' Tuition Credit Program,  
2 established pursuant to P. L. 1975, c. 356 (C. 18A:71-64 et seq.),  
3 shall be administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

1 19. (New section) The Vietnam Veteran Tuition Aid Program,  
2 established pursuant to P. L. 1985, c. 114 (C. 18A:71-76.1 et seq.),  
3 shall be administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

1 20. (New section) The Veterans' Facilities Council, established  
2 pursuant to P. L. 1971, c. 344 (C. 30:6AA-11 et seq.), together  
3 with all its powers, functions and duties, is continued and trans-  
4 ferred to the Department of Veterans' Affairs. This act shall  
5 not affect the terms of office of the present members of the council.

1 21. (New section) The Blind Veterans' Allowance Program,  
2 established pursuant to R. S. 38:18-1 et seq., shall be adminis-  
3 tered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

1 22. (New section) The Paraplegic and Hemiplegic Veterans'  
2 Allowance Program, established pursuant to P. L. 1947, c. 263  
3 (C. 38:18A-1 et seq.), shall be administered by the Department  
4 of Veterans' Affairs.

1 23. (New section) The program of Veterans' Orphans Educa-  
2 tion Grants, established pursuant to R. S. 38:20-1 et seq., shall  
3 be administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

1 24. (New section) The veterans' loan authority, established  
2 pursuant to P. L. 1944, c. 126 (C. 38:23B-1 et seq.), together with  
3 all its functions, powers and duties, is continued and transferred  
4 to the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

1 25. (New section) The Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Committee,  
2 established pursuant to section 2 of P. L. 1985, c. 494, together  
3 with all its powers, functions and duties, is continued and trans-  
4 ferred to the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The act shall not  
5 affect the terms of office of the present members of the commission.

1 26. (New section) The New Jersey Veterans' Cemetery at Arney-  
2 town, built in part of funds appropriated pursuant to P. L. 1985,  
3 c. 149, shall be administered by the Department of Veterans'  
4 Affairs.

1 27. (New section) The Vietnam Veterans' Special Services  
2 Council and the Vietnam Veterans' Outreach Program, first  
3 funded by State monies during fiscal year 1984 pursuant to P. L.  
4 1983, c. 240, together with the council's functions and duties,  
5 shall be administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

1 28. (New section) The Agent Orange Commission, established  
 2 pursuant to P. L. 1979, c. 443, together with its powers, functions  
 3 and duties, is continued and transferred to the Department of  
 4 Veterans' Affairs. This act shall not affect the goals of the com-  
 5 mission or the terms of office of its members.

1 29. Section 3 of P. L. 1979, c. 443 is amended to read as follows:

2 3. There is established *in the Department of Veterans' Affairs*  
 3 an Agent Orange Commission which shall be composed of seven  
 4 members to be appointed by the Governor of whom at least four  
 5 shall be Vietnam era veterans. The members of the commission  
 6 shall serve without compensation but shall be entitled to reim-  
 7 bursement by the commission for expenses necessarily incurred  
 8 in the performance of their duties. The commission shall employ  
 9 an executive director and such clerical support as is necessary  
 10 to effectuate the purposes of this act.

1 30. Section 5 of P. L. 1979, c. 443 is amended to read as follows:

2 5. The Division of [Veterans Programs and Special Services in  
 3 the Department of Human Services] *Loans, Grants and Services*  
 4 *in the Department of Veterans' Affairs* shall render all assistance  
 5 requested by the commission to effectuate the purposes of this act.

1 31. (New section) There is established in the department a  
 2 Division of Administrative Services, a Division of Loans, Grants  
 3 and Services, and a Division of Education, Training and Infor-  
 4 mation.

1 32. (New section) The Division of Administrative Services shall:

2 a. Provide centralized support to all segments of the depart-  
 3 ment, including budgeting, personnel administration and oversight  
 4 of equal opportunity programs;

5 b. Supervise and operate the State Veterans' homes at Menlo  
 6 Park, Vineland and Paramus; and

7 c. Supervise and operate the New Jersey Veterans' Cemetery  
 8 at Arnetown.

1 33. (New section) The Division of Administrative Services  
 2 shall be under the immediate supervision of a director who shall  
 3 be a veteran qualified by training and experience to direct the  
 4 work of the division. The director shall be appointed by the  
 5 commissioner with the approval of the Governor, and shall serve  
 6 at the pleasure of the commissioner.

1 34. (New section) The Division of Loans, Grants and Services  
 2 shall:

3 a. Administer the Blind Veterans' Allowance Program;

4 b. Administer the Paraplegic and Hemiplegic Allowance Pro-  
 5 gram;

- 6 c. Maintain a continuous liaison with the Association of Blind
- 7 Veterans and other similar State and national veterans' associa-
- 8 tions and organizations;
- 9 d. Provide all necessary assistance to the Agent Orange Com-
- 10 mission;
- 11 e. Administer the veterans' loan authority;
- 12 f. Supervise and operate the liaison and field offices which
- 13 serve the federal Veterans' Administration Centers at Lyons and
- 14 East Orange;
- 15 g. Administer the program of voluntary commitments by em-
- 16 ployers to participate in a plan of veterans' preference in private
- 17 employment; and
- 18 h. Compete for all grants, private and federal, that would fund
- 19 programs to benefit the State's veterans and their dependents.

1 35. (New section) The Division of Loans, Grants and Services  
 2 shall be under the immediate supervision of a director who shall  
 3 be a veteran qualified by training and experience to direct the  
 4 work of the division. The director shall be appointed by the com-  
 5 missioner, with the approval of the Governor, and shall serve  
 6 at the pleasure of the commissioner.

1 36. (New section) The Division of Education, Training and  
 2 Information shall:

- 3 a. Administer the federally-funded Veterans' Educational Assis-
- 4 tance Program;
- 5 b. Administer the Veterans' Orphans Fund Educational Grant;
- 6 c. Administer the Vietnam Veterans' Tuition Aid Program;
- 7 d. Administer the Veterans' Tuition Credit Program;
- 8 e. Administer the MIA-POW Dependents Educational Program;
- 9 f. Administer the operations of the Vietnam Veterans' Special
- 10 Services Council and the Vietnam Veterans' Outreach Program;
- 11 g. Administer all other federal and State training and rehabili-
- 12 tation programs; and
- 13 h. Provide current information to the general public on federal
- 14 and State veterans' programs and benefits.

1 37. (New section) The Division of Education, Training and In-  
 2 formation shall be under the immediate supervision of a director  
 3 who shall be a veteran qualified by training and experience to  
 4 direct the work of the division. The director shall be appointed  
 5 by the commissioner, with the approval of the Governor, and  
 6 shall serve at the pleasure of the commissioner.

1 38. (New section) Each director shall receive such salary as  
 2 may be established by the commissioner with the approval of



3 the Commissioner of Personnel and the Director of the Division  
4 of Budget and Accounting.

1 39. (New section) In the event that a director is appointed  
2 from persons holding positions in the classified service of the  
3 State, the director shall retain, during his or her tenure in such  
4 positions, any rights or protection provided that person by Title  
5 11A, Civil Service, of the New Jersey Statutes or any pension  
6 law or retirement system.

1 40. (New section) Sections 40 through 45 of P. L. 1944, c. 85  
2 (C. 52:27C-40 to 52:27C-45) are repealed.

1 41. (New section) The transfers directed by this act, except  
2 as otherwise provided herein, shall be made in accordance with  
3 the "State Agency Transfer Act," P. L. 1971, c. 375 (C. 52:14D-1  
4 et seq.).

1 42. (New section) In addition to the funds transferred to the  
2 department by this act, there is appropriated the sum of  
3 \$1,000,000.00, or as much thereof as may be necessary, from the  
4 General Fund to be allocated for the implementation of this act.

1 43. This act shall take effect upon the enactment into law of  
2 P. L. , c. (C. ) (now pending before the  
3 Legislature as Assembly Bill No. 2019 of 1986).

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### STATEMENT

This bill establishes a Department of Veterans' Affairs as a principal department in the Executive Branch of State Government. The current Division of Veterans' Programs and Special Services, located in the Department of Human Services, is abolished and reconstituted as the nucleus of the new Department of Veterans' Affairs. The bill is made contingent on the enactment of Assembly Bill No. 2019 of 1986 which abolishes the Department of Energy.

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### VETERANS

Establishes a Department of Veterans' Affairs, appropriates \$1,000,000.

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\* \* \* \* \*



(Malfunction of recording equipment at the beginning of the meeting. Andy Andriola, President, Veterans' Council of Nutley opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Mr. Andriola was followed by Assemblyman John V. Kelly, who thanked Assemblyman Genova for holding the meeting, and thanked Mr. Andriola for acting as Program Chairman for the evening. Assemblyman Kelly was followed by Assemblywoman Marion Crecco.)

**A S S E M B L Y W O M A N   M A R I O N   C R E C C O:** Thank you, Pete, members of the Committee, Tony Capriglione, Andy Andriola, and members of AMVETS Post 44 here in Nutley.

This Committee is considering legislation that would give veterans a voice in the affairs of this State. Currently, veterans' affairs are handled by a myriad of different State agencies. This is wrong. Veterans need a department of their own to ensure that the services to which the veterans are entitled are delivered in the most efficient manner possible.

The State Constitution limits New Jersey to 20 different State departments, and right now we are at the limit. In order for the Veterans' Department to be created, we need to eliminate one of the current 20 State agencies.

Last year, the Assembly abolished the State Department of Energy. I was one of those who supported ending this obsolete agency. Yet the State Senate has failed to act. I am not one to question any of Senator Dalton's motives, who still has this in his Committee, but I will tell you that the elimination of the Department of Energy must happen before veterans will have a single clearing house to handle their needs.

Your testimony here tonight will give us the information we need to make a case for the elimination of the Department of Energy and the creation of a Veterans' Affairs Agency.

Thank you for attending.

MR. ANDRIOLA: Thank you, Marion. I will now turn the meeting over to Assemblyman Peter Genova, Chairman of the Assembly Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

ASSEMBLYMAN PETER J. GENOVA (Chairman): Thank you, Andy. Good evening, everyone. I want to thank you all very much for having this Committee come to your great City of Nutley, in the great County of Essex. We are very, very pleased with the representation of both John Kelly and Marion Crecco. I have enjoyed working with them for the past, close to two year. They have really brought a lot of interest, not only to other areas of concern in the State of New Jersey, but mostly to veterans. They are two professionals, two people who enjoy government, two people who are very sincere, open-minded, and willing to work on behalf of everyone in the State of New Jersey. You are very, very fortunate -- those of you who reside in the district they represent -- to have them representing you in the State House.

Marion and John, I want to thank you very much for arranging this evening. This is one of the greatest turnouts we have had of the 15 meetings we have had around the State, and I want to thank all of you for coming out and making it a success.

Before I get into the introduction of our Committee members, we also have two visiting legislators with us, two very good friends of mine who represent Passaic County and parts of Essex County. They serve on the Labor Committee in the house with me. The Chairman of the Transportation Committee, and also the Vice Chairman of the Labor Committee, the Honorable Newt Miller -- Newt? (applause) -- and the Honorable Gerry Zecker -- Gerry? (applause)

At this time, I would like to introduce all of you to some of our Committee members. Several members could not be here either because of prior commitments or traveling. My Vice Chairman resides in Atlantic City, and it is very, very



difficult for her to get up here during a regular working day. But I am very pleased to have with us some of the other members. To my left, one of my very good friends who has brought a lot of interest to this Committee, who is a veteran himself who possesses three Purple Hearts, someone who I would like to have say a few words to all of you, the Honorable Ben Mazur, Assemblyman from Bergen County. Bennett? (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: Thank you. It is a great pleasure to be with you tonight. I am a co-sponsor, with many other legislators, on this particular piece of legislation -- proposed legislation -- proposed creation. The purpose of this meeting, of course, is to get your opinions and your views. I really have not come to talk to you; I have come to listen, and I will be listening very eagerly to what you have to say.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Thank you very much, Ben. Seated to Ben's left -- and I always introduce him as one of our bright young stars -- is a young man who has been very, very close to me. He has helped me out with a lot of my key legislation, and I, in turn, have helped him out with a lot of his. A friend of the veterans, a friend of just about everyone in the State, besides being so good-looking, he is a good legislator -- the Honorable Paul DiGaetano, from Bergen County. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. For those present here who are not familiar with this Committee itself -- and this is the first time the New Jersey Assembly has had a Committee on Veterans' Affairs -- this is a Committee on which all of the members serve as volunteers. There is no one on this Committee who was appointed to it who didn't volunteer to serve on this particular Committee first. This is in addition to the other committees which each and every one of us sits on -- the other standing committees.

It is my distinct pleasure to be here. I represent the district which is north and east of us here -- Passaic and Bergen Counties. I have always felt that Nutley was my back yard. It is just a hop, skip, and a jump from my house. But, it is certainly a pleasure to be here to do whatever I can for those of us here who have given their time, given of their lives -- parts of their lives -- for service to our country.

Really, as Ben said, I came here to hear you. Thank you for having us.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Thank you, Paul. Our final member who is here tonight is probably no stranger to you people. You see his picture in the papers all the time. He is one of our senior members in the Legislature; one of the most interesting people I have known since I have been down there. I have worked very, very closely with him. He familiarizes himself with the legislation before he votes on it. He is very, very open-minded, and will listen to both sides of the issue. A very good friend, a good friend of the veterans, the Honorable Tom Paterniti, from Middlesex County. Tom? (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN PATERNITI: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I would like to thank the Veterans' Council and both Assemblyman John Kelly and Assemblywoman Marion Crecco for making it possible for us to be here this evening.

As you know, the establishment of a Department of Veterans' Affairs is of deep concern to all veterans. I can tell that from the great turnout we have here this evening. This has been long in coming. There are a lot of concerns. Many, many times, your concerns are sent to various committees, and are kind of buried at the bottom. I don't think that's right. As time goes by, there are more and more new concerns for veterans, because a lot of our veterans today are going to be senior citizens. In fact, in the next three or four years,

all of the World War II veterans and Korean veterans are going to be seniors, and they will have special needs and special concerns. Because of that, I think we need this department established more than ever.

I want to congratulate our Chairman, Peter Genova, for introducing this legislation and for making us all co-sponsors. We know it is vitally needed, and I hope your input tonight will make the bill even a little bit better.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Thank you very much, Tom. I would like to finally introduce a man who has been quite vital to this Committee. He has traveled around the State with us. He is the nuts and bolts of the Committee, because he prepares the notices that go out to you; he prepares the agenda; he makes sure that we are on top of all the necessary issues. From the State House, from the Office of Legislative Services, Brian Volz. Brian? (applause) And, of course, the two young ladies from Legislative Services, who traveled all the way from Trenton to take testimony from the audience. Thank you for coming. (applause) I know you would rather be home.

We are here to talk a bit about Assembly Bill 3527. It was introduced on December 18, 1986. This bill calls for the creation of what some people like to term another layer of bureaucratic red tape. I am offended when I hear that; I really am. I think in State government there is always a need for improvement if you see many vital areas not being addressed as they should be addressed.

At the present time, the veterans' concerns and issues are under the jurisdiction of the Department of Human Services, through the Division of Veterans' Services in Trenton. In my opinion, the veterans -- the close to 900,000 veterans in the State of New Jersey -- have been treated like second-class citizens too long. It is about time that we place all of their needs and concerns under one umbrella. It is about time we have a separate and distinct Cabinet position, manned by a

veteran who reports directly to the Governor of the State of New Jersey to head this department, to make sure that every need -- every education need, everything conceivable that a veteran is entitled to -- is addressed by this particular department, and not by several departments.

I am very pleased that the bill has enjoyed co-sponsorship in our house by 62 co-sponsors. From what I am told, that is the largest number of co-sponsors to join any bill in the State House. I am doubly pleased to have this bill in the Senate by a gentleman who I would like to refer to as "Mr. VFW" and also "Mr. Veteran of the State of New Jersey," the Honorable Senator Franny McManimon, from Mercer County. I am sure many of you know Franny from the VFW. He has put the bill in, in the Senate, and once we move this bill forward in the Assembly State Government Committee, Senator McManimon will urge the Chairman, Senator Lipman, to push the bill forward in the Senate. We will have them both hit the Senate and the Assembly at the same time. We will move both of them, and hopefully get them to the Governor for acceptance. It is very, very important that we do this.

What really offended me one time, was when I had reported to me that approximately \$1.6 million of moneys that were supposed to be distributed to Vineland and the Menlo Park Home, went astray -- went to some other service -- to DYFS, in fact. There has never been a tight control over the moneys that were allocated, or afforded to the Division of Veterans' Services for veterans. There are a lot of things that veterans need; a lot of things that people just don't have control over. I think that by the creation of this department, we will certainly illustrate to everyone in the State, especially the veterans, that they will have a single representative in Trenton they can go to, should they have questions. They have representation in Washington, so there is no reason why they shouldn't have it in New Jersey also.

I am pleased with the acceptance of this bill. We have had several meetings throughout the State where we addressed this bill alone. The veterans are behind it. Hopefully, we will move this bill-- We will have it before the Committee in August, and if it is accepted there, we will have the Speaker of the House post it for a vote as soon as possible.

I met with the Governor on the bill at the time I introduced it. He was not committed; he was not in favor of it, yet he was not opposed to it. He has his own ideas about the creation of a department. Of course, as Marion mentioned before, we are only allowed by the State to have a certain number of departments. At the present time, we have 20. If the Department of Energy is abolished -- it cannot be abolished by Executive Order; it has to be abolished by legislation -- we will, of course, then be entitled to a slot to fit this one in. The Governor has talked about a separate department for the senior citizens -- for aging. Of course, as you may have heard, there is a proposal that would create a separate department for the Division of Motor Vehicles.

I feel the veterans certainly do need this department. It has been a long time coming. With all of your help -- I mean, speaking to one another, writing to the newspapers, writing to the Governor -- we will have this thing very, very shortly, and you certainly do deserve it.

Enough from me. I would like to hear some testimony on behalf of the bill -- hopefully not opposing the bill -- from whomever has signed in. Brian, do we have a list of people who wish to speak?

MR. VOLZ: Just one gentleman, Stephen Shuey.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Okay. I am sure that once Steve speaks, we will have other people volunteering to testify. Steve, for the record, please give us your name, your address, and who you represent.



S T E P H E N   S H U E Y: Thank you. My name is Stephen Shuey. I am a Veterans' Service Officer for the State of New Jersey. I am also a State representative of Vietnam Veterans of America on the PTSD Subcommittee for the State Council. But, I am testifying here as an individual and as a veterans' advocate.

First of all, I would like to thank the Chairman and the Committee for their recent support of the legislation on the Agent Orange Commission. As the Chairman well knows, it is making headway, where the Federal government couldn't. We appreciate -- at least I appreciate -- the advocacy that comes from this Committee for veterans in the State of New Jersey.

I would also like to state that I am testifying under the Whistle Blowers Act, which basically covers those State workers who feel there are improprieties going on that should be addressed in a public format, but who are in fear of losing their jobs.

I have a written statement from the New Jersey Coalition for Veterans' Advocacy. They have asked me to read this prepared statement on behalf of this legislation to switch the Division to a department. I would also like to add that in no way is anything I say anti-veteran. Any of my criticisms are aimed at enhancing services, as a person who everyday handles all kinds of claims -- widows, homeless veterans, and veterans of every war and era.

If I may, I will read the written statement on behalf of the New Jersey Coalition for Veterans' Advocacy:

Mr. Chairman and members of the Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I have been asked by representatives of the New Jersey Coalition for Veterans' Advocacy to share their thoughts on Assembly Bill 3527. The Coalition recognizes that additional action must be taken to resolve the issue of the Department of Energy prior to any action that would formalize a new Department of Veterans' Affairs. While we support the

premise of upgrading veterans' affairs to department status, we do have serious reservations concerning the ability of those now charged with heading the Division of Veterans' Programs and Special Projects to realize the promise this new department would bring to the almost one million veterans and their families in New Jersey.

In all candor, the leadership and management needed to serve our veterans has been sorely lacking. A number of veteran advocates have described the Division of Veterans' Programs as resembling a ship with no one at the helm and "steering a course of ever-widening circles." Hearing that view, we can only wonder what would transpire with increased responsibilities and a wider scope of delivery services for the veterans of New Jersey?

Assembly Bill 3527 proposes to bring an array of veteran services and programs under one umbrella of a department. Some of the programs presently in place with other agencies may go from being well-run, to suffer the same lack of vision and implementation we all now experience in the Division.

Let me outline a simple plan of action that may very well satisfy the concerns many veterans have at this time. We call on you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of this Committee, to help us set the present Division on a true course that will finally serve veterans. Let the Division demonstrate that it deserves to be a department. Provide us with leadership and management that will instill confidence for the future. Show us that this is not just more wasted dollars that serve no one. In short, clean house and give the veterans of New Jersey a new department that will serve us.

Let me say that we Vietnam veterans applaud the recent passage of legislation to provide research funding to the Agent Orange Commission. We also applaud amendments that have been put forth retaining the independence of the Agent Orange Commission. Each of these actions demonstrates that you can

move in a positive way in the best interests of our veterans. Continue that effort and we will have a smooth transition from a Division to a department, and you will have our support. I say again that if we continue to see what we have seen for services to veterans in the Division, there can be no looking to the future, only a full effort to make the present right. We will settle for no less, and I hope you agree with that. Give us a Division and a department that serves veterans.

In addition, I brought some memos. There are some accusations I would like to make, and I would invite this Committee, given their responsibility for oversight, to investigate the allegations. Some of the things that go on in the Division-- I have been working there for three years, and I want to add that this has nothing to do with an ax to grind, or sour grapes, or anything like that. I have a long history of veterans' advocacy.

I am a combat Marine, a Vietnam veteran.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Steve, you do know that this is being recorded to be transcribed?

MR. SHUEY: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Okay, fine.

MR. SHUEY: I am a combat Marine. I am a disabled veteran. Basically, everything I have done as a private individual for veterans' advocacy, or in my own organization, has been for the enhancement of veterans' programs. In the Division where I work, there is rampant abuse of responsibility. There is a lack, if you will, of checks and balances.

Now we have several superintendents who-- My own clients have come to me to complain about their inability to find people in the offices. I found client complaints about-- Allegedly, they knew where to find the supervisor, what bar to find him in. Allegedly, they told me that one of the supervisors was using his office for an office cleaning

business; that one of the supervisors -- one of the folks who had been there almost 20-some years -- who couldn't tell me, after seven years in Trenton where the Department of Labor Employment Service was-- He wanted me to send a 65-year-old disabled veteran to the Vietnam Veterans' Outreach Center. He also didn't know where that was.

The point is, there is a lack of responsibility there. There is apathy; there are laissez faire attitudes. Basically, there has been a hounding of Vietnam veterans. There have been three who have already left, who have been hounded out of their jobs. I, myself, am probably going to be the fourth. Basically, these people who are driven out are people who are caring, who can do the job. There has been a scramble recently to cover their butts, in my opinion; a scramble to convince the traditional organizations that they are really there for them, and they are doing a terrific job.

My observation in three years-- I will give you an instance. I worked as a liaison officer in Newark. I was hired with no training. About three weeks after I was hired, after I "oriented myself to the VA system," I was to do the legal arguments for veterans and their widows who were denied their benefits. Eventually, after a year and a half, I was removed from the job for being technically incompetent, after doing legal arguments for a year and a half. I was also sent to Trenton for training, which never happened.

My case -- as you have seen in that article -- is just the tip of the iceberg. There is an inability on the part of the bureau chief or the supervisors to allow us to have access to automobiles to transfer veterans who are in tears to hospitals. We have to fight with the secretaries, secretaries who appear to be in a favored spot with the Acting Division Chief, Mr. Cheesman.

The hiring practices-- There has been an ongoing practice-- In my opinion, there is nepotism -- the hiring

of relatives. There was a non-veteran hired for a job that was supposed to be for a bilingual veterans' service officer who was hired. He told us he was only going to be on the job for four months, until a Federal job he had solicited for opened up. He was gone after four months, but that opening was closed for four months to a veteran who really wanted to help veterans, and who could have used the job. Obviously, I am talking about a lot of cronyism.

I have a memo here where a non-veteran who is politically connected was hired -- all right? -- after failing the test for a veterans' service officer's job. That veterans' service officer's job should be given to someone who has empathy. In my opinion, in a Division that has approximately 100 employees, all of the employees should be veterans. And there should be advocacy from those veterans.

The Division has claimed that it has served 16,000 veterans. That is a dubious figure. There are a number of people in the Division who would come forward, if they did not fear the loss of their jobs. Regarding the 16,000 claims the bureau did last year, in comparison the DAV did 13,000. The DAV has six service officers who do legal arguments, and three secretaries. The Division of Veterans' Programs has one liaison officer and one secretary. I ask you, how in the world can one person deal with that number, and deal with it effectively to get the services to these men and their families which they deserve? As you noted, Mr. Chairman, there has been legislation proposed in the past that was stamped "pro-veteran," but it has been found to be not necessarily in the interest of the veterans' community. In fact, it was also loaded with people who advocated publicly a concern for veterans, and yet performed terribly, much to the undoing of the veterans' community.

I will be sending a package to each member of this Committee. I would strongly urge you to look into the hiring



practices. I have a memo here, and a lot of other documents, which I will make accessible to this Committee. I do not bring up these criticisms to disapprove of this bill. What I am saying is, there has been a lack of services. What I am afraid of is self-promotion by some people in that Division. For instance, one of the Vietnam veterans who is the Chairman of the Vietnam Veterans' Civic Council, was pressured and coerced to send a letter recommending Mr. Cheesman to that position by a high-level supervisor in that Division.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: What position is that?

MR. SHUEY: The Director's position. This veteran was pressured to write a letter. He actually went against Federal law. Under the Vietnam Veterans' Civic Council, as members, we do not promote anyone. What we do is make recommendations for policies, but we do not promote any one individual. By law, we are not allowed to.

The bottom line is, I am a little dry, and I am a little nervous. I have loads of information on this. My concern is the people who do not care in the real everyday workings of veterans' benefits. In a diminishing community, the older veterans, as you stated, are-- My own father is a combat veteran of World War II. He agrees with my position that basically people forget. I am a combat veteran; I don't forget. That is one of the reason I am speaking now.

My great concern is that this Committee is being hoodwinked; that the veterans' community is being hoodwinked. This Committee could do one of the greatest services to the veterans' community -- to the one million veterans of this State -- by shaking the rug clean, and getting rid of some of the bad folks who have been floating for years, because there has been no oversight until this Committee, as newly formed as it is.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: You have to realize that we do not have the power or the jurisdiction to do that. That is not

what this Committee was created to do. Just like with the controversial issue regarding the cemetery at Arnytown-- You know, we heard both sides. We opened up our meeting to testimony on both sides of the issue, but this Committee did not take an official position. It was not intended to do that. One of our Committee people decided to take a position, but she certainly did that on her own without the support of the other members of the Committee.

You know, the Governor makes appointments to the Division. The Commissioner of the Department of Human Services -- Commissioner Altman -- makes appointments to the Division. We are not an employment agency, Steve.

MR. SHUEY: I understand that, but I do solicit this Committee for whatever political acumen they may have to, in a cohesive, concerted effort-- As a Vietnam veteran, I can tell you about how badly I have been treated since I first came home from the war, and still am on occasion. There are things that we can never change; there are attitudes that we can never turn over. But, I can tell you, you have an opportunity, Mr. Chairman -- this Committee has an opportunity -- to get rid of some bad eggs, who just don't care. In particular, they have a problem with Vietnam veterans. In general, they don't care anyway.

There are a number of documents, as I said, which I can forward to the Committee to document my statements. And, as I said, there are a number of people who would come forward, were it not for the fear of removal from their employment. They are not people who have any political ambitions, who have an ax to grind. They are people who really deeply care about veterans. Those people should not be penalized. Those people should not be driven out of their jobs.

I guess that about sums it up. I am starting to be redundant; I am repeating myself. These kinds of things get me very emotional. There is a sense of great frustration in

myself and many of my compatriots, and desperation. At this political juncture with this bill, I hope the gentlemen in this room will take heed to what I say. I hope, also, that they would encourage you to follow through on my suggestions, because it is in their benefit. I am younger than most of them, but I am speaking historically -- as Assemblyman Paterniti can testify -- as a veterans' advocate. I am an honest person, and I am greatly concerned about conditions, and the rewards that are going to go to people who, in my opinion, will continue those conditions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me this opportunity. I thank the members also for listening. I am at your service, in terms of what direction to take this.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: I will deviate from our normal procedure, and will allow members of the Committee to ask you some questions, Steve. I ask the Committee members, first of all, not to get personal with respect to charges made against certain people, because I think many of us know who those people may be. I ask that we not try to resolve this matter tonight. Keep your questions in the general sense. That is all I can ask you to do. If I feel we are getting too deeply involved in this-- We didn't come here, with all due respects, Steve, to talk about this.

MR. SHUEY: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: We know you traveled a distance, and we afforded you the opportunity to talk to us. If I feel we are getting a bit out of hand with the dialogue, I am going to call you out of order, and we will go to the next witness. Ben?

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: Steve, I am very impressed with your story and your experience. I would like to ask you--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Mr. Chairman, may we ask Assemblyman Mazur to speak up?

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: Oh, these microphones are for the recording, I'm sorry. I will speak up.

I would like to ask you some questions which perhaps you can answer regarding the legislation. Now, you have been referring to the Division of Veterans' Programs in the Department of Human Services. Is that correct?

MR. SHUEY: That is correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: How many other agencies of State government -- how many other departments -- have veterans' programs housed within them?

MR. SHUEY: How many programs deal with it?

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: How many other--

MR. SHUEY: How many programs in other agencies?

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: Yeah.

MR. SHUEY: I couldn't tell you offhand exactly, but I can tell you there are some which I do not think should be under the Division of Veterans' Programs. Obviously, the Agent Orange Commission has needs--

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: That is a separate thing.

MR. SHUEY: Right. In the Department of Labor, the DVOP -- Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program -- I think should be separate. Of course, I think the nursing homes should be kept under the Department. I agree with a separation from the Department of Human Services. There seems to be a lack of understanding of veterans there, or a lack of empathy, or sympathy, you know?

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: Do you think that a--

MR. SHUEY: If I may interject, I think a department is a great idea, but I think if you have a department-- It's like, if you have a farm, and you have been plowing with a horse and plow, and someone offers you a tractor, you are going to take it. But if the tractor is inefficient and defunct and you can't get parts for it, or you can't get a driver who knows what he is doing, or you don't get a real farmer, you know, there is no sense; you don't gain anything by buying a tractor.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: Let me ask the question one other way. Do you think -- and this question has puzzled me a little-- There are other departments which have specialized programs for which they themselves -- those departments -- have some expertise. Do you think they would be better administered by a department whose main focus is general veterans' affairs, or should they be left alone in the individual departments where there is a specialization?

MR. SHUEY: You would have to identify the special area.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: Well, let's take, for instance, Education or Human Services.

MR. SHUEY: I think Education-- It would be easier if we had a liaison with Education, all right? I think those people deal with Federal laws and they interface the stuff with the Federal people. There is potential great good from a Department of Veterans' Affairs -- potentially great good.

I know some of the people who have been involved in certifying veterans for some of the State benefits -- education benefits. I know that with this bill there was a conflict of law. I don't recall exactly what that was. I also know there was a conflict of law with the Department of Labor taking over the DVOP. My feeling is that if there were strong advocacy, if there were administrators and managers who had a history of being veterans' advocates, or being pro-veteran -- I mean obviously pro-veteran -- and had on-hands ability, it is possible that things could be run better.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: The Department of Human Services runs other kinds of institutions.

MR. SHUEY: Right. Do you mean the nursing homes?

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: The question in my mind, once again, is, is there some broader expertise in that Department in veterans' nursing homes, since it runs other hospitals or

nursing homes in different categories -- children's homes, or whatever? I think it can be sliced different ways myself, but I just wanted to get your opinion.

MR. SHUEY: You're talking about a really broad bureaucracy.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: Yes. It's abstract.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Just so everybody understands exactly what is happening, Steve Shuey, who is a Veterans' Service Officer with the Division of Veterans' Programs, comes before us today as an employee of the State of New Jersey. I did not know Steve was going to testify. Well, actually we were here just for Assembly Bill 3527 -- to hear testimony on that. As a courtesy to Steve, as I said before, I allowed him to speak.

What he is saying is -- and this is, of course, his statement; it is on tape -- although he supports the concept of a separate and distinct Department of Veterans' Affairs in the State of New Jersey, he is a bit concerned about us elevating a separate unit that high, when the existing body which represents veterans in Trenton -- the Division of Veterans' Programs and Special Services -- is not professional, is not functioning properly, is not doing what it should do in the best interest of our veterans. That certainly is his opinion. I don't know enough about the Division, but I feel that a division that does not handle developmentally disabled and the handicapped and welfare, and all of those other types of responsibilities that Human Services does handle, would be much better off all by itself.

So, that is where we are with this witness -- with Steve -- and with Ben's questions. If anyone else has a question, please feel free to ask it.

MR. SHUEY: Excuse me. I apologize if I was vague. It is just that I was trying to be as honest as I could about it what I think is best.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Paul (addressing Assemblyman DiGaetano), before you ask your question, I would like you -- because you did explain it at one time-- Even though I am Chairman, I like the way Paul does it better than the way I do it. About the Department, Paul-- We don't have jurisdiction over personnel changes, over implementing policy. Why don't you just talk about that?

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Steve, what I really want to ask is, you kind of alluded to politics being played within the existing Division. Now, are you aware -- something the Chairman stated at the beginning of this session -- that this piece of legislation emanated from the Assembly? I mean, it is the Chairman's bill, and all of us are co-sponsors. This was not solicited by the Governor's office. It was not solicited by any department head or any division head. So, it is not as if the people who supposedly are keeping those, let's say, allegedly incompetent people in place, who are looking to elevate them to a greater position. That is not the case. Are you aware of that?

MR. SHUEY: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: What we are really looking to do here is, create a department to handle what is being done within a few departments now with different divisions.

MR. SHUEY: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: I think we all agree that if we have incompetent people, or people who do not have bona fide intentions of helping those they serve, whether we have a division within several departments, or whether we have a department, things will not be accomplished. Do we agree on that?

MR. SHUEY: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: So, there is something I want to take out from what you said, and I would like you to state that that is really what you meant for the record. You said

earlier that certainly this piece of legislation -- the creation of a Department of Veterans' Affairs -- has the potential for greatness -- has a potential to serve the veterans better than any other way, shape, or form. Correct? Is that your feeling?

MR. SHUEY: Yeah, but I said that--

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: If the right people are put into place.

MR. SHUEY: That is correct, if you were to clean house. Apparently exactly what this statement says here, is that you need to clean house up top. If there is good management -- and it is really good management -- and real advocacy-- The 10 Veterans' Service Officers who were hired three years ago were never trained. They were never trained. I was never trained. I had the responsibility for arguing legally -- for making legal arguments for cases, which meant whether a veteran lost his home or not; whether or not a veteran's wife stayed with him. You know, in some cases--

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Steve, the point here is--

MR. SHUEY: Right, right, the point has been made.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: This Committee is the Committee that is going to advise the Legislature on pieces of legislation. We are not an administrative committee. I think you know that. So, what we can do is, we can create the vehicle to get us from Point A to Point B. We can't drive it, and we can't put any of the drivers in it or take any of the drivers out of it. But, without the vehicle, it is difficult to get there.

So, I think we can at least be closely in accord that with this particular piece of legislation, the Department of Veterans' Affairs has the potential to serve the veterans of New Jersey better than any other way, shape, or form we know of at this point. If we can just agree on that, at least legislatively, then I think you are here speaking as a proponent of the bill, and the Committee is, as well.



MR. SHUEY: I'll agree to that. What I said before is correct. Potentially, it could be an excellent service. It could cut off some of the bureaucracy, but, on the other hand, it could create it. One of the things we discussed in the Vietnam Veterans of America was if actually you were just going to broaden the bureaucracy, that it was going to be more costly, and that the services you were getting, but not getting well-- Basically, you would get them well, but you would hardly get them. Less veterans would receive them.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Well, this way they are not going to be hidden within another department.

MR. SHUEY: Yeah, I understand that, and that is an advantage.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Right.

MR. SHUEY: I agree with that. But what I'm saying is-- I am assuming that in political positions, you are all astute men and women, and have knowledge and skills that can make things turn for the better.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Unfortunately, though, Steve, if we all assume the worst case scenario where we have incompetent people in positions, then we might as well do nothing, because it won't get done. Veterans won't be served in the form they are now, and they won't be served in the form that they will be under this legislation. Hopefully--

MR. SHUEY: I would never agree to that. I would never say it is either or, which is never the case in life, generally, unless you are in combat. In this case, I would say there are options. This bill, if it is going to go forward -- and the men and women who have worn the uniform of this country are supporting it enthusiastically -- only to find that in two years' time the services do not change, then we have gained nothing and we have spent a lot of money, and you folks have been misled about your intentions for the veterans' community. Your advocacy has been wasted.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Hopefully, it won't be.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Tom?

ASSEMBLYMAN PATERNITI: What I think he is trying to point out is that he is in favor of establishing a Department of Veterans' Affairs, but along with that, he would probably like us, as legislators, to come up with some kind of enabling legislation, or some kind of a study commission, where we could have input, to make sure we could set up certain standards where the people who are going to run the department are truly qualified, to make sure that some of the mistakes we have had in the past won't happen again. I think we could do this with additional legislation over and above creating the department.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: You are certainly entitled to do what you would like to do. We are not going to go on a witchhunt after the Governor. We are not going to go on a witchhunt after Drew Altman, Leon Cheesman, or anyone else -- or I am not going to do that. They are responsible to the people of the State of New Jersey, and to the Legislature, should they compromise their responsibilities and duties to the people of the State, in this case, to the veterans. If someone cares to put in enabling legislation that would investigate the conduct of the employees or the leadership in the Division of Veterans' Programs under the Department of Human Services, they are certainly entitled to do that.

Tom, you mentioned that maybe we could do this. If you care to do it, that is certainly your prerogative. I can appreciate what Steve is saying before us, and what I asked Paul to say earlier, because I felt he could say it much better-- He didn't, and I will.

This Committee was charged with reviewing legislation that pertains to veterans, conducting public hearings, and making recommendations to the standing committees. We are a Select Committee. We do not vote on bills for posting consideration by the Speaker of the House. We make

recommendations to the committees which will finally look at these bills, hear testimony, and then make the recommendation to the Speaker for posting.

We vote bills out of our Committee only in recommendation form, and that is it. So, we are not a policy committee; we are not a voting committee that will allow bills to be posted. We are a Committee that has open ears, open minds, and we serve in the best interests of the veterans. That is why Speaker Hardwick — Chuck Hardwick — my colleague in the Twenty-First District in Union County, created the Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs. We are not going to go after the Jewish Orthodox people for requiring a separate burial plot down in Arnytown, and we are not going to go after the VFW, the American Legion, the DAV, and the other people for opposing it, or for supporting it, or for whatever it might be. We are not going to do that. We are not going to be placed in that type of a position where we compromise the intent of this Committee, which is to serve in the best interests of all of the veterans.

I hope that all of you appreciate that. Now, if someone — someone — on either side of the aisle cares to go after the Administration, to go after the Division or its employees, whether it be politically intended or whatever, or in the interest of best government, they certainly can do that, but it is not going to be sanctioned or supported by me as Chairman of this Committee nor, hopefully, by my membership.

Is there anyone else who would like to speak? Newt?

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: I would just like to say that your testimony was very interesting, really. I am a veteran from World War II — the big boom — with five campaign stars in Europe, the Bronze Star, the works, so I can appreciate the concern of veterans to bring everything under one roof, if you will, and give it a, let's call it, I won't say a more sincere direction, but a direction with purpose; a direction with

results. I think a department is really necessary. Veterans should have department status. I would even go a step further.

The Chairman of the Committee indicates that this Committee should not get involved with doing other-- I don't know, maybe what the Committee should do, after all of the hearings have been held on this-- Maybe this Committee should go back and extend itself, or change the bill around to extend the purpose into a review of the operation of the Division, in an attempt to give greater support to a department approach to this.

Now, if in their review of what goes on within the Division they find that things aren't as you say, they aren't quite that bad, and that they can get along with it, fine. But, on the other hand, maybe what they have in place today would fit under some one Cabinet member, or maybe -- just maybe -- as you are pointing out, things should change from within, which would give more credence to, and support for a department type operation.

As Pete has said, that is not the charge of this Committee, and to charge this Committee, you would have to take and extend that with another bill. That could be done through this Committee, or through another committee to set this thing up. But, you will find that I and Assemblyman Zecker and Senator Joe Bubba are with the veterans 100%. We have several bills in, in support of the veterans right now.

MR. SHUEY: Yes, sir, I realize that, but my concern is, don't reward incompetence with a raise--

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Absolutely.

MR. SHUEY: --and no checks and balances any longer. As I said before, I am here in desperation. I see the purging of the veterans' advocates out of there. There appears to be an attempt to change the job title, so that disabled veterans -- so they can arbitrarily decide if they will take a disabled veteran, especially if the disabled veteran is not going to play ball, with business as usual.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: That is what a review of that Division would bring out. From that review, legislation could be formulated and established to try to straighten that sort of thing out. Unless people like you speak up and tell us what is going on--

MR. SHUEY: Yes, sir, I realize that.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: We are on the outside looking in, and we just don't know what is going on unless we hear from you people, or anyone else with their particular problems. That is why I am here tonight, to hear some of the comments being made.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Thank you very much.  
Assemblywoman Crecco?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: I thank you for being here, Mr. Shuey. I truly empathize with the veterans, without whom we wouldn't be sitting here. I thank all veterans.

I think legislation may be in order somewhere in the Assembly that would expand the scope of this Committee to review the operations of the Veterans' Division in Human Services. It can't hurt. We owe you a lot, and I am in favor of that.

Thank you.

MR. SHUEY: I appreciate your comments as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: This Committee, I must remind Marion and the members, is not here because of legislation. We are here because of the farsightedness of Chuck Hardwick, who recognized the necessity of placing all of our veterans in one group, and saying, "We don't want you competing with one another. We want you to rally in one area. We want you to be recognized as one group of proud people who honored the great flag of this country and our great country itself."

So, we are not here because of legislation. We are not here because an Assemblyman or a Senator said, "I want to put a bill in to have a select committee." It has not been done in the Senate. Can you imagine how forceful you would be

as a body if you had a select committee in the Senate? But you don't have that, because they won't create one there. But we do have it in the Assembly. We do the best we can. I am not going to accept any tag-alongs to this bill that will necessitate an investigation of the Division of Veterans' Programs. As Paul illustrated, we are not here because of that. The bill was not put in because of that. The bill was put in so you would have one voice in Trenton, as they do in Washington. That is why. But, if someone would like to go further with that, they are certainly entitled to do that.

Who has not spoken? Jack? Assemblyman Kelly?

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: I don't belong to this Committee.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: No, but we have invited you here.

ASSEMBLYMAN KELLY: I think I will do my own enabling legislation on what this man's charges are. I think I can do it myself, and set up some sort of a bill that would do some investigating -- separate from this Committee.

MR. SHUEY: That would be outstanding, sir. I think you would be doing an incredible service to the men and women in this room who went to war. There are approximately 100 -- as I said, to repeat myself -- approximately 100 employees. There is no reason why a non-veteran who has flunked the test is being hired, when there are plenty of disabled veterans who could use that job, who are empathic and would do a crackerjack job. There must be checks and balances here; otherwise, you are going to have people running amuck, and nothing is going to change in terms of quality.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: As many of you know, these types of investigations are conducted by the SCI -- the State Commission of Investigation. They are not conducted by committees such as ours. If we are directed by the Chief Counsel of the Governor, Michael Cole, to handle the initial testimony, and to convey the results of our testimony to the Attorney General, of course then we could do so, but not until

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whoever decides to take legislative action, or whatever is going to be done on this, will this Committee serve to undermine the appointments of Governor Kean, the appointments of Commissioner Drew Altman, or the conduct of any member of the Division of Veterans' Programs and Special Services, whether it be man, woman, black, white, or whatever. It is not the charge of this Committee, and I think it would certainly not serve in our best interest.

MR. SHUEY: Just one comment, and then I will close.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Sure.

MR. SHUEY: My interest, as I stated before, is not to rain on anybody's parade or attack the Governor or Commissioner Altman. My aim is to focus attention on a real problem that is going to cost the veterans dearly. It is the people who are part of the problem, not the solution. And that's it.

I would like to close by thanking the Committee for giving me this opportunity, and you, Mr. Chairman. Hopefully, you folks will do what you can in your limited capacity with regard to the responsibilities you are charged with. Please do something about this for the veterans.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Thank you very much for testifying, Steve.

ASSEMBLYMAN PATERNITI: Mr. Chairman?

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Assemblyman Paterniti?

ASSEMBLYMAN PATERNITI: I just want to add one more thing. When I brought this point up, it had nothing to do with trying to throw any aspersions on the Governor for his appointments. I can remember in my first term when I went to Governor Byrne one time when I was upset about one of his appointments. He said, "Tom, let me tell you what happens. This happened to me, and it happens to other Governors. Sometimes a county chairman or a legislator recommends someone to me for a job. They tell me the person has good qualifications, and I take them on their word. I appoint them,

and then I am stuck with them. They create the problems." So, many times, the Governor's appointments are not through his own fault. I mean, that is the system. It is unfortunate. That is why maybe if, like Assemblyman Kelly said, he is thinking of possibly putting in enabling legislation that might be able to forestall something like this-- Maybe we need this. Maybe indirectly it will help the Governor, not hurt him. It will probably enable him to make better appointments.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: You can't be serious when you say that. I don't want to get into it. I could debate you on that, Tom.

Steve, thank you very much for coming.

Again, we are here to hear testimony on Assembly Bill 3527, which will create a separate department in the State of New Jersey on behalf of our State's 900,000 to a million veterans. Is there anyone else who would like to testify? Steve Shuey is the only one who signed in. Many of you may not know that if you care to testify -- if you care to come before us to speak about the bill -- our Office of Legislative Services aide should have had your name by now. In case you did not know the procedure, I invite anyone to come forward at this time.

John Mooney? Hi, John.

J O H N M O O N E Y: Fine, thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Full name, address?

MR. MOONEY: My name is John Mooney, 564 Browden Avenue, Bloomfield. I am State Junior Vice Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars -- the 73,000 members of the group -- are totally in support of the bill. We think it is about time that a group like this was formed and brought up to a Cabinet level. We see nothing but good coming out of it. It will help all veterans with regard to their future, whether it is employment, the status of the veteran, whether they are Vietnam veterans, World War II, or whatever it happens to be.



That is where the VFW stands at the present time. I have one question. I would like to ask: When was this meeting called for, and by whom?

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: This one here?

MR. MOONEY: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Brian, when was the public notice sent out? (no response from Mr. Volz)

MR. MOONEY: The reason I ask-- It is not too important, because I am here, but we just had our State convention and not a word was said about this meeting down there. I did not know about this until last night at 11 o'clock.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Were you in Convention Hall when I spoke?

MR. MOONEY: I was in and out. You know what the conditions were.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Because I did mention it.

MR. MOONEY: You mentioned that the meeting was going to be here? Well, I was preoccupied at the time. It's just a shame, because I think a meeting like this is great. I would like to see this group meet more often throughout the State, which would afford other veterans in other parts of the State to attend, as we are here. It is very difficult for people in the north to attend a meeting in the south.

I wish to commend everyone who is here; Peter, you, and everyone on your staff here, for what they are doing. The sooner we accept the fact that the veteran has paid his sacrifice and we give him his just due-- The veteran is not asking for anything else, other than what he fought for and earned, especially the veteran who is lying in the hospital at the present time. We are his spokesmen. So, again, on behalf of the total membership of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, we are in total agreement with this bill. We commend each and every one of you.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Thank you, John. I would like to say that if you would like to be placed on our mailing list, please give your name and address to Brian Volz at the conclusion of the meeting. If you do that, you will know about every meeting we are going to be conducting throughout the State, and in Trenton, and everything that happens with respect to this Committee. You will be officially advised on it.

John, I did enjoy myself at your convention on Friday. I spoke to nearly 400 people. I spoke about this bill, and several other initiatives. You had a good time, I could see. You were out there eating saltwater taffy and--

MR. MOONEY: You got it.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: I really enjoyed it. Thanks for the invitation.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: John, I need to address something you said really to compliment the Chairman. You said we should hold meetings in different parts of the State. The only part of this State that Peter has not called a meeting for is the part that is actually water and not land, because we have met from Cape May County up to Bergen County, and from east to west. So, he has really given everyone an opportunity. I have to compliment him on that. For the past year and a half, we have been putting lots of miles on. So, he has taken this Committee to different parts of the State.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: It is called "Genova's road show."

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Yeah.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Is there anyone else who would like to come forward? Yes, sir? Please give your name and address and your post, and please speak up for us, okay?

F R E D M A N G A R E L L I: Well, I did receive a notice. My name is Fred Mangarelli, 1-06 Lyons Avenue, Fair Lawn, New Jersey. That is Bergen County.

I am a member of the Catholic War Veterans. I am the National Welfare Officer. I was very happy to see that this bill was introduced. I was told about it at the beginning of the year. You know, the veterans have been fighting to get away from the Human Services Department. We want our own department. I am very happy that this bill was introduced.

I also want to remind the Committee here, because if we had a special department of the veterans-- We had a little problem up at Kramer's (phonetic spelling) Nursing Home. Maybe you read about it. Three aides assaulted some of the residents. They were arrested. I understand the trial was supposed to be this week. It has been postponed because the three individuals had the same lawyer, and it was advised that they each have their own lawyer. So now it is postponed until September. They are not working there; they are not being paid. But I think if we had a veterans department, this would have been resolved a lot quicker than it is being resolved now.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Thank you, Mr. Mangarelli. Thank you very much. Thank you for coming down from Fair Lawn.

Is there anyone else? Yes, sir?

ANTHONY CAPRIGLIONE: My name is Anthony Capriglione. I am a member of this post -- AMVETS Post #30.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Your address, Mr. Capriglione?

MR. CAPRIGLIONE: My address is 143 Woodford, in Nutley.

Without a doubt, it is really an honor and a pleasure to come before you this evening, because I think this bill you are proposing -- rather this legislation you are proposing -- is the greatest thing that has ever happened to the veterans in this State, outside of the fast \$50 we received years ago.

It can be the greatest thing to happen in New Jersey in many years. But I caution you, when you have strength, you have power, as you mentioned before. But, if you are going to

utilize the veterans again for political motivations, then we are right back where we started from.

This particular department you are trying to establish-- Before I get to that point, I just want to ask a question of the Chairman. How many states in the United States have a Department of Veterans' Affairs?

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Twenty-three.

MR. CAPRIGLIONE: Twenty-three. I believe California is the most outstanding of the group.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: It may be. We didn't model our bill after California.

MR. CAPRIGLIONE: Well, that was the information I received. Without a doubt, we do need a Department of Veterans' Affairs. We have been second-class citizens in this State too long. We need guidance to a point where if we want to go someplace where we can get some sort of help -- for administrative purposes and everything else-- We need to be able to get this guidance. We want some direction. We don't want this Department of Veterans' Affairs, which you want to establish, to be a political step stool for some politician down in Trenton.

This is the problem we are having right now. We are being pushed from the Department of Community Affairs and the Department of Human Services. Really, you get some people who try to solve problems who aren't even veterans. They don't understand, although it is no fault of theirs. They are just put in those positions because there was nothing else for them to do. This is what we are trying to avoid.

This legislation to establish this particular Department of Veterans' Affairs is the greatest thing, and we want it. But, once again -- and I don't want to sound repetitious -- we don't want it to be used as a political stepping stone for any politician. As the first gentleman who spoke said, you must have competent people in this department.

My other question is, how many Cabinet members are required under the Constitution in New Jersey?

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: How many departments?

MR. CAPRIGLIONE: Cabinet members?

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Twenty-one. Oh, you're saying Cabinet members. What do you mean, "Cabinet members"?

MR. CAPRIGLIONE: Departments.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Oh, departments. There are 20.

MR. CAPRIGLIONE: Twenty? How many do we have now?

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: The Constitution calls for 21.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: We have to get rid of one, to allow this particular bill to--

MR. CAPRIGLIONE: In order to establish this particular department, you have to get rid of one?

ASSEMBLYMAN PATERNITI: Or, by constitutional amendment, you could increase the number of departments.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: You could increase it by one, as Tom mentioned, by constitutional amendment.

MR. CAPRIGLIONE: That is the point I am trying to bring out. Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: What is happening is -- as I mentioned before -- it was determined that the Department of Energy in the State of New Jersey was no longer functional; it was no longer a necessity, because many of its functions were being carried out by other departments. So, enabling legislation was put in by the Majority Leader, Assemblyman Chuck Haytaian, from -- I think it's Sussex County. The bill passed the Assembly. It is over in the Senate, but it is not moving there. The Governor has issued an order to dismantle it, but it is not officially dismantled until the official order goes through.

Hopefully, once this bill gets out of Committee and passes the Assembly, and our good friend, Franny McManimon in the Senate, pushes his bill through, the Senate will take action to abolish the Department of Energy.

Mr. Capriglione, I can't say that I have ever heard anyone down in Trenton talk about what advantage he or she would gain by doing something good for veterans. Believe me, it is a separate type of group that we want to go out there and support. As legislators, we are human, too. Now, there are things, as politicians, which we can do for our own benefit to help our political campaigns or our futures -- nothing illegal, but there are certain things we can do -- rub shoulders with people. But, when it comes to veterans, I mean-- Like Ben here, there is no one in the house who is as decorated as he is. It must send chills throughout his body when he sees something being done for veterans.

I have to tell you, when I testified before the Assembly Health and Human Resources Committee for the Agent Orange bill, which I was fortunate enough to be the sponsor of in the Assembly-- That was through the efforts of Senator Van Wagner, who was the person who did all of the work on it; I just helped it along a bit. George Otlowksi, who is the Mayor of Perth Amboy, and an Assemblyman, and Tom Deverin, who is an Assemblyman from Elizabeth -- the senior member of the Union County delegation -- had tears in their eyes when Vietnam veterans came before the Committee and urged the support of the \$675,000 appropriation that would continue the second phase of the appointment project for the Agent Orange Commission. I'll tell you, it was an emotional outbreak that I have never witnessed in my life by two grown men.

When it comes to veterans, Mr. Capriglione, politics certainly does get placed aside. That is why we have so many members on this bill as co-sponsors. I will allow any member to provide any newspaper clip they want on behalf of this bill, sponsored by them, or whatever, as long as we get the people out there to know that the entire Legislature supports the bill, and that it would be the best thing the veterans could have available to them. That is the bottom line.

I appreciate your concern about that, but I want you to know that on both sides of the aisle -- 50 Republicans and 30 Democrats in the Assembly -- you have people who are really looking after the best interests of the veterans, without any type of fanfare.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Mr. Chairman?

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Assemblyman Newt Miller?

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: I am going to have to leave.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: But I just want to say thanks for the opportunity of being here. I want to let you know that the veterans in my district, I am sure, support this 100%, and the veterans of the three veterans' organizations I belong to personally are certainly behind this bill. I wish you well on it, and I am happy to be one of the co-sponsors of the bill also.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: I think you have done a terrific job on it, Pete. It's going very well.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Thank you, and thank you for coming. As you know, Newt represents Passaic and parts of Essex, along with Gerry Zecker. Thank you very much, Newt.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: My pleasure, really.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Mayor Chenoweth, from Nutley. How are you, sir? Thank you for coming. Does everyone know the Mayor? (applause)

**MAYOR HARRY W. CHENOWETH:** My name is Harry Chenoweth. I have been a member of the AMVETS, the American Legion, the Catholic War Veterans, and the VFW for 40-some years -- since 1945, really. I have been actively engaged in veterans' affairs, especially in obtaining their rights and some of the concessions we have received from the State. We have worked locally and on a statewide level.

I am very interested in a statement you people made in introducing this bill, saying that the Department of Human Services, which is the principal government agency that serves the State's veterans, has done an especially commendable job attending to this special group of residents. I agree with that; I agree with that.

My question is going to be a sort of probing thing. We have accomplished many, many veterans' concessions, privileges, and benefits at the State level, by working with all of these agencies down there directly. I think technically we have done a wonderful job. We have obtained credits on our assessments. We received awards in the areas of Civil Service -- veterans' preferences. This was all done working through these agencies which you commend.

We have also obtained many, many pension rights for our Civil Service people, dealing with their retirement benefits, etc. -- all through these agencies. In reading over all of the introductory pages and your statute itself -- your bill -- I feel-- My first question is: If you establish this Department of Veterans' Affairs -- if you want to call it that -- wouldn't you, as legislators, have to go back to these agencies to get us these rights? Won't it become more cumbersome than the direct contact that we have had as veterans with all of these agencies? Or, do you feel that a Veterans' Affairs Department in the Executive Branch will be able to expedite and bring about many, many more benefits that we are still looking for, in an easier and less complicated way than what we have been doing up until now?

I came here with an open mind. A lot of people have heard me state that we, as veterans, shouldn't buy everything that comes along, because we could hurt ourselves in the long run. Some of you are too young to remember, that years ago in every county we had a veterans' department. We had sad consequences in the end. We were able to accomplish very



little by directing our attention to that. Oh, yes, they gave out flags for the burials, and did a few other little things, which now the undertakers really do. But I don't know of a county -- and maybe I'm wrong -- that has an active veterans' department that is functioning in the shadow of the Veterans' Administration, the real source of our benefits.

As I say, I came here with an open mind. We question whether or not this is a good thing for us as veterans. I mean that in this way: We have accomplished so much by dealing directly with the agencies involved in our problems. For instance, on pensions for Civil Service people. If they wanted to adjust that now and get some other benefits, they would have to come to you people, and you would have to go to the Pension Board and get some approval, some evaluation -- the Department would. There may be a little duplication here.

If you can show me that it is going to be more beneficial to us, as veterans -- organized or unorganized -- to get the ear of the proper department under your proposal than it has been over the past 40-some years -- I guess we could go back to 1944 with this State program on veterans' affairs being handled by these various agencies-- If you can show me that it is going to be easier, and it is going to be more effective in our approach to the State government by having this Department of Veterans' Affairs, as opposed to the manner in which we are now used to handling our problems with the departments directly--

Years ago, we had a question about raising the benefits under the assessment program, where the veterans get so much off their assessments. That was jumped a few years ago, and that was done directly with the departments and with the legislators. Ultimately, those are the people we are going to have to deal with if we want legislation. I would like to hear you tell me that this is going to be much more beneficial, is going to make it a little easier for us, make it a little

better, in our approach to State government, then I will consider it.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: It is going to be made much easier, and more beneficial, and a better approach to State government, by the creation of this department, if that is what you want to hear. We are looking to -- as I indicated in my opening remarks -- reorganize State government. We are not looking to adding a layer of bureaucratic red tape to that which already exists down there. We are not looking to promising veterans that we are going to give them, you know, the rainbow. Everything that is put in for veterans down in the State House carries with it a very, very high price tag, as you know. We have heard people talking about veteran bonuses. We have heard people talking about the property tax deduction. Well, as you may know, it is going to be on the ballot. Along with Assemblyman Villane, I have sponsored a resolution -- it's in the budget -- that will increase, for the first time since 1961, the property tax deduction for veterans from \$50 to \$100. It will be on the ballot in November. If you go ahead and vote for it and it goes through, you will get it next year.

I would like to give you \$125 or \$150, but because of the cost of running State government, it is virtually impossible to do that. We are not looking to grandstand, as Mr. Capriglione may have alluded to. We are not looking to have people go around and shine our stars. We are looking to reorganize government. We are looking to make it very easy for the veterans to find out exactly what services are available to them, so they don't have to go to a bureaucrat in the Division of Pensions, who refers them to someone in the Division of Community Relations, who refers them to someone in the Department of Education, who refers them to someone in the Department of Labor. We want one person to be responsible for overseeing all of these divisions; all of these individual units. Then, if something is said that shouldn't be said, or

if someone is not given something that he or she is entitled to, we know where to point the finger.

That is the basis for the bill. We are not looking to promise--

MAYOR CHENOWETH: Don't you think in what you're saying-- For instance, most of the veterans' agents representing the major divisions, like the American Legion, the VFW, and the AMVETS-- The agents we have probably know more about getting down to the areas we need than probably anyone down in Trenton.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: When you refer to agents--

MAYOR CHENOWETH: We have representatives in the VA; we have representatives in the posts. At a higher level, we have them at the VA. In Newark, we have county representatives. I have found that most of these men know more about getting down to the department and the person's desk than anyone else. No department you set up is going to do anything for us in that area.

Now, the other thing is-- I will take your word that it is going to be an excellent program for us.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Were you here for Mr. Shuey's presentation?

MAYOR CHENOWETH: Beg your pardon?

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Were you here for Steve Shuey's presentation?

MAYOR CHENOWETH: No, I was up at the library.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: I will give you his phone number. Maybe you can give him a call.

MAYOR CHENOWETH: We were talking about taxes, and I want to talk about taxes, too. You know, I would not want the veterans to be hung on this. I would like to know: What is this ultimately going to cost as a unit -- as a department?

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Approximately one million dollars, but what we are doing is transferring money that

exists right now in the Department of Energy. Once the appropriation that is in the budget is relieved by virtue of the abolishment of the Department of Energy--

MAYOR CHENOWETH: That million dollars you refer to-- Is that in addition to what you have already appropriated?

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: We are talking about a million dollars that is in the Department of Energy right now. We can have that appropriation transferred over.

MAYOR CHENOWETH: Is that in addition to your present costs?

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: No, no. We are going to have the existing budget of the Division of Veterans' Programs and Special Services transferred over.

MAYOR CHENOWETH: All right, you're telling me this, but it doesn't say that in your bill.

ASSEMBLYMAN PATERNITI: Mr. Chairman, this will probably save money, because you will be eliminating a lot of duplication in these other divisions by having this particular special department. I think you will be able to more or less eliminate a lot of duplication, and I think you are going to get more for your dollar. It would probably be more efficient, too.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Mayor, if I may, I just want to address something you mentioned earlier. You talked about how well the veterans have done, and are doing, with the departments and divisions which exist now. You talked about several programs. You talked about the fast \$50; you talked about a decrease in the assessments; you talked about an increase in the property tax deduction; and there were one or two others you talked about -- things you got from the departments and from the divisions. But I think you have been in politics long enough, Mayor, to know that you didn't get those things from any division, you didn't get them from any department, and you didn't get them from working with any division or any department.

Every one of those programs you talked about, including probably about 10 or 15 others since I have been around, you have gotten from the Legislature. You will continue to get them from the Legislature. The department will not be creating any new benefits for you. It will be administering the benefits. As the Legislature creates them, the department will be administering them.

That is the whole point here. It is not that it is easier to work with the departments which exist, or that you got so many benefits from them. You get those things from the Legislature, and you will continue to do so. It is just whether or not they will be better administered by one singular department, or several departments, several divisions, several areas which exist now.

MAYOR CHENOWETH: Do you agree with the statement that is made in your introductory bill here, that these departments have done an excellent job?

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Oh, I do, certainly.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Sure we do.

MAYOR CHENOWETH: There is no doubt about it, right?

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Certainly, but this will be better.

MAYOR CHENOWETH: I agree with that. I just want to give you one example from what you are talking about. You know, there were certain preferential benefits under Civil Service, oh, back in '45, when we came back from the war -- those back from World War II. Gradually, we were able to incorporate many, many more benefits -- preferences and so forth -- insofar as disabled veterans, and on down the line. That was all done through the agencies you are talking about. I agree that you had to vote on them, but those were the approaches we had.

And, the same way here. Do you mean to tell me that if you establish a department, that you people aren't going to

be involved and play a little politics, too? Of course, you are.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Well, sir, I had two particular pieces of pension legislation for veterans. Both have passed. Neither one of them came to me from any division or department. So--

MAYOR CHENOWETH: They came from the veterans.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Yes, that's right; from people like those right here in this room.

MAYOR CHENOWETH: Right, right.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: We didn't get them from any department which exists now.

MAYOR CHENOWETH: If you create a new department, there will be nothing coming from it. It is going to come from the roots. Believe me, you are not going to change that process.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: That's right, and we don't want to. The department is going to administer the benefits better.

MAYOR CHENOWETH: I respectfully submit what I have said, with all due respect to you gentlemen. I just want you to know that I agree with your statement, that the way we have been handling it has been credibly administered, really.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Thank you. Is there anyone else? Yes, ma'am? Nice and loud, full name, address, and who you are representing.

JANICE LIENHARD: My name is Janice Lienhard, 336 New York Avenue, Lyndhurst. I am the State Adjutant for the AMVETS. I am also a member of the Jewish War Veterans.

I had the pleasure of taking up about 40 minutes of Mr. DiGaetano's time this afternoon, trying to get some definition to this bill. He helped me very much, but I do have some questions based on what was said from the first speaker to now.

Were this department to be created, it would oversee the veterans' related programs of other departments? For instance, the job placement of the Department of Labor, and the education benefits, because it was agreed that the Department of Education knows the ins and the outs at this point.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: At our last meeting in Florham Park, we met with someone from the Department of Higher Education. They do have some problems with that section of the bill. We are going to try to iron that out.

MS. LIENHARD: But with these two specific examples--

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: The way the bill is written now?

MS. LIENHARD: Would these two divisions be inserted into the new department, or would, say, the job opportunities, stay in the Department of Labor, with an overseeing body being the Department of Veterans' Affairs?

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Brian, where is that one? (speaking to Committee Aide)

MS. LIENHARD: That is the easiest one to discuss, I think.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: As far as the education question is concerned--

MS. LIENHARD: The education-- That's up in the air.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: --we are kind of flexible on that one.

MS. LIENHARD: On the--

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: What page in the bill is that section?

MS. LIENHARD: I really don't have it in front of me right now.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Oh, okay.

MS. LIENHARD: But, would it be overseeing? That is one area that is kind of gray to me.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Okay.

MS. LIENHARD: Also, I know there have been political appointments, and that the top personnel will be war veterans. Would they be shifted from other departments, or will they be coming in fresh? Is that known?

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Are you trying to be cute with us now? Are you talking about the Veterans' Service Council?

MS. LIENHARD: Me? No.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Okay, because we heard that question once before.

MS. LIENHARD: Mr. Andriola could tell you that.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Okay. The Cabinet head will be an appointee of the Governor. It will have to be a veteran. The Service Council, as it presently stands right now, will shift into the department, as well as the other division leaders and subordinates.

MS. LIENHARD: So, they will just be shifting from their former departments to the new department. I have had very bad dealings with some of them. That is why I ask that question.

Two groups which I did not see represented when I was reading the bill-- On a Saturday morning, at about seven o'clock, I would say that about 60% of the cars on the roads have uniforms in them. They will be guardsmen and reservists. There are some problems which reservists have. I am a reservist. I feel they could be represented by--

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: They are already represented by General Francis Gerard.

MS. LIENHARD: That's the guardsmen.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: General Gerard is Adjutant General of the State of New Jersey.

MS. LIENHARD: Yes, that is for the National Guard, but then there are also the National Reserves.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: The reservists are under the direct jurisdiction of the Governor. In fact, yesterday--



MS. LIENHARD: No, the National Guard is the Governor. The reservists are national.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: The reservists are Federal government.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Yes, that's right. The National Guard is the Governor, with General Gerard overseeing it.

MS. LIENHARD: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: In fact, yesterday, we honored the 78th Lightening Division. Do you know of them?

MS. LIENHARD: I'm Air Force.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Oh, okay. In fact, those of you who know of Route 78, we dedicated Route 78 in honor of the 78th Lightening Division Reserve Group in Trenton.

MS. LIENHARD: I am aware that a lot of reservists and a lot of National Guardsmen have problems with employers when they are interviewed and when they are told they have to take off, even though it is a Federal law. I feel this department will be able to ease the way a little bit for these people.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Well, we didn't address that.

MS. LIENHARD: Oh, I realize that. There is another group I feel has been forgotten. You said there are 30,000 female veterans. There are 30,000 women enlisted in the service, and they do have needs. There were a lot nurses and medical personnel in combat units, who have not been addressed. These women are forming their own private groups to try to get help. I feel the department should have more than two women on the Veterans' Service Council. I feel there should be a women's veterans' council.

The State Senate had a bill two years ago establishing a women's service council, but that bill has been buried. I have not seen or heard anything from that, and I have contacted my State Senators. I feel maybe you could incorporate that into this a little bit.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: We will certainly entertain your recommendations for amendments. Please see Brian after the meeting and make sure he has those.

MS. LIENHARD: Okay. Also, is there any way that the employees of this department could be veterans?

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Well, the bill just calls for the chairmanship of it.

MS. LIENHARD: The top people?

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: No, not the top people. But, of course, by statute, the people who are presently employed, who will be shifted over-- I am sure there are some prerequisites to their veteranship in the State, but we are not going to change that at all.

MS. LIENHARD: Well, how about new people coming in and those acquired by acquisition?

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: That is a personnel situation. I don't believe we have--

MS. LIENHARD: As has been said, veterans are really the best ones to see to the needs of the veterans, at this point, you know, especially when creating a new department.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: Excuse me. There exists absolute veterans' preference in New Jersey. So, if a job is posted in this department, and a veteran applies for the job, he gains the job as long as he passes the test. He does not compete with others. As long as he passes the test. Of all of those who pass the test, the veteran must be given first preference. The only distinction there is, is that a disabled veteran gets prior preference.

MS. LIENHARD: Well, I think my questions have been answered. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Thank you very much for coming. Yes, sir?

ANDREW PETRUSKA: My name is Andrew Petruska, 50 Vogert Place, Clifton, New Jersey. I entered the military

service in 1928, retired in '58, which makes me 79 today. (applause) Thank you.

For the past years, I have participated in veterans' organizations and patriotic services in Clifton, New Jersey. This is the first time I have seen so many Assemblymen in one body and, as an individual, I want to thank you for this privilege.

I would like to suggest that in the future we get a little more advance information on your planned meetings, so we can tell our members back home, and give them a chance to attend. I am sure they would be happy to see this body working in their interest.

I personally am in favor of creating that department here in Trenton -- or in Trenton. I got a letter not too long ago from Congressman Bob Roe, that they plan on doing the same thing in Washington, D.C.; that is, to make that bureau headed by a Cabinet officer, instead of the present level.

In conclusion, veterans, I would like to suggest that you stick together, because Congressmen and Senators can take away what they gave you some years ago. Recently, there was an effort on the part of some of them in Washington, D.C., to charge our military people going into the hospital \$5 or \$10 for each visit. That pertained to retired, and it also pertained to active military personnel. However, the bill was killed, and thank God for that. But, they can take away what they gave you.

I am a disabled veteran; I was awarded 30% disability. In addition, I was subjected to arthritis of the spine. My civilian doctor prescribed medication. I went to my VA doctors in Newark, and the doctor there okayed the VA issuing me the pills, which amount to about \$26 a month. Then, a couple of months later, my VA doctor told me he had to take away that pill because their budget had been tightened. So, if we get people in Trenton to represent our veterans, I am sure

they will protect the benefits we have earned. That is all we are asking. Give us what we worked for.

Thank you, gentlemen. It was a privilege. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Unfortunately, we in the Legislature have to put up with some disappointments with respect to the press. I know that Assemblyman Kelly and Assemblywoman Crecco advised the press, through press releases, that we would be having a meeting, but I understand that nothing was printed in the paper. (indiscernible response here)

We try to reach people the best way we can. Again, if you haven't signed up with Brian, please do so after the meeting, and you will know about all of our meetings. Okay? Thank you very much..

If there is no one else, I am going to ask that we conclude. Is there anyone else who would like to speak? (no response) Do I hear a motion to adjourn?

ASSEMBLYMAN MAZUR: So moved.

ASSEMBLYMAN DiGAETANO: So moved.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: All in favor?

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE: Aye.

ASSEMBLYMAN GENOVA: Thank you very much.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)

## **APPENDIX**



# VSO Challenges Patronage

## Vet bureau targets dedicated worker

*"Steve Shuey goes out of his way to help all of his veteran brothers, and this is apparent when meeting with him and talking to him on the phone. He really cares and does his job well. It would be a great injustice to veterans and their families to terminate his employment."*

Margaret Meyer and her husband, a Vietnam veteran suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), aren't the only people who appreciate the work Steve Shuey, a veterans service officer in the Bureau of Veterans Services, has done.

State Senator John Lynch (D-Middlesex), and State Assemblymen David Schwartz (D-Middlesex-Union) and Tom Paterniti (D-Middlesex) are other Shuey supporters.

In a letter of recommendation to Division of Veterans Programs Director Leon Cheesman, Schwartz wrote, "New Brunswick [Bureau Office] has a definite need for a person with Mr. Shuey's skills, enthusiasm and ability to relate to veterans. He could be helpful to those unemployed Vietnam veterans in my district who need help and support in their job search."

And there are still others who feel the same way.

Amvets representatives, Veterans Administration workers, and fellow bureau employees vouch for Shuey's loyalty to veterans and his dedication to helping them lead better lives. Disabled American Veterans National Service Officer Joe Lewellyn has stated that Shuey has a "professional bearing and manner" and that he is an "asset to the state through his employment with the Division of Veterans Programs."

Unfortunately, none of this seems to matter to the division or to the Department of Human Services. The push is on to push Shuey out.

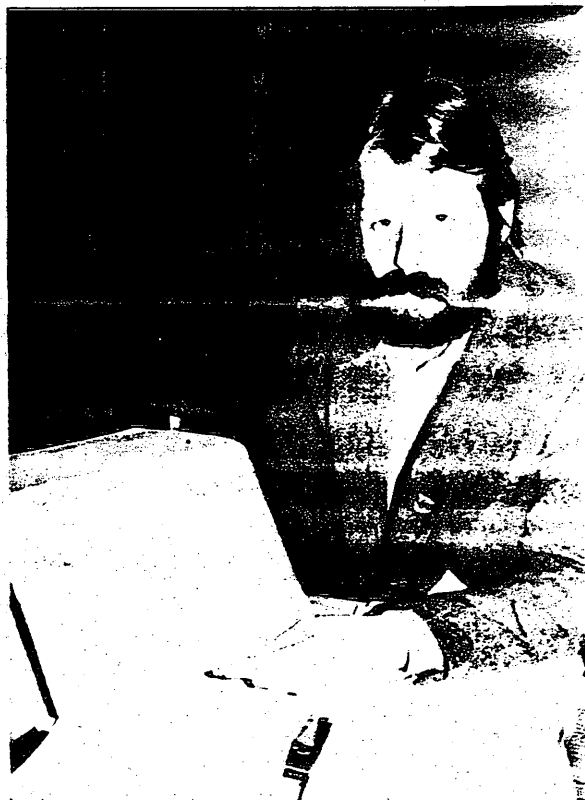
Incredible insensitivity and hypocrisy are at the center of Shuey's fight for his job. The state agency that is mandated to assist veterans and guide them through difficulties associated with their military service has turned its back on a decorated combat veteran. Shuey's tour of duty with the Marine Corps in Vietnam appears to mean nothing to his bosses.

### VICTIM OF POLITICAL INFIGHTING

Shuey is facing a charge of excessive delay in carrying out an order. He didn't hand in his time sheets promptly. Management feels he should be fired for this.

This employee maintains that there is a continual problem with the department's mail system. Time sheets have been lost and delayed before. Policies, he told the *State Worker*, are "arbitrarily enforced depending upon personal relationships and passivity to incompetence."

Time sheets, clearly, are not the real issue. Shuey has been the victim of persistent harassment since



*"My case is really a reflection of what the state thinks of Vietnam veterans. We have to get others to see what is happening here and then change it."*

—Steve Shuey

## BVS is 'invisible' to vets, badly managed

When the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program (VVLVP) was functioning in New Jersey, it came under attack from state veteran officials.

Mismanagement. Duplication of services. Fiscal irresponsibility. Those were charges leveled against the VVLVP by some of those connected with the Bureau of Veterans Services, under the Department of Human Services.

The VVLVP went out of business early in March, when further funding was cut off by the state. That left the BVS in sole charge of state-provided veterans services.

How is the BVS performing?

"It's an embarrassment," said one of its employees, a veteran service officer. "It's a do-nothing agency. They like to hide and not show up for work. Offices aren't staffed. They get a fair number of complaints, and they just ignore them."

This VSO pointed the finger at some of the higher-ups: Bureau Chief Dominic S. Farnoly; Leon Cheesman, acting director of the Division of Veterans Programs and Special Services; John Dramezi, Cheesman's assistant, and David Joost, an area supervisor.

The agency's statistics, according to several VSOs who requested anonymity, are "a joke." Claims are counted two and sometimes three times to pad the figures, they said.

Another complaint is the bureau's "invisibility."

"A lot of veterans don't know we exist," said one disgruntled VSO, noting that most of the 19 state offices have no outside signs and that even the telephone listings are inadequate.

"You have to know to look us up

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(Continued on p. 14)

# Scoops

## Vet bureau harasses a dedicated worker

(Continued from back page)

he began working for the division. Political infighting in the veterans community has made this state worker a target.

Shuey was a very active opponent to funding for the controversial Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program (VVLPL). That private veterans agency folded early this year because of its cost ineffectiveness, padding of client figures, and illegal supervision of state workers. Shuey believes that many of his troubles stem from the political vendetta the well-connected VVLPL directors are orchestrating against himself and several other Vietnam veterans.

### STRESS

On-the-job harassment is tough for anyone to handle. For Shuey, the stress is magnified. Like many of his clients, he suffers from PTSD. Rather than "act out" when the pressure builds, Shuey withdraws. The few instances that have been cited as excessive absenteeism can be attributed to this.

During the period for which it is charged that time sheets are missing, Shuey was either an inpatient at the Lyons VA hospital or was receiving group counseling at the Jersey City Vet Center. Team Leader Ann Talmage-Clark reports that job-related stress "appears to have exacerbated symptoms of PTSD associated with Mr. Shuey's combat experiences in Vietnam."

### INSENSITIVITY

"The Bureau of Veterans Services," CWA Local 1039 Rep. Bruce Fralinger (on loan from Local 1040) points out, "is supposed to take care of veterans in need. Yet here is a disabled veteran working for them and they don't want him as an employee because he has some of the same problems the clients have."

A 1986 division proposal submitted to Human Services Commissioner Drew Altman indicated that agency's goals and objectives. It emphasized the need for "special attention to the psychological needs of Vietnam veterans."

Fralinger is angry with the way management has handled Shuey's counseling. "He was referred to the Employee Advisory Service (EAS)," says Fralinger, "but his bosses don't want to give it a chance. They say they want feedback and haven't gotten it. Why don't they press EAS, rather than the employee?"

To help reduce the tension, Shuey asked to be transferred to the Agent Orange Commission. According to Wayne Wilson, the executive director of the commission who had given a green light for the move, division Director Leon Cheesman had approved the transfer. Strangely, the request was denied.

Shuey feels that he is "being punished because I want to get things done. It's been long, hard years for Vietnam veterans."

He has been outspoken on Agent Orange issues, training for bureau employees, and an apparent "drive to remove combat veterans from

## Shuey's crime: enthusiasm

bureau positions and fill the slots with non-veteran appointees.

"I have a reputation for honesty and aggressive pursuit of Vietnam veterans' rights," Shuey says proudly. It is that openness, he suspects, that has annoyed management.

He is extremely critical of the division's political nature. A number of positions are occupied by political appointees including, for a time, "a fishing buddy of the assistant director of the division."

Management hasn't come down on him "because they care about Vietnam vets," he says. "It's all due to the infighting and political ambition of some of these people. Advocacy for veterans is almost non-existent. I've been hounded since day one, when I was told by a supervisor I had never met before that there seemed to be a dark cloud over my head wherever I went."

Others have seen the tension as well. After the disciplinary hearing, Shuey's counselor, Ann Talmage-Clark, remarked that she couldn't believe the hostility. The administrative section chief at the Veterans Administration had to note that Shuey's only problem was his *enthusiasm*. He also said that he thought Shuey did a pretty good job for someone with ten minutes of training.

### DETERMINATION

Shuey could walk away from this mess. He's been offered other jobs working with veterans. Yet, he is determined to fight it out and win.

"I could leave and forget all of this," he says, "but that won't help the other good people who work here who will still have to put up with it. We have to get others to see what is happening here and then change it."

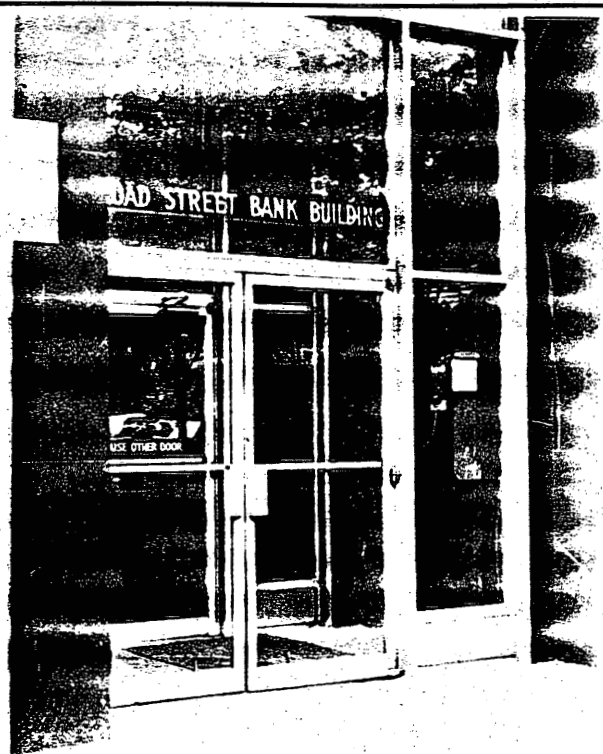
Shuey recalls with clear detail a conversation he had with Leon Cheesman after the charges had been filed.

"Cheesman said he didn't know what he was signing when they put the charges on his desk. He was just told to sign it."

Cheesman told Shuey during that conversation that he knew the ex-Marine was a good service officer.

Steve Shuey cares about veterans. He is a member of the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) New Jersey State Council, and he is the founding president of the Central Jersey VVA Chapter.

"My case is really a reflection of what the state thinks of Vietnam veterans in general and of Vietnam veterans in government service," he says. "All of this is a culmination of the type of 'Vets Preference' I've gotten over the past three years."



The vet services bureau is hidden in this bank building.

## BVS is 'invisible' to vets, badly managed

(Cont'd from back page)

under Human Services," he said.

The Trenton office is located near one of the busiest intersections, W. State and Montgomery streets, on the fifth floor of a bank building. There is no sign outside, and visitors to the building must go through a uniformed guard.

"It's intimidating," said one of the VSOs.

### VIETNAM VETS SHORTCHANGED

These unhappy workers also cite a lack of training and insufficient attention to the particular needs of Vietnam veterans. There's no training to deal with post-traumatic stress disorder — a common problem among Vietnam combat vets — nor is there any encouragement to work with the Agent Orange Commission, they said.

There are 900,000 veterans in New Jersey, and 300,000 of them are Vietnam veterans, one VSO claimed. "We don't do anything to make them feel better about themselves."

The VSOs complained, too, that little is done to inform older veterans — over age 65 — of their pension eligibility, or to reach out to World War II veterans who may be eligible for increased disability compensation as service-connected disabilities further deteriorate.

"Korean veterans are ignored as much as Vietnam vets, and atomic veterans from the end of World War II have no services," said a VSO.

They also cited the lack of a system to share information, not

only within the bureau but with other veteran service agencies.

One service officer, in a memo to a Human Services orientation meeting in March, accused the division of having a "class prejudice" against Vietnam veterans, and claimed that "a vendetta seems to exist against combat Vietnam veterans in the division."

This officer listed 29 reasons for reaching the conclusion.

The memo also listed nepotism as a problem.

That charge may be borne out by an April 30 memorandum from Cheesman to the personnel office, requesting new qualifications for taking an area supervisor promotional exam.

Cheesman asked that any service officer with four months or more permanent status be eligible to take the exam. Previously, two years of professional experience was required.

One service officer — Michael Wersky — meets the four-month experience requirement but would not meet the two-year requirement. His brother, Robert, is an aide to Cheesman.

A training needs assessment was done by Human Services on March 10. The resultant list of needs is wide-ranging, from improved information flow to better training and more communication.

At the moment, morale in the BVS appears to be at an all-time low. With the VVLPL no longer around to be the scapegoat, New Jersey's veterans can only hope that the bureau will pay attention to the job at hand and provide the services it's funded for.





