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UNITED VETERANS COMMITTEE OF COLORADO

2018 Colorado General Assembly End of Session Report

The Second Regular Session of the 71st Colorado General Assembly adjourned sine die on Wednesday, May 9, 2018 (its constitutionally-limited 120th day). The legislature will convene for the first regular session of the 72nd on January 9, 2019.

During the course of the 2018 session, there were 784 bills introduced (compared to 681 in 2017). Of those introduced this year, 559 failed compared with 270 that failed last year. Of the 784 introduced bills this year, 225 were passed by both chambers and sent to the Governor for action (compared to 290 in 2017). Of those bills sent to the Governor, 9 were vetoed.

Despite with one political party having the majority in one legislative house and the other political party having the majority in the other legislative house, the legislature managed to find compromises on an impressive list of challenging issues. These ranged from the required laws (passing 2018-19 state budget and school finance act), to many not required (e.g. fixing the RTD/special district taxing mistake; the subject of a stillborn special session last year, allowing local governments to adopt “Idaho stop” bicycle traffic rules, restructuring the state’s “One-call 811 system”), to the significant passing of a bipartisan transportation funding package, restructuring the State’s pension fund (PERA), rural broadband funding, opioid addiction programs, reauthorizing the Colorado Energy Office -which had died in a partisan impasse during the last night of the 2017 session, and changes to the rules around impending elimination of low strength beer).

There were some highlights. For the first time in memory and due to “newfound onetime revenue” resulting from federal tax reform, the State realized a nearly \$1.2b windfall of new budget to work with. This made the 2018 budgeting process unlike any in recent memory - instead of partisan angst and efforts to raid programs and switch funding around, the budget committee and legislators enjoyed ample money for a long list of programs and projects which are usually un-funded or under-funded. To offset this windfall, there were unsuccessful efforts to pass a one-time reduction in the state personal income tax.

1. UVC’s Specific Legislative Goals

In our UVC’s Specific 2018 Legislative Goals, we were very active in supporting all five. The first, being “to establish a state income tax exemption for up to \$20,000 in military retirement pay of military retirees up to age 55,”

Both in the 2016 Legislative session and in the 2017 Legislative session, this was one of our top priority goals. And while we came close in 2017, we were unsuccessful. This year, with an “All Hands” effort by many UVC volunteers, with outstanding research by Shelly Kolkowski of our UVC Legislative Committee, and with the well laid out tactical efforts of our Lobbyist, Alexandra Garza, we made it! HB18-1060, sponsored by Reps. Danielson and Landgraf and Senators Crowder and A. Williams, was signed into law by Governor Hickenlooper on May 29, 2018. So, to all of you who lent a hand and actively helped in this effort, your work paid off. And the veterans that were represent before the Legislature, we thank you.

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With our goal of supporting legislation and funding for the operation and expansion of Veterans Courts so they are available to veterans statewide, we were able to get passed HB-1078 which accomplished much of what we wanted. And we were able to get some additional funding for the Veterans Courts, thanks to the efforts of Representative Lois Landgraf, who along with Representative Exum and Senator Gardner sponsored this bill. It was signed into law on April 22, 2018. This new law requires all who first come before a judge to be asked: "Have you served in the Military?" This has led to much more interest of veterans in getting into these courts. To accommodate more veterans now knowing about these Courts, there is a need for additional staff to handle them. So, we will be pushing for additional funds, which will make for even greater savings of tax payer dollars/

We pushed hard on our goal to support efforts, where appropriate, to improve the quality of care of veterans in our Veterans Community Living Centers, including allowing nursing employees to be exempted from specified limitations under the state civil service requirements. We thought we were in good shape when the Governor had pay increases in his budget to rectify the concern. But on the final day of the 2018 session, the Legislature's Joint Budget Committee, on a vote of 3 to 3, did not pass the increases. We are continuing to push hard on this, mainly through the very effective efforts of Robby Robinson and Bill Hanna, both active members of our UVC Legislative Committee.

Our goal of establishing a Colorado women veteran's office or officer in the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (SB18-157) went nowhere, and I take responsibility for that happening. Luckily, we have a group of women veterans within UVC, led by Sheila Scanlon, that have taken on this goal, and I am satisfied they are making good progress.

The last specific goal, to provide legislative support to strengthen the resource and information clearinghouse created in 2009 by HB09-1209, was not achieved, mainly by further research by us. There may be a more effective way to obtain the goals sought by this 2009 law than to have that clearinghouse be a state governmental entity, because of the various governmental limitations that would be placed on it. The goal of developing a statewide system where any veteran can obtain accurate, current information and help that is available to veterans regardless of where in the state they are, is being actively pursued by us.

Specifically, in addition to the above bills discussed, we lobbied "SUPPORT" or took positions of "MONITOR" or "OPPOSE" on the following bills.

HB18-101: Honor the Service of the Seabees Sponsors: Rep. Danielson and Senator Fields
SUPPORT; Status: P'd

HB18-1095: Educator License Requirements Military Spouses
Sponsors: Representatives Carver and Arndt / Senator Todd
SUPPORT: Status: Passed. Governor signed 03/22/2018

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HB18-1218: Definition of Veterans' Organizations for Sales and Use Tax

Sponsors: Representatives Carver and Melton/ Senators Crowder and Todd

SUPPORT: Status: Passed. Governor signed 06/6/2018

HB18-1244: Honoring the Service of Submarine Veterans

Sponsors: Representative Danielson / Senator Gardner

SUPPORT: Status: Passed. Governor signed 06/6/2018

HB18-1317: Exempt Nonprofits for use of electronic gaming machines

Sponsors: Representative Reyher

MONITOR: Status: P'd

HB18-1337: Veterans One-stop Center in Grand Junction

Sponsors: Representatives Hamner and Decker/ Senators Lambert, Decker

SUPPORT: Status: Passed. Governor signed 04/30/2018

HB18-1343: Veterans Service to career Program

Sponsors: Representatives Lee and Carver / Senators Lambert and Todd

SUPPORT: Status: Passed. Governor signed 05/25/2018

HB18-1361: Eligibility for Veteran Vietnam War License Plate

Sponsors: Representative Exum / Senator A. Williams

SUPPORT: Status: Passed. Governor signed 05/30/2018

SB18-012: Military Enlistment School Performance Indicator

Sponsors: Senator Hill / Representative Pettersen

SUPPORT: Status: Passed. Governor signed 05/19/2018

SB18-015: Protecting Homeowners and Deployed Military

Sponsors: Senators Gardner and Hill / Representatives Williams D. and Liston

MONITOR: Status: P'd

SB18-020: Registered Psychotherapists Auricular Acudetox

Sponsors: Senators Garcia / Representative Esgar

MONITOR: Status: Passed. Governor signed 03/12/2018

SB18-024: Expand Access Behavioral Health Care Providers

Sponsors: Senators Jahn, B. Patterson and Tate/ Representative Singer

MONITOR: Status: Passed. Governor signed 05/21/2018

SB18-044: Employment Preference by Private Employer

Sponsors: Senator Crowder/ Representative Landgraf

MONITOR: Status: P'd

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SB18-087: In-state Tuition Foreign Nationals Settled in Colorado

Sponsors: Senator Fenberg / Representatives Michaelson Jenet and Winter

MONITOR: Status: Passed. Governor signed 04/12/2018

SB18-112: Veterans Outdoor Terrain Restoration Grant Program

Sponsors: Senator Crowder and Jahn / Representative Lawrence

MONITOR: Status: P'd

SB18-123: Asbestos Trust Claims Transparency Act

Sponsors: Senator Sonnenberg/ Representative Liston

MONITOR: Status: P'd

SB18-135: Update Colorado Code of Military Justice

Sponsors: Senator Gardner / Representatives Carver and Lee

SUPPORT: Status: Passed. Governor signed 04/2/2018

SB18-157: Colorado Women's Veterans Act

Sponsors: Senator A. Williams/ Representative Danielson

SUPPORT: Status: P'd

OUR NEW UVC LOBBYIST

Shortly after the end of the 2018 Legislative Session, our Lobbyist, Alexandra Garza, took a full-time position which gives her responsibility of three states for her client. She recommended we hire Dan Jablan who worked with Alexandra on a number of matters. After interviews and meetings with Dan, he was hired to take her place and we are looking forward to his efforts on our behalf.

OTHER NEWS

A substantial number of respected and experienced legislators from both houses will retire or move on this November. In the Senate, this includes leaders President Grantham (R-Canon City) and Assistant Minority Leader Guzman (D-Denver) as well as Senators Jahn (U-Wheat Ridge), Lambert (R-Colo Springs), Kerr (D-Lakewood), Hill (R-Colo Springs), Lundberg (R-Berthoud), Jones (D-Democrat), and Kefalas (D-Fort Collins).

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In the House, this includes Speaker Duran (D-Denver), Becker J (R-Fort Morgan), Pabon (D-Denver), Lawrence (R-Littleton), Young (D-Greeley), Salazar (D-Thornton), Everett (R- Littleton), and Willett (R-Grand Junction).

The legislature will convene a number of interim committees during the interim period before the 2019 session commences. This will include year-round statutory committees (e.g. Joint Budget Committee, Capital Development Committee, Legal Services Committee), and interim committees (e.g. Transportation Legislation Review Committee, Water Resources Review Committee).

Any questions/comment/concerns, please e-mail me at diclyoung123@gmail.com. And my sincere thanks and all of those of those veterans who greatly in our efforts. And to the many of our UVC Legislative Committee members who participated in our efforts. my sincere thanks.

My Best,

Dick Young, UVC State Legislative Chair