



Department of Maine

Senator Ben Chipman
Representative Maureen Terry
Honorable Members of the Taxation Committee

April 6, 2021

My name is Steven SanPedro and I am the Department of Maine Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Legislative Chairman. I served 20 years of active duty in the United States Army earning the rank of First Sergeant. After retiring in 2008 I became active with the VFW. Serving as a Post, District and Department Commander earn the elite title of All-American Commander in 2016-17. So, as you can see, I have experience when it comes to talking about Veterans and their families.

On behalf of the Department of Maine VFW and its Auxiliary Members I am here to speak in favor of LD-1166 An Act to Increase the Property Tax Exemption for Veterans by 50 Percent. First, we would like to thank Representative Janice Dodge for her efforts in addressing this much needed change that we have been trying to get changed for years.

The current law Title 36-653 is so outdated and provides little to no relief. These Veterans that are 62 years or older or are 100% serviced connected disable deserve more than \$6,000.00 exemption. Most are retired getting social security or can't work anymore because of their disability. When this law was passed in 1967 or earlier that was a lot of money. With today's prices of homes and taxes paid it provides little to no relief. For an example a property valued today at \$125,000.00 the Veteran would get 4.8% or a property \$250,000.00 would get a 2.4% tax exemption. This change would take it to 7.2% and 3.6% respectfully. Does this seem right to you?

As I said we the VFW support LD-1166 but we feel that it is not enough! We would support a committee amendment to expand the age limit downward to 60 years old, to set the exemption to set rate of 10% and to eliminate the Merchant Mariner exclusion from qualifying conflicts from many years ago. These changes would make us competitive with others states. We constantly say we want Veterans to come live in Maine well let's give them a reason. Some other States give 50%-100% to Veterans in these situations. I have submitted a list of each state and what they give their Veterans. These Veterans don't make up a huge population so the impact will be small.

In closing we will support LD-1166 and any of the changes stated above for it will help Maine Veterans and their families. We again thank Representative Dodge for addressing this issue and her efforts to supporting Maine's Veterans. I also want to thank the committee for your time. I am prepared to answer any questions.

Respectfully Submitted

STEVEN J. SANPEDRO (PSC)
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Department of Maine Legislative Chairman
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