



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: LD 369, An Act to Allow Repurposed Military Vehicles to Be Registered and Operated on Maine Roads

Committee Chair Senator Chipman, Committee Chair Representative Williams and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation,

Thank you for allowing me to testify on LD 369, An Act to Allow Repurposed Military Vehicles to Be Registered and Operated on Maine Roads.

I was approached last week and asked by a constituent if I was aware of this bill. Imagine my surprise as I thought it was already legal to register in the State of Maine most vehicles that had been purpose built for military use but had been retired from military service, the exception being tracked vehicles which I knew were prohibited from being operated on public ways. I was confused because in the past I had seen a British Ferret scout car that was road legal, registered and privately owned by the director of the Owl's Head Transportation Museum; I had seen a variety of Swiss Pinzgauer utility vehicles operated in the state, including one that I had driven that was operated by a sporting camp in Piscataquis County; and I have seen American made M151 "Jeeps", M998 HMMWVs, M35 Trucks and M977 HEMMTs, all privately owned or operated by municipalities, private search and rescue groups and other enterprises, on the road at one point or another.

The constituent informed me that he had purchased a decommissioned M1070 HET, a vehicle I was very familiar with as both a former brigade level Master Driver and as an Abrams Tank Commander. The HET, or Heavy Equipment Transporter, is powered by a six cylinder 700 hp C-18 Caterpillar and can haul about 70 tons. For a small business owner, obtaining an operational HET from a DRMO source to haul forestry or construction equipment, at the fraction of the cost of a comparable civilian model truck, is a boon. He was obviously upset that he was no longer allowed to register the vehicle for

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legal operation in the State of Maine and had wasted his precious investment dollars.

I contacted the sponsor and was told that our legislature had previously banned the registration of all vehicles that were originally built for or operated by military forces.

There are a variety of reasons that one might want to own, operate, and therefore register, a vehicle that was formerly used by a military entity. This could be a collector who uses a vehicle in a parade or event. While there may be exemptions for “organized veteran’s groups”, more often than not such organizations cannot afford to own, maintain or operate these vehicles and it is individual members who provide historic pieces for these parades and functions. It could be for the general utility of the vehicle. In our state, there is at least one private, non-profit NGO search and rescue entity that owns HMMWVs, for example, and the Pinzgauer has proven to be so adaptable and reliable worldwide that it has been used by search and rescue groups, civilian government operations, outdoor enthusiasts, missionaries and even package delivery services. And of course, there are small business owners of all types that take advantage of repurposed military vehicles for a variety of reasons, from hauling heavy equipment to carrying water.

I served as both a Master Driver for the Second Brigade of the Second Armored Division and the Non-Commissioned Officer In Charge of Driver Training for the 66th Armor Regiment after completing the US Army’s Master Driver Certification Course. I can tell you that the vehicles in question are built to a rugged standard and every wheeled vehicle in the Table of Organization and Equipment I trained drivers on were constructed to operated in regular traffic and on public ways with operational headlights, brake lights, taillights and signal lights.

Based on my experience of contact with people who have owned demilitarized vehicles, owners tend to be collectors who are veterans; veterans who have been formerly trained on those vehicles and have hundreds or thousands of operational hours driving them. This presents a higher standard of safety then a municipal operator who has attended a 3 hour EVOC course followed by a road test and then operates that same vehicle only a dozen hours per year, at emergency speeds and under stress conditions, in the same vehicles but which are exempt from the current registration ban.

Any additional argument on the lack of safety equipment is moot when you consider that the state still allows the registration of other vehicle (among them antiques, autocycles, horseless carriages, motorcycles, reconstructed vehicles and street rods) that lack many of the modern safety features of new vehicles.

I would offer three amendments to the proposed bill though. Under the definitions section of “Demilitarized vehicle” in §101, sub-§20-A, I would include language similar to “any vehicle originally designed or built for military service from any country of origin” if foreign built vehicles are currently banned from registration. I would also remove section §458-C-A-3 to allow an owner/registrant to transfer the vehicle and allow subsequent owners to register the vehicle, since I read the current language to say that the vehicle can only be registered if there is a certificate of transfer from the government to

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the current registrant. Finally, I would also like to see section §458-C-A-6 changed or removed, as just the M1070 HET tractor weighs in at 41,000lbs and a HEMMT is 42,000lbs.

I encourage the committee to consider this legislation and support it with a vote of 'Ought To Pass' with these amendments. I thank you for your time and will gladly answer any questions to my ability.

Respectfully,



Rep. Chad R. Perkins
District 31

ATT:

CF:
Committee Chair Senator Chipman
Committee Chair Representative Williams
Transportation Committee Members

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