

Senate Executive Departments and Administration Committee

Kevin Condict 271-7875

AMENDMENT # 2025-1370s, to HB 64, relative to extending hiring preferences for military members and their spouses to the state and private businesses, and establishing purchase preferences for disabled veterans and military spouses regarding state supply purchases.

Hearing Date: April 2, 2025

Time Opened: 10:27 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:34 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Pearl, McGough, Gannon, Altschiller and Reardon

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill expands the definition of veteran for purposes of veteran hiring and employment preferences to include a veteran's spouse and any active duty service member regardless of length of service. This bill also extends employment preferences for veterans or their spouse to include veteran owned suppliers of goods and services in dealings with the state.

Sponsors:

Rep. Roy

Rep. Creighton

Rep. Edwards

Rep. Moffett

Rep. Rhodes

Sen. Gannon

Who supports the amendment: Rep. Jim Creighton (Hills. 30), Maj. Gen. David Mikolaities (DMAVS), and Kevin Grady (SVAC), Sen. William Gannon (SD 23), and Janet Lucas.

Who opposes the amendment: Curtis Howland, Timothy Finney, James Gardner, and Aubrey Freedman.

Who is neutral on the amendment: None.

Summary of testimony presented:

Senator Howard Pearl, Senate District 17

- Sen. Pearl introduced non-germane amendment 2025-1370s to House Bill 64.
- Sen. Pearl explained that this was a request from Maj. Gen. Mikolaities.
- Sen. Pearl stated that this amendment would not affect the underlying bill.

Major General David Mikolaities, Department of Military Affairs and Veterans Services

- Maj. Gen. Mikolaities said that generally speaking the biggest challenge for the United States military is the ability to man an all-volunteer force. He explained the main two elements are the ability to recruit and retain.
- Maj. Gen. Mikolaities said this policy used to be the New Hampshire National Guard scholarship fund. The New Hampshire National Guard used to rent out the Manchester Armory and use the rental income to support the scholarship fund. They stopped renting the Armory and the scholarship fund went away. He said they repurposed the fund into this enlistment and retention policy.
- Maj. Gen. Mikolaities said that one of the things they do is a referral bonus. He said they give someone a thousand dollars to refer a friend. He said the National Guard is typically a family business or a word-of-mouth business. He said the program has paid dividends; they typically receive about forty referrals per year which is significant for them.
- Maj. Gen. Mikolaities said that the New Hampshire Army National Guard has a ten percent unemployment rate. He said the Air National Guard has a zero percent unemployment rate. He said they struggle with recruiting and retention.
- Maj. Gen. Mikolaities said that over the past two or three years the National Guard has met their recruiting numbers, but retention has declined. He said the challenge is keeping first term service members in the Guard. He explained that the twenty-year retirement went away. He said they are finding that a service member signs up for three to four years, does their time, gets their 401k, and departs.
- Maj. Gen. Mikolaities said the emphasis has been on retention. He said that last year the legislature allowed them to do a state retention bonus which allows them to use state funds. He explained that it is four thousand dollars if someone reenlists if they are eligible for the federal bonus. He explained that this amendment would expand the program to offer funds for jobs that are hard to fill.
- Maj. Gen. Mikolaities said there is urgency to this policy. He explained that every five years their field expert is deployed to the Middle East. He said this policy gets ahead of that and offers service members four thousand dollars if they reclassify to a more critical job.
- Maj. Gen. Mikolaities stated that there is no funding needed, as they already have the funds for this.

Kevin Grady, State Veterans Advisory Committee

- Mr. Grady said the State Veterans Advisory Committee (SVAC) supports this bill.
- Mr. Grady said that last year's HB 1355 was put in to help with retention in fields that are in demand or critical. He provided an example of people in information technology (IT). He said they can make more money in the private sector.
- Mr. Grady said that when they cannot retain service members it is like trading away Tom Brady for the hundred and ninety-ninth pick and hoping the new guy can pan out.

KC

Date Hearing Report completed: April 4, 2025