

**Testimony of Mike Marceau**  
**To the Senate Education Health and Environmental Affairs Committee**

**March 4, 2009**

**SB 501--Public Safety - National Guard Deployment - Governor's Powers**

SUPPORT

My name is Michael Marceau. I am vice president of Veterans For Peace Chapter 16, the Washington DC area chapter. I am a disabled Vietnam veteran retired on disability due to severe injuries sustained while I was serving in the U S Army.

Veterans For Peace has 5 main principles that we adhere to. One is that we want to make people aware of the cost of war. This is not only in an economic sense, but also on a personal level.

On the economic level, we need to remember that the invasion and occupation of Iraq is not included in our national budget. That cost is in a supplemental budget. The average of this is around \$170 billion a year. Since 2003 the total is over \$1 trillion. Imagine how much good that money would have done here at home in America.

Now on to the personal cost of war. Last spring I attended a hearing of the House Armed Services Committee in Washington DC. One of the witnesses was a general who commanded the Indiana National Guard. He stated that the units in his state train on Vietnam era equipment, which is close to 40 years old. He said that when these units are sent to combat in Iraq, they have to take several weeks to be trained on the newer equipment. This is not only a danger to the guard member who is unavailable for duty during his training period, it is also a danger to the members of his unit who must take up the slack of the under-manned unit. This puts the entire mission in jeopardy.

There are no statistics available on the number of deaths or injuries caused by improper training or inadequate equipment, but I'm sure there are too many in each of these categories.

Imagine Cal Ripken in a similar situation. During spring training he has played shortstop. Suddenly, on opening day he is told "You're starting at catcher." Not only could he get hurt, but his teammates will be distracted from playing their positions because they are concerned about Cal not being able to be competent at his new spot. This affects the mission of the team, which is to win games.

Another point of Veterans For Peace is to seek justice for veterans and victims of war. Let me tell you about the 1162 members of the Minnesota National Guard. They are being denied education benefits because they served too few days in Iraq. They served just as long as their colleagues -- 22 consecutive months, the longest of any U.S. unit in Iraq -- but they are not eligible to enroll in the Chapter 30 Montgomery GI Bill because they were demobilized before serving the 730 days of active duty deployment required by the bill. How long before? From one to 12 days. There are also more than 300 guard members from Iowa who faced the same

situation.

How would you feel if you served 22 months in Iraq beside members of the regular Army, and saw them receive benefits while all you got as a guard member was a “Thanks for you service. Have a nice life,” when you returned home? I know I would be very upset.

Please check out these web sites for more information about the Minnesota National Guard.  
[www.startribune.com/local/11591161.html](http://www.startribune.com/local/11591161.html) and [chronicle.com/news/article/3305/long-serving-national-guard-troops-were-denied-gi-bill-benefits](http://chronicle.com/news/article/3305/long-serving-national-guard-troops-were-denied-gi-bill-benefits)