

**2025 SB0282 Testimony For 2025-02-04.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: FAV

# Testimony For SB0282

Honorable Senators

Please enter a favorable decision for SB0282.

I support:

1. altering the rule of interpretation for “veteran”;
2. altering the application of certain provisions of law governing natural resources to apply to all uniformed services rather than only the armed forces;
3. altering the circumstances under which licenses for fishing in tidal waters do not lapse; and
4. authorizing active service members, veterans, and vehicles of which an active service member or veteran is an occupant to enter a State park without paying a certain fee

Doing such is just a small token of appreciation of their service. Consequently, please enter a favorable decision for SB0282.

Alan Lang  
45 Marys Mount Road  
Harwood, Maryland 20776  
Legislative District 30B  
410-336-9745  
[Alanlang1@verizon.net](mailto:Alanlang1@verizon.net)

February 4, 2025

# **Support for Maryland SB 282 - 31 Jan 2025.pdf**

Uploaded by: David Heredia

Position: FAV



**THE AMERICAN LEGION**  
Department of Maryland, Inc.

The War Memorial Building, Baltimore, Maryland 21202  
410-752-1405

January 31, 2025

David Heredia, Jr.  
Commander, Department of Maryland  
The American Legion  
101 N. Gay Street, Suite E  
Baltimore, MD, 21202

The Honorable Bryan W. Simonaire  
Maryland State Senate  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

cc:

Recreational Equality for Service Members Act Committee  
Co-Sponsors, The Honorable Johnny Ray Salling, J.B. Jennings, Jason Gallion, Johnny Mautz,  
and Jack Bailey

Subject: Strong Support for Senate Bill 282 – The Recreational Equality for Service Members Act

Dear Senator Simonaire and Honorable Co-Sponsors,

On behalf of The American Legion Department of Maryland and our over 42,000 members, I would like to express our full support for Senate Bill 282 – The Recreational Equality for Service Members Act. This vital legislation ensures that active-duty service members, National Guard, Reservists, and veterans receive equal access to recreational opportunities in Maryland.

Our military personnel have dedicated their lives to defending our freedoms, often at great personal sacrifice. It is only fitting that they can enjoy Maryland's state parks, recreational facilities, and public resources without undue financial or administrative barriers. SB 282 seeks to address this by:

- **Ensuring Fair Access** – Expanding eligibility for discounted or free entry to state parks and recreational facilities for all service members and veterans.
- **Reducing Barriers** – Simplifying the process for service members to obtain recreational benefits, ensuring ease of access for those who have served.
- **Recognizing Military Contributions** – Honoring the sacrifices and service of military personnel by fostering an inclusive and supportive environment in Maryland's recreational programs.

This legislation reinforces Maryland's commitment to its military community, ensuring that those who have served are able to enjoy the benefits of recreation, outdoor activities, and community engagement. By passing SB 282, we demonstrate our appreciation for their service and uphold the principles of fairness and gratitude.

On behalf of the over 350,000 veterans, active-duty service members, National Guard, and Reservists in Maryland, I respectfully urge you to support SB 282 and advocate for its swift passage. Providing our military personnel with equitable access to recreational opportunities is a meaningful way to honor their service and well-being.

Thank you for your time and unwavering commitment to Maryland's military community. The American Legion, Department of Maryland stands ready to support this effort, and I welcome the opportunity to discuss this further. Please do not hesitate to reach out if additional information is needed.

Sincerely,

*David Heredia Jr.*

David Heredia, Jr.  
Commander, Department of Maryland  
The American Legion

cc:

Recreational Equality for Service Members Act Committee  
Co-Sponsors, The Honorable Johnny Ray Salling, J.B. Jennings, Jason Gallion, Johnny Mautz,  
and Jack Bailey

**SB 282 Hugh McClean\_UMB School of Law.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kara Contino

Position: FAV



School of Law  
The Bob Parsons Veterans  
Advocacy Clinic

1420 N. Charles St.  
Baltimore, MD 21201-5779

T: 410.837.5706  
F: 410.837.4776  
law.ubalt.edu

January 28, 2025

Education, Energy and Environment Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD

Re: Letter in Support of Senate Bill 282

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

I respectfully submit this letter in support of Senate Bill (“SB”) 282, the Recreational Equality for Service Members Act. I am an Associate Professor and Director of the Bob Parsons Veterans Advocacy Clinic at the University of Baltimore School of Law. I founded the clinic in 2014, and I have supervised student-attorneys in the representation of veterans in a wide variety of litigation and legislative initiatives for the last ten years. Prior to joining the faculty, I served in the U.S. Air Force Judge Advocate General Corps from 2003 to 2014, and was on the faculty at the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

I fully support the interpretations and definitions outlined in SB 282. The bill clearly defines military terms that are important in the designation of certain benefits. The bill removes previous ambiguity in military terminology. Where appropriate, the bill incorporates definitions from the U.S. Code, thereby maintaining continuity between military terminology in state and federal law.

For the above reasons, I fully endorse SB 282. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions at [hmclean@ubalt.edu](mailto:hmclean@ubalt.edu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Hugh McClean'.

Hugh McClean

**SB 282 Senator Simonaire\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kara Contino

Position: FAV



**BRYAN W. SIMONAIRE**  
Legislative District 31  
Anne Arundel County

Education, Energy, and the  
Environment Committee

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and  
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 320  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3658 · 301-858-3658  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3658  
Fax 410-841-3586 · 301-858-3586  
Bryan.Simonaire@senate.state.md.us

## *The Senate of Maryland* ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

### **SB 282 - " Recreational Equality for Servicemembers Act "**

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 282.

I am very excited to be presenting a package of bills that represents the most comprehensive overhaul of military law in our state's modern history.

The package consists of 8 bills:

At the core is SB 275 - Modernization of Military Laws Act

Along with 7 other bills covering all of Maryland Laws

I have worked directly with the Uniformed Services, military advocates, federal and state agencies, military legal experts and our DLS legal counsel to draft a consensus and workable solution.

This being the first bill hearing of the package I wanted to give you an overview of what the package does:

1. **Completely restructures** Maryland's military law into the 21st century with modernized and standardized terms that are also strategically centralized in one location
2. **Establishes consistent and equal benefits** among all 8 Uniformed Services branches and reserve units, and
3. **Authorizes the Department of Veterans and Military Families** to provide support to our service members, in addition to our veterans.

The advantages are namely:

1. Updates current laws to **provide over 100 additional benefits** that were being denied to various former and current service members simply because of inconsistent and outdated terminology.
2. **Creates a centralized structure** that facilitates easy, consistent and standard military laws for future revisions.
3. **Codifies the Department's authority and duty** to support the service members.

To get an **idea of the magnitude** of this package, every legislator received a memo this past November from the Department of Veterans and Military Families highlighting 34 sections in our laws with inconsistencies in military terminology.

**In contrast**, this comprehensive legislative package updates more than 230 sections with over 500 revisions touching nearly every article.

**But first a brief refresher** on terms so my presentation makes sense:

The term '**Uniformed Services**' is comprised of 8 federal branches.

There are **6 military** branches of the Uniformed Services (~ 1.3 million active duty):

Referred to as the '**Armed forces**':

Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, Navy and Space Force

There are **2 non-military** branches of the Uniformed Services (~6,000 active duty nationwide)

- Commissioned Corps Officers of the Public Health Services (PHS)
- Commissioned Corps Officers of the National Oceanic Atmospheric and Administration (NOAA)

I am sure we are all familiar with what our military branches do, but some may not realize what the other non-military branches do to protect our nation.

I won't discuss all PHS and NOAA responsibilities, but I will highlight a few tasks.

PHS sent hundreds of officers over to Afghanistan to assist during the war. Additionally, they were sent over to Africa to help when there was an Ebola outbreak to contain it.

NOAA is involved in almost every mission performed by our military through its coordination of their satellites and weather capabilities. Additionally, you may not know that NOAA was in the Gulf helping sweep for mines during the war.

**And that brings me to SB 282**, which improves the Natural Resources Article by updating the uniformed services term to be inclusive of all 8 branches in areas, such as:

1. Healing Hunting and Fishing Program privileges applies to all service members,
2. Exemption for annual fishing licenses for service members with a physical or mental disability applies to all service members,
3. Providing the same benefits to all service members for a fishing license renewal or expiration during an emergency,
4. Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license exemption for service members on leave in the state applies to all service members,
5. Codify the Veterans and Active Duty Servicemembers free state park passes and extending it to Uniformed Services members as well, and
6. Provide clarity in military definitions.

Lastly, I would note that in general, these bills are **not changing the underlying policy but providing equality among our service members**. And worked very hard to keep the **fiscal note to zero** or within all the Department's current budget.

I could go into much greater depth but will stop there and say, "For all these reasons, I ask for your favorable consideration."

# **Maryland Military Coalition SB0282 Written Testimo**

Uploaded by: DAVID Dragics

Position: FWA



## MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

*Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy*

January 31, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman  
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Request for **FAVORABLE Report with Amendments** – SB0282 – Recreational Equality for Service Members Act

Dear Chair Feldman and distinguished members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC), I write to recommend a **FAVORABLE report with Amendments** by the Committee on **SB0282 – Recreational Equality for Service Members Act**, sponsored by Senator Bryan Simonaire. The bill will update and change the application of certain provisions of law governing natural resources to apply to all uniformed services rather than only the armed forces. It is a **positive step in making the Maryland Code consistent with U.S. Code in the use of terms related to the uniform services**, which the MMC endorses. However, our recommendation of a FAVORABLE report with Amendments is based on the definition of “veteran” being proposed in the bill compared with that in § 1-117, Veteran, of the State Government Article of the Maryland Code.

General Provisions § 1-117 defines a veteran as an individual “eligible under 38 U.S. Code § 101, a member of the commissioned corps of: (1) the Public Health Service; or (2) the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or its predecessor, the Coast and Geodetic Survey.” The language that is proposed in Article – State Government § 9-901 (M) uses the definition of “veteran” found in 38 U.S. Code § 101, in which § 101 (2) states that the “term ‘veteran’ means a person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.” That subparagraph, **38 U.S. Code § 101 (2), by itself, does not include the commissioned corps of both the Public Health Service (PHS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and could be interpreted differently from the existing definition in Maryland’s General Provisions § 1-117, which does.** The MMC believes this could lead to an interpretation that veterans who served honorably with PHS and NOAA are not eligible.

Subject: Request FAVORABLE Report with Amendment – SB0278 – Tax Relief and Pensions Equality for Service Members Act

The MMC's position is to make certain that those who have served in the PHS and NOAA continue to have the same rights and benefits as those who have served in the armed forces and received a DD Form 214 that is other than dishonorable. Our position is also to make certain that all federal and state legal references supporting the above clearly indicate the same to those who will use these references in the future. **We respectfully request that the language be amended to read that "veteran" has the meaning stated in § 1-117 of the General Provisions Article.**

The specific instances where these amendments should be made are as follows:


- Page 3, lines 8-13: restore the deleted text in § 1-117 and delete the reference to 38 U.S. Code § 101.
- Page 10, lines 3-6: amend the language to read that "veteran" has the meaning stated in § 1-117 of the General Provisions Article.

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports SB0282** and asks for a **FAVORABLE report with Amendments** as noted above. Updating and implementing the proposed changes will make the Maryland Code consistent with the U.S. Code for key terms related to the uniformed services and will decrease their misuse in future legislation and policymaking.

The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, nonpartisan advocacy organization comprised of 22 prominent Maryland-based veteran and military groups. It represents over 150,000 service-connected individuals, including those currently serving, veterans, retirees and their families, caregivers and survivors. Visit our website at <https://mdmilcoalition.org/>.

We want to thank Senator Simonaire for sponsoring this legislation and for supporting the uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,



David L. Dragics  
COL (Ret), U.S. Army  
Legislative Director



## **Member Organizations of the Maryland Military Coalition**

Air Force Sergeants Association

American Military Society

American Minority Veterans Research Project

Association of the United States Navy

Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

Disabled American Veterans

Fleet Reserve Association of Annapolis

Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A

Maryland Air National Guard Retirees' Association

National Active and Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Military Officers Association of America

Military Order of the Purple Heart

Military Order of the World Wars

Montford Point Marines of America

National Association of Black Veterans

National Active and Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

Platoon 22

Reserve Organization of America

Society of Military Widows

Veterans of Foreign Wars

# **Nash\_written\_Commissioned Officers Association\_SB**

Uploaded by: Lynn Nash

Position: FWA



# Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Service

Protecting the interests of the USPHS Commissioned Corps since 1951

February 4, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman  
Chair, Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Request for **FAVORABLE Report with Amendments** – SB 282 – Recreational Equality for Service Members Act

Dear Chair Feldman and Distinguished Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

As the Maryland Military Coalition Director representing the Commissioned Officers Association, I write to request a **FAVORABLE Report with Amendments** for SB 282 – Recreational Equality for Service Members Act. As a retired U.S. Public Health Officer, I have first hand witnessed events where members of my Corps were denied benefits given to other service members because of the language written or more likely omitted in legislation. Over the past several years, I have worked relentlessly to try and remediate legislation before it is enacted to ensure that the correct terms and meaning are understood by everyone. As an example, last session I requested an amendment and succeeded in getting inclusion of U.S. Public Health Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration spouses into the Families Serve Act, where service spouses receive priority hiring for Maryland State Government positions. This session, I am asking for a similar amendment to the Burial Equity Act, to codify what is already happening in Maryland State Cemeteries.

**SB 282** updates and changes the application of certain provisions of law governing natural resources to apply to **ALL** uniformed services, including both the U.S. Public Health and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Corps Officers who are NOT members of the armed forces. This is important Maryland Statute General Provisions § 1-117 states:

“With respect to any State program of benefits, rights, or privileges applicable to a veteran under this Code, “veteran” includes, if the individual is eligible under 38 U.S.C. § 101, a member of the commissioned corps of:

- (1) the Public Health Service; or
- (2) the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or its predecessor, the Coast and Geodetic Survey.



Request for **FAVORABLE Report with Amendments** – SB 282 – Recreational Equality for Service Members Act

However, 38 U.S. Code §101 (2) is less explicit. It states “the term ‘veteran’ means “a person who served in the active military, naval, air or space service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable”.

Maryland is home to the headquarters of both the U.S. Public Health Service **AND** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Corps. In addition to my headquarters, U.S. Public Health Service serve in Department of Health and Human Services operating administrations including the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, the Health Resources and Services Administration, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, as well as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, among others. There are over 1,390 active-duty officers and nearly 7,000 retired officers living in Maryland.

I served for a total of 30 active-duty years in both the Army as well as Public Health. I served under combat during Desert Storm – Desert Shield and also under “combat” fighting public health “wars” including 9/11, the Anthrax Attacks on the Capitol, New York and Florida, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Fukushima Daiichi disaster, Ebola and other major public health events. More often than not, my PHS duties placed me in more perilous positions than much of my Army time. I have TWO DD-214s, and by Maryland law, I am a veteran. While I can continue to go about and attempt to right the wrongs of previous legislation on a case-by-case basis, it seems more efficient to update relevant Maryland code to be inclusive of **ALL** uniformed services.

Public Health and NOAA officers work hard and undertake significant activities to improve the health and safety of the Nation. They deserve inclusion in Maryland statute and access to all benefits received by other services. I respectfully request that SB 282 be amended to read that “veteran” has the meaning stated in Maryland Statute General Provisions § 1-117 and request that this Committee give a **FAVORABLE report** to the amended bill.

Senator Simonaire, I am grateful to you for sponsoring not only this bill, but also the other Maryland Statute uniformed services updates that you have offered. I know it took a tremendous amount of work to draft these. Thank you for your on-going support of **ALL** of the uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,



Lynn A. Nash, PhD, RN, PHCNS-BC, FAAN  
CAPTAIN (Retired), United States Public Health Service  
Commissioned Officers Director  
Maryland Military Coalition  
[Lynn.Slepski@outlook.com](mailto:Lynn.Slepski@outlook.com)