

TESTIMONY OF
Senate President Kevin Raye
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
Presenting LD 1630,
Resolve, To Establish a Stakeholder Group for the Development of a Plan
for the Inventory and Proper Care of Veterans' Graves
February 8, 2012

Chairman Farnham, Chairman Beaulieu and distinguished members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, I am Senate President Kevin Raye, and I am here as the sponsor to present LD 1630, "Resolve, To Establish a Stakeholder Group of a Plan for the Inventory and Proper Care of Veterans' Graves."

I introduced this legislation in response to concerns that were brought to my attention by a citizen concerned about the condition of veterans' graves in the Unorganized Territories. In the UT, this gentleman had visited the final resting place of a heroic B26 crew member who made the ultimate sacrifice in Europe during World War II, and was deeply disturbed to find this fallen hero's grave stone in a state of neglect and disrepair.

After consulting with officials of the American Legion, it became clear that this is a situation that warrants a thorough review. Every veteran deserves a final resting place that is honored by those of us who enjoy freedom as a result of their service to our nation and we, as a State, have an obligation to do what we can to ensure that happens.

That is the goal of my legislation.

By creating a stakeholder group to look at this issue more closely, this resolve will bring together concerned groups and individuals for a comprehensive examination of this troubling situation. It is clear in Title 30(A) that when a veteran's grave is in an ancient burying ground or a public burying ground, the municipality "shall keep in good condition and repair all graves, headstones, monuments or markers designating the burial place."

We all have a stake in making certain that, likewise, we do all we can to ensure that the graves of our veterans in these types of burying grounds located in the UT are also properly honored.

This stakeholder group will take an in-depth look at veterans' graves across the state and make recommendations based on thoughtful and careful considerations. It is important to make clear that this task force is not designed to create cost for local government, but rather to uphold our commitment to those who sacrificed for all of us.

It has been said that one measure of a society is how it honors its dead. Certainly that is true and no more so than in how it honors those who have given their all in service to their fellow citizens and the ideals of democracy and freedom.

Maine has a proud military tradition, one that we must continue to honor and it is my hope that this legislation will earn your support and a unanimous ought to pass report so that we can better understand the issues involved and be prepared to take appropriate action.

Thank you.

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