

Testimony

Vermont House Committee on Government Operations and Veteran Affairs

February 17, 2026

Room M106 or via Zoom @ 3pm

Committee Chair [Rep. Matthew Birong](#), Deputy Chair [Rep. Lisa Hango](#) and Committee members,

Thank you for inviting me to testify this afternoon on H.93. While I am by no means an expert on the subject, I am here today to contribute my remarks and observations which are not inconsistent with discussions the Governors Veterans Advisory Council (GVAC) has had over the years regarding **the critical need for a database of veterans in Vermont.**

Paraphrasing, H.93 [FN1](#) proposes to require the Office of Veterans Affairs (OVA) to develop and maintain a database of veterans in Vermont and stipulates the OVA work with state agencies, offices and departments to develop and maintain the database while protecting the confidentiality of veterans identifying information – this legislation would be a major step forward for Vermont's 34,000 veterans (comprising 6.5% of the state's adult population!) and their families.

There is little disagreement with either the legislative intent or the requirements and stipulations proposed in H-93 – they are clear and concise. That being said, the multi-agency/office and department cooperation and coordination essential to overcome obstacles for a successful statewide implementation will not be a simple task. Too, H.93 is silent regarding new resources (financial and human) which almost assuredly will be necessary.

During the next few minutes I will offer observation on a number of topics which I believe will need to be given due consideration:

- **The State of Vermont does not know the number of veterans residing in the state.** A veterans database would be a major step forward to correct this deficiency. A state veterans database would provide Vermont the opportunity to participate in database matches between state and federal government agencies which may result in a greater utilization of federal resources thereby reducing state expenditures. One database example is [The P.A.R.I.S Match](#). The acronym PARIS stands for the Public Assistance Reporting Information System. [FN2](#)
- **There is no single agreed-upon definition of “veteran”;** [FN3](#) the federal definition of veteran is probably the most widespread and articulated.

- **From a resource and service perspective, it is absolutely essential for Vermont to identify "veterans" in its databases and on official State forms.** **FN4**
- **A veterans database should enhance communication between the state and Vermont's veterans and their families** – from the Office of Veteran Affairs, to state agencies and departments, to the legislature and the Office of the Governor.
- **Vermont does not have its own veterans database, but one would not necessarily need to be created from scratch.** Most states already have veteran databases and the accompanying computer systems. One of those states could serve as a model thereby averting the need "to reinvent the wheel!"
- **Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) as well as advocates and supporters would need to be advised and "engaged".** One can reasonably anticipate that support from Vermont's veteran community would be forthcoming. In particular, VSOs would benefit from a database that would permit them to more effectively and efficiently reach and communicate with veterans and their families.
- **Vermont's state's military Department is "onboard."** **FN5** H.93, stipulates the Office of Veterans Affairs (OVA) as the organization responsible "to develop and maintain" the state's veterans database. It is important to mention that the resources (financial and personnel) necessary to accomplish the mission would need to be determined and included in the OVA's budget.

In summary, while silent on resources (financial and human) required, the implementation of a veterans database in Vermont as proposed in H-93 is essential and laudable.

That concludes my remarks. I am providing the Committee a written copy of my testimony for the record. I welcome your questions and comments.

Gary
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 Chairperson, Governors Veterans Advisory Council

Footnotes:

FN1

H.93 "...proposes to require the Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs to develop and maintain a database of veterans in Vermont with any information that is collected to be exempt from public inspection and copying" .AND stipulates that "The Director of the Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs shall work with 7 other agencies, offices, and departments to develop and maintain a database of veterans in Vermont. All agencies, offices, and departments shall, to the maximum extent practicable and consistent with -State and federal law, provide information on veterans in Vermont to the Director of the Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs. Any personally identifying information about veterans collected for the database is exempt from public inspection and copying under the Public Records Act and shall be kept confidential".

FN2

The PARIS Match (Public Assistance Reporting Information System (U.S. Government System) is not at all a new topic for the GVAC and dates back to at least the end of CY 2009! The P.A.R.I.S Match is intended to prevent fraud and minimize "improper payments," saving taxpayers money. It reviews veterans who are "on State rolls" and checks against Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs databases to see if individuals are receiving federal salaries or military pensions that they haven't reported.

The program encourages interactions with the local VA Medical Center (in Vermont that would be the White River Junction Healthcare System) to coordinate potential transfer of identified individuals to VA health care.

The Program also helps to recognize known health care voids in geographic areas and helps to recognize the need for collaboration and cooperation with VSOs, the Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs as well as State Agencies, Departments and Offices.

Vermont has no data identified in PARIS. The data void may exist because the State of Vermont may not have entered into a Memo of Understanding with the VA to share data and could help to explain the state's difficulty in identifying veteran" status in existing data bases. While the numbers identified for Vermont would likely be small, some resource savings for the state would result.

FN3

Rather than asking a Vermont resident "if s/he is a veteran", the State may want to consider the question: "Did you ever serve in the military?" If the answer is "yes" then the VA could be contacted to determine if the self-identified service member has eligibility for federal benefits as a US veteran. Each year federal expenditures for veterans benefits (pensions, compensation, insurance, educational benefits, etc.), healthcare and memorial affairs run in the tens of billions of dollars!

FN4

By and large the State of Vermont (Departments of taxes and Labor, Human Resources, etc.) does not request or collect information on veterans and both their forms and data collection systems would need to be revised.

FN5

The Vermont Military Department is responsible for the maintenance and operation of Vermont's military forces and facilities and consisting of the Army National Guard, Air National Guard and State Guard and the Office of Veterans Affairs),