# Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee
# JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** SB-282 / Bill Status / Public Hearing Testimony
**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VETERANS' GRAVES UPKEEP WORKING GROUP.
**Vote Date:** 3/10/2026
**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute
**PH Date:** 2/24/2026
**File No.:**

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## SPONSORS OF BILL:

Sen. Christine Cohen, 12th Dist.
Sen. Saud Anwar, 3rd Dist.

## REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill includes a number of provisions to improve the upkeep of veterans' graves, including strengthening existing requirements for municipalities to appoint a committee of veterans to oversee the maintenance of veterans' graves, authorizing the Department of Consumer Protection to receive and resolve complaints, establishing a grant program available to municipalities for the maintenance and care of veterans' graves, and increasing the reporting required by cemetery associations. These policies were included in the recommendations of the Veterans' Graves Upkeep Working Group, as established in SA 23-25, in order to address the increasing number of veterans' graves in disrepair around the state and the inconsistent maintenance of those graves.

## SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

Per the testimony from the Commissioner of Consumer Protection, the substitute language for this bill (LCO #2959) removes the portions of the bill that task DCP with additional responsibilities, appropriates $100,000 to the Neglected Cemetery Account, and expands the scope of the Neglected Cemeteries Account grant program to ensure that cemeteries with veterans' graves in disrepair can apply for grant money. This change ensures that avenues still exist for cemeteries to fund the repair of veterans' graves without requiring additional resources from DCP.

**RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**Bryan Cafferelli, Commissioner, Department of Consumer Protection**: Commissioner Cafferelli noted that this bill would require the Department of Consumer Protection to designate staff to keep up with incoming complaints regarding veterans' graves and to administer a grant program. He pointed out that the bill would necessitate resources that are not in the Governor's budget, and that the Department does not currently administer any grant programs.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Christine Cohen, State Senator, Connecticut General Assembly**: Sen. Cohen expressed her support for this bill, stating that the proposal came from concerns voiced by constituents regarding the lack of consistency in the upkeep of veterans' graves around the state. She commended the establishment of oversight on cemetery associations, a clearly defined complaint mechanism, and guidelines for increased transparency, and she noted that the bill does so without an overly burdensome mandate on municipalities.

**Allison Weir, Executive Director, Connecticut Veterans Legal Center**: Ms. Weir expressed her support for this bill, noting that the veteran population of Connecticut is aging and the state veterans' cemetery in Rocky Hill is running out of room. She described the historic nature of municipal cemeteries and the importance of commemorating the service of veterans even after their passing.

**Ed Zack**: Mr. Zack expressed his support for this bill, asserting that the recommendations from the Veterans' Graves Upkeep Working Group pointed out the necessity of systemic reform regarding veterans' graves upkeep. He pointed out that many veterans' graves are housed in cemeteries that are not explicitly designated as veterans' cemeteries, including those operated by municipalities, ecclesiastical societies, and cemetery associations. In his testimony he indexed multiple documents, including the recommendations of the Veterans' Graves Upkeep Working Group, correspondence from DCP regarding a cemetery in Fairfield County, financial notes from said cemetery, reports from the Office of Legislative Research regarding public cemeteries and veterans' graves, and a number of other documents.

**Reported by: Sam Sims** **Date: 3/17/26**