

Chairwoman Alzate and members of the House Special Legislation Committee,

I am writing in opposition to the passage of House Bill Number 5887 (Stewart). As a member of Rhode Island's Veteran community, I believe that "Victory Day" currently in use best pays tribute to the service men and women who served, sacrificed, and died in the Pacific and China-Burma-India Theaters of Operation during World War II. It also pays tribute to Rhode Islanders that actively participated in the war effort back home, as represented by 1 in 10 citizens. Rhode Island is the smallest state in the Union, but we came together during WWII, multiple areas throughout our state directly contributed to the war effort, Newport, Quonset Point, Narragansett Bay to name just a few.

At last week's hearing opposition testimony was presented by Dir Kasim Yarn and Veterans of Foreign Wars Past State Commander Joe "Tiger" Patrick. Patrick mentioned language on page 2 of the bill that up to this point has not been discussed regarding racially discriminatory practices. I call your attention to read the stories of US Ex-POWs Frank O. Promnitz Marine and Louis Zamperini Army Air Force, to learn how American prisoners of war of the Japanese were treated.

A comment was also made during the hearing regarding Russia not celebrating the end of WWII. Russia does in fact have its own Victory Day commemorating the victory over Nazi Germany, 8 May.

Part of the argument in support of Peace and Remembrance Day is that Victory Day is often confused with Victory over Japan. Our job is not to erase history but to educate our citizens on Victory Day with the impact of WWII on our state.

I feel that while well-intentioned, renaming this day to "Peace and Remembrance Day" would not be appropriate and would be a disservice to our military and civilians that contributed to the war effort.

I ask you to vote against the passage of this bill.

Respectfully,

Dora Vasquez-Hellner
State Commander (2021-2022)
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
Ashaway RI