

March 3, 2011

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Mr. Chairman & Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing me to express my opinion on Senate Bill 132 & explain my opposition to it.

My name is Larry Dotson & I live in Great Falls. I have 35 years of Law Enforcement experience & 12 years Military, with 8 years of active duty.

In Jan. 2009 the VA granted me a 10% disability on my hearing & assigned me to Cascade Audiology to have a hearing exam & be fitted for hearing aids. Around the 1st of Feb '09, Cascade Audiology made an appointment for me & did the hearing exam. The Audiologist & the "office lady" talked it over & decided that with my hearing I needed a "cross over" hearing aid. That is where one aid is a receiver & the other transmits to it. I received the hearing aids near the end of the month. When I commented on the lack of hearing on my right side, the transmitting side, I was told that my brain would adjust & I'd be able to tell what was on the right & what was on the left, but wasn't I able to hear? Granted, I was able to hear more with the aids than without.

In mid March I went back to try to get the aids adjusted because they weren't working right. The 'office 'lady' cleaned them & once I was wearing them again, she asked "can you hear me okay?" I said yes, & that was it.

Throughout the rest of the year I made several attempts to get the aids working right, but to no avail. During the VA Stand Down in Great Falls, I talked to the operator of the VA Hearing Van. He said to try again with Cascade Audiology & if I still couldn't get them adjusted right, to come back to him & he'd see what he could do. I got nowhere with Cascade Audiology.

Last summer while working in my front yard with a friend, setting

concrete forms, My friend, who has hearing in only one ear, asked "Is that a rattlesnake I hear?" I said I don't hear anything! He then said "yes it is & it's right behind you". I looked down & less than 5 feet from me was a 40 inch rattler.

After not hearing that snake & another friend suggesting that I contact Pat Fournier, a hearing aid specialist, & see if he could adjust the aids for me I made an appointment with Pat, who did a hearing exam for me. When he finished he asked me why I had a cross over hearing aid, as I didn't have a "dead ear". Even though my hearing was bad in both ears, they were about the same. He called Cascade Audiology to see if there was anything they might want to do to get things working right & was basically told that he didn't know what he was talking about & that they felt I was just trying to "play the system" & that if I wanted anything else I'd have to go back through the VA.

I then borrowed \$4000 dollars & had Pat replace the aids from Cascade Audiology, with some that work about ten times better, & are probably half the price.

It is my opinion that Cascade Audiology fitted me with the wrong aids, wasting my VA benefits & a lot of time for both of us. If they had been properly trained & educated in hearing aid dispensing, possibly it wouldn't have happened.

I thank you for your time & I hope that my experience may help you vote in opposition to SB 132.

Thank you!