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House of Delegates debates West Virginia National Guard deployment



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CHARLESTON, W.V. — Debate broke out on the House of Delegates floor Tuesday about whether West Virginia National Guard members should be called to war overseas if Congress has not declared war.

It was not the first year the issue has been introduced in the West Virginia legislature.

According to the bill's sponsor, Del. Pat McGeehan, R-Hancock, in previous sessions he introduced similar bills, but this year the idea picked up national attention with ten other states following suit with similar legislation.

Tuesday's motion intended to discharge the bill from the House Veteran Affairs and Homeland Security Committee, where it had recently been moved off the agenda. While the motion to discharge ultimately did not receive a majority support, with the vote tallying 50-50, the motion did result in spirited debate and a promise from the chair of the House Veteran Affairs and Homeland Security Committee, Del. Tom Bibby, R-Berkley, the bill will be put back on the committee agenda next week.



Air Force veteran Del. McGeehan said, "Should our National Guard be more concerned with the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan?"

He went on to explain his view, saying deployment overseas keeps West Virginia National Guard members from helping during flooding or other disasters.

Dissenters of the motion took issue with what they saw as a neglect for procedure. Del. Daryl Cowles, R-Morgan, made the point discharging the bill from the House Veteran Affairs and Homeland Security Committee before the committee had considered the bill could affect national security, saying, "I'm not sure I understand what the real life, real world consequences would be — the reaction from the federal government, from the military brass, what that would mean for our bases."