



# Ohio State Association of County Veterans Service Officers

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**President Nichole Coleman**  
**Ohio State Association of County Veterans Service Officers**  
**President Ted Bruner**  
**Ohio State Association of Veterans Service Commissioners**  
**HB 192**  
**House Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security**

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Lanese, Ranking Member Craig, Representative Anielski, Representative Fedor, Representative Landis, Representative Miller, Representative Perales, Representative Riedel, Representative Vitale, Representative Young and Representative Zeltwanger: My name is Nichole Coleman and I am a seven-year Air Force veteran who served in Desert Storm and I am also the wife of a 10-year Air Force veteran. I am a county veterans service officer and the director of the Hancock County Veterans Service Office and I am the president of the Ohio State Association of County Veterans Service Officers. Standing with me is Ted Bruner. Mr. Bruner is a five-year Army veteran and a veterans service commissioner in Darke County. He is the president of the Ohio State Association of Veterans Service Commissioners.

Our associations have been gathering data ever since the introduction of HB 192 to find out how the OEF, OIF and Desert Storm veterans are already represented on the Veterans Service Commissions and in the Veterans Service Offices. We still need a little bit more time to gather data; however, at this point we have information from 75% of the counties and the numbers show that the modern era veterans are already well represented. Our survey shows that nearly 22% (better than 1 in 5) of the responding County Veteran Service Commissioners and over 45% of the VSC employees have served in the military since August of 1990. Of those who have served in this Modern Era\* nearly 46% have served in theater.

Modern era veterans are eligible to be members of almost any of the veterans service organizations defined in R.C. 5901.02. They can be members of the American Legion, the AmVets and the VFW. These veterans may also be eligible for the DAV if they are disabled and the Military Order of the Purple Heart if they were awarded this medal. If there is going to be an exception made then we believe it should be managed in the same manner as the Vietnam Veterans and the Korean War Veterans. These two groups of veterans are covered in R.C. 5901.02(E).

While well intentioned, the implementation could bring further separation within the veteran ranks when we are working hard to bring them together and close that gap. If the OEF/OIF veterans are going to be singled out then what about Desert Storm, Kosovo, Panama, Grenada and peacetime? Should they also be provided with seats on the commission?

We understand that this legislation also gives the VSC the opportunity to appoint a spouse of an OEF/OIF veteran to the Veterans Service Commission. Military spouse's opinions and experiences are a vital importance in every aspect of the service member's life but it is the role of the Veterans Service Commissioners to represent ALL veterans and their family members just as you as Representatives keep the best interest of ALL of your constituents in mind not just those who you share common interests, lifestyles or stories with in life.

**Ref: H.B. 192 Testimony from OSACVSO/OSAVSC**

These commissioners stay connected by being involved in the veterans' organizations that they represent which also keeps them in contact with spouses. If passed this bill would also bring up many potential complications when divorces happen. Would the ex-spouse then be removed from the commission? If so, who orders this removal?

It is not clear that there is a need to expand the CVSC to include a military spouse. While we do not know the exact number of CVSC and staff who are the spouses of a veteran. We are confident that significant number of our VSC and their employees are related to and understand what it is like to be a family member of a veteran. In fact 2011 Pew Research Center survey, found that more than three-quarters (77%) of adults ages 50 and older said they had an immediate family member –a spouse, parent, sibling or child – who had served in the military.”

The Ohio State Association of County Veterans Service Officers and the Ohio State Association of Veterans Service Commissioners are concerned about potential nepotism and ethical issues that could arise from the implementation of HB 192. I would like to provide a few examples to explain our concerns. One potential situation is the County Commissioner who has a niece, grandson or child who they want to be appointed to one of these new seats. A “smooth budget hearing process” could be offered as a trade for adding their friend or family member to the Veterans Service Commission. Another possibility is that a staff member from one of the Veterans Service Offices tries to have someone appointed by the VSC to the commission. This board of individuals manages pay raises and personnel issues of the staff so this is yet another possible ethical violation.

We ask that this legislation be reviewed carefully by the Ohio Ethics Commission and the Ohio Common Pleas Judges Association. If both are in support of HB 192 then we simply request that an implementation committee be formed with representation from both of our associations just as was done with the new State Veterans ID Card last year.

We will not oppose this legislation if this Committee can establish guidelines concerning the appointment of commissioners who are related to other commissioners or employees of the veterans service commission as long as the Ohio Ethics Commission and the Ohio Common Pleas Judges Association both support this bill.

We appreciate the time and interest each of you have shown in ensuring our veterans are properly served, just as they have served our Nation.

## Notes:

- My definition of ‘modern era’ is serving since August of 1990
- 71 VSC Plus 205 Employee = 276 Served since August 1990. 36 VSC Plus 90 Employee = 126 Served in Theater.  
Percent in Theater that served after August 1990 (126/276) = 45.6 %