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Tim Schaffer
State Representative, 77th House District

House Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security Committee
House Bill 414—Sponsor Testimony
Wednesday, January 17, 2018

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Lanese, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the House Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 414.

House Bill 414 creates recognition for a very important group of people, the Atomic Veterans. Because of the importance, secrecy and unknown dangers of their tasks, Atomic Veterans have rare challenges, specifically with their healthcare and quality of life. It is time for Ohio to recognize their contributions to our country and bring attention to their distinct situation.

During the period between 1945 and 1962, the United States is estimated to have performed 235 atmospheric nuclear weapons tests. Nearly 250,000 service men and women assisted with these tests throughout the Southwestern region of the country and Pacific Ocean. Those service men and women are better known as the Atomic Veterans. An Atomic Veteran is a service member who participated in atmospheric and underwater nuclear weapons tests from July 16, 1945 to October 30 1962. This group also includes those that participated in post-test duties, for example, those that removed test samples, worked with gathering and moving test instruments and devices, as well as a plethora of other duties that provided the opportunity to be exposed to radiation.

House Bill 414 will bring immense awareness to these veterans by designating July 16th as "National Atomic Veterans Day" in Ohio. This designation will put a spotlight on the challenges and difficulties these Veterans have faced, as well as the recognition they so deserve.

I have read several testimonies that show the bravery and courage these men and women exemplify. Many of these service members were within 3,500 yards from the detonation sites with minimal to no protective gear. They served their country with honor and pride, only to be punished with diseases such as cancer years later. These Veterans have sacrificed so much for our country, and all the while, they were only doing their job. It is time that Ohio stand up and recognize all that these Veterans have done.

This is why I am before you today, in order to bring more attention to their unique circumstances, honor their legacy and service. It is important that we designate July 16th, National Atomic Veterans Day.

Thank you once again, Chairman Johnson, and the members of the committee, for the opportunity to present these issues to you today. I will be pleased to answer any questions that the committee may have.