

THE AMERICAN LEGION  
DEPARTMENT OF



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March 21, 2018

Attn: Chairman and Representative Terry Johnson  
House Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security Committee  
HB 192 - Permit adding members to County Veteran Service Commissions  
Amending 5901.02

Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member Craig,

House Bill 192 is proof of a great initiative towards improving services that currently exist and our organization knows the value of Ohio's military and veteran spouses of all periods of war. Our OEF/OIF veterans are our future. The Ohio State Association of County Veteran Service Commissioners have spoken in clear opposition to this amendment and they are the most experienced within this field. We stand in alliance with their decision to oppose adding additional members to the 5<sup>th</sup> seat of the County Veteran Service Commission and any previous versions of HB192.

The purpose of our argument is there are a great number of OEF/OIF Veterans currently serving on the County Veteran Service Commission. I have personally witnessed this as a guest at their quarterly trainings hosted by OSACVSC and ODVS. There are provisions that exist which allows the Judge of Common Pleas in each county to appoint a qualified veteran if none are available from said organizations.

The military/veteran spouse is a more complex manner. Marriage is the only contract between a military member/veteran that creates eligibility for a spouse to obtain a benefit. Within public, private, and federal resources administered to veterans by both civilians and veterans, what we have found is the veteran is the most qualified to identify with another veteran and have earned the right to be considered for these positions.

Lastly, our organization has a policy within our *Code of Procedure* that states "It is contrary to the policy of The American Legion to accept POA from any person whose interests are detrimental or adverse to those of the veteran, regardless of the fact The American Legion does not hold POA from the veteran...this includes cases that can be reasonably expected to become contested, such as, a claim for apportionment by an estranged spouse, as well as those that are "simultaneously" contested."

Thank you for the opportunity to present before you.

V/r,

Suzette Heller  
VA&R/Legislative Director