

Committee Assignments:

Finance
Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education – Chair
Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security
Higher Education and Workforce Development
State and Local Government
Public Utilities



Commissions/Special Committees:

Veterans' Caucus – Chair
BRAC and Military Affairs Task Force – Chair
Ohio Aerospace and Aviation Technology Committee
Ohio Third Frontier Commission Advisory Board
Joint Committee on College Affordability
Ohio Latino Affairs Commission

State Representative Rick Perales

Ohio's 73rd House District: Western Portion of Greene County

Armed Services, Veterans Affairs & Homeland Security Committee

House Bill 696 – Office of Government and Military Affairs

Sponsor Testimony

14 November 2018

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Kick, Ranking Member Craig and members of the Armed Services, Veterans Affairs & Homeland Security Committee, thank you for the opportunity today to testify on behalf of House Bill 696, a bill to establish the Office of Government and Military Affairs to protect and enhance our military assets in Ohio.

In August of 2017, then-Speaker Rosenberger established the BRAC and Military Affairs Task Force to study and analyze the current Ohio Department of Defense and NASA assets, resources and missions in anticipation of potential Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) actions and other major mission realignment opportunities. Over the course of nine months, I served as Chair of a 12 member task force that comprised five legislators (included Representative Craig) and 7 impressive members of communities all across Ohio: Cleveland, Toledo, Youngstown, Dayton and Columbus. Of our 12 members, 7 are veterans ranging from enlisted personnel to the rank of Major General. We had leading

experts in everything from aerospace and military facility management to former congressional staff during the last round of BRAC in 2005. This group was more than qualified to undertake this task, and they did so on their own dime visiting 13 military and federal installations all across the state.

In our meetings with installation commanders and research into our military values, we have learned that Ohio as a whole is, for lack of a better term, “behind the ball” when it comes to our readiness to address any sort of DoD realignments. Most people are aware of or know what a “BRAC” is, but many do not realize that Congress and the DoD have the ability to move missions and resources internally and through the National Defense Authorization Act. States such as Florida and Alabama have well establish offices within their state governments to protect and advocate for their military facilities, its time Ohio steps up its game.

House Bill 696 will establish the Office of Government and Military Affairs under the Governor. This office will be responsible for develop a facilities and installations strategy for Ohio and conduct a regular review of federal installation strengths and weaknesses to include military value and facility conditions. Additionally, this office will work closely with the Department of Veteran Services and the Adjutant General to set up regular meetings and updates with military affairs committees across the state as well as visits to bases around the State to understand all mission sets. Perhaps its greatest purpose will be to advocate with

legislators to secure funds during the operating and capital budgets to fund infrastructure and programs to increase our installations Military Value. As anyone who has gone through a BRAC will tell you: the more Military Value an installation has, the more likely it will remain open and acquire even more missions.

Ohio needs an office of support that will wake up every morning knowing what is going on with our military assets here in Ohio and know what is going on in D.C. Here in Ohio we already have offices focusing on subjects such as education and Medicaid, it is time we have one looking out for our warfighters and the communities around them. It is truly a no brainer. We don't know when and if the next BRAC will occur...but we do know that if we aren't prepared, we could lose assets as a state.

It is for these reasons that I urge favorable consideration of House Bill 696. We as a state cannot afford to wait any longer in developing strategies to keep Ohio's overall Military Value high. Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Kick, Ranking Member Craig and members of the Armed Services, Veterans Affairs & Homeland Security Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today and will answer any questions you may have.