

Vice Chairman Patton, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee; thank you for allowing me to testify today on House Bill 582.

I am Michael Newman, Chief Warrant Officer 2, US Navy Retired.

I was raised in Los Angeles, lived in Syracuse, New York, moved to Cincinnati in 1995. I have been a Clermont County resident for the last fourteen years.

Although I did not serve in-country, I am a Vietnam Veteran by virtue of having served in the United States Navy from 1956 through 1975 with what I had always considered an unremarkable career.

Between 1966 and 1967 I served at the Naval Communication Station, San Miguel, Philippines in direct support of troops in Da Nang and our ships in Vietnamese waters. During the war years 1969 and 70 I personally experienced student wrath directed at the military while continuing my college education. By 1972 after most of the nation had soured on the Vietnam War, I began serving at the Naval Communication Station, Guam, again in direct support of the war, although by that time I had my own mixed feelings about our presence in Vietnam.

For almost 40 years I had shied away from veterans organizations. That changed six years ago with my introduction to Vietnam Veterans of America. After attending five meetings I decided to join.

I am currently President of Chapter 649, the Clermont County Chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America.

I am proud to be a member of Vietnam Veterans of America. I believe in its purpose. I believe in its goals. I believe in its strategy. I believe in its people. I believe in its leadership.

When Travis Ricketts, Legislative Aide to Representative Doug Green, attended the meeting of Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 649 and informed us of Representative Green's intention to introduce legislation to designate portions of US Route 52 through Clermont and Brown Counties as Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway, the meeting erupted in cheers.

Chapter 649, the Clermont County chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America, is not only the largest chapter in the state of Ohio, but one of the most active.

Members of Chapter 649 work throughout the year to meet fellow veterans, raise awareness of veterans issues, and raise funds in order to carry out its mission to provide fellowship, advocacy, education of veterans benefits, as well as financial assistance, as appropriate, to veterans of all eras, pursuant to the founding principle of the Vietnam Veterans of America, *"Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."*

Some of our activities include:

Provide Christmas dinners, groceries and cash to carefully selected needy veterans of Clermont County. In 2017 we supplied needy families (mostly families of currently deployed military members) approximately \$4,000 of groceries and gift cards.

Contribute to other veterans' organizations to strengthen their projects in Clermont County. Additionally, last year we provided two \$500 scholarships to children and grandchildren of local veterans. In 2018 we awarded three..

Sponsor Bingo nights at the Georgetown Veterans Home.

Maintain the helicopter, the brick patio, and several other memorials at the Union Township Veterans Memorial Park and hold several ceremonies each year including Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

Keep chapter members and community veterans from all wars, abreast of current changes in veteran benefits through monthly newsletters and meetings, maintaining of our website, and attending state and national conventions. VVA Chapter 649 recently co-sponsored a town hall meeting to discuss the effects of Agent Orange on ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren.

While most members of Chapter 649 reside in Clermont County, several reside in surrounding counties, including Brown County and Highland County as well as Fayette County.

It would be an honor for members of Chapter 649 and all other Vietnam Veterans in Clermont and Brown Counties to have those portions of US Route 52 designated as Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway.