



# AMVETS

## Department of Ohio

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**Written Testimony for the Ohio House  
Finance Subcommittee on Transportation**

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Members of the Finance Subcommittee on Transportation, my name is Don McCauley, and I am the Executive Director for AMVETS Department of Ohio. The American Veterans of World War II Service Organization (AMVETS) was born on December 10, 1944 to advocate for America's veterans returning from WWII. Congress under President Harry S. Truman chartered AMVETS on July 23, 1947. AMVETS has grown over the years to accept and advocate for all veterans who have honorably served our nation. The AMVETS Department of Ohio has approximately 31,000 members and 114 posts. Ohio has the largest membership in AMVETS, which is approximately 33% of the national organization's membership.

AMVETS Department of Ohio adamantly opposes the proposed budget of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services (ODVS) where it recommends that the State Veterans Organizations' (VSOs) current state appropriations, as stated in the 2016-2017 Biennial Budget, will be transferred to the ODVS budget under Fund GRF 900501. ODVS prepared this proposed Bill behind the backs of the Service Organizations, and the ODVS Advisory Committee that meets monthly for discussion on issues like this proposed House Bill. Seven (7) of the thirteen (13) State VSOs currently receiving state appropriations utilize some or all of the funds to pay the salaries and benefits for their Veterans Service Officers throughout the state. AMVETS

Department of Ohio has VSOs located in Columbus and Dayton. Due to budgetary issues, AMVETS has not been able to replace its VSOs previously at the Cincinnati and Cleveland VA Medical Centers, but plan to add another in Chillicothe or Canton during the first quarter of 2017. Our Veteran Service Officers, coupled with the Service Officers from the other state VSOs, those at the County Veterans Service Commissions, and ODVS personnel at the Cleveland VA Office helped Ohio's Veterans file claims and other documents that helped bring in 2.1 billion dollars in VA compensation & pension benefits for Ohio veterans in 2015. The total VA expenditures in Ohio for 2015 were 7.7 billion dollars. At the time, the State appropriations for the VSOs were 1.8 million dollars. The VSOs are probably the only entities receiving state funding that help bring in billions of dollars in disposable income to Ohio, while receiving less than 2 million dollars. The sales taxes on this disposable income alone would more than cover our state appropriations. That is quite a return on investment for the State of Ohio.

If the current state appropriation moves under the ODVS budget and not allocated to the thirteen (13) VSOs we foresee the following will occur:

**In fiscal year 2019, the foregoing appropriation item 900501, Veterans Organizations, shall be used to provide grants to veterans organizations pursuant to division (W) of section 5902.02 of the Revised Code to improve access for veterans and their families to benefits and resources from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or programs that enhance access to employment services and opportunities, or other resources.**

Because the term "Veterans Organizations" is vague, there would not be any guarantee that AMVETS or any of the other twelve (12) VSOs currently receiving state appropriations will receive any funding in fiscal year 2019. We fear the money will become a political fund for distribution to organizations in the favor of the current or future ODVS Director(s). So, how can AMVETS or these other twelve (12) VSOs budget for Service Officers or any other organizational needs on a possible grant? If AMVETS loses its state appropriation, our Veteran Service Officer program will cease to exist helping Ohio's veterans.

Thank you for your time and consideration.