

**Proponent Testimony for HB 282**  
**Ohio House Finance Committee**  
**October 24, 2019**  
**Daniel P. Faulkner, Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)**  
**Department of Ohio**

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chairman Scherer, Ranking Member Cera and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Veteran Service Organizations represented here today, I want to reiterate our thanks for the opportunity to testify in **support** of House Bill 282. As warfare today is about the Joint fight, we Veterans Service Organizations come here today as a joint team. This legislation will provide us the resources needed to support our critical and diverse mission.

As the oldest Combat Service Organization in the Nation, the Ohio VFW and its Auxiliary represents approximately 97,000 members and 335 Posts across state. This year our National organization celebrated its 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary and for the first time in 27 years 100% in membership meaning our membership did not decrease from the year before. Since July of this year alone Ohio has recruited over 400 new members!

Our organization has stood the test of time because our mission is a relevant today as in the beginning, and that is to take care of those that have worn the uniform in defense of our great nation to include their families and the communities they live in. For Ohio this is of special significance as the VFW had its beginning in Columbus Ohio on 29 Sept 1899 when thirteen veterans of the Cuban Campaign of the Spanish American War met in a barber shop on East Main St. That location is marked today by a Historical marker.

To add to all the good work you have heard from our Comrades in the American Legion and AMVETS, the VFW provides:

- Support to the 5 major Veterans Affairs facilities in the state with a Social Worker fund of **\$5,000 dollars each** to assist veterans with things like gas cards and food vouchers and other small necessities. As the funds get used we replenish them so they always have funds to help those veterans with the things that the VA is unable to provide.

-- We also have a VA Voluntary Service representative at each VA site and Ohio Veterans Nursing Homes that directly report to me, the State Commander, to ensure any additional needs are directly addressed!

- Support to our County Veteran's Service Commissions. When they have exhausted their resources helping Veterans, or the needs of those Veterans fall outside of their parameters on a case-by-case basis they reach out to us for assistance.

- In the last **12 months alone** through our local Posts and VFW of Ohio Charity we have provided:

-- **\$668,000 dollars** directly helping Veterans and their families with everything from food, clothing and shelter, to car repairs, rent and utilities.

-- **\$40,000 dollars** for burial services for Veterans and their family members

-- **\$16,000 dollars** on Electric Wheelchairs, Scooters, Hospital Beds and various medical equipment.

-- **\$30,000 dollars** on Veteran treatments which the government does not pay for such as Hyperbaric Chambers which have been successfully helping patients recover from a wide variety of conditions and injuries, such as concussions and head trauma.

-- **\$200,000 dollars** on Scholarships for all levels of schooling.

-- Over **\$1 million dollars** on sponsorships to local organizations covering everything from Boy Scouts to, 1<sup>st</sup> responders, Medical supplies to Hospice programs, Food Pantries, and Service Dogs.

-- **\$95,000 dollars** to the VFW National Home for Children. Founded in 1925 on 472 acres in Eaton Rapids, Michigan, it is a place where families left behind by war could remain together when their service member didn't come home. Today's veterans and their families face different challenges: reintegration, post-traumatic stress, unemployment and rehabilitation from battlefield injuries, among others. The National Home has evolved over its decades-long history to meet those changing needs. Every family that stays at the home has its own personal case worker and can live at the home 100% free for four years! Of the Home's 42 single dwellings, the two story, 2,874' Ohio House was built in 1935 and is maintained by our Department.

-- Direct support to Ohio National Guard Units for both Pre and Post Deployments. Our local posts take care of these units by donating funds to the respective Family Support Group to be able to provide holiday parties, assist with their Military Ball, Training Days, and Family Day Activities, Yellow Ribbon program or any other special event that arises.

In closing, I want to highlight that the "hidden V" in VFW is Volunteer! We do this not for any personal gain, but our commitment to take care of those that have served and those that are serving along with their families and their communities.

HB 282 will help ensure we have the resources to continue funding our Service programs by allowing veterans and fraternal organizations the ability to play instant bingo in an electronic form, which will increase charitable revenue for our organizations as well as the local charities we support throughout the state.

Thank you again Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to testify, pending any questions from the Committee this concludes my testimony.