

Proponent Testimony for HB 282
Ohio House Finance Committee
October __, 2019
Michael Farmer, Commander
American Veterans Post 1983

Chairman, Vice Chairman, Ranking Member and members of the committee, good morning. My name is Michael Farmer and I am the Post Commander for American Veterans Post 1983 in Hamilton, OH. I am here today representing my Post to testify our support of House Bill 282.

As you see me sitting before you, your first thought might be, this guy doesn't look like I what I had in mind. Veteran Service Organizations are often associated with older folks just sitting around swapping stories all day, and that is not the case. We serve a vital role within our local communities helping veterans and their family members.

My Post currently has 7 electronic gaming machines operating under the Ohio Veteran and Fraternal Charitable Coalition. The revenue generated from these machines is without a doubt how we keep our doors open, lights on and continue to meet the AMVETS mission.

Our local charity that profits from the machines is the Hamilton High School Junior Navy Reserve Officers Training Corps. My Post specifically chose this program for two reasons. The first is its location. It is a mere 1.5 miles away from us, so we can see the direct effect of our efforts. The second reason is because of the Navy Reserve Officer Training Corps mission. The Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps helps students to develop their leadership potential while promoting things such as community service and higher education. The program works to develop the Cadet to have a high degree of personal honor, self-reliance, discipline and leadership. Many of the Cadets continue on to a ROTC program or enlist in the United States Armed Forces. Many of their parents ARE veterans of the Armed Forces. So while helping a local charity, we are also helping ourselves by indirectly bringing in younger members while bringing light to what we do as an organization.

From October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2019 AMVETS Post 1983 donated \$46,585.95 to the Hamilton High School Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps. These funds have helped students directly both in the classroom and out. The program was able to purchase new travel uniforms for competitions, send Cadets to leadership training and purchase new air rifle equipment.

On Saturday, April 20, 2019 the Hamilton High School Naval Junior ROTC Academic Team competed in the 2019 Navy Junior ROTC Brain Brawl National Championships at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. Only 24 teams from over 600 programs, nationwide, qualified for this national championship. Their expenses were covered because of the donations we were able to provide.

To quote Senior Naval Science Instructor Jim Allison, "your donations are like manna from heaven. Our funding for uniforms have been cut drastically and what merger money that was funded for our trips, programs and classroom equipment is almost non-existent."

But the Post? How is this helping veterans? Why do we need House Bill 282 passed? Post 1983 uses these funding to off set our operating costs. The profits from these electronic gaming devices help us to help veterans in need. We have a Honor Guard program that does funerals for veterans free of charge.

We had a veteran in our community who fell ill. After becoming sick, I began to talk with him about what lead to the onset of his problems. It was simply that he was behind on his medical co-pay at his doctors office and wasn't able to have a refilled called in until the balance was paid, he was simply too embarrassed to ask for help. Our Post made payments arrangements and was able to get the veteran back on track with is doctor and medication.

In September of 2019 I was contacted by a local lady that recently experienced the loss of her father. Being completely indigent, the funeral home would not do anything for the modest request of a basic cremation until funds were paid in full. We were to able to do so and take the burden off of her and give her father, a Korean War veteran, the respectable Final Salute that he deserved.

We support the Dayton Honor Flight with some of these funds. Most of you have heard of the program, but we view it as giving back to a very important mission. Saturday May 25, 2019 we had the great pleasure of sending 18 veterans to Washington, D.C. to visit the memorials. All of them in tears upon returning.

House Bill 282 is asking to make instant bingo available in an electronic format. This is quite simply asking for a technological upgrade to something that we have had for decades in private clubs, paper instant tickets. Along with the other benefits you have heard in testimony, I will say that adding the electronic version will help ensure the continued existence of Veterans and Fraternal Organizations for years to come. I hope that I can count of each you to unanimously agree and see the importance of what House Bill 282 would do for our local communities and organizations.

Thank you for allowing me to be before you today. Semper Fidelis.

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