

**TESTIMONY OF HON. JAMES P. TRAKAS BEFORE THE OHIO SENATE  
COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION**  
Proponent Testimony H.B. 166  
**ALI 745401 OHIO MILITARY RESERVE**

Thursday 16 MAY 2019

Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chairwoman Gavarone, Ranking Member Williams and august Members of the Senate Higher Education Committee. Good afternoon. My name is Jim Trakas, and I am before you today as a citizen of the State of Ohio who also serves by Gubernatorial appointment as a Captain and Company Commander with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 4<sup>th</sup> Civil Support and Sustainment Brigade, Ohio Military Reserve.

You may or may not know that Ohio *has* a Military Reserve! Since the founding of the Northwest Territory and Ohio's glorious statehood in 1803, The Ohio Constitution, in all of its iterations, including the current Section IX, has established a state militia and R.C. 5920, now known as Ohio Military Reserve. OHMR is the 4<sup>th</sup> Civil Support and Sustainment Brigade under the Ohio Adjutant General. This organization is a non-combat force multiplier for the Ohio Army National Guard. OHMR Soldiers go through an abbreviated basic training course, officers through an Officers Candidate School, Soldiers wear the uniform prescribed by the Adjutant General and participate in monthly drills and training at Army National Guard Armories across Ohio, as well as an Annual Training Exercise.

OHMR is not the Army nor is it the Army or Air National Guard (but it is a component of the Guard), who have much more rigorous standards, train and qualify with weapons, win our nation's wars, and can be deployed overseas. Ohio Military Reserve Soldiers can only be deployed in state at the discretion of the Governor of Ohio, and do not carry nor train with weapons. The Brigade specializes in emergency management skills and its current mission includes setting up FEMA related Points of Distribution, Volunteer Reception Centers, and other emergency management functions. OHMR Soldiers are well trained and prepared for state missions to come to the aid of the people of Ohio in times of man made or natural disaster.

Soldiers come from all walks of Ohio life, we reflect the diversity of our communities. OHMR Soldiers sweep floors and work in factories. They own their own businesses, are in law enforcement, vice presidents of banks, retired active duty military, educators, and a few of us are elected officials as well.

I appear before you today to call attention to this Organization and its role in helping the people of Ohio. OHMR Soldiers are uncompensated. They attend monthly drills, buy uniforms and equipment – hundreds of dollars of equipment – all at their own cost and in furtherance of their mission. Open to Ohioans aged 17-62, OHMR is authorized up to 500 Soldiers, and currently are at about half strength. We cannot win wars, but we can provide aid and comfort to your constituents in times of state emergency.

OHMR started out as the Ohio Volunteer Infantry and Cavalry. Before the advent of the great National Guard, it was OHMR Soldiers who fought in the Mexican War, The Civil War, the Spanish-American War to name a few. Presidents James A. Garfield, Rutherford B. Hayes, and William McKinley wore the same uniform that I wear, part of a rich tradition of the citizen-Soldier.

But, OHMR's goal is not to reminisce the past, but to be an effective force multiplier at the discretion of the Adjutant General. OHMR is grateful that the State of Ohio maintains this force and can deploy OHMR Soldiers on a rainy day. Or a snowy day. Or a really rainy day when floods sweep through our state, and the communities that you represent need help.

For the past decade, OHMR has operated on a budget of less than \$1,000.00 per month. The Brigade is fortunate to have been provided these resources, but cannot be an effective force multiplier without minimal resources to train, to provide equipment to Soldiers, to recruit and retain Soldiers to maintain an effective force that can be deployed at any time. OHMR Soldiers have to live off of a 72 hour pack in the field, all at their own expense. There are over 80 items in this pack -from rucksacks to protractors, and survival gear; and while Soldiers are trying to help others to survive war or extreme weather conditions, they often do not have enough resources to even provide for themselves on a field deployment.

The current budget lacks the resources to pay for OHMR's Annual Training Exercise, usually held at Camp Perry, but this year, OHMR is privileged to participate in NORTHCOM's Operation Vigilant Guard, at State Military Bases and Camps across Ohio. The funds we are requesting, mostly go back to the State to pay for these types of exercises through the Adjutant General's Office. OHMR's current budget does not pay for one week of its Annual Training Exercise. Not complaining, but just pointing out that to maintain an effective force, a small amount of GRF would go a very long way.

Understanding the value of OHMR, Sen. Matt Huffman is drafting an Amendment to H.B. 166 Line Item 745401 that would increase FY20 and FY21 to \$25,000 annually. That would double the very modest budget of

Ohio Military Reserve and allow the Brigade to operate as you would expect an effective Organization to operate. Our Soldiers do raise private funds as well as chip in on their own, but our current budget would be like asking your legislative aides to come to work and buy their own pens, computers, phones, notepads, envelopes, and stationary. OHMR gets by due to innovation and perseverance, but you expect an Organization of this type of talent to do more than just get by, you expect success, and by providing a very modest amount of resources, you will see the difference.

I ask this committee to include in its report a budget for ALI 745401 of \$25,000 for each of FY20 and FY21. In that manner, OHMR can start to truly be the Organization that is envisioned by the Adjutant General. MG Harris did not prepare the budget proposal, but has robust plans for OHMR, and we are honored to be led by such a great leader.

Thank you for allowing me to provide a little background and earnest request for a modest amount of support. A little goes a long way, and we will turn your \$25,000 per year investment into a force that you can be proud of and an effective force that when the state calls, we answer with trained troops ready to assist.

I am very honored to stand before you and represent myself and am happy to answer any questions that you may have.