



# AMVETS

Department of Ohio

**DON MCCAULEY**

**Executive Director, AMVETS Department of Ohio**

Written Opponent Testimony for the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

House Bill 226

Chairman Coley, Vice Chairman Uecker, Ranking Member Schiavoni, and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee: I appreciate the opportunity to write in opposition to House Bill 226. The AMVETS Department of Ohio has approximately 32,000 proud members in 113 posts and at-large in every county of the state. In fact, Ohio has the largest membership in AMVETS, and it is on behalf of these fine men and women that I write to you.

Though our organization began by advocating for veterans of World War II, we now serve veterans of every era after September 15, 1940, and are the only congressionally-chartered veterans organization that is open to **ALL** honorably discharged veterans. Consistent across them has been the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), although it has had many names over time. Rates of PTSD range from 12% of Persian Gulf veterans to 15% of Vietnam veterans to as high as 20% among post-9/11 veterans.<sup>1</sup>

As a recent Virginia Tech study noted: “Fireworks on nights other than the Fourth of July or New Year’s Eve might be nothing more than inconsiderate neighbors, but for veterans with PTSD, **the shock of noise and light may trigger a deeply-learned expectation of danger.**” For them, “unexpected surprising events—noise or otherwise—could be a matter of life or death.”<sup>2</sup>

**That this bill both legalizes the discharge of a category of loud and powerful fireworks and has such loose standards for when and where the fireworks may be set off is, quite simply, a question of quality of life for many of our veteran neighbors.** We veterans love this country and enjoy celebrating it as much as anyone else, but there is no shortage of professional fireworks displays available if a veteran or anyone else should want to seek out that sort of celebration.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/PTSD-overview/basics/how-common-is-ptsd.asp>

<sup>2</sup> “Scientists find heightened attention to surprise in veterans with PTSD,” Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute, <https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2018/01/vtc-ptsdlearning.html>



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Over the years, you and your colleagues in the legislature have enacted countless positive pieces of legislation that have made Ohio a great place for veterans to live, and AMVETS Department of Ohio has stood by you every step of the way. On behalf of our 31,000 members, I thank you for your support of veterans, and I ask for it once more by strongly encouraging you to reconsider the inclusion of the individual discharge provision in HB 226.

Respectfully,

Don McCauley

Executive Director