

Chairman Uecker (Ee-kur), Vice Chairman Wilson, and Ranking Member Thomas, thank you for allowing me to testify in support of Senate Bill 311 which would designate June 12<sup>th</sup> as Woman Veterans Day.

I am SFC Angela Beltz, Retired a Desert Storm Veteran with over 21 years of service in the Army/Army National Guard. On my mother's side, my family has served in every conflict starting with my great grandfather who was a scout for the U.S. Calvary in the late 1800s.

On June 12, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed into law the Women's Armed Services Integration Act. Allowing women to serve in all four branches of the military services. However, women have served in every conflict including the revolutionary and civil wars, where they often disguised themselves as men to enlist.

Women Veterans are strong, resilient, capable and often invisible. We sometimes face double barriers because we are the minority among the veteran population as well as in the working women population. The gender-based stereotype is alive and well for Women Veterans. Many times, the general public believes that when they hear the word Veteran, they think of a physically fit male or an older male with a Veteran hat on.

As a women veteran I don't want to be seen as "different" from male veterans just because I am a woman, my Sisters in Arms and I want to be recognized for our service and sacrifice in support of our great nation.

I decided to change that in my world, so I bought the shirts, received a Woman Veteran hat as a gift and now proudly wear them. It is unfortunate that without the "woman" modifier, on license plates, bumper stickers, t-shirts and hats many of us women are asked if our husbands served. At a recent Veterans Resource Fair, I witnessed a VFW Woman dressed the same as a VFW Man get overlooked by others reaching out to the man to shake his hand and thank him for his service. It isn't about getting the special "thanks" it is about being recognized for their military experience and being equally considered in the "Veteran" conversations.

My latest personal experience was when my husband (Desert Storm/Afghanistan Veteran), Father-in-Law (Vietnam Veteran) and I were out to lunch to celebrate Veterans Day the server assumed they were the Veterans. They were thanked for their service, and thankfully they both promptly corrected the server by letting her know I was a Veteran as well.

Please consider supporting this bill to officially recognize the service and sacrifices freely given by the more than 67,000 Women Veterans in our great State of Ohio.

Thank you for your time and consideration of Senate Bill 311. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.