



Ohio House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee
HB 406 - Proponent Testimony
18 November 2020

Chairman Perales, Vice-Chairman Hood, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the House Armed Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of House Bill 406. Thank you, Representatives Miller and Richardson, for sponsoring this legislation.

My name is Jermaine Ferguson, and I am the legislative coordinator for The American Legion Department of Ohio. The American Legion Department of Ohio is a leading veterans-service organization within the state, with a membership of over 90,000 wartime era veterans.

Earlier this year, The American Legion National Executive Committee issued an updated Vision, Mission, Values, and Motto of The American Legion to give clear guidance on our organization's role in today's society.

Please allow me to take just a short moment to share our mission statement and our value principles.

The American Legion's mission is to *strengthen our communities, states, and nation with programs and services for our veterans, the military, and their families.*

Our value principles are the following:

A Veteran is a Veteran – The American Legion embraces all current and former members of the military and endeavors to help them transition into their communities.

Selfless Service - The American Legion celebrates all who contribute to something larger than themselves and inspires others to serve and strengthen America.

American Values and Patriotism – The American Legion advocates for upholding and defending the United States Constitution, equal justice and opportunity for everyone and discrimination against no one, youth education, responsible citizenship, and **honoring military Service** by observing and participating in patriotic and memorial events.

Family and Community Engagement – The American Legion meets the unique needs of local communities.

Advancing the Vision – The American Legion educates, mentors, and leads new generations of Americans.

Honoring Those Who Came Before Us – The American Legion pays perpetual respect for all past military sacrifices to ensure **they are never forgotten** by new generations.

So, among our value principles, we (1) celebrate all who contribute to something larger than themselves and inspires others to serve, (2) honor military service by observing and participating in patriotic and memorial events, and we (3) pay perpetual respect for all past military sacrifices to ensure new generations never forget them.

House Bill 406 is **one** way for the State of Ohio to pay respect for all past military sacrifices so that we will not forget the price an individual, a family, a community has paid for the freedoms we enjoy today. The display of the *Honor and Remember Flag* on one of our most solemn days – Memorial Day – is an open invitation for the general public, or our public servants, our veterans to take a moment to reflect on the meaning of selfless service, to honor the life that was given, and to remember the family and the community they left behind.

At this time, 26 states have adopted the *Honor and Remember Flag* as their official symbol to recognize and honor members of the Armed Forces who died in service to our nation. The *Honor and Remember Flag* will always be displayed under *Old Glory*. The U.S. flag symbolizes our nation's freedoms and all that we hold common as Americans, secured by military men and women who sacrificed so much for all citizens. This nation is worth fighting for—our military men and women who have paid the ultimate sacrifice due the utmost honor and respect.

The American Legion Department of Ohio will always support efforts made by the State of Ohio and its community members to honor and pay respect to our military heroes and their families. I ask for this committee to support the passage of House Bill 406.

“Veterans Strengthening America”