

Veterans of Foreign Wars & VFW Ohio Charities
Proponent Testimony for HB 282
Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee
December 2020

Chairman Coley, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Craig and members of the committee:

My Name is Todd Reveron and I am the Executive Director of the VFW Ohio Charities & Sr. Vice Commander of VFW Post 3320 in Marysville, OH. On behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the VFW Ohio Charities, I would like thank you for the opportunity to provide **proponent** testimony in support of House Bill (HB) 282.

The intent of HB 282, drafted in collaboration with the Ohio Attorney General, is to modernize Charitable Instant Bingo to permit the use of electronic as well as paper Instant Bingo. Uses of the funds generated would be limited to uses consistent with the IRS, Attorney General and Ohio Revised Code 2915.

HB 282 does **not** expand gaming in Ohio, it migrates what we do now under the law with paper instant bingo tickets, to an electronic format.

Point of Fact – While all types of gaming machines in Ohio look similar and have the same physical attributes (i.e. Monitor, bill acceptor and ticket dispenser), it is the software which truly defines the type of machine it is.

A **Slot** machine uses an ongoing “random number generator” software to prevent patterns from being discovered and used in forecasting outcomes.

A **Video Lottery EZ Play** machine uses a “random number generator” software as well. The difference is some games have endings for example “Keno”.

An **Electronic Instant Bingo** machine uses a unique type of software which is a digital version of a bag of Instant Bingo tickets. For each play, a virtual card appears on the screen. The face of this card is covered or otherwise hidden from view to conceal a number, letter or symbol, some of which have been designated in advance as prize winners. These virtual bags of instant bingo tickets have a predetermined amount of tickets, set amount of winning tickets and a set profit margin. These are finite games with only 12,500 tickets per bag and **CANNOT** be manipulated to avoid taxation. They have true accountability to the Attorney General’s office, from a central server which they will have access to.

Veteran organizations **want** “oversight” to ensure vendors who provide Charitable Electronic Instant Bingo goods and services in Ohio are licensed, regulated, have validated machines/software, etc. We believe the Ohio Attorney General is in the best position to provide such oversight, as they are currently doing so with paper versions of Charitable Instant Bingo.

We are proud of the overwhelming support for HB 282 in the Ohio House of Representatives as indicated by the 90 to 2 votes in favor of the bill, and we believe the same overwhelming support also exists in the Ohio Senate!

This bill is about Veterans! Unlike other entities that do gaming in Ohio we do not have “Shareholders” we have “Stakeholders”. Our stakeholders are the countless thousands of people in need who we have helped and supported with funds generated by Ohio’s Charitable Gaming. Our Veterans Posts are social hubs in communities all across this great state. Passing of this bill will ensure they have the stable revenue to address the many needs of our Veterans, active duty members, their families and their communities.

Approximately 220 VFW Posts in Ohio engage in Charitable Bingo at the Post level. Here are some examples of how our VFW Ohio Charities and our VFW Posts are able to provide support for our overall mission:

- VFW Ohio Charities provides support to each of the 5 major (VA)Veterans Affairs facilities in the state with a Social Worker fund of **\$5,000 dollars to each VA facility** to assist Veterans with things

like gas cards, food vouchers and other small necessities. As the funds are used, we replenish them so funds are always available to help those veterans.

- VFW provides VA Voluntary Service representative at each VA site and Ohio Veterans Nursing Homes that directly report to the State Commander to ensure any additional needs are directly addressed!
- We Support our County Veteran's Service Commissions (VSC). When they have exhausted their resources helping Veterans, or the needs of those Veterans fall outside of their parameters, the VSCs reach out to us for assistance.
- In the 12 months prior to COVID-19, our local Posts and the VFW Ohio Charities have provided:
 - **\$668,000 dollars** directly helping Veterans and their families with food, clothing, shelter, car repairs and utilities.
 - **\$40,000 dollars** for burial services for Veterans and their family members.
 - **\$16,000 dollars** for Electric Wheelchairs, Scooters, Hospital Beds and various medical equipment.
 - **\$30,000 dollars** for Veteran treatments (which the government does not pay for) such as Hyperbaric Chambers, which have been successfully helping patients recover from a wide variety of conditions and injuries such as concussions and head trauma.
 - **\$200,000 dollars** for Scholarships at all levels of schooling.
 - Over **\$1 million dollars** for sponsorships to local organizations covering everything from Scouts to 1st responders, Medical supplies to Hospice programs, Food Pantries to Service Dogs.
 - Direct support to Ohio National Guard Units both Pre and Post Deployment. Our local posts take care of these units by donating funds to the respective Family Support Groups to provide holiday parties, assist with their Military Ball, Training Days, Family Day Activities, Yellow Ribbon programs, and any other special events that may arise.
 - **\$95,000 dollars** to the VFW National Home for Children. Founded in 1925 on 472 acres in Eaton Rapids, Michigan, it is a place where families left behind by war can remain together when their service member did not come home. Today's veterans and their families face different challenges: reintegration, post-traumatic stress, unemployment and rehabilitation from battlefield injuries, among others. The National Home has evolved over its history to meet those changing needs. Every family that stays at the home has their own personal case worker and can live at the home 100% free for four years! Of the Home's 42 single dwellings, the two-story Ohio House was built in 1935 and is maintained by the VFW Department of Ohio.

In closing, I want to highlight that the backbones of our organizations are "Volunteers!" We do this not for personal gain, monetary or otherwise, but to fulfill our commitment to take care of those that have served, those that are currently serving, their families and their communities. By passing HB 282 you will help ensure we have the resources to continue funding our charitable service programs by allowing veterans the ability to play Instant Bingo in an electronic format. Thank you again Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to provide testimony and I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.