



AMVETS

Department of Ohio

House Bill 282 Proponent Testimony

American Veterans (AMVETS) Department of Ohio

Don McCauley Executive Director

Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Wednesday, December 2, 2020

Chairman Coley, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Craig and the other esteemed members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify before you today on behalf of House Bill 282 (H.B. 282). I am Don McCauley, Executive Director for The American Veterans (AMVETS) Department of Ohio.

The American Veterans (AMVETS) is a Congressionally Chartered National Veterans Organization whose Department in Ohio was founded on June 14, 1946 to advocate for Ohio veterans returning home from World War II, and we have honored that commitment in Ohio for over 74 years now. The Department of Ohio is currently made up of approximately 50,000 members, making it the largest AMVETS department in the nation. We have 107 Posts throughout the state, and most are assisting veterans and charities in their communities daily.

I would like to begin my proponent testimony of H.B 282 by briefly outlining the history of the effort to legalize electronic bingo in Ohio. In 2013, H.B. 325 was introduced to legalize electronic bingo; it was met by opposition from supporters of the lottery and their vendors who claimed the lottery could provide what we needed, and the bill never made it out of committee. Following, approximately 22 million dollars was spent to develop and manufacture the EZ play machines that did not provide a charitable function that the organizations needed and now most of those unused machines sit in a warehouse somewhere. This forced the formation of the Ohio Veterans & Fraternal Charity Coalition (OVFCC) and since electronic bingo was illegal, electronic raffle machines were implemented because the ORC did not state these machines were illegal. Since raffle machines were not defined in the ORC as illegal, the organizations around the state began using them. When the State began trying to enforce a

law that raffle machines were illegal, the OVFC was forced to file a lawsuit against the state since the ORC did not define raffle machines as being illegal and the OVFC felt posts were operating within the law. The court then issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) prohibiting the state from enforcement while the matter went through the court system. After a few years on the docket, the lower court ruled that electronic raffle machines were illegal; the OVFC did not agree with this and filed an appeal to that ruling. The appellate court then ruled that electronic raffle machines were not illegal but the method in which the winners were being determined, did not meet the requirements of the law. This ruling has been appealed to the Ohio Supreme Court who has not yet accepted the case or rule on the lower court's ruling. They, with the support of the Ohio Attorney General's Office, have agreed to wait on deciding the fate of the case pending the outcome of H.B. 282. It has been said that the machines the veteran and fraternal clubs are using are illegal. While the legality of the machines has nothing to do with H.B. 282, the use machines are protected by a TRO until the Ohio Supreme Court makes its ruling.

In closing, H.B. 282 passed the House by a margin of 90-2. This bill does not add new gaming, has nothing to do with the raffle machines, lottery machines, slot machines or any other machines currently being utilized. In addition, the Bill has nothing to do with any litigation; it simply legalizes electronic bingo and authorizes the Attorney General to govern it under the charitable gaming section of the law. Passage of this bill into law will give our posts a fighting chance to increase the revenues needed, donate more to charities, and hopefully keep their doors open. I reiterate this bill does not add new gaming, has nothing to do with any current machines or any litigation, it only brings instant bingo into the 21st century for our posts as many other things have over time. ~

Approval of H.B. 282 will show the veteran community that you support them and will not be something soon forgotten.

Chairman Coley, Vice Chairmen Huffman, Ranking member Craig and the remaining esteemed members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you again for allowing me to testify before you today. If there are any questions, I would be happy to answer them at this time.