

National Veterans Memorial and Museum

Ohio House Bill 16
Senate Higher Education Committee
October 30, 2019

Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chairwoman Gavarone, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on behalf of an amendment to Ohio House Bill 16 that would modify current Ohio Revised Code language by allowing the National Veterans Memorial and Museum to be subject to the rules and regulations as similar non-profit organizations in Ohio.

I am Lt. General Michael Ferriter, U.S. Army (Retired), and I am honored to serve as the first President and CEO of the National Veterans Memorial and Museum.

A little bit about my background:

I spent 35 years in the U.S. Army -- commanding Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and International Forces at every level. I completed three tours of duty in Iraq, in addition to combat service in Somalia, parachuted with Paratroopers and Rangers more than 200 times, and served as the lead military trainer and advisor with the Iraqi government from 2008-2010.

In my last role with the U.S. Army, as the Commanding General of Installation Management Command, I oversaw 75 Army installations and bases around the world, managing a 75,000-person workforce, and a \$12 billion budget, where I was able to achieve nearly \$3 billion in savings by transforming the way business was conducted and services were delivered.

After retiring from the Army in 2014, I have dedicated my civilian life to helping Veterans, first through the establishment of the Ferriter Group, and now through my role at the National Veterans Memorial and Museum.

The leadership in this city and state created a national treasure. The National Veterans Memorial and Museum is the nation's first, and only, museum dedicated to telling the story of the Veteran experience, representing all branches of the military, and both wartime and peacetime service. For Veterans and civilians alike, the museum provides the platform to begin important discussions about what it means to serve our nation and commit to something larger than one's self.

The museum experience is like no other. It is an intimate journey of military service and the return to civilian life told by Veterans through multi-media presentations, interactive exhibits, photos, and letters. Our mission is to Honor, Connect, Inspire and Educate, and this makes us much more than a museum. We serve as a rally point and advocate for all Veterans, and we are developing relevant programming to connect and impact the lives of Veterans, their families, and the general public.

Since opening our doors a year ago, we have welcomed nearly 60,000 visitors from 38 states and several countries.

When originally conceived in 2014, the Ohio Veterans Museum was contemplated to be a state-wide museum with hopes to receive ongoing state operating support. Ultimately, this vision was fundamentally altered, with the scope now being national in nature and a museum that is run by a non-profit organization that does not receive any state operating support. In fact, we receive no federal funding, and all our funds are raised through donations, grants, sponsorships, membership, and programming.

To successfully realize our national mission, the National Veterans Memorial and Museum must have the engagement of a diverse group of board members from across the country. The recruitment and participation of a national board is critical in accessing a philanthropic base

outside of Central Ohio as national fundraising will be important to the overall goals of the National Veterans Memorial and Museum.

The section of Ohio code that the National Veterans Memorial and Museum currently is under imposes requirements that significantly limit the organization's ability to recruit and appoint a geographically diverse board.

Specifically, our concerns center around requirements for an in-person quorum, no telephonic meetings, limits on action by unanimous written consent, and committees that will suffer the same constraints as the board.

We are seeking modification to the Ohio Revised Code language to allow the National Veterans Memorial and Museum to be subject to the rules and regulations as similar non-profit organizations in Ohio, instead of unfairly burdening it with public records and open meetings laws, which were not designed for a national non-profit organization. As you know, many Ohio cultural institutions receive state capital support, yet are not considered to be public entities. We believe that holding the National Veterans Memorial and Museum to a different standard sets a bad precedent and will prevent us from forming a board with members from across the country and from a wide range of industries and corporations.

We seek to operate as all other non-profits under Section 1702 of the Ohio Revised code as required. As an IRS-designated 501c3 organization, the National Veterans Memorial and Museum already is subject to all the rules and regulations provided by Ohio law for the operations of a non-profit including corporate governance, conflict of interest, voting, annual meetings, and committees.

We appreciate your careful consideration of this matter as we work to build a strong national organization, here in Columbus, that is worthy of our nation's 20 million Veterans.