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Committees

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Ohio House of Representatives
133rd General Assembly

Sponsor Testimony on HB 17
Senate Ways and Means Committee
February 11, 2020

Chairman Roegner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Ways and Means Committee, thank you for allowing me to come before you today and present sponsor testimony on House Bill 17.

House Bill 17 is legislation that passed unanimously in the House Ways and Means committee and the House Floor last General Assembly but ran out of time in the Senate. This bill will enhance the homestead exemption for surviving spouses of public service officers killed in the line of duty from \$25,000 to \$50,000.

The bill defines a “public service officer” as a peace officer, firefighter, EMT, or paramedic. The surviving spouse would receive, upon receipt of an application, a \$50,000 tax exemption on one homestead owned by the surviving spouse. The application must include a letter from a retirement or pension fund and/or from the chief officer of the department or agency which employed the public service officer that affirms that the death of the public service officer happened in the line of duty.

Additionally, the bill clarifies that “Killed in the line of duty” is defined in ORC 742.63 as “Death in the line of duty or death from injury sustained in the line of duty, including heart attack or other fatal injury or illness caused while in the line of duty”. This exemption would continue for the surviving spouse until his or her death or remarriage.

All of us who work in the Statehouse walk by a beautiful monument in the Capitol rotunda. The monument is known as “The Lincoln and Soldier Monument”. Upon that monument are inscribed the words President Lincoln spoke during his second Inaugural Address on March 4, 1865...“To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan,”

With these words, President Lincoln affirmed the government’s obligation to care for those injured during the war and to provide for the families of those who perished on the battlefield.

There could be no more appropriate description of the spirit and goal of HB 17; to provide some monetary relief to the spouses of our first responders who make the ultimate sacrifice while protecting and serving the public.

In 2018, Ohio lost four public service officers in the line of duty, then in 2019 lost two more. This bill is about giving back to those who make that ultimate sacrifice by providing relief to their grieving spouses during a difficult time. To honor the men and women who run towards danger and put themselves in harm's way, day after day, we ask for your favorable consideration of this bill.

Chairman Roegner and members of the committee, I would be happy to answer any questions you have at this time.