



Senate Veterans & Public Safety Committee
Senator Frank Hoagland, Chairman

Todd Kleismit, Director of Community & Gov't Relations
Ohio History Connection

Proponent Testimony – Senate Bill 59

March 2, 2021

Chairman Hoagland and members of the Veterans & Public Safety Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today in support of Senate Bill 59, which proposes to better protect war relics such as Civil War cannons and similar relics located on public property from being sold, destroyed, relocated, removed, altered or disturbed, except as described in SB 59.

I want to thank Senator Schaffer for addressing this issue and I know he did a great job describing in Committee last week the challenges that sometimes arise when private collectors come calling to offer cash-strapped local governments or cemetery associations cash for these illegal transactions. These relics are not just a tangible part of American history; they are most often federal property.

We have probably all seen these cannons or perhaps some WWII anti-tank guns on display in front of our county courthouses, city halls, VFW posts and cemeteries. With adequate protections, these are proper ways to share this history with the public. If they are not on display in those public spaces, publically accessible museums and historic sites are where these relics (museums often refer to them as collections) of local, state and national history belong.

The Ohio History Connection commends Sen. Schaffer for working on this and we think this will be a useful deterrent to prevent these kinds of illegal sales in the future. Our role is that the State Historic Preservation Office has the ability to record objects such as the cannons and artillery described in this legislation in our historic/archaeological inventories. From the definition in the legislation it appears that most of these relics will be located in outdoor settings. This might take some time to initially set up, but we're equipped to handle this and carry out the intent of the legislation with the cooperation of the organizations across Ohio that maintain the cannons/artillery on their property.

Thank you for the opportunity to be with you today. I'll be happy to answer any questions you have of me.