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Testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee

House Bill 90 - *Authorize property tax exemption for disabled veterans, spouses*

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Chairman Roemer, Vice Chairman Lorenz, Ranking Member Troy and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify on House Bill 90 this afternoon.

I am David Root, a US Navy Veteran of the Vietnam War. I am a State Legislative Chairman for the Department of Ohio Veterans of Foreign Wars and a past State Commander.

In 2014, the 130th General Assembly unanimously passed House Bill 85 and expanded the homestead exemption for totally disabled veterans from \$25,000 to \$50,000. House Bill 90, as you know, will again expand the homestead exemption for veterans who are 100% disabled. Currently they can apply annually to their county auditor for a property tax credit on the first \$50,000 value of their homestead. HB 90 would expand the exemption to the full value of their homestead.

Please keep in mind, the exemption on the current \$50,000 property value and the expanded total property value applies only if the veteran is rated by the Veterans Administration as permanently and totally disabled.

We are talking about veterans that could very likely be living solely on their VA compensation. These veterans, like all property owners, see the value of their homes increase every year which in turn raises their tax burden every year. The passage of HB 90 would go a long way in assuring Ohio veterans who selflessly served our great nation and are now totally disabled because of that service can remain in their homes.

According to the latest available statistics from the Veterans Administration, less than 3 percent of Ohio veterans have a 100% service-connected disability rating. While I have been unable to find any data to determine the number of those veterans who own a home, I think we can be safe in saying that not all of them do. My guess is that less than 15,000 Ohioans would be affected by House Bill 90.

Chairman Roemer, Vice Chairman Lorenz, Ranking Member Troy, and committee members, I hope I can count on you to support the disabled veterans of Ohio who are homeowners and vote favorably on House Bill 90.

Thank you again for allowing me to offer proponent testimony today. I will try to answer any question the committee might have.