

November 26, 2023

Chairman Roemer, Deputy Chairman Lorenz, Ranking member Troy and members of the House Ways and Means Committee thank you for this opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB254.

Thanksgiving. The season has just passed and for most veterans is a time of praise, prayer, and reflection on all that God has provided for us this past year. In addition to our needs, our wants and desires are also being met and we often forget about that. Americans need to be mindful to give praise and thanksgiving for all that we have. As a member of the Disabled American Veterans, we are called upon to look after each other whenever possible. But, as a 100% disabled veteran it is often difficult to perform this task and some daily tasks as well.

Some veterans were drafted during difficult times in our nation's history and others volunteered. Regardless, none of us came back home the same. After being revived in a Medivac, I spent 51 weeks attached to Bethesda Naval Hospital. It was a very difficult and painful time. Readjustment to civilian life was anything but easy, too. The scars are both emotional, physical, and psychological. With help from VSOs like the DAV and American Legions I went back to school and got my degree in electronics. I have worked for the past 26 years before receiving my 100% disability status earlier this year. It was a long and arduous procedure that lasted 33 years to reach.

I did not get to vacation a lot during that period. A lot of my time off was for sick days or medical appointments due to my various injuries. It had a large impact on my first marriage and my children. Eventually it ended in divorce and once again I felt like a failure.

I moved to Ohio in 2003 and have been an active part of the community and DAV both. I have held both local and state positions within the DAV and see the great work and advocacy for disabled veterans that they perform. I am forever thankful for the DAV and the opportunities it has given me. My wife, Sherry, and I have a wonderful home in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. I have given of my life, time, and body in support of this country and would do it all over again. But I would hate like hell to lose my home because I couldn't pay property taxes when many other states are offering this exemption for 100% Disabled American Veterans!

In closing, I am asking you to consider the requests made to pass this bill supporting 100% Disabled American Veterans. The emotional and financial impacts on those who served the United States cannot be numbered.

Andrew R. Gerhart

Summit County Chapter #35 DAV; Treasurer