

Good Afternoon,

Chairman Senator Lang, Vice Chairman Senator Wilkins, and Majority Leader Senator Sykes,

It is my pleasure and honor to come before you today to as a representative of the Veterans of Ohio. I am Iris Foster-DeNieuwe, Executive Director of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Ohio Charities. As such I am in contact with many Veterans throughout the great state of Ohio.

Ohio as you know has the 6th largest Veterans population in the United States. This is known as a Veteran friendly state. But addition, and more importantly Ohio is known for supporting small businesses. This is evident in its approach to encouraging new businesses to register in the state. Ohio has low business licensing fees, manageable business taxes which allow breathing room for businesses, and very low progressive income tax rates. Ohio has some of the least expensive registration fees for businesses, these are the things that cause many people to register a business in Ohio and start on their way to self-sufficiency as a business owner.

Senate Bill 12 will be a welcomed enhancer to the state's reputation for being a supporter of small businesses and with its introduction of "Veteran-friendly business enterprises" and "Veteran-owned business enterprises" as well as businesses that are owned by Veterans. Veterans will be encouraged to continue to grow and to have the opportunity to compete with non-Veteran owners of businesses. Veterans are applauding the State Legislators for opening this great door of opportunity along with all of the benefits of owning a business in Ohio. Senate Bill 12 will do just that open the great door of opportunity to Veterans who are contemplating opening a business as well as the Veterans who currently own and operate a business.

SB 12 provides the much needed preference or bonus points to each certified veteran-friendly business enterprise that submits a bid or other proposal for a contract with the state of an Agency of the State.

More importantly, it establishes standards by which a business enterprise may apply for Certification as a veteran-owned business enterprise and standards to determine when a Veterans owned business no longer qualifies for business enterprise certification.

Statistics indicate approximately 2.5 million Veterans or 9% of businesses in America are owned by Veterans. The five states where the highest percentage of all businesses are veteran-owned

13% - South Carolina; 12.2% - New Hampshire; 11.7% - Virginia; 11.7% Alaska; and 11.4% Mississippi

The great state of Ohio will definitely be included in those numbers if Senate Bill 12 is enacted. In each of the Ohio counties there are at least one or more Veteran owned and operated businesses.

These businesses range from vodka production, to children's clothing. They range from law offices to construction companies, from hot dog stands to flags. We are everywhere there is an enterprise.

Veterans as you know make great business owners. We appreciate processes and systems as we have developed an appreciation for structure. We are natural leaders or have been taught be so. We are dedicated and disciplined. We have the ability to work under pressure. We fought for and have a vested interest in making America and the great state of Ohio STRONG. STRONG means businesses and community, along with the opportunity to excel, to amplify the skills we bring.

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today! Veterans applaud the opportunities that SB 12 is bringing to Veteran business owners and those who plan to follow in the steps of entrepreneurship.

But I do have a final question? But I also have the answer. Who here has heard of the following great enterprises – Sperry Shoes, FedEx, Go Daddy shoes, Walmart, Doc Spartan in Portsmouth, Ohio?

They are owned and founded by Veterans.

Are there any questions?