

Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee
Wednesday, December 4th
James Crawford, USW 3372-07
Proponent SB 281

My name is James Crawford, and I am here to speak in support of Senate Bill 281 on behalf of the United Steelworkers, the largest industrial union in North America. I am the Unit President of Local 3372-07. I work at Hunt Valve where I help make actuators and valves for Navy submarines and aircraft carriers. I am also a Marine Corps veteran where I was a Corporal in charge of not only Marines but the repair of RADAR equipment for the F-18 fighter jet.

I was medically separated after 5 years in the service. Not only did I have to go through the stress of not knowing when I will be honorably discharged but also not knowing how I'm going to transition back to the real world. The Veteran's Affairs office was extremely helpful in making sure medically I was taken care of. I still had to find out for myself how to use the GI Bill or how to use the VA home loan. I know many veterans in my area, workplace and friend groups, I also have kept in touch with the Marines I was stationed with. The one thing we all have in common is that if it wasn't for word of mouth from each other we wouldn't know how or where to use our benefits. Now not only did I start my college education using my benefits, but I was also able to become a homeowner. We earned these benefits and it's only fair we get to know what they are.

Veterans get a lot of information when they are discharged, but that is a confusing time for many people and the level of information can be overwhelming. Once some time has passed and a veteran has transitioned to a workplace, they may be more open and able to receive information about services. It is already tough to transition back to the normal world, many veterans would need someplace to see this information when they are ready for it and not thrown at us with the burden of everything else.

There are lots of scams out there, especially on the internet. The poster will serve as a place where people can see legitimate information from sources that are vetted. Having trustworthy information jointly developed by the Ohio departments of veteran's services and commerce will help veterans cut through all the clutter out there.

This bill helps our returning veterans who may suffer from different mental health issues such as military sexual trauma, suicidal thoughts, and other military related disorders or disabilities. In many cases a veteran has no idea where to turn, which often leads to devastating results.

The poster would show the state's commitment in supporting those who volunteered, defended, and sacrificed themselves for their fellow Ohioans. Eleven other states have enacted this legislation – New York, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Indiana, Virginia, Utah, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Illinois.

Senate Bill 281 would require the state commerce and veteran's services departments to make a poster detailing available benefits and services for veterans, and to provide a free copy of the poster to any employer who wishes to post it. The poster must include the following:

- Contact and website information for Ohio's department of veteran's services and U.S. department of veterans affairs veterans crisis line
- Substance abuse and mental health treatment
- Educational, workforce, and training resources
- Tax benefits and exemptions
- Armed forces designation on OH driver's license or ID card
- Unemployment benefits eligibility
- Legal services
- Any other benefit or service available as determined by the directors of commerce and veterans services

For all these reasons, I urge you to support this important legislation. Chair Johnson and Ranking member Craig, thank you both for sponsoring this important legislation. I'll answer any questions you may have.