

House Committees

Public Insurance and Pensions, Ranking
Member

Education Committee

Energy Committee

Local Government Committee

Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review



Contact Information

77 S. High Street Columbus, OH 43215

<https://ohiohouse.gov/members/sean-p-brennan>

Rep14@ohiohouse.gov

614-466-3485

**Representative Sean Patrick Brennan
14th House District**

Sponsor Testimony: H.B. 75

Good afternoon Chairman Hall, Vice Chairman Ferguson, Ranking Member Humphry and members of the House Governmental Oversight Committee.

I stand before you to discuss an important issue that strikes at the very core of our rights as Ohioans - our right to express support for those who serve and protect our communities by displaying the Thin Blue Line flag or emblem.

The Thin Blue Line flag is more than just a piece of fabric. It is a symbol of respect, remembrance, and solidarity with the brave men and women in law enforcement who risk their lives every day to ensure our safety. While it has sparked different interpretations, for many Ohioans, it represents honor, sacrifice, and community strength.

Yet, residents in mobile home parks, rental properties, and homeowner associations often face restrictions that prevent them from proudly displaying this emblem. This raises an essential question: Should property management rules override an individual's right to free expression? I say they should not and here is why.

Our nation was built on the principle that every citizen has the right to express their beliefs peacefully. The First Amendment does not stop at the property line of a rental unit or the borders of a homeowner association. While private property owners and HOAs can set reasonable guidelines, outright banning flags or symbols like the Thin Blue Line challenges our core democratic freedoms. In short, this bill expands the right of freedom of expression.

Ohio's law enforcement officers are essential pillars of our communities. They work tirelessly, often without recognition, to maintain peace, respond to emergencies, and protect the vulnerable. Displaying the Thin Blue Line flag is not a political statement for many. To the contrary, it is a sign of gratitude and respect. Restricting residents from showing their support undermines community unity and the appreciation we owe these public servants.

The right to express gratitude and support for our law enforcement should not be limited by where we live. Whether in a mobile home park, a rented apartment, or a neighborhood governed

by an HOA, Ohioans deserve the freedom to fly the Thin Blue Line flag if they so choose. It is a simple act that carries deep meaning for many who simply wish to show their respect for those who sacrifice so much to keep our neighborhoods safe, especially those who have lost loved ones in the line of duty, like Chief DiSario, or as a result of physical or mental injuries they obtained on the job, like a Parma officer who was a friend of mine who took her own life in 2024.

Concerns about neighborhood aesthetics or property values are often at the heart of these restrictions. This bill addresses these issues by including guidelines on flag size and placement, thus respecting both a community's appearance and individual rights. In fact, groups like Ohio Real Estate Investors Association and the Ohio Manufactured Homes Association were consulted in the writing of the bill and have indicated their support.

Embracing the Thin Blue Line flag could also help with the shortage of police officers departments around the state are currently grappling with. The more we do as a state to promote and show respect for the profession and good law enforcement officers and practices, the better our chances of attracting and retaining the best and the brightest to the profession.

Let us stand for unity, respect, and the freedoms that define our state and our nation. Let us ensure that all Ohioans, regardless of where they live can honor the men and women who stand on the thin blue line, safeguarding our communities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

