



## OHIO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

November 5, 2025

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Before the Ohio House Veterans and Military Development Committee  
Proponent Testimony House Resolution 243

Chair Richardson, Vice Chair Mathews, and Ranking Member Lawson-Rowe, and members of the House Veterans and Military Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony on House Resolution 243 on behalf of the members of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce. My name is Tony Long, General Counsel and Director of Energy & Environmental Policy at the Ohio Chamber.

According to the JobsOhio internet site, Ohio is the proud home of various federal and military installations that contribute nearly \$40 billion to the overall economy of Ohio. One such installation is Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base. The base has operated under several names, serving various vital roles for over 80 years. Attachment A is a breakdown of the various names for the base and brief highlights from each era.

Along with the unique joint use civil airfield, the base is host to the 121<sup>st</sup> Air Refueling Wing (121 ARW) that flies the KC-135R Stratotanker and provides in-flight refueling for U.S. Armed Forces and allied nations' aircraft. The aircraft provides worldwide refueling missions for U.S. and NATO operations, upholding the 121 ARW motto: victory through vigilance.

HR 243 sends a clear signal from this body that Rickenbacker is the only choice for the deployment of the new generation KC-46A Pegasus refueling aircraft. The Department of the Air Force has selected seven bases as candidate locations to host the aircraft. A final basing decision is expected no later than 2027. The operations from Rickenbacker demonstrate that the 121 ARW is best situated to continue to carry out this critical mission and to continue missions that provide vigilance and safety for the USA and its allies.

Thank you to the sponsors for bringing this resolution forward. And thank you for the opportunity to present this proponent testimony for HR 243. The Ohio Chamber looks forward to working with this committee and the Ohio House to move the legislation forward. I will now attempt to answer any questions you may have for me.

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## Attachment A

### History of Rickenbacker National Guard Base

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#### 1. Lockbourne Army Airfield (1942 - 1948)

- **World War II:** Established in 1942 as a training base for pilots and glider crews.
- **The Tuskegee Airmen:** After World War II, it became the home of the all-Black **332nd Fighter Group** and the **477th Composite Group**, a unit composed of the famed **Tuskegee Airmen**. Lockbourne was one of the first Air Force bases to implement President Truman's 1948 executive order to desegregate the U.S. Armed Forces.

#### 2. Lockbourne Air Force Base (1948 - 1974)

- **Cold War Era:** It became a major **Strategic Air Command (SAC)** installation, hosting bomber and reconnaissance missions, including B-47 Stratojets and KC-97 Stratofreighters, placing aircraft on full-time nuclear alert.
- **Vietnam War:** The base was heavily involved, with its KC-135 tankers routinely deploying to support the air war in Southeast Asia.

#### 3. Rickenbacker Air Force Base (1974 - 1980)

- **Renaming:** The base was renamed in 1974 to honor **Captain Eddie Rickenbacker**, the World War I "Ace of Aces" and a native of Columbus, Ohio.

#### 4. Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base (1980 - Present)

- **Transfer:** The active-duty Air Force operations were phased out in the late 1970s. The base was officially transferred to the **Ohio Air National Guard** on **April 1, 1980**, with the Ohio Air National Guard's 160th Air Refueling Group (later consolidated into the 121st Air Refueling Wing) becoming the host unit.
- **Civilian Integration:** The military transferred portions of the base to a civilian authority, which established **Rickenbacker International Airport (LCK)**, creating the unique joint-use civil-military airfield that exists today.