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From the desk of
Riordan McClain
State Representative

Chair Richardson, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Lawson-Rowe, and fellow members of the House Veterans and Military Development Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony for H.B. 576.

This bill came from a suggestion at a community event in Bucyrus, Ohio honoring veterans.

As we approach America's Semiquincentennial next year in 2026, it affords us all the opportunity to stop and consider all that has transpired in those 250 plus years. All of the times of turmoil and strife, and of victory and peace. What has been constant through the years is that there has been men and women willing and able to answer the call of their time to preserve this great nation. We call many of those men and women veterans.

Ohio has a rich history of such individuals who have served. Here are a few stats:

- Currently have 700,000 veterans currently living in Ohio, making it the 7th largest in the country and also has 32,000 active personnel.
- Over 7,000 Revolutionary War Veterans moved to Ohio after the war as they received land grants as payment for serving during the war. Many are buried around Marietta, Chillicothe, Cincinnati and elsewhere.
- Roughly 320,000 Ohioans served in the Union Army in the Civil War including major generals Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman and Phillip H. Sheridan.
- 15,000 Ohioans served in the Spanish-American war, with all-Black 9th Ohio Battalion commanded by Brigadier General Charles Young who we recently named an 85-mile stretch of roads after.

- 256,000 served in WW1 and 6500 dying in the war. Home to Camp Sherman which was one of the largest military training camps for WW1 in Chillicothe. Ohio was the 4th largest number of troops provided.
- 839,000 Ohioans served in WW2, and there are 1,618 that are still alive and living in Ohio including local legend Wilmer “Lefty” Loy who served in Patton’s Third Army and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. We were able to celebrate his 100th birthday last year with him in New Washington, Crawford County. Estimated 3rd most in the nation.
- Approximately 221,167 Ohioans served in the Vietnam War, making it the state with the fifth-highest total number of Vietnam veterans.
- Columbus is home to the National Veterans Memorial and Museum just across the river from here and of course Wright-Patt Air Force Base in Dayton. We also house the National Museum of the United States Air Force which is also in Dayton.
- Ohio has 1,014 people in the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame which was created in 1992.
- Ohio Veterans count for 332 Medals of Honor recipients since the Civil War.

Next, let me give you a brief history of what we know as Veterans Day

- At the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918 the guns finally fell silent in “The Great War” (World War I)
- 1919: President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the first Armistice Day, calling for parades, public gatherings, and a brief pause at 11 a.m. to reflect on the war’s end and to honor those who served.
- 1926: Congress passed a resolution for an annual observance of Armistice Day with ceremonies.
- 1938: An act of Congress made November 11 a legal federal holiday called Armistice Day dedicated to world peace and honoring World War I veterans.
- Similar observances occurred worldwide including in the UK, Canada, France, Australia, and others.
- 1945: Following World War II veteran Raymond Weeks of Birmingham, Alabama worked to organize a National Veterans Day to honor veterans of all wars and began petitioning

General Dwight Eisenhower at the Pentagon for support. Weeks is known as “The Father of Veterans Day”.

- 1954: Then President Dwight Eisenhower signed a law replacing Armistice with Veterans to create Veterans Day for American veterans of all wars.
- 1968: The Uniform Monday Holiday Act moved several holidays including Veterans Day to create three-day weekends. Starting in 1971 Veterans Day was moved to the fourth Monday in October.
- 1975: President Gerald Ford signed a law restoring Veterans Day to November 11 effective in 1978

November belongs to our warriors.

By creating Veterans Month, we can include 30 days to tell our veterans they are not forgotten and that our obligation to them endures. 30 days to tell their stories so that future generations do not forget. 30 days to say thank you to the veterans in our communities.

Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, who commanded the 20th Maine in the Union Army during the Civil War is credited with the following speech in preparing his men before Gettysburg. To me it’s a great encapsulation of what sets America veterans apart.

“This is a different kind of army. If you look back through history, you will see men fighting for pay, for women, for some other kind of loot. They fight for land, power, because a king leads them, or just because they like killing.

But we are here for something new. This has not happened much in the history of the world. We are here to set other men free. America should be free ground, all of it. Not divided by a line between slave state and free, all the way, from here to the Pacific Ocean. No man has to bow. No man born to royalty. Here, we judge you by what you do, not by who your father was. Here, you can be something. Here, is the place to build a home. But it’s not the land. There’s always more land. It’s the idea that we all have value, you and me. What we’re fighting for, in the end, we’re fighting for each other.”

Let us make November Veterans Month. And may God continue to bless the United States of America, and every man and woman who has defended it.

Thank you for your time and I will be happy to answer any questions.

Phil M'V