

Speech from Charles Johnston

Hello, my name is Charles Johnston from Jefferson Ohio with my wife Susan and dog Sarge. We live on 28 acres in the country, I am a 100% disabled veteran, currently being treated for Multiple Myeloma cancer. I have just completed my 3rd round of treatment this week at the Cleveland VA. With the continue fighting with the VA to get my disability rating upgraded it has been a challenge. I have finally gotten to go and get more testing done after 10 years of fighting and hopefully the VA will upgrade me from 90% to a 100% medically. I recently got approval from them on March 4th 2025.

The property tax increase from 50K to 100K for disabled veterans would help us immensely. That is what HB 40 represents. The funding for this HB 40 can be achieved by several ways. After researching the state's budget, it rolled over 9 billion dollars from last year and they have 4 billion in Rainy Day Fund and over 247 million in the Lottery Fund. This is more than enough money to cover the costs, and the state can raise sales tax by 1 cent to help offset the cost as well.

The VA calculations for veterans receiving disability compensation is 134,742. When you subtract 10% for the 100% veterans, you come up with approximately 15,000. You have to consider the number of veterans that are passing away or if their condition has gotten better and they come off that rating.

Plus, you have to remember Ashtabula County is the largest county in the state and also one of the poorest. Our county doesn't have anything to offer to justify what we pay for property taxes. All of our industry is leaving or going out of business. All of the jobs have moved to the three C's and we're not getting anything in return. The largest employers in this county are the schools and county employees. The hospitals in our county are subpar and no one wants to use them.

If this bill doesn't get passed, we will have no choice but to sell and move out to another state that is veteran friendly that gives 100% disabled veterans no property tax. There are a few states that give up to 5 acres no property tax, and some just one. Why doesn't the state of Ohio do better by letting it be for the parcel up to no more than 40 acres? Then this would give veterans with PTSD an area to be out in the woods and nature to deescalate from the stress they face on a daily basis. Please help those that served this nation with dignity and honor. Please pass this HB 40 so the veterans can get some relief on this tax years bill. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Ssg Charles Johnston USArmy Ret.
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