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Testimony before the Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Public Safety Committee  
**House Bill 297 - *Regards funds provided by county for Memorial Day expenses***  
25 March 2026

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Good afternoon.

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to voice my support for House Bill 297.

I am David Root, and I am State Legislative Chairman for the Ohio VFW. I am also a member of the American Legion. Both veteran's organizations strive to promote patriotic values, educate the public - especially the youth - about the history of our great country, and make sure they do not forget the men and women who fought for the freedoms they enjoy. The same can be said for many of the other veterans organization throughout Ohio.

While these tasks are carried out year-round, there are certain times during the year when they are better received by the public. Veterans Day in November and Memorial Day in May are the two best times for every veteran service organization to get out and remind the public that they should love our country, respect our constitution and flag, and honor the brave souls that wore one of the uniforms of our armed forces.

House Bill 297 will help those organizations fulfill their duty every Memorial Day. Throughout Ohio, the veterans put flags and markers on the graves of all departed service members. They march and pull decorated floats in parades. They hold special Memorial Day programs and open the doors of their posts for the public. Their honor guards travel all over to participate in special events and memorial services. Some posts do multiple things on every day of the Memorial Day weekend.

Memorial Day is the one time each year when VSOs go all out to perform their patriotic duties to educate, honor, and remember and to show pride in their country, state, and communities. They spend large amounts of money to do it in the best possible way. There are many posts that spend thousands of dollars during Memorial Day weekend.

One of those posts is American Legion Post 12 in Elyria - it is the post I am a member of. Every year, on the Saturday before Memorial Day, Post members with the help of Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and civilians, place hundreds of flags on veteran's graves in several city and county cemeteries. They do a Memorial Day program and serve refreshments on Sunday evening and invite the public.

On Monday they participate in the Elyria Memorial Day Parade and the Memorial Day Service that is held just prior to the parade step off. Following the parade, they once again open their doors to the

public for a Memorial Day picnic of hot dogs, burgers, potato salad, baked beans, veggies, chips, and dessert. The \$500 they get from the County Commissioners does not begin to cover the cost of all the weekend events. It is greatly appreciated, but never enough.

Post 12 is just one example of why increasing the \$500 limit to \$1,000 is needed. The appropriation has not been increased since the 124th General Assembly increased it 24 years ago. At that time they bumped it up to \$500 from \$300. They did not however, increase the \$100 appropriation for civic organizations. It was \$100 at that time and it remains at \$100 today.

I want to thank Representatives Ritter and Newman for sponsoring this bill. Thanks also goes to all members of the House for unanimously passing House Bill 297 on the floor during the week following Veterans Day. These increases are way past due and I urge the committee to follow the example set by the House and favorably pass HB 297.

Thank you, Chairman Johnson and members of the committee, for listening to my testimony this afternoon and I will answer any questions you might have.