

My name is Ronnie Smith. I was born and raised in Athens, OH. After graduating high school, I found myself in constant trouble with alcohol, so I signed up for the army. I was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division, Air Assault. I deployed to Baghdad, Iraq in 2005 where I was also promoted to Sergeant. Shortly after returning from the war, I was medically discharged from the army. Little did I know.... my war had just began.

I would spend from 2007-2018 battling my addictions and lots of anger from the war. I used the VA during these years and was lead down the path of prescription pills. I was heavily medicated on benzos and opiates for my post war problems. Unfortunately, the pills created many more problems for me, and I found myself more lost than ever. This is where Cannabis comes into my life in a huge way.

I started growing cannabis around 2007 shortly after returning home. During this time I was busted 4x indoors, in and out of jail, constantly fighting cases while fighting for this plant. I started fighting for legalization around 2013. I was the Vice President and the Veteran Affairs Representative for Southeast Ohio NORML. I helped collect signatures for decriminalization across the state of Ohio. I am currently part of a panel that teaches a homegrow workshop at the Cannabis Museum in Athens, OH where I am also a Veteran Advocate for Cannabis.

During the holidays, I was able to give many veterans in Athens County free marijuana. These veterans were happy to receive this free medicine. Most of the veterans I met in person and they told me a little bit about their lives. All were similar, some kind of addiction story. Whether it was alcohol or prescription pills, they were all stuck somewhere. I received lots of feedback from these veterans and most of them told me that the cannabis helped them more than anything. These veterans are stuck at home, living off of whatever the government gives them. They can't afford to buy the cannabis they need and don't know how to grow it. I've been able to help these veterans and others in my community by giving them medicine or teaching them how to grow their own. Senate bill 56 would put a stop to me giving medicine that works to people who need it, and that's just wrong.

This past year in Ohio has been like a dream for many of us. We have been able to live free and enjoy the life we have fought so hard for. But here we are again with another challenge. If the Cannabis laws in place need adjusted, then I feel like it should to be done by someone who understands Cannabis. Mr. Huffman obviously has no knowledge about cannabis from his presentation of this bill.

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