



Proudly serving our veterans since 1918

Senator Susan Manchester
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

April 25, 2025

Dear Senator Manchester,

Thank you for your invitation to testify before the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee.

As one of the oldest veterans organizations in the nation, we have a distinguished 107-year-old history that all but a few current units of the Ohio Army National Guard can tie their history to. Commanders of each of those units receive copies of our newsletter. In August 2010, a 37th IBCT Brigade Support Fund was created to which our members donate and funds are used to support troops. The fund has been used to send care packages, make funeral donations and provide water and Gatorade at training exercises.

Members of those units are eligible to join our association and one key benefit is eligibility for the soldier and their direct descendants, to the third generation, to apply to our scholarship grant program. Since 2000, we have funded \$129,150.00 in scholarships through 37th DVA Scholarship Endowment Fund.

In 2024, we held our first 37th DVA Spring Luncheon thus providing another opportunity for our veterans to meet and because of the success of that event the 2nd annual luncheon is being held April 26, 2025. 37th IBCT CSM Dan Makruski will be providing an overview of the brigade at this event and what possible deployments might be in their future.

In lieu of testifying in person, the enclosed documents detail our history, memorials, reunions, services provided and membership. In that we will be coming off of a major event, we felt it best to provide our feedback for the committee in writing.

Should you have any questions about our organization, I can be reached at 614-832-1190. Our Executive Director, Mandy Oberyshyn, is also available to provide additional information and can be reached at 614-228-3788.

Sincerely,

Joe Woodrum
37th DVA President



History & Heritage

The 37th Division Veterans Association (37th DVA), a non-profit organization, was originally formed in 1918 by veterans of the 37th Infantry Division who fought in Europe during WWI with the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF). It was formed to honor veterans who gave their lives while serving our nation and to help the dependents of these heroic soldiers. In doing so, they preserved and strengthen the fraternal bonds they formed during the war. The mission of our founders continues with our membership today as noted below and as further evidenced by our 105th annual reunion held at Camp Perry August 23-24, 2024. Our 106th is being held August 22-23, 2025

The 37th Infantry Division served with distinction in WWI, WWII and Korea. During WWII, seven members of the division earned the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest decoration awarded. Current units of the Ohio Army National Guard can tie their history to the 37th Division. In 2007, the 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team began wearing the 37th Infantry Division's "bull's eye" insignia and carry its colors and lineage, which returned some historic designation to the current force structure. They have been deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq and Kuwait.

Some heritage units of the 37th Division, such as the 112th Engineers, can further trace their history back to the civil war era to events at Bull Run, Shiloh and Murfrees Borough. In 1865, as the Cleveland Grays, one unit was singled out to perform honor guard duties during the funeral procession and ceremonies for President Lincoln. They also acted as escort for President Hayes and General Garfield.

Heritage units of the 37th Division continue to execute the traditions set forth by the 37th Infantry Division in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). At the close of 2018, there were 11,900 serving in the Ohio Army National Guard. Most had served on active duty during the war on terror. Many of which have served multiple tours. Additionally, soldiers have provided support and relief during natural disasters in Ohio and throughout the nation such as the case with Hurricane Katrina. Members of the brigade have also supported food banks and provided prison medical support in Ohio during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the exception of a few units, all current units of the Ohio Army National Guard, can trace their heritage to the 37th Infantry Division.

One need not look far in the ranks of the 37th Infantry Division to see exceptional success, skill and sacrifice. Rodger Young, one of the fore mentioned Congressional Medal of Honor recipients and maybe the member with the most notoriety within the division, willingly gave his life in battle for his unit, which was under enemy fire and likely would have perished had he not prevailed.

37th Division Memorials

The 37th Infantry Division's history and accomplishments have been memorialized in several ways over the years.

Ohio State Route 3, also known as the 3C Highway, as it connects Cincinnati, Columbus and Cleveland, was dedicated as the 37th Division Memorial Highway in 1947.

On 22 August 1954, a sandstone monument honoring the veterans of the 37th Division was unveiled in Centerburg, the geographic center of Ohio. This monument was rededicated with a solid granite monument and illuminated flag pole on 22 August 2004, 50 years to the day of its original dedication.

An Ohio Bicentennial Marker, honoring the 37th Division for its service to state and country during Ohio's 200-year history, was unveiled on the Ohio State House grounds on 26 October 2003.

Annual Reunions

Each year the association holds an annual reunion at Camp Perry in Port Clinton, Ohio. This reunion along with providing camaraderie and information is an entertaining way to keep current with members of the association. During the reunion, a Memorial Service is held honoring those that have answered their last call since the last reunion. This moving tribute keeps their sacrifices and memories alive.

In 2004, the reunion was held in Washington DC in conjunction with the National WWII Memorial Dedication. This reunion held special significance for those having served in WWII as their tours of duty in the South Pacific ended nearly 60 years earlier.

We celebrated our centennial year of service to our veterans in August 2018 at our 100th reunion. A buckeye tree commemorating our 100th year was planted and dedicated on the Camp Perry clubhouse grounds. A commemorative 100th anniversary challenge coin was also created to mark the accomplishment.

Services Provided

In addition to answering many inquiries from descendants of the veterans that served in the 37th Infantry Division, other veteran organizations and the Ohio Adjutant General's Department, we:

Assist members and non-members in obtaining DD-214 separation forms as well as in obtaining certificates of service on record. We also provide referrals to VA offices in other states.

Assist veterans and/or their descendants in obtaining individual administrative and medical records from the records center in St. Louis, Missouri.

Assist veterans in securing medals earned, but not awarded, such as Bronze Star conversion awards earned during WWII. In many of these cases the recipients had been unaware that they had earned the award, but were informed by the 37th DVA that they had.

Assist widows and/or families of deceased veterans in obtaining burial details, in obtaining the respective grave marker and when requested, displaying the 37th DVA colors at the wake of the deceased.

Publish a newsletter three times per year, the *37th Division Veterans News*, containing the latest changes and/or new actions that may be of interest to members including stories about important veteran benefit issues, on individual members, heritage units returning from active duty and letters from members and non-members searching for information on people with whom they served or with whom their families served. Newsletters also include a section called TAPS, which lists veterans that have passed away since the last edition.

Manage a portfolio of investments from which we award scholarship grants annually to descendants of our veterans. Since 2000, 234 grants have been awarded totaling \$129,150.00. Members and direct descendants of members (to the third generation) including grandchildren and great grandchildren are eligible to apply for this program.

Membership

If you served in the 37th Infantry Division, have served or are serving in a heritage unit of the 37th Infantry Division with the Ohio Army National Guard, or are a spouse/widower, descendant or parent of someone who did or does, you are eligible to join the 37th DVA. If you do not meet one of the above, you can become an Associate Member of the organization.

We provided a place to call and a person to talk to about the items highlighted herein. Our camaraderie is as strong as our dedication is to the nation and to you. Please join our association and its members in continuing the legacy and heritage of the 37th Infantry Division. Annual memberships cost \$30.00 and include a subscription to our newsletter.

For More Information

Contact the 37th DVA at 614-228-3788, 35 E. Chestnut St., Suite 512, Columbus, OH 43215, www.37thdva.org, or mandy@37thdva.org.

106th Annual Reunion pictures published in the
November 2024 issue of the
37th Division Veterans News



MG (Ret) Steve Stivers had a 30-year career in the Ohio Army National Guard. He also represented Ohio's 15th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives for 10. Photo courtesy of 37th DVA Director Greg Rogers.

MG (Ret) Steve Stivers was our reunion keynote speaker, August 24, 2024.



37th IBCT CSM Daniel Makruski had the Color Guard introduce themselves and asked them to share where they have deployed with the Ohio Army National Guard. Along with an update on units, he shared that the 37th is on the patch chart in DC for possible deployment. "When the time comes, we'll be ready/prepared." It is clear that the 37th IBCT thus the continued legacy of the 37th ID remains in the best of hands. Photo courtesy of 37th DVA Director Greg Rogers.

37th IBCT CSM Dan Makruski gave remarks at our last reunion and served as keynote speaker at our 2nd annual Spring Luncheon held April 26, 2025.



This prestigious group did an outstanding job completing their duties during the day and seemed to thoroughly enjoy dinner and comradery at our banquet. They are joined by SFC (Ret) Johnnie Downs who served with Co D, 148th Infantry. On the left from left to right are SGT Ethan Durman, PFC Abram Delisle and SPC McClain Farley. To Johnnie's immediate right is SPC Thomas Kogelman and to his right SPC James Bowen.

Members of Co D
1st Bat 148th
Infantry were
treated to dinner
after performing
duties as color
guard at the
reunion. They are
joined by 37th DVA
member Johnnie
Downs.