



April 20, 2021

Ohio Senate - General Government Budget Committee

Members:

Tim Schaffer, Chair

Steve Wilson, Vice-Chair – Thank you for your Service! Go Navy

Hearcel F. Craig, Ranking Minority – Thank you for your Service! Go Army

Bob D. Hackett, Member

Frank Hoagland, Member – Thank you for your Service! Go Navy

George F. Lang, Member

Kenny Yuko, Member

Thank you, Chairman Schaffer, Vice-Chair Wilson, Ranking Minority Craig, and all Members of the Ohio Senate General Government Budget Committee for the opportunity to address you this afternoon regarding state appropriations for The American Legion Department of Ohio. I will be brief and informative.

A "VSO" is unlike any other kind of non-profit corporation. Most of the VSO's, specifically The American Legion, are defined by the IRS as a 501c-19, different from a 501c-3 or other 501 sections within the IRS. A 501c-19 is an organization that benefits veterans of the United States Armed Forces which is further defined as "Armed Forces of the United States" to include all regular and reserve components of the uniformed services which are subject to the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Navy, or the Secretary of the Air Force, and each term also includes the Coast Guard.

Our organizations **MUST** be; (1) a post or organization of past or present members of the United States Armed Forces; (2) an auxiliary unit or society of such post or organization, or; (3) a trust or foundation for such post or organization. There are many other criteria for our exemption that, if interested, you can read about at IRS.gov.

What makes us unique in Ohio, besides being one of the most Veteran Friendly states in the Union, is globally (there are five foreign outlying Departments that we call

FODPAL) we are the 4th largest Department next to Florida, California, and Pennsylvania. We are blessed to have a Department of Veteran Services and County Veteran Service Offices in each county, supported by that county's tax-payers.

Our Department Service Officers, or DSO's, are highly trained in VA Law, 38 Code of Federal Regulations, Title 10 Benefits, and Veterans Advocacy. They are required to attend bi-annual training and testing with the Veteran-Owned Law Firm of Bergmann & Moore in Bethesda, Maryland, outside of our D.C. Headquarters Division. There is an Ohio Employee in nearly every primary VA Medical Center of Ohio, including Cincinnati, Dayton, Columbus, and Cleveland. Our Cleveland Team has over 60 years of VA Law experience. This specialized team in Cleveland addresses all veteran's claims on appeal to the Department of Veterans Affairs Board of Veterans

Appeals. These are claims that may have been initially filed by a County Veteran Service Officer or one of our DSO's in a field office in Ohio.

From July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020, our team conducted 167 hearings to the Board of Veterans Appeal (BVA) and Decision Review Officers (DRO), leading to a 78% win percentage. This means the VA, and sometimes the veteran, gets it wrong 78% of the time. The financial results are the following:

BVA Retro Grants:	\$1,017,674.20
BVA Remanded Grants:	\$ 518,746.74
Combined Amounts:	\$1,536,420.94

From July 1, 2020, to the Present, our team conducted a combined 74 hearings with a combined accumulation of \$159,222.33 and an 89% win percentage. There are still many cases that have been advocated for in a hearing pending a decision.

These are federal dollars paid to Ohio Veterans who suffer disabilities and diseases associated with their military service. For every \$1 that the State of Ohio appropriated to The American Legion in the 2019-2020 fiscal year, our organization returned \$5 to the local economy. To me, that is good business.

We are very proud of what we do and believe you have a right to know what we have done with the monies you have entrusted us with. We are also very proud of the

“Veterans Strengthening America”

leadership of Deborah Ashenhurst, Director and former State Adjutant General, and her staff at the Ohio Department of Veterans Services, whom we collaborate with often.

The mission of The American Legion is to strengthen our communities, states, and nation with programs and services for our veterans, the military, and their families. We do that through programs like American Legion Baseball, Buckeye Boys State, Buckeye Girls State, (held at Chairman Schaffer Alma-Matter), Americanism and Government Testing, Assistance for Rehabilitation of our Veterans, Veterans Treatment Courts, addressing matters of National Security, Law & Order, Employment & Education, diversity, camaraderie, fellowship, and family. We add value to every aspect of a community.

I thank you, Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Wilson, and Ranking Member Craig and respectfully oblige any questions.