

# SONS OF VETERANS RESERVE



## OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER

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RE: H.B. 190

Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chairman Loychik, Ranking Minority Leader Miller, and members of the committee; it's an honor to be given the opportunity to come before this committee today and testify in favor of H. B. 190. I am a Past Commander of the Ohio Department Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, and a Past National Commander of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, and am currently the National Commander of the Sons of Veterans Reserve (SVR) which is the uniformed military department of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. The SVR members wearing Civil War era uniforms serve as a Color Guard and fire musket salutes at various Civil War ceremonies, march in parades, participate in Memorial Day services and conduct Civil War living history programs and some participate in Civil War battle re-enactments.

I am also a Past Chapter President of the Sons of the American Revolution, and a Past President of the Ohio Society of the War of 1812. I am a United States Air Force Vietnam War era Veteran and a member of the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame.

For over 30 years I have been involved in helping protect and preserve memorials erected to honor our military veterans. One of the big issues the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War has dealt with over the years is situations where people approach small communities and offer to buy Civil War cannons that are usually part of a Civil War memorial erected to honor Civil War veterans.

The local community or cemetery where the cannons are located are often in great need of money and when they are offered a large sum of money for the cannons, they sell them; generally unaware that they don't actually own the cannons. Many times, the local officials are told they can replace the cannons at very little cost with plastic replicas that require no maintenance. They are told the replacements will be just as good or better than the real thing,

I would like to take a few minutes today and share with you some examples of what I am talking about. (1) Located in Greenlawn Cemetery in Milford, Ohio are two three-inch rifled Civil War cannons placed there by a Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Post. The city was offered \$30,000 for the two cannons. When our Sons of Union Veterans Camp that meets in Milford discovered what was going on they went to the city Council and was successful in stopping the sale, and the Council adopted a resolution with the following language: "The City Council of Milford does hereby resolve and declare its continuing commitment to preserving these cannons and the legacy they represent by rejecting any and all offers to sell them and to retain them in perpetuity at Greenlawn Cemetery." Without the intervention of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War I suspect those cannons would no longer be at Greenlawn Cemetery in Milford. I sure hope a future Milford City Council doesn't decide to adopt a different resolution. (See photo No. 1)

(2) At the Sugar Grove Cemetery in Wilmington, Ohio there is a Civil War memorial consisting of a Civil War soldier statue and two Civil War cannons placed there by a Wilmington GAR Post. The cemetery was established in 1857 and today covers over 117 acres and is the main cemetery for Wilmington. Until recently the cemetery was a private cemetery operated by a cemetery association. The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War discovered on the cemetery website that they were offering the cannons for sale, When the Sons of

Union Veterans intervened it was discovered the cemetery was in desperate need of money and was expecting to sell the cannons for about \$50,000 each. The Sons of Union Veterans tried to convince the cemetery trustees that the cannons and the rest of the memorial did not belong to them, that it was GAR property which passed to the Sons of Union Veterans since the Sons are the legal heir of the GAR. The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War filed suit in the Clinton County Court of Common Pleas to stop the sale, and immediately the cemetery association went out of business, and in accordance with Ohio law the City of Wilmington took control of the cemetery. Eventually the city and the Sons agreed to a court ordered settlement that prohibits the city from selling or moving the cannons or the memorial without the expressed consent of the Ohio Department of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Again, without the intervention of the Sons of Union Veterans those two Civil War cannons would be gone. Hopefully, a judge in the future will not reverse the court decision. (See photo No. 2)

(3) At the Greencastle Cemetery in Dayton, Ohio the GAR placed a Civil War Seacoast Mortar nick named the "Dictator" by Civil War soldiers. That type of Civil War Mortar is valued today at between \$75,000 and \$100,000. A few years ago, that war memorial disappeared and a cheap replica now stands in its place. The Sons believe it was probably sold by a cemetery official. It is very doubtful that the original memorial will ever be recovered. (See photos No. 3 and 4)

(4) Several years ago, at a cemetery in Fayette County a cannon that was part of a GAR Civil War memorial disappeared along with a stack of Civil War cannon balls. Not too long ago, the cemetery trustees decided to replace the missing items and refurbish the memorial. After consulting with the Sons of Union Veterans the trustees agreed to purchase one of the plastic replicas. The Sons helped pay for it. During the first winter it was in place water seeped into a seam and froze rupturing the barrel casing. That sort of damage doesn't happen with a real cannon. (See photos No. 5 and 6)

The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War has been around since 1881 when it was created by the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). Membership is open to descendants of Union Veterans who served honorably. In 1954 the organization was granted a Congressional Charter. Two of our most prominent members spear headed that effort. They were: (1) General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, a World War II Congressional Medal of Honor recipient who based his membership on the Civil War service of his father Arthur MacArthur, who was also a Medal of Honor recipient. (2) A man who had just finished a term as the National Commander of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, retired World War II Army Major General Ulysses S. Grant 3<sup>rd</sup> who based his membership on his Grandfather Civil War General Ulysses S. Grant, who later became President Ulysses S. Grant.

Our Congressional Charter requires us to perpetuate the memory and heritage of the Grand Army of the Republic and the men who saved our Union of States. We are confident that H.B. 190 will be a great help to us as we continue that mission. It will also help preserve artillery and cannons placed as memorials honoring veterans of other wars. One of the high lights of this proposed legislation is the fact that it cost the taxpayers nothing. And, it should serve as a deterrent to those who would desecrate the memorials honoring our military veterans.

I ask that you vote in favor of H.B. 190.

Robert E, Grim  
National Commander  
Sons of Veterans Reserve

















