

Chairman Loychik, Vice chair Demetriou, ranking member Miller, thank you for letting me provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 69. I want to express my unwavering support for this important piece of legislation. This bill will require each county veterans service commission to include one member who was in military service after September 11, 2001.

Our brave men and women in uniform have put their lives on the line to defend our freedoms and protect our way of life. A large portion of our veteran community here in Ohio are the post 9/11 generation. However, for over two decades the process for determining which veterans are appointed to oversee government funds to our veteran community has not been revised.

There has been over 20 years of military conflict after 9/11. According to the Combat wounded veteran challenge an organization whose purpose it is to help our wounded veterans. There are more than 2.5 million post 9/11 military veterans that have served our nation, which is less than 1% of the population. 80 percent of those spent some time in an overseas combat zone. A majority are under the age of 34.

Yet in some districts, the percentage of post 9/11 veterans serving on a commission is 0%. Currently in the Veterans Service Commission there is no regard to the era of military conflict in which a veteran has served. But prior to 1994 the Ohio Revised Code required that one slot on the VSC be filled by a WW1 Veteran, and one slot would be filled by a WWII veteran.

That's why I believe it's our duty to provide this generation of veterans with the support they need to successfully serve on these commissions. This bill will help achieve that goal by preserving the current right of Ohio's veteran service organizations to make recommendations for appointment to the veteran service commissions while also restoring specific criteria to increase the number of post 9/11 veterans in these roles.

As a post 9/11 veteran myself. I urge all members of this committee to support this important legislation. We owe it to our veterans to provide them with the support and resources they need to thrive after their service to our country. Thank you for your consideration.

I'm happy to address any questions you may have.