



AMVETS

Department of Ohio

Opponent Testimony for the
Ohio House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee
Tuesday, December 5, 2023

Don McCauley

Executive Director

The American Veterans (AMVETS) Department of Ohio

(614) 431-6990

dmccauley@ohamvets.org

HB69: To amend sections 5901.02 and 5901.03 of the Revised Code to require county veterans service commissions to include one member who served in the military after September 11, 2001.

Chairman Loychik, Vice Chairman Demetriou, Ranking Member Miller, and the other honorable Ohio House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee members. I am Don McCauley, a US Army Veteran and Executive Director for The AMVETS Department of Ohio. Thanks to each of you for allowing me to provide opponent testimony for House Bill 69.

The AMVETS Department of Ohio is in opposition to House Bill 69. The current process of a Judge from the Court of Common Pleas appointing the committee members in all 88 counties has existed for many years and has been very fair and successful.

Each county Veterans Service Commission sets its policy and procedures on how it operates its commission and how often it holds meetings. Some larger commissions meet weekly, and smaller commissions may meet monthly. Also, some meet during the day, and others in the evening. Younger Veterans, especially those who served after September 11, 2001, may have difficulties attending meetings because of job, school, or family conflicts. A perfect example would be a conversation I had a couple of weeks ago with a veteran who served after September 11, 2001, who was upset that the commission in their county would not change the meeting time to accommodate their work schedule.

This bill makes it mandatory that a county veterans service commission shall consist of at least one member who served in the military after September 11, 2001. Why do veterans who served honorably in the military after September 11, 2001, deserve preferential treatment?

The veterans who served honorably after September 11, 2001, can become members of their County Veterans Service Commission by joining a veterans' service organization (VSO), i.e., American Legion, AMVETS, DAV, VFW, or the Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A.

In addition, the revised code already allows the Court of Common Pleas judge to appoint any qualified veteran to represent the veteran community when a VSO defined in the revised code does not have a presence in the county. This would be another opportunity for the veterans who have served after September 11, 2001, to be on the County Veterans Service Commission.

Opportunities for these veterans who served after September 11, 2001, are already in existence; while I do not know how many counties the American Legion, DAV, or the VFW have a presence in, I know that AMVETS currently only has a presence in 63 or 88 counties. While researching this, I found that the VVA only has 39, Korean War Veterans only has 11, and the Military Order of the Purple Heart only has 9.

Let us not forget that many of the benefits the veterans who served after September 11, 2001, have today are because of the efforts of these veteran service organizations advocating for benefits and services over the years. We must keep them alive and active by encouraging younger veterans to join their memberships.

I would be willing to venture that in the future, these same veterans who are pushing this legislation that served after September 11, 2001, will be in here opposing future changes when the next generation is attempting to push them out. It is not right now, and it will not be right then!

Chairman Loychik, Vice Chairman Demetriou, Ranking Member Miller, and the other honorable members of the House Ways and Means Committee, I again thank you for allowing me to submit opponent written testimony in opposition of H.B. 69 and urge that you vote against this bill because it is not needed.