



Joe Miller

State Representative House District 53

Representative Joe Miller, Ohio House District 53

House State and Local Government Committee, HB 123 Sponsor Testimony

Chair John, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 123. My joint sponsor, Colonel Miller, could not be here today, but lends his support and is happy to answer any questions about the bill. This legislation recognizes the Honor and Remember Flag, opening up a new pathway for Ohio to pay tribute to the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

Through HB 123, the Honor and Remember Flag is established as Ohio's symbol of commitment to honoring all members of the United States Armed Forces who lost their lives while serving or as a result of service, as well as their families. Much in the same way the POW /MIA flag was established specifically to recognize "Americans still prisoner, missing and unaccounted for in Southeast Asia," the Honor and Remember Flag is a direct symbol of support for our fallen soldiers. For many families who have been presented with an Honor and Remember Flag, it helps complete the circle of tribute to their loved one.

The bill also allows for the flag to be flown at the Statehouse on Memorial Day each year. Permissive language is included to allow government buildings across the state to fly the Honor and Remember Flag at their discretion. When flying the Honor and Remember Flag alongside the American Flag, the bill stipulates that it always be flown below, and be no larger than, the American Flag.

The Honor and Remember Flag has been recognized in 27 states around the country. Each component of the flag was designed to contribute to its overall meaning. The red background signifies the blood spilled by the brave men and women of America's military, and tops a white border acknowledging the purity of their sacrifice. The gold star, representing the fallen service member and their family, is inlaid on the blue active duty star. Below them, you'll find the folded

flag of final tribute, and inside, you see the flame of unyielding remembrance carried on by those who knew and loved the fallen soldier.

The idea for HB 123 came from members of my community, who have recognized the Honor and Remember Flag for years. That includes the Lorain AMVETS Post #47, who support this effort. It also includes constituents who partnered with the Honor and Remember 501(c)3 organization to recognize fallen military alumni and Gold Star Families at Elyria Catholic and Vermilion High Schools. The families were presented with personalized Honor and Remember flags, inscribed with the name of their loved one. The Honor and Remember Flag is thoughtfully constructed to avoid the suggestion of overshadowing the American flag, the Gold Star Service Banner, and others. It was copyrighted by the Honor and Remember organization so that it could not be produced outside of the United States. Additionally, all monies raised from the nonprofit go to Gold Star families through their own personalized flag, various events, banquets and more, aside from a 9% administrative overhead. The intention of HB 123 is to complete the circle of tribute to fallen soldiers and their families. We have received written support from over 25 Gold Star Families across Ohio, who want nothing more than for this bill to become law. In addition, I have been contacted by leaders of veterans organizations, not only in my district, but throughout Ohio, that wish to honor the Gold Star families with this tribute.

The bill was first introduced during the 133rd GA and passed unanimously out of the House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee. It failed to make it to the House floor for a vote before the end of the GA. In the 134th GA, the bill passed unanimously out of the House Government Oversight Committee, and was voted out of the House 96-0, where it failed to get a hearing in the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee.

In short, HB 123 supplements, rather than supplants, existing symbols of tribute. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this legislation, I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.