



# Ohio Legislative Report



Volume One Alpha; Number Five

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## HELPFUL LINKS

UNITED STATES CONGRESS:

[www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov)

US HOUSE OF REPRESENTAIVES:

[www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

US SENATE:

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OHIO GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

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OH HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

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## Ohio Legislative Report

Is published electronically every to report on the latest information about legislative issues taking place in Columbus and Washington that will affect the lives of Veterans and Military Personnel and their families in Ohio.

It is emailed at no charge to all who would like to receive it.

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Editor: David K. Root

## Statehouse Happenings

We hope everyone had a wonderful Memorial Day and were able to take a few moments to reflect on it's meaning and remember those who perished in the defense of our great country. And isn't that the reason that we have 132 elected officials serving in the Ohio Statehouse? Without the men and women who stepped up to the plate in the fight for freedom and the ultimate sacrifice made by more than a million of them, we would not have the freedoms we have today. Let us remember that when election day comes around. In November cast your vote in their honor. Be sure to research all those who are on your ballot and vote wisely.

Speaking of the statehouse, we looked over all the bills that were introduced in both chambers during the month of May and discovered that there were none that pertain to our military, veterans of the families of the military and veterans. We can only hope there will be some as the summer months go by.

If any of our readers know of something that the General assembly should address for the benefit of the former or current members of our armed forces, this would be a good time to contact your representative or senator and plant a idea that they can run with.

Although there was no new legislation introduced in May, there was plenty of action all month long with the existing bills.

The first hearing for a bill is usually the testimony from the bills primary sponsor. The second hearing is usually proponent testimony and the third opposition testimony. Further hearings can be testimony from proponents, opponents, and interested parties. Some bill will have half a dozen or more hearings.

In May SB 43 was introduced in the House after it passed unanimously in the Senate the month prior. Sponsor testimony was heard by the House Ways and Means Committee May 2nd and proponent testimony on the 10th. Although third and forth hears we scheduled there was no testimony so on the 23rd it was voted favorably out of committee. The full house gets it next.

Other bills heard for the first time were HB 126, HB 53, HB 150, and SB 113. House Resolution 95 also had sponsor testimony. Bills that had second hears during the month of may were HB 69, and HB 126. Bills that had a third (or more) hearing were SB 63 and SB 12.

HB 33 is the 'Budget Bill' and many senate committees held multiple hears. This could go on for a couple more weeks, but it needs to be passed by the senate and then sent back to the house for a vote of concurrence before landing on the Governor's desk. All this must be done by the end of June.

## American Legion

### *Some of their 2023 TOP PRIORITIES*

*The American Legion is the voice of nearly 1.6 million U.S. military veterans and servicemembers. A resolution-based organization, The American Legion's positions represent the views of its membership and shape the organization's legislative priorities for the 118th Congress:*

**Mental Health & Suicide Prevention** The leading issue facing the veteran community is suicide. The suicide rate among veterans is nearly double that of their civilian counterparts, with more than 6,000 veterans taking their lives annually. It is imperative to destigmatize asking for mental health support. Simultaneously, access to such support must increase. The American Legion encourages Congress to enhance access to alternative therapies, robustly fund VA's suicide-prevention outreach budget and continue to invest in mental-health research.

**PACT Act: Implementation & Oversight** Passage of the SFC Heath Robinson PACT Act in the 117th Congress ensured millions of toxic-exposed veterans will now have access to healthcare and compensation they rightfully deserve. VA estimates there will be up to 7 million new disability claims filed, due to eligibility expansion under the PACT Act and that the claims backlog will increase to 450,000 by October 2023. The efforts put forth by the VA workforce to reduce claims backlogs in recent years have been admirable, but substantial backlogs of hundreds of thousands of claims for sustained periods of time are not acceptable. It is imperative that VA fully leverage the resources made available in the PACT Act to assist in the continued modernization of information technology systems, as well as the hiring of additional employees to ensure veterans claims are adjudicated in a timely manner. The American Legion urges Congress to provide necessary oversight and funding to ensure VA has the resources needed to properly implement this legislation.

**Concurrent Receipt** Currently, 50,300 military retirees with combat related injuries qualify for DoD retirement pay as well as VA disability compensation. However, for retired veterans with disability ratings less than 50%, the VA compensation is deducted from their DoD retirement pay. The American Legion strongly supports ending this unfair policy. The Major Richard Star Act would repeal this draconian offset, allowing disabled veterans to concurrently receive their retirement pay and disability compensation.

## Bills To Watch In The US Congress

**HR 542:** Introduced on March 29th by Congresswoman Julia Brownley (D-CA-26).

The bill, known as *Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act of 2023* will amend title 38, United States Code, to improve certain programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs for home- and community-based services for veterans, and for other purposes.

**HR 693:** Introduced on January 31st by Congressman Steve Womack (R-AR-3).

The bill is known as *VACANT Act* and will limit the detailing of directors of medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs to different positions within the Department, and for other purposes.

**HR 1606:** Introduced on March 14th by Congressman Bradley Scott Schneider (D-IL-10).

The bill, known as the *Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act of 2023* provides statutory authority for the Boots to Business Program, which provides entrepreneurship training to individuals including veterans and active members of the Armed Forces, to be administered by the Small Business Administration.

**S 326:** Introduced on February 9th by Senator Jon Tester (D-MT).

The bill is known as *VA Medicinal Cannabis Research Act of 2023* and will require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to study the effects of cannabis on veterans who are enrolled in the VA health care system and have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or chronic pain (i.e., eligible veterans).

**S 928:** Introduced on March 22nd by Senator Jon Tester (D-MT).

The bill is known as *Not Just a Number Act* and will require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to prepare an annual report on suicide prevention, and for other purposes.

# OPINIONS

*House Bill 57, sponsored by Representatives Thomas Hall (Madison Twp.) and Steve Demetriou (Bainbridge Twp.) is legislation that would adjust homestead exemptions to match inflation costs.*

*I recently testified before the House Ways and Means Committee as a proponent for HB 57. This in part, is my testimony.....*

I spent three days walking the Halls of Congress talking to our Ohio Congressmen and Senators about the current key issues the VFW would like them to be working on. High on that list was the prevention of veteran suicides. We all know that suicides are tied to mental health, and much is being done nationally and even here in Ohio to study the issue and to reduce the number of suicides among veterans.

What the VFW is advocating is that the VA look into the causes of these mental health issues our veterans are facing. We feel there is more than PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury causing veteran suicide. As an example, a 2020 study of recently transitioned service members found those with fewer years of education had a higher risk of suicide, with lack of education being a likely factor contributing to difficulty finding post-military employment and potentially leading to financial instability.

But education is only one of the areas VFW wants the VA to be working on. Problems with employment and compensation are two other areas that can push a veteran to feel

helpless and give up on everything. The last issue VFW feels is a contributor to veteran suicide is housing. Data from one study of veterans who reported housing instability between 2012 and 2016 indicated over half of these veterans accessed homeless services and associated this use of services to a significant reduction in suicide risk. This is a positive sign for the ability of these programs to perform upstream intervention.

While the VFW national organization is working with our national legislators to look at these things as a way to reduce veteran suicide, we can work together to reduce the risk of suicide here in Ohio. Housing is one of the ways.

The Ohio Housing Finance Agency published their 'Housing Needs Assessment for Fiscal Year 2021' and it stated -and I quote, "Ohio's oldest veterans face substantial housing cost burden. One-in-five veteran mortgage holders aged 75 and over (20%) were severely cost burdened in 2018". There are also many younger veteran homeowners who are 100% disabled who could also be facing housing cost burden. This is exactly the issue that can drive up the veteran suicide rate in Ohio.

House Bill 57 can be a big part of ending veteran suicides at a very small cost. Much more can be done to curb the financial burden of veterans owning a home in Ohio, but HB 57 is a start. A small adjustment to compensate for the rising cost of living each year can be the difference of living in peace and living on the street for some.

I would like to thank Representatives Hall and Demetriou for sponsoring House Bill 57 and I urge the committee to support the bill.

*David K. Root, Editor*

## Reflections

*"So long as we have enough people in this country willing to fight for their rights, we'll be called a democracy."*

*-Roger Nash Baldwin*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Ohio Legislative Report** welcomes letters to the editor.

- Letters are limited to 175 words.
- Letters containing more than 175 words may be edited.
- Letters will be subject to editing for accuracy, clarity, length, and taste.
- Letters must include writer's name, address, and phone number for the purpose of verification.

**EMAIL LETTERS TO:** [oh.leg.report@gmail.com](mailto:oh.leg.report@gmail.com)

# Legislation In The 135<sup>th</sup> Ohio General Assembly

Pertaining to Ohio Veterans, Active Duty, Reserve & National Guard, and their Families

- ◇ HB 18 Allow military license plate applicant present county veterans ID
- ◇ HB 33 Establishes operating appropriations for fiscal years 2024-2025
- ◇ HB53 Authorize refundable tax credits for hiring certain veterans
- ◇ HB 57 Index the homestead exemption to inflation
- ◇ HB 60 Increase amount of and expand the homestead exemption
- ◇ HB 69 Revise membership of county veterans service commissions
- ◇ HB 90 Authorize property tax exemption for disabled veterans, spouses
- ◇ HB 123 Designate Honor and Remember flag to honor fallen service members
- ◇ HB 126 Expand municipal income tax exemption for military pay
- ◇ HB 131 Designate Army SSgt. Charles V. Kettler Memorial Highway
- ◇ HB 132 Designate Army Sgt. Herbert C. Linville Memorial Highway
- ◇ HB 133 Designate Army Sgt. Ronnie Blair Memorial Highway
- ◇ HB 150 Prohibit rental discrimination based on lawful source of income
- ◇ HR 95 Urge Congress to extend GI Bill benefits
- ◇ SB 12 Regards veteran-owned business enterprise certification program
- ◇ SB 14 Expand veteran eligibility to teach without license
- ◇ SB 15 Authorize Military License Plate Program permanent registration
- ◇ SB 43 Modify homestead exemption-surviving spouse of a disabled veteran
- ◇ SB 45 Designate Veterans Memorial Bridge in Trumbull County
- ◇ SB 63 Require plaintiff in asbestos claim to file specified disclosures
- ◇ SB 64 Expand Ohio National Guard Scholarship Program
- ◇ SB 110 Designate Sgt. Anthony Kress Vinnedge Memorial Highway
- ◇ SB 113 Regards failure to comply with Military Selective Service System
- ◇ SB 114 Designate Lance Corporal James F. Kimple Memorial Highway

Follow, learn, and research every bill as it travels through the Ohio General Assembly

[www.legislature.ohio.gov](http://www.legislature.ohio.gov)

## OHIO CONSTITUTION

### ARTICLE I, BILL OF RIGHTS

#### SECTION 2 RIGHT TO ALTER, REFORM, OR ABOLISH GOVERNMENT, AND REPEAL SPECIAL PRIVILEGES

*Effective: 1851*

All political power is inherent in the people. Government is instituted for their equal protection and benefit, and they have the right to alter, reform, or abolish the same, whenever they may deem it necessary; and no special privileges or immunities shall ever be granted, that may not be altered, revoked, or repealed by the general assembly.

### 2023 OHIO SPECIAL/GENERAL ELECTIONS CALENDAR

July 10 Deadline for Voter Registration for August 8 Special Election

**August 8 Special Election Day**

Oct 10 Deadline for Voter Registration for November 7 General Election

**November 7 General Election day**

# ***Back in the day...***

## **The Northwest Ordinance**

One of the most important legislative documents in U.S. history, the Northwest Ordinance, is relatively unknown compared to its "siblings," the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Federal Constitution. July 13, 1987, marked the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Northwest Ordinance. Its importance cannot be underrated, as it laid the foundation for our system of free public education, set up the mechanism for the introduction of new states to the Union, and outlawed slavery northwest of the Ohio River. In addition, it made guarantees of individual liberties that were the cornerstone of the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Right..



## **Statehood**

At least six states had territory affected by the terms of the Northwest Ordinance. Ohio was the first of these to enter the Union. Initially, the Ohio Territory was ruled by a military governor and three judges. Residents had no voice in government and were represented in the U.S. Congress by a non-voting delegate. It was in 1798 that the Ohio Territory gained sufficient population (5,000) of males to initiate self-government. A 22-member territorial legislature was formed, of which five members were selected to serve as territorial council.

Eligibility for statehood came in 1802, when the population reached 60,000 persons. Male voters

elected delegates to a Constitutional Convention. The delegates drafted the constitution on which our state government is based. On February 19, 1803, the U.S. Congress approved the constitution and admitted Ohio as the 17th state.

The constitution called for a bicameral legislature, similar to the federal model, consisting of a House of Representatives and Senate. The first session (meeting) of the Ohio House occurred in

Chillicothe on March 3, 1803 and consisted of 30 members. This first session was concerned with levying taxes, creating counties, and appropriating monies for the operation of the state.

## **Constitutional Conventions**

In 1850, the people of Ohio voted to hold a second constitutional convention. Rapid population growth, an inadequate judicial system, legislative power, tax reform and flexibility were some of the issues that were

addressed. Ohio's second constitution was completed in 1851.

Two more constitutional conventions were held to construct today's government. Each one placed more legislative power in the hand of the voters. The conventions also helped equalize the branches of government, giving the governor veto power at the third constitutional convention in 1873. The fourth and final convention was held in 1912.

## ***Strange but True...***

Ohio became the 17th state of the Union when President Thomas Jefferson endorsed the United States Congress's decision to grant statehood on Feb. 19, 1803. Due to an oversight, Ohio wasn't "officially" admitted to the United States until Aug. 7, 1953.