Ohio Legislative Report

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'Ohio Legislative Report'

Ohio Legislative Report

Is published electronically at the beginning of each month to report on the latest information about legislative issues taking place in Columbus that could affect the lives of Veterans, Military Personnel, their families, and Veteran Organizations in Ohio.

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

To subscribe, send your name and email address to:
oh.leg.report@gmail.com

Editor: David K. Root

Statehouse Happenings

Our legislators are now very busy in their districts or visiting other legislators. There has been a higher use of social media and a higher number of newsletters than in previous months. All for a very good reason… in November we hold the General Election. This trend will undoubtedly continue or even increase during the next three months.

As always, OL Report suggests that our readers take full advantage of the trend and get to know their legislators better while at the same time getting to know the other folks running for those seats. Readers should spend the five months learning all they can about the candidates, and the issues. There will be time to dig deep and learn what the candidates have actually done – not just what they say they will do.

NEW LEGISLATIONS IN JULY:

There was only one bill introduced and no resolutions. No hearings were held for any of the veteran/military legislation. This same thing will happen every month until November.

RESULTS OF THE '*SOUND OFF*' QUESTION:

In the May and June issues we asked our readers to let us know what legislation they felt was the most important for the general assembly to pass before the end of the term in December.

We also asked the same question on the Ohio Legislative Report Facebook page as well as several other venues. Every time we asked the question, we received two or three responses. We ended up with a list of more than two dozen items.

Most of the answers came as general topics without many details given if any. But some gave us a better understanding of what they really wanted.

The number one issue on many minds is not a big surprise. It is the number one issue for most people right now –not just veterans and military folks. Property Taxes.

Most came in simply as "Property Tax Exemptions". There were a couple that offered more details in their responses. One said, "Pass Senate Bill 92". Another said to "pass a tiered system

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of property tax exclusion". Several said, "full exemption for 100% disabled veterans".

There were two who added a personal comment to their response. One said, "Any Kind of property tax relief. My husband has zero disability from the army, but our taxes will cause us to lose our home." Another said, "I'm strongly considering moving to Michigan or S.C. specifically because those states offer property tax exemptions for 100% DAV."

The topic that came in with the next highest number of responses was protection from claim sharks. The one comment was, "Make Claim Sharks, or anyone not accredited through the VA, illegal."

There were many responses that were from just one or two people, but they covered a wide variety of topics.

- Expand the scholarship program for National Guard members.
- Tax exemptions for companies that hire veterans.
- A Grant Program for Veteran Service Organizations.
- Educational benefits for veteran's spouses and children.
- Free hunting and/or fishing licenses.
- Reduced rates for vehicle license plates.
- Better marketing by ODVS for all the benefits Ohio offers to veterans, military, and families.
- Requiring all 88 Counties to set up Veterans Courts.

If any of our readers want to add their topics please send them in. We will add them to our current list that could be used to let the General Assembly know what is important.

Send your replies to: oh.leg.report@gmail.com

—OLR—

Ohio Legislative Report
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Details of every bill can be found on the Ohio Legislature website. You can check the status of bills as they travel thorough committees and sessions, voting results, and read the testimonies of witnesses.

To find a bill put the bill number in the search bar and go from there.

Find the Ohio Legislature's website here:
www.legislature.ohio.gov

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OLR welcomes letters to the editor

* Letters are limited to 250 words.
* 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 YOUR LETTERS TO:
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DON'T FORGET
REGISTER TO VOTE

Reflections

"I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education."

-Thomas Jefferson

A look at what the bills say... In a Nutshell

Summaries from the Office of Research and Drafting

The House Veterans and Military Development Committee has two bills that will have lasting results with Ohio's veteran population. The bill sponsors maintain that their bill will protect their VA benefits.

Introduced on February 18 was House Bill 708. The sponsor was Representative **Bernard Willis** (HD-74) and there were 22 cosponsors.

Introduced on June 8 was House Bill 961. The sponsors were Representatives **Sean P. Brennan** (HD-14) and **Daniel P. Troy** (HD-23). There bill has 8 cosponsors.

Neither bill has had the first hearing scheduled yet.

A controversy between the two bills has developed that could jeopardize their passage during this General Assembly. While both bills claim to provide the needed protection of veterans benefits from unscrupulous claim assistant companies, there are some Veteran Service Organization who will disagree.

Passage of the wrong bill could hurt our veterans financially, but passage of the right bill could offer them the piece of mind they need when filing their VA claims.

You decide...

House Bill 708-

The Summary & Analysis

As Introduced

SUMMARY

- Governs the practice of providing veterans claim consulting assistance for compensation and establishes that prohibited actions constitute a violation of the Consumer Sales Practices Act.
- Establishes requirements, within the Consumer Sales Practices Act, for soliciting a fee for providing a copy of a military discharge record.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Veterans claim consulting assistance

The bill establishes a framework of governance to regulate the practice of providing veterans claim consulting assistance for compensation. For purposes of bill, "compensation" and "veterans benefits matter" are defined as follows:

"Compensation" means any money, thing of value, or economic benefit conferred on, or received by, a person in return for services rendered, or to be rendered, by the person or another.

"Veterans benefits matter" means the preparation, presentation, or prosecution of any claim affecting any person who has filed or expressed an intent to file a claim for any benefit, program, service, commodity, function, status, or entitlement that is determined to pertain to veterans, their dependents, their survivors, or any other person eligible for such benefits under the laws and regulations administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or by the state.

Written agreement

Under the bill, a person seeking to receive compensation for advising, assisting, or consulting with any individual in connection with any veterans benefits matter must, before rendering any services, memorialize the specific terms under which the amount to be paid will be determined in a written agreement signed by both parties. Compensation must be purely contingent upon an increase in benefits awarded, and if successful, compensation may not exceed five times the amount of the monthly increase in benefits awarded based on the claim. No initial or nonrefundable fee may be charged by a person advising, assisting, or consulting an individual on a veterans benefits matter.

Prohibitions

The bill prohibits the following:

1. Receiving compensation for referring an individual to another person to advise or assist the individual with any veterans benefits matter;
2. Receiving compensation for services rendered, with respect to the individual's case, in connection with a claim filed within one year after the individual's date of separation of service; 3. Guaranteeing, either directly or by implication, a successful outcome or that an individual is certain to receive specific veterans benefits or that an individual is certain to receive a specific level, percentage, or amount of veterans benefits

Disclosure

Under the bill, any person advising, assisting, or consulting on veterans benefits matters for compensation must provide the following disclosure at the outset of the business relationship:

> This business is not sponsored by, or affiliated with, the United States department of veterans affairs, the Ohio department of veterans services, an Ohio county veterans service commission, or

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any federally chartered veterans service organization. Those organizations may be able to provide you with this service free of charge. Products or services offered by this business are not endorsed by any of these organizations. You may qualify for other veterans benefits beyond the benefits for which you are receiving services here.

The written disclosure must appear in at least 12-point font and must appear in a readily noticeable and identifiable place in the person's agreement with the individual seeking services. The individual must sign the document in which the written disclosure appears to represent understanding of these provisions. The person offering services must retain a copy of the written disclosure while providing veterans benefits services for compensation to the individual and for at least one year after the date on which the services terminate.

Privacy protections

A person who is advising, assisting, or consulting on veterans benefits matters for a fee must ensure that any individual who has access to a veteran's medical or financial information has undergone a background check before having access to that information. The background check must be conducted by a reputable source and include identity verification and a criminal records check. Also, the person must not utilize international call centers or data centers for processing veterans personal information and must not use a veteran's personal log-in, username, or password information to access that veteran's medical, financial, or government benefits information.5

Federally accredited agent or attorney exemption

The veterans claim consulting assistance provisions of the bill do not apply to an agent or attorney who is or is required to be accredited under federal law as a Service Organization Representative to assist claimants in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims for veterans administration benefits.

Soliciting a fee for providing a military discharge record

The bill requires that a supplier who solicits a fee for providing a copy of a military discharge record, or a free copy of the record in connection with the solicitation for any other service, must provide to the purchaser a written document before the collection of any fee. The document must clearly set forth the fee for the service and must state on the top of the document, in at least 24-point type, all of the following:

- The solicitation is not from a public body;
- No action is legally required by the person being solicited;
- The military discharge record may be obtained free of charge from the U.S. National Archives or from a county veterans service commission. If the military discharge record has previously been recorded with a county recorder's office, it may be obtained from that office by an authorized party;
- The information necessary to contact the U.S. National Archives and the appropriate county veterans service commission;
- The name and physical address of the person soliciting the fee.

The bill defines "military discharge record" for purposes of the Consumer Sales Practices Act, as "a United States department of defense certificate of release or discharge from active duty, form DD-214, and any other discharge document issued by the United States department of defense."

Fee

Under the bill, a supplier soliciting a fee for providing a copy of a military discharge record may not charge a fee in excess of $5 per record provided.9 Suppliers must furnish, to the county veterans service commission and to the county recorder's office of each county where the solicitation occurs, a copy of the document that will be used for the solicitation not less than 15 days before distributing the solicitation.

Consumer Sales Practices Act

A violation of the veterans claim consulting assistance provision of the bill constitutes an unfair or deceptive act or practice in connection with a consumer transaction under the Consumer Sales Practices Act (CSPA). The bill specifies that any civil penalties collected for a violation of the bill's provisions must be deposited into the Military Injury Relief Fund.

A supplier who solicits a fee for providing a copy of a military discharge record, and who charges an unapproved fee, or who fails to furnish a copy of the solicitation, may be found to have committed an unconscionable consumer sales act or practice, under CSPA.13 Note, the Attorney General may bring certain actions, which would be in the public interest, for

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violations of the CSPA, such as an action to obtain a declaratory judgement, an action to obtain a temporary restraining order, or an injunction to restrain the act or practice, and a class action.

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House Bill 961-

The Summary & Analysis
As Introduced

SUMMARY

▪ Governs the practice of providing veterans claim assistance for compensation.
▪ Requires that a person seeking compensation for providing assistance regarding a veterans benefits matter must be accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
▪ Names the act the "Veterans Empowerment Through Ethical Representation and Navigation Act (V.E.T.E.R.A.N. Benefits Protection Act)."

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Veterans claim assistance for compensation

Federal accreditation

The bill governs the practice of providing veterans claim assistance for compensation. Under the bill, a person seeking compensation for providing assistance regarding a veterans benefits matter must be accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

For purposes of bill, "compensation," "person," and "veterans benefits matter" are defined as follows:

- "Compensation" means any money, thing of value, or economic benefit conferred on, or received by, a person in return for services rendered, or to be rendered, by the person or another;
- "Person" means an individual, sole proprietorship, partnership, joint venture, association, trust, estate, business trust, limited liability company, corporation, or any similar entity or organization;
- "Veterans benefits matter" means the preparation, presentation, or prosecution of, or advising, consulting, or assisting an individual regarding any claim affecting any person who has filed or expressed an intent to file a claim for any benefit, program, service, commodity, function,

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Statehouse Announcements

-EXHIBITS-

Uniforms and Flags of America 250
Feb. 27 - Dec. 31, 2026
Thomas Worthington Center
In honor of America-250, replicas of 1776 clothing and flags are on display in the Gov. Thomas Worthington Center. Updates are happening throughout the year, so be sure to stop in and see if there's anything new when you visit!

Fort Laurens Artifacts
August 8 - December 31
Map Room
New exhibit alert! Artifacts will be on display this August in the Map Room from Fort Laurens. Fort Laurens is special because it's the site of Ohio's single Revolutionary War fort. Check out items like musket balls, gun locks, coins and so much more.

Thirty-Six-Star Flag from the Civil War Era
Now - November 12
Rotunda
There's still time to see the historic thirty-six-star flag that flew over Capitol Square in 1865. This flag was waving in the wind during the repose of President Abraham Lincoln. The flag will be taken down in November. More information about the exhibit can be found on our website OhioStatehouse.org.

The Ohio Statehouse is where history happens!

See you at the People's House!

The Ohio Statehouse is where history happens!

- The Ohio Statehouse is open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; weekends from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; closed holidays.
- The Capitol Café is open 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekdays.
- The Ohio Statehouse Museum is open, and admission is free. Free guided tours are available.

- For education and museum information, contact 614-728-2697.
- Literature is available online and in the Map Room easily accessible from the Third Street entrance.
- Contact 888-OHIO-123 for more information.
- For more information about the Ohio Statehouse visit OhioStatehouse.org.

status, or entitlement that is determined to pertain to veterans, their dependents, their survivors, or any other person eligible for such benefits under the laws and regulations administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or by the state.

Prohibitions

Under the bill, no person may:

1. Receive compensation for preparation, presentation, or prosecution of, or advising, consulting, or assisting an individual regarding any veterans benefits matter, except as permitted under federal law;
2. Receive compensation from an individual for referring that individual to another person to advise or assist the individual with any veterans benefits matter;
3. Provide a guarantee, either directly or by implication, that an individual is certain to be awarded specific veterans or dependent benefits, or certain to receive a specific rating, level, percentage, or amount of benefits from programs administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs;
4. Render assistance, for compensation, to an individual regarding a veterans benefits matter without a fee agreement that is in compliance with federal law.

Consumer Sales Practices Act

A violation of a provision of the bill constitutes an unfair or deceptive act or practice in connection with a consumer transaction under the Consumer Sales Practices Act (CSPA). Under current law, the Attorney General may bring certain actions, which would be in the public interest, for violations of the CSPA, such as an action to obtain a declaratory judgement, an action to obtain a temporary restraining order, or an injunction to restrain the act or practice, and a class action.

Title

This bill is entitled the "Veterans Empowerment Through Ethical Representation and Navigation Act (V.E.T.E.R.A.N. Benefits Protection Act)."

—OLR—

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Ohio Legislative Report

2026 GENERAL ELECTION DAY

Tuesday, November 3rd

September 18: Military and overseas voting begins

Oct. 05: Deadline for voter registration for Nov. 3 general election

Oct. 06: Early in-person voting and absentee voting by mail begins (first day after close of voter registration)

Oct. 28: Applications for absentee ballots to be mailed for Nov. 3 general election must be received by boards of elections by the close of business

Nov. 03: General Election Day. -Polls open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Absentee ballots, returned in person or via a method other than U.S. Mail, must be received by the boards of elections by close of polls

LEGISLATION INTRODUCED IN JULY

HB 974 was introduced on July 17 by Representative **Sharon A. Ray** (HD-66).

The bill would enact section 5534.622 of the Revised Code to designate a portion of State Route 421 in Medina County as the "LCpl Richard O. Fisher Memorial Highway."

It has not been referred to any committee.

Legislation In The 136th Ohio General Assembly

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

HB 1 Enact Ohio Property Protection Act
HB 22 Authorize homestead exemption for surviving military spouses
HB 27 Designate Specialist Jacob A. Ashton Memorial Bridge
HB 40 Increase disabled veteran enhanced homestead exemption
HB 50 To designate a portion of SR 47 the "PFC John Wayne Richard Memorial Highway."
HB 56 To designate a portion of SR 421 the "CPL David James Amheiser Memorial Highway."
HB 61 Modify homestead exemption, owner-occupancy tax credit amount
HB 95 Support members of Ohio Veterans Education Council
HB 96 Make state operating appropriations for FY 2026-27
HB 135 Prohibit source of income discrimination in rental housing
HB 171 Designate a portion of State Route 28 the “CPT Louis John Speidel Memorial Highway.”
HB 192 Enact the Community Pharmacy Protection Act
HB 198 Regulate manufacture, sale of inhalable, ingestible hemp products
HB 204 Designate 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion Day
HB 228 To designate a portion of I 280 the "SSG Jack W. Coy Veterans Memorial Highway."
HB 234 Designate Cpl. Robert Dockstader Memorial Highway
HB 259 Designate Captain Joshua Michael McClimans Memorial Highway
HB 267 Regards creation, display of veterans benefit and services poster
HB 290 Enact the Atmosphere Protection Act
HB 292 Establish the Ohio Defense Commission
HB 297 Regards funds provided by county for Memorial Day expenses
HB 316 Designate MSGT Norman Michael Kilbarger Memorial Highway
HB 335 Regards county budget commissions, property and sales tax, funds
HB 339 Allow surviving spouse to retain Purple Heart license plate
HB 344 Regards electronic instant bingo, lottery terminals; levy a tax
HB 360 Designate SPC Louis P. Shuster Memorial Interchange
HB 383 Designate Litten Brothers Memorial Highway
HB 384 Designate Staff Sergeant Melvin Trushel, Sr. Memorial Highway
HB 385 Designate PFC Thomas "Tommy" Pizzino Memorial Highway
HB 414 Designate Navy Seaman Jadwisiak Memorial Highway

More on next Page...

HB 419 Create the Save22 license plate
HB 434 Exempt military driver's license applicants from driver's ed
HB 451 Designate CPL Lindsey William Mitchell Memorial Highway
HB 452 Designate 761st Tank Battalion Day
HB 464 Exempt military-certified child care providers from licensure
HB 476 Authorize online raffles under the Charitable Gaming Law
HB 497 Designate PFC James Vincent PottKotter Memorial Highway
HB 500 Designate a school JROTC program as a career-technical ed program
HB 516 Designate 83rd Ohio Division Memorial Highway
HB 529 Authorize tax credit if hiring veterans, service members, spouse
HB 576 Designate November as Veterans' month
HB 580 Designate PFC Francis Guillozet Memorial Highway
HB 600 Designate PFC Wetzel Eldridge USMC Memorial Highway
HB 607 Name Spc. 4th Class Frank A. Herda, Medal of Honor Rec. Mem Hwy
HB 632 Allow driver's license or ID card to show Gold Star Family status
HB 660 Regards the Ohio National Guard Scholarship Program
HB 681 Designate Marine PFC Glenn S. Wingenbach, Jr. Memorial Highway
HB 708 Govern practice of providing veterans claim consulting assistance
HB 721 Establish the Veterans Organization Grant Program
HB 730 Make capital reappropriations for biennium ending June 30, 2028
HB 731 Create the Land of U.S. Grant license plate
HB 738 Designate PFC Chris Dixon Memorial Highway
HB 740 Regards creation, display of veterans medical benefits poster
HB 748 Establish the Armed Forces Reserve Component Scholarship Program
HB 759 Enact the Ohio Vets-Military Families Childcare Act
HB 771 Modify Governor's authority re: Ohio National Guard; deployments
HB 785 Enact the ASSET Act
HB 788 Regards paid military leave for law enforcement officers
HB 790 Miller, JDesignate the Honor and Remember flag; encourage flag display
HB 823 Regards deployed elected official's office, meeting attendance
HB 824 Allow deployed elected official to retain the official's position
HB 844 Authorize tax credit for qualifying technology investments
HB 879 Prohibit unlawful removal of item used as a memorial for the dead
HB 886 Enact the V.E.T.E.R.A.N. Benefits Protection Act
HB 933 Enact the Fair Trial Protection Act
HB 955 Expand homestead exemption - disabled veteran's surviving spouse
HB 959 Make capital appropriations for the biennium ending June 30, 2028
HB 961 Enact the V.E.T.E.R.A.N. Benefits Protection Act
HB 962 Create the Blue Star Mothers of America license plate
HB 974 Designate LCpl Richard O. Fisher Memorial Highway

HCR 7 To support the work of the Am. Leg. Buckeye Boys State and the Am. Leg. Aux. Buckeye Girls State
HCR 18 Urge Congress to recognize US troops who served in Honduras
HCR 20 Honor the United States Navy; commemorate its 250th anniversary
HCR 21 Recognize the 250th anniversary of the United States Marine Corps
HCR 23 Recognize 250th anniversary of United States Army, Chaplain Corps
HCR 27 Support use of state land for a new VA National cemetery
HCR 42 Urge Congress to enact the Veterans' ACCESS Act

HJR 9 CA: Require identification to vote

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HR 133 Honoring Battery B, 1st Battalion, 134th Field Artillery Regiment on its One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary
HR 243 Urge selection of Rickenbacker as KC-46 Pegasus operating base
HR 365 In memory of Master Sergeant Tyler Simmons
HR 370 In Memory of Captain Curtis J. Angst
HR 378 In memory of Captain Seth R. Koval
HR 390 Honoring Beavercreek High School Air Force JROTC as a 2026 U.S. Air Force Open Drill Nationals Champion
HR 447 Designate Honor and Remember Flag to honor fallen service members

SB 17 Designate 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion Day
SB 21 Designate Rutherford B. Hayes Day
SB 39 Provide for informational poster on veteran benefits and services
SB 56 Revise medical and adult-use marijuana laws; levy marijuana taxes
SB 88 Enact the Ohio Property Protection Act
SB 92 Authorize total property tax exemption-totally disabled veterans
SB 148 Designate a portion of State Route 2 the "Specialist Lloyd Andrew Sellers Memorial Highway."
SB 179 Verify veteran status of imprisoned individuals
SB 193 Designate Captain Joshua Michael McClimans Memorial Highway
SB 197 Legalize, tax internet gambling; make other Gambling Law changes
SB 218 Exempt armed forces-certified child care provider from licensure
SB 223 Require ODNR discount program for veterans, service members
SB 244 Designate Abbey Gate Remembrance Day
SB 253 Designate Black Ohioan Civil War Medal of Honor Recipient Day
SB 280 Allow registration of a humvee as a historical motor vehicle
SB 293 Revise deadline to return absent voter ballots
SB 302 Create the Land of U.S. Grant license plate
SB 346 Create the 1905 Wright Flyer III license plate
SB 351 Allow deployed service member to attend public meetings virtually
SB 356 Temporarily increase the amount of the homestead exemptions
SB 362 Establish the Ohio Defense and Space Commission
SB 372 Make capital reappropriations for biennium ending June 30, 2028
SB 401 Designate General William Tecumseh Sherman Day
SB 402 Designate General Philip Sheridan Day
SB 416 Regards board of education members deployed on active duty
SB 417 Enact the ASSET Act

SCR 7 Urge Congress reissue DoD Civilian Retiree Identification Cards

SJR10 CA: Require identification to vote

SR 21 Urge Congress support military, veteran mental health treatment
SR 22 Urge federal govt reduce processing time-veteran disability claim
SR 52 Honoring the DAR Elizabeth Sherman Reese Chapter on its 150th Anniversary
SR 97 Observing April 2025 as the Month of the Military Child in Ohio
SR 123 Honoring Deborah A. Ashenhurst on her retirement from the OVDS
SR 192 Recognizing Rutherford B. Hayes Day in Ohio
SR 233 Honoring James W. Erisman on his One Hundredth Birthday
SR 299 In memory of Captain Seth R. Koval
SR 301 In memory of Captain Curtis J. Angst
SR 324 Recognizing the Month of the Military Child in Ohio, April 2026
SR 332 Honoring Beavercreek HS AFJROTC on winning two 2026 U.S. Air Force Open Drill Nationals championships
SB 450 Make capital appropriations for the biennium ending June 30, 2028