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:
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Statehouse Happenings

December was a full month of winter break for the Ohio General Assembly. There were no hearings held on any veteran/military bill. There was no voting on any bills. Only one bill was introduced (you can find that on page 8). There were no resolutions introduced or adopted.

Our legislators spent time at home for the most part with family celebrating the holiday of their choice. Just like most of our readers did.

As we look forward to a new year –the second and last for the 136th General Assembly –we anticipate a very active year. An election year and a lame duck session will create a hectic and hurried twelve month.

The Ohio Legislative Report hopes our readers have a safe, healthy, happy, and prosperous 2026.

A look at what the bills say... In a Nut Shell

Summaries from the Office of Research and Drafting

A bill introduced in January of last year would create an enhanced homestead exemption for the surviving spouses of uniformed service members killed in the line of duty equal to all taxes imposed on the homestead. It was House Bill 22 and was referred to the House Ways and Means Committee.

In February the bill sponsors testified before the committee and in March a second hearing was held and the committee received testimony from Secretary of State, Frank LaRose, a Gold Star Spouse, and the great grandson of two Gold Star Mothers. All were in support of HB 22.

Four more hearings were held in March, April, and May with no witnesses at any of them. However two amendments were made to the bill during the May hearings.

During the first May hearing an amendment was made that would require a surviving spouse to have lived in Ohio for at least one year before receiving the bill's enhanced homestead exemption and limits the exemption to 10 tax years.

An amendment to allow a surviving spouse to maintain the exemption through the year of their death regardless of whether the surviving spouse remarries or cohabitates with an unrelated individual was made during the second May hearing.

Since the sixth hearing in May, House Bill 22 has not had any hearings.

House Bill 22-

The Detailed Analysis

As Introduced (before being amended)

Homestead exemption: gold star spouses

Continuing law provides a property tax credit for the residence, or "homestead," of certain qualifying individuals. The standard "homestead exemption" equals the taxes that would be charged on up to $28,000, adjusted for inflation, of the true value of a home owned by a homeowner who is 65 years of age or older, permanently and totally disabled, or at least 59 years old and the surviving spouse of an individual who previously received the exemption. ("True value" is the appraised fair market value.) This standard exemption is means-tested, so only homeowners with household income below a certain threshold ($40,000 for tax year 2025) may qualify for the exemption. A special "enhanced" exemption of $56,000, also adjusted for inflation, is available for the home of (1) an honorably discharged veteran of the armed forces with a total disability or the veteran's surviving spouse and (2) a surviving spouse of an emergency responder who died in the line of duty.

The bill creates an additional enhanced exemption for the surviving spouse of a uniformed service member killed in the line of duty equal to all of the current year's taxes assessed against the spouse's homestead. In essence, the enhanced exemption completely exempts such a surviving spouse's home from taxation. The exemption continues until the spouse dies, remarries, or cohabitates with another person that does not share a common ancestor with the surviving spouse ("consanguinity"). This is stricter than the enhanced exemptions for the surviving spouse of a disabled veteran or an emergency responder, which only terminate when the spouse either dies or remarries. The bill's exemption extends to members of the uniformed services, which includes the branches of the armed forces along with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Public Health Service. Like the other enhanced exemptions, the bill's exemption does not require the surviving spouse to earn below a certain income to qualify. The exemption does not apply to the surviving spouse of a dishonorably discharged uniformed service member. Similar to all other homestead exemptions, the bill's enhanced exemption applies to manufactured and mobile homes regardless of whether they are taxed as real property or subject to the manufactured home tax. Also similar to other homestead exemptions, the enhanced exemption does not exempt the homestead from special assessments.

See *Nut Shell* on Page Four...

WHAT OTHER STATES ARE DOING

There are many bills that will help veterans, military, or families of veteran or service member in just about, if not all the fifty states. Some of them are similar to bills we have in the Ohio General Assembly and some of them are unique to the states they are in. There are the 'Hey, why didn't I think of that' variety and some that might make you shake your head in bewilderment.

OLR takes a look at some of the Vet/Military bills in other states. They are bills introduced within the past year or so. They may still be in committees, have passed out of committee, or have been signed into law. You can look at the progress of each by going to the websites of each of the state's legislature. Maybe some of them will spark some interest and begin to grow in Ohio.

IN THE OREGON GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SB 150 The measure prohibits, except as applicable, compensation for preparing or advising on applications for veterans' benefits, appealing decisions on such claims, or for referring veterans to those providing these services.

SB 230 The measure requires dental care organizations and oral health providers contracting with the Oregon Health Authority to provide oral health care to veterans and to complete an intake screening with enrollees within 60 days of their contact with the organization or provider.

HB 3920 The measure modifies the Veterans' Dependent Tuition Waiver. It raises the age by which a dependent child can apply for the waiver from 23 to 31, removes the requirement that qualified students apply for a master's degree within 12 months of receiving a baccalaureate degree to receive a tuition waiver for a master's degree, and allows an exemption to the age limit for anyone qualifying for the federal Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) program.

SB 807 The measure allows the Adjutant General to pay a bonus to members of the Oregon National Guard who reenlist or extend their period of service for at least three years and agree to any other conditions required by the Adjutant General. The bonus must be repaid if the member fails to complete the agreed-upon conditions or period of service; exceptions may be granted in specified circumstances.

SB 808 The measure adds current and former members of the Oregon National Guard to existing hiring preferences for veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States applying to, or seeking promotion in, civil service positions.

HB 3968 The measure adds the U.S. Space Force to Oregon statutes that name the other U.S. armed forces.

IN THE MICHIGAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SB 207 and **SB 208** The bills would create a grant program administered by the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency to help fund veterans service organizations that engage in veterans' service operations, such as assisting veterans in obtaining Federal Veterans Affairs health benefits. Veteran service organizations, such as the American Legion or the Veterans of Foreign Wars, serve with the purpose of connecting veterans and their dependents with benefits and services for which they are eligible.

Continued on next Page...

States, from Page Three

SB 215 The bill would amend the Michigan Consumer Protection Act to do the following:
-- Expand the definition of "veterans' benefit service" to include disability benefits.
-- Allow only an individual accredited under applicable Federal laws and regulations to represent a veteran or a veteran's family as an agent or attorney.
-- Require a person seeking compensation for providing veterans' benefit services for an initial claim for disability benefits to establish amounts to be paid in writing, receive only compensation contingent on an increase in awarded benefits, and protect a client veteran's personal and digital information, among other requirements

SB 703 The bill would designate the Honor and Remember flag as the official symbol of remembrance of the state of Michigan.

HB 5265 The bill would create a grant program to assist veterans in obtaining service animals; create certain funds; and provide for the powers and duties of certain state governmental entities.

HB 5266 The bill would create the office of veteran homelessness; provide for the identification, coordination, alignment, and acquisition of available resources and available programs for homeless veterans in this state; provide support and programs to secure housing for homeless veterans in this state or otherwise address veteran homelessness; provide for the powers and duties of certain state governmental officers and entities; and make appropriations and prescribe certain conditions for the appropriations.

HB 5269 The bill would require certain state and local governmental officers and entities to notify a county department of veterans' affairs or county board of commissioners of a report of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a veteran; and provide for the powers and duties of certain state and local governmental officers and entities.

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Nut Shell, from Page Two

Application requirements

As with all current homestead exemptions, a surviving spouse must apply to the county auditor to qualify for the exemption. The applicant must include with this initial application a copy of the service member's U.S. Department of Defense form DD-1300 Report of Casualty or other federal documentation showing the service member was killed in the line of duty. After this initial application, no further application is needed to maintain the exemption, but the auditor must be notified if the homestead no longer qualifies for the bill's exemption.2 (This notification is required under continuing law to report ineligibility for all current homestead exemptions.)

Reimbursement of local taxing units

As with all current homestead exemptions, local taxing units are reimbursed by the state for the reduction in property tax revenue that results from the bill's enhanced homestead exemption. The reimbursement is paid from the GRF semiannually or annually.

Application date

The enhanced homestead exemption for surviving spouses begins to apply for tax years ending after the bill's effective date or, in the case of homes that are subject to the manufactured home tax, tax years commencing after that date. The difference in application is accounted for by the fact that manufactured home tax is payable on a current-year basis, whereas property tax is payable in arrears.

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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:
oh.leg.report@gmail.com

SOUND OFF

Last month in Sound Off, OLR informed our readers about a published report ranking all fifty states on how veteran friendly they were. The report ranked Ohio in the 22nd spot.

OLR asked our readers to send us their suggestions for what Ohio needed to be more veteran friendly. The responses are given below.

All responses are listed. Our readers will see similar or duplicate items. There are possibly items that are already in the Ohio Revised Code or bills currently being worked on in the General Assembly. We listed them all so our readers will get a better understanding of what are the most important needs of our veterans.

Here are the suggestions we received.

From E.M. via email:

- Grant in-state tuition rates to qualified veterans and their dependents immediately upon establishing domicile, waiving the typical residency requirements.
- Accept and evaluate military experience and education for equivalent school credit to prevent redundant coursework.
- Designate "Purple Star" schools and universities that are supportive and inclusive of military-connected students and their families.
- Establish dedicated points of contact or veteran centers at educational institutions to serve as a resource hub for military students.
- Provide priority registration for veterans and service members at state colleges and universities.
- Exclude military pension from income tax.
- Provide for military education as equivalent for civilian counterpart jobs. If you were a trained electrician in the Navy, you should be able to be a licensed electrician in the civilian world w/o the hassle.
- Just provide the documentation.
- Facilitate professional license and certification transfers for military members and their spouses who are licensed in another state.
- Perhaps have add beds to the current Veterans homes. Or have smaller units/homes scattered across the state.
- The state-level sharks bill.

From a County Veterans Service Commission via email:

After conferring with my team, one of the largest suggestions they came up with is:
No state income taxes for all veterans who reside in Ohio to include military retirees and gray retired national guardsmen.
Personal property taxes reduced by percentage of disability to 100%= zero property tax.
2 more Veterans homes so all 4 corners of Ohio are covered.

From L.D. via email:

Its been awhile since I was looking up places to retire to, but it did stay with me that many states reduce the burden of retirement for veterans through various tax breaks.

The one veterans talked a lot about is no income tax. To me, those states just take bigger license plate taxes or sales taxes, so it winds up being a regressive tax.

A few had reduced property tax for veterans with any disability. That could encourage home ownership and stabilize neighborhoods. (You know how hard it is to get to 100% disability.) IF they want to get clever, they could target communities that need stability, like low-mod cities, to incentivize veterans as kind of a natural "community watch".

From D.R. via email:

Free tuition for college, university, and trade school for Gold Star families

Create a dedicated fund to adequately support Ohio's 888 Suicide & Crisis Hotline

Recognize the Honor and Remember flag

Make it illegal for any firm or individual to file

Continued on next Page...

Reflections

"Surely anyone who has ever been elected to public office understands that one commodity above all others, namely the trust and confidence of the people, is fundamental in maintaining a free and open political system."

- Hubert H. Humphrey

Sound Off, from Page Five

VA claims for veterans unless they are VA accredited Service Officers

Mental health funding for the spouses of disabled veterans.

Property tax exemption for disabled veterans who are VA rated at 60% or higher

Double the number of beds available in Ohio Veterans Homes –either enlarge the ones we have or build new ones

From J.T. via telephone:

The biggest issue in our area is the lack of affordable housing. Rent is way too high for many veterans. Sellers do not want to sell to veterans using a VA home loan because the VA requires the seller to pay for all closing costs.

The other big problem is high property tax. Ohio should look at the neighboring states and at least match the state with the best property tax exemption for veterans. Neighboring states are much more veteran friendly.

From A.N. via email:

Upon reading the most veteran friendly states article and seeing how Ohio was ranked 22nd when Ohio is one of the Top 10 Veteran populated states. I researched both the Education aspects of other states and property tax exemptions for other states. I feel if we, the State of Ohio can tackle these two key issues, we can begin to make Ohio one of the Top Veteran Friendly states.

Education For Veteran Dependents

Upon reviewing all the different states veteran and dependents education benefits, I think a combination of Maine and Nebraska's Dependents education benefits, and something like Missouri does for their Veterans would bring in Veterans to Ohio along with making it veteran friendly.

Maine: Tuition free, including mandatory fees and lab fees for Associates and Bachelors, room and board is not waived. Tuition waivers may be reduced by an amount necessary to ensure the value of waivers combined with other grants/benefits do not exceed the cost of education. Has 6 academic years to complete 8 semesters (may be waived for Medical Disability or Illness delaying education). Requirements: Veteran must have entered service through Maine or been a resident of Maine for 5 years preceding application, 100% Service Connected, KIA/MIA/POW, died from a service-connected condition. If the veteran dies and applicant applies 5 years after residency is established, it will be as if the veteran fulfilled the 5-year requirement.

Nebraska: Tuition waiver. Requirements: Resident of state, parent/stepparent/spouse member of the military. 1) Died from SC disability, 2) died subsequent to discharge from injury/illness from service, 3) 100% P/T disabled, 4) KIA/MIA/POW.

For Ohio (idea): Tuition free, including mandatory fees and lab fees for Associates and Bachelors, room and board is not waived. No waiver reduction but anything over the cost of education can be applied towards Room & board, dining, and books. Requirements: Veteran must have entered service through Ohio or been a resident of Ohio for 5 years preceding application, or 100% Service Connected, KIA/MIA/POW, or died from a service connected condition, or If the veteran dies and applicant applies 5 years after residency is established it will be as if the veteran fulfilled the 5 year requirement.

Education for Veterans

Missouri: Limits tuition to no more than $50 per credit hour at all public colleges/Universities after other financial aid is taken into account, Associates

Continued on next Page...

Statehouse Announcements

Exhibits

~Camp Chase Aug. 27 - Jan. 28
Map Room

Artifacts from the Civil War-era Camp Chase, a Union training and POW camp west of Columbus, are displayed in the Map Room, including POW carvings, letters, medical tools, and a detailed camp diorama. Visitors can also discover the legend of The Lady in Gray, said to haunt Camp Chase Cemetery where nearly 3,000 Confederate prisoners are buried.

~Flags of Honor Nov. 10, 2025 - Jul. 31, 2026
South Light Court

Working in partnership with the Motts Military Museum in Groveport, Ohio, the exhibit shines a light on the service of Ohio's service members, showcasing uniforms and equipment used by these men and women. Also featured prominently are American and Ohio flags that belonged to these veterans during their service.

Sound Off, from Page six

and Bachelors. Applies to Post 9/11 veterans only.

Ohio (idea): Limit the tuition to no more than $75 per credit hour at a public College or University before GI Bill is pair or $50 after all other financial aid is applied. Post 9/11 Veterans or veterans receiving VR&E.

Property Tax Exemptions

I am aware of the bill currently in the sitting at Legislation for veterans that are 100% P/T to receive full property tax exemption. But I feel there should be levels of exemption for every service-connected veteran. For example, your VA rate is the percentage of property tax, i.e., rate is 10%, 10% is taken from the property tax, 50% rate gets 50% removed from the property tax. There are also 10-30% rates, get $25,000 removed from the property tax, 50-90% rate get $50,000 removed from the property tax and 100% is full exemption.

These are just some of my ideas to help make Ohio more Veteran friendly.

From K.K. via email:

My only suggestion on the State level is that all Ohio vet organizations could use is a complete list of service members who have completed their tour of duty. Based on zip code, the group could reach out to that veteran in an effort for him to join their organization. I have been told that State doesn't have that info maybe true but if they could get it would help all the organizations grow which is what we need and more importantly show that vet perhaps unknown benefits.

From K.J. via email:

Continue to fund our Veterans Service Offices in Ohio and also our Schools. If property taxes are done away with we will have fewer veterans living in Ohio.

Let's work to provide more Veterans homes in Ohio. Sandusky and Georgetown are not enough.

We must also find away to capture more Doctors, Nurses and more health care providers to work in Ohio.

—OLR—

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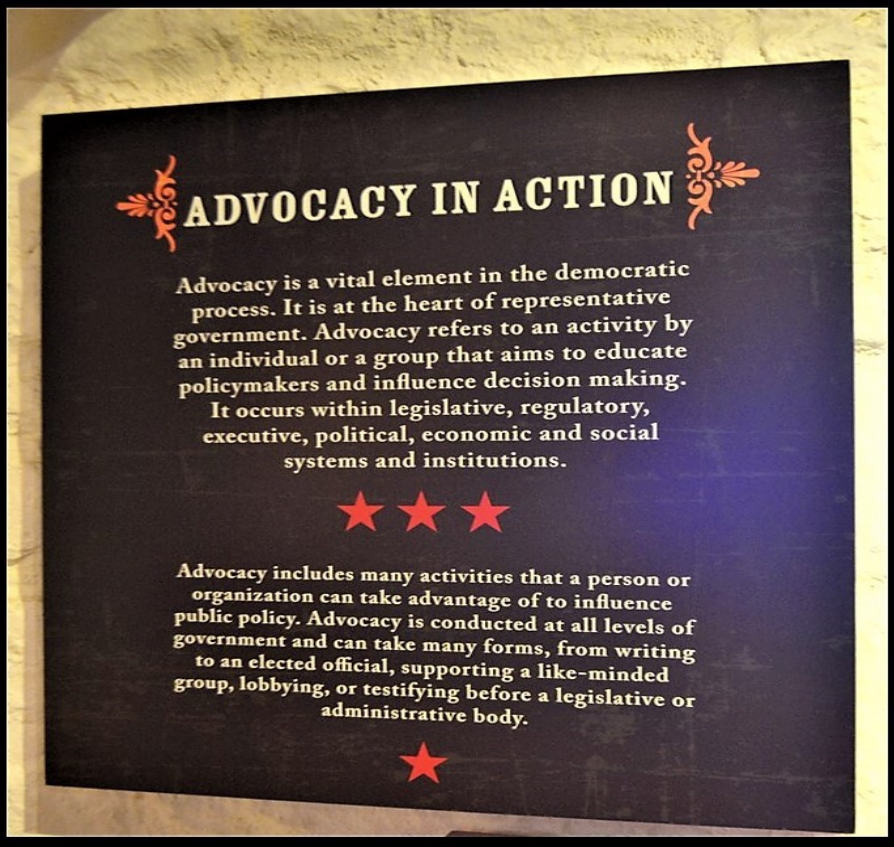
Words to live by...

This plaque can be found hanging on a wall within the Ohio Statehouse Museum.



LEGISLATION INTRODUCED IN DECEMBER

HB 632 was introduced on December 17 by Representative **Kevin Ritter** (HD-94).

The bill would amend sections 4507.01, 4507.06, 4507.13, 4507.51, and 4507.52 of the Revised Code to allow a driver's license and a state identification card to indicate that the licensee or cardholder is a Gold Star Family member.

It has not been referred to a 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 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 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
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 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

More on next Page...

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 632 Allow driver's license or ID card to show Gold Star Family status

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

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

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 293 Revise deadline to return absent voter ballots
SB 302 Create the Land of U.S. Grant license plate

SCR 7 Urge Congress reissue DoD Civilian Retiree Identification Cards

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 October 4, 2025

The details of every bill can be found on the Ohio Legislature website. You can also check the status of bills as they travel thorough committees and sessions, find out how the voting went, and read the testimony of every witness.

To find a bill type the bill number (example: SB 712 or HB 943) into the search bar.

You will find the Ohio Legislature’s website here:

www.legislature.ohio.gov