

February 19, 2019

2019 Regular Session

Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development

Good afternoon Senator Manning and Representative Gomberg and members of the Committee.

My name is Elizabeth Buys and I am here this afternoon to present comments in support of full funding of the Veterans Service Officers Program.

It is vitally important to continue (and/or increase) the funding for this program. The funding is for all 36 counties to support their offices.

These Officers provide a valuable and honorable service to all veterans who are seeking guidance and help in obtaining benefits, dealing with compensation issues, or increasing their benefits as well as all related services.

Far too many veterans/spouses have no idea how to access help or what is available to them after being discharged and trying to re-establish their lives. Many veterans (especially WWII veterans) often don't feel worthy of receiving compensation.

Such is the case with in my own life. My husband (now deceased) was a WWII decorated combat veteran. He was one of those who felt undeserving of compensation for his service.

However, after he had major back surgery and upon the urging of his surgeon (also a veteran), we contacted ODVA and met with a Service Officer. Thus began the process of working toward increasing his benefits and restoring his service connection disability to 100 percent.

While this process was long for us, the Service Officer's knowledge, willingness, availability, thoroughness, and guidance, was amazing. As a result of the Service Officer's help and a successful hearing, I now receive widow benefits. I'm sure I would not be receiving this benefit had I not had his help. My experience of going through this process has been so educational and rewarding.

It is really important that more education is needed for veterans.....to know what is available and to help them through the processes. I encourage your support of this program. It is so vitally important to our veterans and their families. Thank you for your time.

I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.