



Military Officers Association of America Emerald Empire Chapter



Statement in Support: SB 178

Senate Committee on Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

March 28, 2003

The Emerald Empire Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) represents members of all uniformed services of the United States. Our 108 local members include veterans of all wars and conflicts; some who served in 1942 and others who are still serving today. The national organization's 355,000 members work to advocate for all veterans, servicemembers, their families and survivors, especially on military personnel matters and proposed legislation affecting the career force, the retired community, and veterans of all the uniformed services.

MOAA supports Senate Bill 178. Oregon exempts military retirement income earned before 1991. Veterans retiring now with up to 32 years of service in one of the uniformed services of this country do not earn the same exemption. Currently 37 states offer full exemptions from state taxation of military retired pay, and that number is increasing steadily.

Oregon is losing its ability to attract veterans to live and work in this state after retirement. Beside the fact that there are very few military facilities located here, hence even fewer amenities, there is little other incentive to establish a post-retirement residence or start a second career in Oregon. This has become well known to retiring service members, evidenced by the fact that the veteran population in Oregon has decreased from over 11 percent in 2010 to less than eight percent in 2021. If we value our veterans, we need to take steps to show it.

Senate Bill 178 is just such a way to attract retiring uniformed services members to this state so that our communities can profit from the values, leadership, and desire to serve that these individuals bring with them. The Eugene chapter of MOAA, whose members are retired, former and active-duty officers of the uniformed services, includes current and former presidents of such civic and fraternal organizations as Kiwanis, Rotary, MADD, Elks, and the University of Oregon Alumni Association. There are key leaders in churches, philanthropic organizations, commercial development groups and chambers of commerce. The members volunteer in the Coast Guard Auxiliary, various fire departments, community development corporations, scouting, and health and veterans' organizations. We even have someone who volunteers as a chaplain at the jail.

Oregon communities profit greatly from their uniformed services retirees. It's the virtues these individuals bring with them, e.g., their proven ability to work with others and their demonstrated respect for laws, rules, and other people, that makes them the kind of citizens that communities build around.

As our veteran population continues to decline every year, we need to take steps to address the tax policy that rewards only those who served before 1991 and ignores those who served on 9/11 or during the Gulf Wars. Finding ways to adjust our policy on the treatment of uniformed services members' pensions is just one way. This will demonstrate that the state of Oregon values them and wants them to become citizens of this state.

On behalf of the Military Officers Association of America and all veterans of the uniformed services of the United States, we respectfully ask that SB 178 be approved to help make Oregon a more veteran-friendly place to live.