

Submitter: Patrick Harris

On Behalf Of: Military Officers Association of America

Committee: Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

Measure: SB178

Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present our views on this legislation.

My name is Patrick Harris, and I am a retired officer of the uniform services of the United States. I was an Army helicopter pilot in Vietnam, a Coast Guard cargo pilot in Desert Storm and a helicopter rescue pilot in North Bend, Oregon. I retired from the Coast Guard after acting as the Commander of Coast Guard Activities in New York City on September 11, 2001.

I represent the Military Officers Association of America; specifically, the 108 members of the Emerald Empire Chapter in Eugene. Our chapter and 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.

Because Oregon only exempts military retirement income earned before 1991, we are losing our ability to attract veterans to live in this state after their retirement. Beside the fact that there are very few military facilities, hence even fewer amenities, located here, there is little other incentive to establish a residence in Oregon. This has become well known to the 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.

Oregon needs to attract uniformed services retirees because it is 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. When Oregon takes the step to address their tax policy that rewards only those who served before 1991 and ignores those who served on 9/11 or during the Gulf Wars, they will demonstrate to those uniformed services employees preparing to retire that the state of Oregon values them and wants them to become citizens of this state.

I urge the committee's support of SB 178.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views. We look forward to working with you and the ODVA to better the lives of those who have served this country faithfully.