



## **Military Officers Association of America Emerald Empire Chapter**



### **Statement in Support: SB 225**

#### **Senate Committee on Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs February 4, 2025**

The Emerald Empire Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), represents members of all uniformed services of the United States. Our 92 local members include veterans of all wars and conflicts who have served since 1944 and are still serving currently. The national organization's 364,000 members work to advocate for all veterans, service members, 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.

I support Senate Bill 225. Oregon exempts military retirement income earned before 1991. Veterans retiring now with up to 34 years of service in one of the uniformed services of this country do not earn the same exemption. Currently 38 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 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 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 6.3 percent in 2023. If we value our veterans, we need to take steps to show it.

Senate Bill 225 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 of about 100 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, Scouts 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 War. Exempting up to \$17,000 of retirement pay or pension is just one way. It 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 225 be approved to help make Oregon a more veteran-friendly place to live.