

Testimony in support of **HB 2036** creating a property tax exemption for disabled Veterans.

Testimony prepared by Michael Ogle, Veterans of Foreign Wars Service Officer, Kansas

I am writing to provide testimony in support of HB 2036. This bill intended to provide property tax relief to disabled veterans is extremely well written as it provides scaled relief for disabled veterans that is in proportion to their federally rated disability. This bill honors our veterans that have made the commitment to carry our American values around the globe, who have served honorably in defense of our constitution and provided the blessings of liberty and security that allows our government to successfully serve the people of our great nation. The Veteran is the thread that holds the fabric of our nation together.

As a Veteran Service Officer for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, VFW accreditation # 53149, I am faced with the individual cost of military service to this nation daily. Veterans come into my office with a host of individual disabilities connected to their time in service. These problems are amplified by uncertainty in the government's ability to provide effective remedy in medical care and compensation to the veteran for their individual sacrifices. It is specifically my task to advocate for the veteran to get them the medical care and compensation they need to recover from the challenges they faced, that created chronic medical conditions in service to our country.

The need for property tax relief for veterans in Kansas is not only necessary to best serve the veterans of the State of Kansas and keep Kansas as a competitive state for veterans to live; it is also the right thing to do given the very serious medical conditions our veterans face due to service. The risks assumed by the citizen joining the military are vast and many veterans come away from service with both physical and mental health conditions that have a great impact on their quality of life, for the remainder of their lives. In addition to the known risks of physical and mental disabilities it has become clear that veterans are at a great risk of serious injury and disease due to toxic exposure. In 2022 the PACT ACT recognized 19 cancers and serious diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure for veterans who served in Vietnam and in other herbicide use locations during the Vietnam era. The PACT ACT also recognizes 21 cancers and 12 serious medical conditions associated with Gulf War era veterans who served in burn pit locations. Because of this exposure many veterans' lives are tragically cut short due to their service to our country.

As a former United States Army officer and Service officer with the VFW the epidemic of mental distress and Veteran suicide, coupled with illness and death due to toxic exposure is all too clear. These separate health concerns work together to diminish the quality of life and shorten the life span of veterans. The number of suicides among my former comrades and in the veterans who suffer mental distress in Kansas is staggering. I've also seen veterans I've served with and veterans in my office, who are younger than me who's bodies are riddled with cancer because of what my generation of veteran was exposed to. I am 43. In addition, many veterans suffer physical ailments from damage to their bodies in service to our country that also reduce quality of life. These sacrifices often go unseen and are not considered by the public but are very real in the veteran community. HB 2036 provides relief to veterans by improving their quality of life and compensating them for the sacrifices they have made. I believe this bill could save lives because it will improve the quality of life in the veteran community in Kansas.

HB 2036 greatly honors the veterans of the state of Kansas for their service and sacrifice and does so in proportion to the veterans federally rated, chronic disability. It is my belief this bill will go a long way to ease the suffering and improve the quality of life for veterans residing in the State of Kansas. This bill will encourage veterans to seek medical treatment and compensation for the damage to their health incurred in service. HB 2036 also keeps Kansas competitive with surrounding states who have taken similar measures to honor veterans whose health and wellbeing have been sacrificed in the military service of the United States.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Ogle', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael Ogle, MBA

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VFW Accreditation # 53149