

November 15, 2007

The Honorable Peter Ujvagi
State Representative
Ohio House of Representatives
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Rep. Ujvagi,

OCSEA/AFSCME Local 11 supports the Governor's proposed Office of Veteran's Affairs. The proposed consolidation of the various agencies providing veterans services will provide an excellent resource for all veterans and advocates. In addition, communication and consistent application of federal and state regulations to all agencies and organizations serving our veterans will increase overall efficiency. OCSEA/AFSCME represents many of the employees included in the proposed agency consolidation including both Veterans Homes as well as the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

We believe, however, that certain services provided by ODJFS should remain within that agency. Within ODJFS, this includes the state's Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVERs), the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialists (DVOPs), as well as the other Ohio employment security personnel. The ODJFS Veteran Representatives are primarily assigned to Local 1-Stop offices. OCSEA supports maintaining the presence of Veteran Representatives in the 1-stop system for several important reasons.

- The Jobs for Veterans Act (PL 107-288) indicates the Workforce Investment Act as the primary service vehicle from which veterans receive employment services. Ohio has assigned this function to ODJFS. The rationale is that the mission of ODJFS is aligned with the purpose of the veteran employment objectives.
- Veterans services are included as one of several mandatory partners in the 1-stop system. Although the 1-Stop system has experienced many growing pains, it is abundantly clear that this service delivery model will continue. Removing veterans' programs from this system would isolate them from the administrative structures and resources necessary to provide them with the best services. A close integration of the DVOP/LVER staff with the workforce system has worked for Ohio and in fact, a GAO study has recognized Ohio as one of the states that are doing a good job with veterans employment services.
- Our Transitional Assistance Program workshops link recently separated service personnel with information on programs and benefits for new employment. These services are delivered through our DVOPs and LVERs as part of the one-stop awareness program. ODJFS veteran staff are trained as TAP facilitators which has significantly improved moving veterans into the workforce.

- The veteran population often needs personalized services to deal with multiple employment barriers. Veterans of past wars as well as the war in Iraq deal with disabilities (physically and mentally) and often have a readjustment period to civilian life. Veterans who utilize the employment services at a 1-stop can easily access additional services from other partners also located within that local 1-stop. Moving ODJFS employees as well as the support functions associated with them to another agency would add expenses to the administrative costs of providing these services without creating more value.

OCSEA strongly supports the Governor's new initiative to streamline the support network and increase benefits for our veterans into one agency. However, as the Governor's Veterans Study Council moves toward its final recommendations to the Governor, we would ask for your support in the best interest of Ohio veterans, to maintain DVOP and LVER staff in the ODJFS 1-stop system. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Kim Fellingner, Governmental Affairs Director at 614/865-2644. Thank you for your attention. We will very much appreciate your consideration of our respectful request.

Sincerely,

Andy Douglas
Executive Director

AD/kf

cc: Eddie L. Parks, President
Kim Fellingner, Governmental Affairs Director