



Senator Chris Widener
10th Ohio Senate District

GUEST COLUMN

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OHIO VETERANS CAN STILL APPLY FOR BONUS PROGRAM

In 2009, Ohio voters approved a constitutional amendment authorizing the sale of \$200 million in bonds in order to fund the Ohio Veterans Bonus Program. This program provides one-time cash bonuses of up to \$1,000 to Ohio veterans who served on active duty during the Persian Gulf War and the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Voters previously authorized similar bonus programs to support veterans of World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

The first bonuses were issued last year; to date, more than \$27 million has been awarded to roughly 33,500 veterans. However, the Ohio Department of Veterans Services (DVS) recently estimated that as many as 100,000 veterans are eligible for bonuses but have not yet applied. In addition, 20,000 veterans began the application process but did not submit the necessary follow-up forms to ensure they received their bonus.

To help ensure that all veterans receive the bonuses to which they are entitled, DVS and other organizations are once again reaching out to promote the Ohio Veterans Bonus Program. Individuals who served on active duty with U.S. Armed Forces – including the Ohio National Guard – in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan or Iraq may receive \$100 for each month of active duty service in these locations during specified dates, with a maximum benefit of \$1,000. Those on active duty elsewhere in the world may receive \$50 for each month up to \$500. Veterans can combine their services bonuses for a maximum payment of \$1,500.

Individuals can apply for the Ohio Veterans Bonus Program, check on the status of a completed application or get help determining a veteran's eligibility by visiting www.veteransbonus.ohio.gov or by calling 1-877-OHIO-VET (1-877-644-6838). Veterans must have been legal residents of Ohio when they went on active duty and must be Ohio residents when applying for a bonus.

For more than 200 years, men and women from across the country have answered the call to duty in defense of our country. Our veterans deserve the thanks of a grateful nation, and while we will never be able to fully express our thanks to them, we will continue to seek to honor their service while easing the burden on them and their families. I would encourage area veterans who have not already done so to turn in an application for the Ohio Veterans Bonus Program. Our military personnel – along with their families – have endured many sacrifices in their efforts to promote

peace and security across the globe, and the Ohio Veterans Bonus Program is one way we can show our appreciation for their service.

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State Senator Chris Widener serves the people of the 10th Senate District, which includes Clark, Greene and Madison counties. For more information, please visit www.ohiosenate.gov/chris-widener.