



For Immediate Release  
February 26, 2013

## **Vietnam Commemoration Coming in March**

Preparations are in full swing for the commemoration of Vietnam Veterans Day in Ohio from March 26-29. This year is the first state-level commemoration of the day enacted by the Ohio General Assembly and signed by Governor John Kasich last year. The Wall that Heals, panel discussions and special ceremonies highlight the four days.

The state commemoration also marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of America's role in the Vietnam War. The theme of the commemoration, expressed in the event's logo, is to finally welcome home and honor all those who served there, and to remember those who didn't make it back. Events will be held at the Ohio History Center at Interstate 71 and 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue and at the Statehouse.

The Ohio Department of Veterans Services (ODVS) and the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), Buckeye State Council, are joining together to sponsor the commemoration. A volunteer committee of veterans' organizations and local officials has been working the past few months to make the event a reality. The Veterans of Foreign Wars Ohio Charities has also graciously underwritten a significant portion of the costs of the event.

"Vietnam veterans are grateful for this recognition," said Ohio Department of Veterans Services Director Tom Moe, "They have not been properly honored, and many of my comrades were even vilified when they returned from the war. This is a way to honor and thank them that is long overdue."

"I personally experienced a lot of negative feelings when I came back to the States from Vietnam," VVA State Council President Tom Burke said. "Vietnam veterans did what was asked of us, just like veterans of every war throughout history. It's a great feeling to be able to honor our service and our sacrifice."

The highlight of the four-day commemoration is the hosting of the traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall, known as the The Wall That Heals from Washington, D.C., at the Ohio History Center. The Wall, escorted by veteran motorcyclists from the Patriot Guard Riders and Rolling Thunder, will arrive at the Ohio History Center at about 2 p.m. on March 24 after journeying from the Ohio-Indiana border at Interstate 74 and then up Interstates 275 and 71 to Columbus.

A formal dinner will be held at the Statehouse, along with an opening ceremony at the Ohio History Center and a closing ceremony at the Statehouse. There will also be a final memorial ceremony at the Wall to close out the commemoration.

Another key component of the commemoration is education. Panel discussions will be held at the Ohio History Center from March 26-28. Separate panels will focus on the experiences of veterans, the suffering and endurance of prisoners of war, the roles played by female veterans, and a historical perspective on the war and its aftermath.

Following the panels, Vietnam veterans will be able to record their experiences in Living History interviews to be on permanent file at the Ohio History Center.

All events are open to veterans and the public. Volunteers are also needed to help reach out to veterans and veteran organizations, staff the events, greet veterans, provide services to veterans and their families who are in attendance, and several other functions.

The Ohio Department of Veterans Services' web site contains a special section with a schedule of events, volunteer information and other details of the commemoration at:

[http://dvs.ohio.gov/home/vietnam\\_veterans\\_commemoration.aspx](http://dvs.ohio.gov/home/vietnam_veterans_commemoration.aspx)

"It's important that we establish Vietnam Veteran's Day so that the people of Ohio can unite in one voice and say that they are grateful and proud of the veterans of that conflict," Director Moe said. "It is a voice that is finally saying to them, 'welcome home.' "

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