

Chairman Sherrod Brown

Thank you. Welcome to what I understand is the first ever Joint Field Hearing of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees. I want to thank Kent State University for hosting this event. I also want to thank those testifying and their organizations. I want to recognize Congressman Zack Space of the House Veterans Affairs Committee and thank him for holding this hearing in New Philadelphia.

It is fitting that we are holding this hearing the day after Memorial Day, a day to honor our nation's fallen men and women in uniform. Today we are focusing on improving services for our nation's veterans so we may honor them as well. We have a full slate of issues and a very ambitious agenda so I will keep my remarks brief.

The purpose of the field hearing is to hear from veterans from right here at home so we as policy makers can make the best decisions possible back in Washington.

This is an official hearing so all testimony will be made a permanent part of the record and will serve as a resource for the House and Senate Committees as we work on future legislation.

While there is room for improvement in serving our veterans, that blame is shared between what the VA can do better and what we, as members of the House and Senate, can do.

Inadequate funding is an ongoing issue and one that Congress and the White House must resolve together.

I also want to make clear that while not everyone in this auditorium may agree on the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, we can all agree that we need to do everything we can to care and provide for our veterans.

Ohio is home to more than 1 million veterans. These proud men and women and their families have sacrificed to serve our nation. There are Ohioans in this room who helped to defeat tyranny in the World War II. There are Ohioans in this room who served in the conflicts of the Cold War, enabling the United States to eventually defeat totalitarianism. And we have a new group of veterans from the post-cold war era -- those who fought in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, or Bosnia.

Some of Ohio's veterans include Presidents Grant, Harrison, Hayes, Garfield, Harrison, and McKinley. Others like John Glenn, Neil Armstrong, Clark Gable, General Philip Sheridan and General Sherman. Ohio is proud of our veterans past and present.

I look forward to hearing the testimony today. We have a distinguished panel of witnesses.

Before we get started, I want to run through how this will work. First, Congressman Space will deliver his opening remarks. Then, we will proceed to hear from each witness on the panel. Once the testimony is complete, we will then go into a round of questioning and if we have time, we will hold an addition round of questions.

Now, I turn the microphone over to Congressman Zack Space.