

**TESTIMONY OF PAMELA SEMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE DISABLED VETERANS ASSOCIATIONS
BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
CONCERNING VETERANS' CHARITIES**

December 13, 2007

Thank you Chairman Waxman, Ranking Member Davis, and distinguished members of the Committee for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the Disabled Veterans Associations. My name is Pamela Seman and I am Executive Director of the Disabled Veterans Associations ("DVA").

DVA, which started in 1996, is a charitable organization registered under Ohio law. DVA's mission is to help improve the quality of life of our veterans through aiding and assisting needy and disabled veterans, their families and dependents -- whether they have been hospitalized at one of the US Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers, admitted to any of the over 100 state run and state funded veterans homes, or simply in need at home. We have developed a number of programs to assist veterans and have funded these programs through fundraising efforts. DVA accomplishes its goals with the assistance of 3 paid employees.

Statistics from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs are staggering. There are now more than 23 million living veterans. Nearly 2.2 million of these veterans suffer from a service-connected disability and nearly 40 percent are 65 years or older.

There are over 100 state-run, state-funded veterans' long-term care and domiciliary homes that provide care exclusively to veterans and their spouses. Yet, four out of five people you meet on the street have no idea that such facilities exist. Our Public Service Announcements ("PSA") inform the public and veterans that these state run veterans homes exist and are available to the men and women who gave up so much for our freedom.

Our PSA can be heard on more than 3,500 radio stations nationwide. They inform the listener that help is available to honorably discharged veterans. A toll-free number is provided for the listener to obtain information on not only the state-run homes, but on any veterans' issue they may have.

We offer gifts and grants to the state-run veterans' homes and the VA medical centers throughout the country so they may provide veterans with day-to-day necessities that they otherwise may not receive due to budgetary limitations. We have provided everything from basic toiletries to reconstruction and refurbishing an audiology room. These gifts and grants have proven to be vital to the well-being of veterans in these facilities.

Our Helping and Assisting Veterans in Emergency program allows us to assist our veterans on a more individual basis. Many of these veterans are awaiting their benefits through the VA and find they are unable to pay their bills during the interim. By working hand-in-hand

with county service offices and other agencies, we are able to assist veterans on a short-term, beneficial basis. Veterans can receive a one-time gift to help them through a rough period. We assist with mortgages, rent, utilities, and various other items.

We also offer a veterans entrepreneurial training seminar program. The day long seminars are available to all veterans free of charge. We include speakers from the Small Business Administration, the Service Corps of Retired Executives, certified lenders and state taxation departments. This program is designed to help veterans struggling with their small business or who are starting a small business.

DVA first entered into a fundraising contract with the Civic Development Group (“CDG”) in 1998. I became executive director of DVA in 2002. At that time, a contract was already in place for fundraising services provided by CDG. The first time a fundraising contract came up for review while I was executive director was around September of 2004. The percentages in the contract remained the same as they were from the beginning – 12 ½ - 87 ½. I questioned the split and actually made inquiries with other vendors and learned that the percentages were pretty much a standard in the industry. Though DVA was unhappy with the split, CDG agreed to provide DVA with a guaranteed minimum amount of \$600,000.00, which was more money than DVA was able to raise under past contracts.

Under this arrangement CDG became a consultant. This appeared to be a good thing for DVA because it was going to receive more money than it had in the past, and this would mean more money to fund vital programs.

My primary goal as Executive Director of DVA was, and is, to raise as much money as possible to fund the programs that we offer in order to make a difference in the lives of veterans.

I would like to thank the Committee again for this opportunity and would be pleased to answer any questions.