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Governor Appoints Director, Assistant Director of Ohio Department of Veterans Services

Columbus, Ohio – Ohio Governor Ted Strickland today announced the appointments of former state Rep. Bill Hartnett as the director of the newly established Ohio Department of Veterans Services and Tim Espich as the assistant director of the department.

Strickland signed legislation on May 23 that created the Ohio Department of Veterans Services, which assumes the duties of the Governor's Office of Veterans Affairs, the Ohio Veterans Home Agency and the Ohio War Orphan Scholarship Board. The legislation to establish the department takes effect on August 21.

Bill Hartnett, Director of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services

Bill Hartnett, of Mansfield, is a U.S. Navy veteran of the Korean War era. He currently serves as the legislative director in the Governor's Office.

As director of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services, Hartnett will serve as a member of the Governor's Cabinet.

"Bill is an honorable man and dedicated public servant who will be a tireless advocate for Ohio's veterans," Strickland said. "At a time when more and more Ohioans are returning from war, I trust that Bill will lead the department with a deep commitment to ensuring that all veterans have access to the benefits and services that they deserve."

Hartnett represented the 73rd District in the Ohio House of Representatives from 1998-2006.

An educator for more than 30 years, Hartnett was a teacher for several school districts in north central Ohio and most recently served as the superintendent for the Madison Local School District in Mansfield. He also served as the vice president and interim president of North Central State College and as an adjunct faculty member at Ashland University.

Hartnett is a member of AMVETS and the Korean War Veterans Association. He received the AMVETS-Department of Ohio Legislative Award in 2001.

Hartnett earned a bachelor's degree from Kent State University, a master's degree from West Virginia University and a specialist in education degree from Kent State University.

Tim Espich, Assistant Director of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services

Tim Espich, of Springfield, has served as the director of the Governor's Office of Veterans Affairs since 2005.

"Tim has been strong voice for our veterans and their families as director of the Governor's Office of Veterans Affairs," Strickland said. "His military experience and his relationship with our veterans' community will be a tremendous asset to the new department."

Espich enlisted in the U.S. Army National Guard in 1981 as a computer operator and became a full-time active guard soldier in 1984. In his 24 years of military service, he served in several positions, including platoon, battalion and operations sergeant, and retired as a master sergeant in September 2005.

Espich is the recipient of numerous military awards, including the Meritorious Service Medal and the Ohio Distinguished Service Medal.

Espich is a graduate of Franklin University.

Governor's Office Legislative Staff

Kris Long, currently the deputy legislative director in the Governor's Office, will assume the role of legislative director. She served as the governor's policy executive assistant for public safety, criminal justice and the Bureau of Workers' Compensation from January 2007 to January 2008.

Long previously served as chief of staff and legal counsel for the Ohio Senate Democratic Caucus and worked in private practice in Michigan. Long received a bachelor's degree from Hope College in Michigan in 1991 and a law degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1998.

Karundi Williams will assume the position of deputy legislative director in the Governor's Office. Williams is currently the legislative affairs coordinator at the Ohio Department of Transportation.