

**NOTE:** *"If approved by the Ohio General Assembly, the plan presented by Gov. John Kasich would bring health care to approximately 26,000 military veterans living in Ohio, along with 12,500 of their family members."*

## **THE PLAIN DEALER**

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### **Kasich's Medicaid expansion would help Ohio's veterans: Thomas Moe and Victor Wilson**

By Plain Dealer guest columnist

It's not often that we see people on both ends of the political spectrum come together for a common purpose, but that's exactly what happened in April when thousands of people rallied on the Statehouse lawn in support of expanding health care to more than 275,000 low-income Ohioans, most of whom have jobs and are working taxpayers. Side by side in the pouring rain stood Republicans, Democrats, business groups, union members, advocates for the mentally ill and addicted, hospital officials and health care workers -- all with the goal of passing Medicaid expansion.

And there's one more group of Ohioans who showed support for Medicaid expansion but are too often overlooked -- our veterans.

Right now in Ohio, there are approximately 52,000 veterans who have no options for health care. Many of them served our country during times of peace or have a disability unrelated to their service, pushing them into a dangerous gap where they are not eligible for federal Veterans Affairs benefits. Members of the Ohio National Guard or the military services' reserves who were not called up for federal active duty may fall into this same gap. This is not satisfactory: They served when we asked and asked for nothing in return.

We now have an opportunity to help thousands of these veterans gain access to health care, and we shouldn't turn our back on them.

If approved by the Ohio General Assembly, the plan presented by Gov. John Kasich would bring health care to approximately 26,000 military veterans living in Ohio, along with 12,500 of their family members.

By putting politics aside, Medicaid expansion would also free up precious state dollars that could be used to help those veterans who see suicide as a better option than where their lives and service may have led them. According to the VA, 60 percent of veteran suicides in 2012 were among those who fell outside of the VA health care network. The Medicaid proposal will provide vital health care coverage to childless adults under the age of 65, as well as to uninsured families below the federal poverty level, making lifesaving mental health services available to those veterans who may need it the most.

Ohio veterans helped by the governor's plan are men and women who served with the same honor and sense of duty as combat veterans. At one point or another, they were active-duty members of the United States Armed Forces or stood ready for the call while serving in the National Guard or reserves. They completed the necessary training and received proper discharges from their respective military branches. In fact, many of them enlisted during the primes of their lives and spent months at a time away from their families and homes -- always ready to defend their nation should they have been asked.

Kasich has taken a stand for uninsured veterans and other Ohioans in similar circumstances by supporting Medicaid expansion. Not only does it provide needed help to veterans and the working poor, but it spares our hospitals the crippling funding cuts from the Affordable Care Act and helps hold down the cost of private insurance.

**Op-ed continued**

here: [http://www.cleveland.com/opinion/index.ssf/2013/05/kasichs\\_medicaid\\_expansion\\_wou.html#incart\\_river](http://www.cleveland.com/opinion/index.ssf/2013/05/kasichs_medicaid_expansion_wou.html#incart_river)

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