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Ex-legislator to oversee new veterans agency

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Bill Hartnett will lead the Ohio Department of Veterans Services. He was a state representative from Mansfield from 1998 to 2006.

Former state Rep. Bill Hartnett, a U.S. Navy veteran of the Korean War era and legislative director for Gov. Ted Strickland, has been picked by the governor to head the new Ohio Department of Veterans Services.

Strickland signed a law earlier this year creating the cabinet-level agency that incorporates duties of the Governor's Office of Veterans Affairs, the Ohio Veterans Home Agency and the Ohio War Orphan Scholarship Board. The law takes effect Aug. 21.

Strickland called Hartnett "an honorable man and dedicated public servant" who will lead the department "with a deep commitment to ensuring that all veterans have access to the benefits and services that they deserve."

Hartnett, a former educator and school superintendent, was a Democratic state representative from Mansfield from 1998 to 2006. He has a bachelor's degree from Kent State University and a master's from West Virginia University.

Strickland also named Tim Espich as assistant director of the new department and promoted Kris Long, a lawyer on his staff, to legislative director.

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