

**Howard County Council Resolution 37-2019
Commission for Veterans and Military Families**

Testimony

**Steven M. Bolen
April 22, 2019**

SUPPORT

Good evening,

My name is Steven Bolen. I live in Ellicott City; County Council District 5.

Before I begin, I want to thank our County Executive, Dr. Calvin Ball, for nominating me to the Howard County Commission for Veterans and Military Families. I was privileged to serve on his Public Safety Subcommittee Transition Team and I am once again honored by his nomination to this Commission.

I also thank the Chairperson, Ms. Christiana Mercer Rigby, for introducing County Resolution 37-2019 at the request of the County Executive.

I am here tonight with three special people: my wife Linda, and my parents, Donald and Maria Bolen. My parents are farm-raised teachers that grew up in Iowa during the Great Depression and World War II. My father is a Navy combat veteran who served in the Korean War. He was a radio operator on a Landing Ship Tank. In a couple of weeks, we will be celebrating his 87th birthday.

I ask the Council's indulgence, and the Chair's permission, to let my father stand so that he can be recognized for his service to our country. I thank him and his brothers and sisters-in-arms for their service.

I am a 27-year veteran of federal service. Like our servicemembers, I took an oath to protect and defend our Constitution. I spent my career working alongside those brave women and men doing just that.

I left service as a professional intelligence officer with the Central Intelligence Agency. I supported counter-terrorism, counter-proliferation, and special military units.

I began my career as an engineer, at the height of the Cold War, working for the U.S. Department of the Air Force at Rome Air Development Center, Griffiss Air Force Base. I spent a lot of long hours there working with many fine Air Force officers developing and deploying intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance technical solutions to counter Soviet, and communist Chinese and North Korean military threats.

I left the Air Force to work for NASA at the Human Spaceflight Center in Houston, Texas. My work on the Space Shuttle Orbiter, International Space Station, Extra-Vehicular Activity, Human Lunar Return, and Mars Expedition programs supported the Astronaut Corps; many of whom were military officers.

Drawing from my 27 years of service, I can bear first-hand witness of the enormous sacrifice that our servicemembers make to keep our country safe; and, the enormous sacrifice, stress, and anxiety faced by their loved ones back home.

Our veterans served and did their duty to protect us. When they come home and enter civilian life it becomes our duty to help them; and, that is exactly what I want to do.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Maryland is home to nearly 380,000 veterans with about 18,000 living in Howard County.

In a 2016 report, Maryland's Interagency Council on Homelessness estimated that, on average, 8.75% of those homeless in Maryland were veterans.

Research performed by the RAND Center for Military Health Policy is also very troubling. They found that 20% of Vets who served in Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from either major depression or PTSD. That number is possibly higher. And, we cannot forget those like my father who served in Korea, Vietnam, and in other conflicts.

It is my keen desire to help our veterans as much as I can. We all need to lend a hand to promote the health, wellness, and healing of those coming home. Some need our help with long-term trauma recovery - both physical and psychological. They need access to education and vocational cross-training so that they can translate what they learned while in service to job-ready skills in the civilian marketplace. They need good jobs and they need help finding those jobs. They need help finding safe, affordable housing, childcare, and some families need counseling to help cope with the stress of post-service life.

I left federal service, but that doesn't mean that my desire to serve has ended. I look forward to continue to serve our community, county, and country; and, it will be my honor to serve on the Howard County Commission for Veterans and Military Families.

God Bless this County and the United States of America.

Thank you.