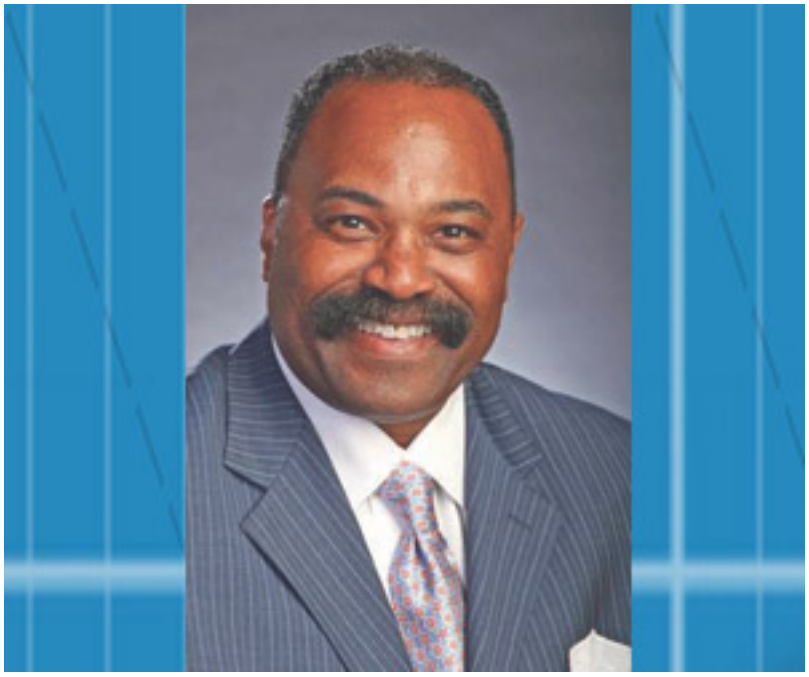

The major fillip for the proposal, said Craig, is to open up more opportunities for veteran-owned businesses when bidding for city contracts.

By IKE MGBATOGU

Contributing Writer

COLUMBUS – The 100,000 military veterans in Columbus have a very special friend in Columb us City Councilmember Hearcel Craig.

Craig has, in recent times, shown that friendship by expressing his deep commitment to protecting the interest of the city's veterans. Lately, the Columbus native has been churning out ideas for how to help those he said served the country well.

A council member since 2007, Craig recently proposed back-to-back initiatives aimed at supporting the city's veterans, working with the council recently to pass ordinance 1325-2011 aimed at paying city employees currently serving in the military leave with pay for one more year. That benefit includes health and life insurance for family members.

Just last month, the council established a new committee to address issues facing the city's veterans, an effort spearheaded by Craig. The main purpose of the committee is to ease the process of accessing government services for veterans.

Craig, himself an Army veteran, said one of the committee's primary roles is to "highlight the many programs and services that assist this growing population."

Apparently, it is his view that one of those "many programs and services" could help support veteran-owned business. Recently, Craig proposed a major change to the city code to enable veteran business owners better compete for city contracts. He made the proposal at the annual Veteran's Stand Down event held at the Veteran's Memorial.

What Craig is really looking to do is to qualify veteran-owned businesses as certified vendors to be tracked by the Equal Business Opportunity Commission Office (EBOCO) as a protected group, similar to the status being enjoyed by minority and female owned businesses.

The major fillip for the proposal, said Craig, is to open up more opportunities for veteran-owned businesses when bidding for city contracts.

"By increasing our services for veteran-owned businesses, the City of Columbus once again is demonstrating its commitment to helping those who protected the very freedoms we enjoy as Americans," said Craig. "This is a business friendly initiative that will help position these firms to expand their opportunities to do work for the city."

And Craig is not done.

He has already expressed interest in looking into ways to assist veteran-owned businesses secure bids by awarding them credits, such as those enjoyed by local businesses.

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