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By IKE MGBATOGU
Contributing Writer

COLUMBUS – At the AMVETS Board of Trustees meeting last week, there was a new member sitting at the table. He is Columbus Councilmember Hearcel Craig.

But while Craig may have been a new face at that parley, he wasn't new to his new colleagues and he certainly wasn't new to matters involving veteran affairs in the state of Ohio.

That may help explain why Ohio Attorney-General Mike DeWine recently named him as a member of the AMVETS Career Center Board of Trustees. The meeting was held at the group's headquarter located at 1395 East Dublin Granville Road. The cabal is a statewide non-profit

organization responsible for providing job training and employment assistance to veterans.

And providing assistance to Ohio veterans is something Craig, himself a Vietnam-Veteran, knows a thing or two about. After his appointment, he said that he is always pleased and honored to serve the veteran community.

“I am proud of my military service and wholeheartedly support the AMVETS’ mission to help veterans translate the skills they learned in uniform into good paying jobs in the private or public sectors around Ohio,” said Craig. “We owe it to our veterans to do everything we can to make sure the transition to civilian life and beyond is as smooth as possible.”

And throughout his career, he has been doing his part to make a difference for veterans on multiple fronts. On the council, Craig has been constantly coming up with innovative programs to assist Columbus veterans.

A while back, under his leadership, the council passed an ordinance to pay city employees serving in the military ‘leave with pay’ for one more year, a package that included health and life insurance for family members.

Before that, the council created a new panel to address a panoply of challenges facing the city’s veterans. It was an effort also spearheaded by Craig. The committee’s central mission is to help ease the process of accessing government services for the 100,000 veterans in Columbus.

Craig was also behind city efforts to reform the bidding process for veteran owned businesses, making it friendlier.

And because of his amendment to the 2012 Capital Budget, veteran business owners who also own their own homes gained the advantage of a program crafted to assist them with home improvements.The pilot program, called the Better Municipal Care for Veterans – Home Fund (BMCV-HF) provides financial assistance to eligible veterans to fix up their homes, for an amount up to $15,000 per home.

Craig, who is chair of the council's Veteran Committee, explained the importance of the program.

"The Better Municipal Care for Veterans – Home Fund represents City Council's commitment to serving the housing needs of our nation's heroes," said Craig, in a statement. He noted that eligible veterans are those who live on the Southside of the city, mapped out as the area encompassing "High Street on the West, Morrill Ave. on the North, Parsons Ave. on the East and Hosack Ave. on the South."

Mgbatogu is a freelance writer and editor of Onumba.com based in Columbus. He can be reached by email at Onumbamedia@yahoo.com