

Mr. Chairman, members of House GVA

The Veterans Memorial Center at Fargo National Cemetery is a project that has been in the works for a few years. While I wasn't originally involved with the project, I was contacted by the local Honor Guard to learn about their project and vision for the future of the cemetery. They are in attendance and will be presenting after me.

As we kept in touch over the past couple of years and they would keep me updated on issues at the cemetery and the need for improvements. This past fall I was asked if I would ever consider sponsoring a bill to secure funding for a facility meant to honor our nation's heroes.

I was thrilled at the opportunity to help with this project.

In the following months I had meetings with Senator Hoeven, Fargo/Moorhead Chamber President, local mayors, and dozens of Veterans. I appreciate the effort of every single one of you, as this project wouldn't be here without your help.

A little over a year the sale of 30 acres had been finalized between the US Department of Veterans Affairs and local landowners to expand the cemetery's footprint from 5 acres to 35 acres.

A press release from Senator Hoeven stated, "We're working to provide the best federal veterans cemetery, matching the quality we've built at our state-run veterans cemetery, and this 30-acre expansion is a key part of these efforts."

A few months later our senior Senator held a roundtable with VA Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, Senator Cramer, numerous

city officials, veteran service organizations and other local stakeholders to advance plans for a facility at Fargo National Cemetery. Following that meeting, feedback was provided to the undersecretary, which secured an agreement to allow a local non-profit to build a facility, pending VA approval. The VA would then assume the ongoing costs of owning, operating, staffing and maintaining the facility.

Since the proffer was submitted in October, 2024 by the local working group, Senator Hoeven has continued working to ensure the VA follows through on their commitment to support this project moving forward and he made this a priority in Senate committee hearings.

In early February, the Senator released another statement on the confirmation of the next secretary to lead Veterans Affairs, Doug Collins former Congressman of Georgia

The Senator stated, "His experience as an Air Force Colonel and chaplain have prepared him to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs. We appreciate his commitment to ensure that our veterans receive the recognition, benefits and high-quality care they have earned. When we met, the Secretary also committed to help us advance upgrades for Fargo National Cemetery. He understands what it means to serve, and we look forward to working with him to ensure that our nation keeps its promises to our veterans."

Thank you again to Senator Hoeven for your dedication to Fargo National Cemetery.

The \$3 million Line of credit through BND requiring VA approval prior to the funds being drawn, will be used towards:

- Gathering area to be used by family and friends of the deceased veteran prior to or following the interment
- Gallery to showcase the lives and service of our Veterans
- Offices for VA staff
- Breakroom for the Honor Guard members
- Indoor restrooms
- Garage to accommodate a hearse
- And one of the biggest needs, a parking lot

As the proud son of a Vietnam Veteran, I am motivated to assist our military members, their families, and our Veterans any way I can.

We honor our fallen veterans with deep gratitude, recognizing their sacrifice, courage, and dedication to our nation's freedom. We remember them not just in solemn ceremonies but in our daily commitment to unity, service, and respect. Their bravery echoes through generations, reminding us that freedom is never free. With a heartfelt thanks, I hope we pledge to support their families, honor their memory, and ensure their sacrifices are never forgotten.

I ask for a do pass recommendation and I'll stand for any questions.

Scott Meyer

Grand Forks ND

State Senator District 18