

House Appropriations Committee Human Resources Division

House Bill 1005

Andrew Alexis Varvel

Harvest Room

North Dakota State Capitol

January 6, 2023

10:00AM

Chairman Nelson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Andrew Alexis Varvel. I live in Bismarck.

During last session's hearing on HB 1488 at the House Human Resources Committee on whether to create a truth commission, one member of that committee suggested that the legislation was not necessary because the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission was well within its rights to authorize a truth commission under its own auspices.

I think he had a point. If there is actually enough mutual trust to convene a truth commission, it would make sense to have it under the auspices of the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission whether it requires authorization from the Legislature or not.

It is very important for a truth commission to be done right. A bad truth commission would be worse than none at all. The gold standard for truth commissions is South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was appointed by President Nelson Mandela – not by the leaders of bantustans. The best truth commissions have a limited frame of reference, and recognize the moral agency of all parties. For this reason, I recommended that HB 1488 be turned into a study resolution during the last session.

Measure seven times. Cut once.

If the Legislature does move forward with a truth commission, admittedly a big if, there should be a line item in this appropriation to that effect. The expenses and logistics of such a truth commission ought to come within the purview of this committee, regardless of whether it is here or whether it comes under another piece of legislation.

Thank you.

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