

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and members of the House Appropriations Committee.

My name is Austen Schauer, representing District 13 in West Fargo.

**House Bill 1182** establishes a state sponsored Military Funeral Burial Stipend similar to programs in Minnesota and South Dakota.

Currently, the North Dakota National Guard manages a **federally funded** Military Funeral Honors program which provides a \$50 stipend to Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs).

However, this program has **limited funds** and rules that restrict who is eligible for the stipend.

Under these rules, the National Guard can only provide the stipend for **Army funerals** that have a **live bugler**.

These rules significantly reduce the number of VSOs eligible to receive a stipend.

The program (**under HB 1182**) would authorize a \$50 stipend for congressionally chartered VSOs that provide the key elements of honor for members of **ALL** branches of service regardless of how the honor of Taps is performed. (A quality audio recording of Taps would be allowed).

VSOs **would not** receive **both** a state and federal stipend.

As you know, funeral Honors include folding of the flag, presentation of the flag, presentation of the state coin, playing of the taps and a three-volley salute.

Even though the stipend is only **\$50**, many VSOs are struggling to financially support their Funeral Honors program.

The ask under this is **\$200 thousand dollars** in continuing appropriation to help cover the yearly average of **16 hundred funerals**.

**HB 1182** passed **GVA** by a 12-0 mark and the full House by a **90-0** margin.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and committee members.