

Chairman Schauer, members of the Government and Veterans Affairs committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning.

My name is Jason Pierce. I am here in support of House Bill No.1148. I believe the state of North Dakota has been, and continues to be, a state whose National Guard Soldiers set the standard and have served, and will continue to serve, the great state of North Dakota, and nation, with honor, sacrifice, and dignity.

As of June 2024, The North Dakota National Guard had around 4,200 service members. That number continues to grow, and God willing, will continue to produce brave men and women who understand the importance of service over self. These dedicated Soldiers and Airmen of our great state spend countless hours in training, and executing the training in which they

receive, which results in time away from their families which can be days, months, and even years. Without fail, they are there to serve, volunteering to serve, *and that is honorable*. I know firsthand, as my fellow brothers and sisters in uniform do, the feeling of missing children's birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays during our service to this state and country.

We don't do this for a thank you or appreciation. A military member will never expect a thank you for what they do or have done, they do it because it is the right thing to do.

However, when I approached District 15 Representative Kathy Frelich in regard to putting together this Bill, it was the now Civilian side of me that wanted to thank every single service member, both National Guard and Active duty, from the state of North Dakota for their selfless service.

Twice a year we celebrate our veterans and mourn the loss of those who lost their lives in the line of Duty, but we as citizens of this great state do not get the chance to recognize those who are still serving our state and nation.

When duty calls for help during a flood, our citizen soldiers answer the call. The number of North Dakota National Guard members who have served on flood duty varies depending on the situation but can be in the hundreds or thousands. For example, in 2011, more than 3,000 North Dakota National Guard members served on flood duty.

When Governor Burgum called upon the North Dakota National Guard for support during the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) protests in 2016, around two dozen soldiers were deployed to the site and 100 more were placed on standby to provide security and administrative support.

Hundreds of our states Guard Soldiers have been called to serve on the southwest boarder and even in air defense at our nation's capital. Also, many Soldiers from my city of Devils Lake have been called to serve in Ghana in a partnership that the ND National Guard has with that nation. These are but a few examples that when our State calls, our brave Soldiers and Airmen answer that call.

I have yet to mention those North Dakotans that have made the ultimate sacrifice. Just to give you an idea of the service and sacrifice of our state's brave servants, these are the numbers of those who gave their lives in support of our nation according to the VA:

Philippine Insurrection: 17

World War I: over 1300

World War II: 1626

Korea: 177

Vietnam: 199

Lebanon: 1

Panama: 1

Gulf War: 1

Iraq: 15

Afghanistan: 7

Our Brave men and women from North Dakota deserve an entire month, where we as a State, show our appreciation for all that they do. So, I humbly ask for your support in passing HB 1148.

Thank you for your time.