



January 13, 2025

Peter O'Rourke Testimony Supporting North Dakota House Bill No. 1169 - *A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new section to chapter 37-14 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to compensation for veterans' benefits; and to provide a penalty.*

Dear Chairman Schauer and Members of the House Government & Veterans Affairs Committee,

My name is Peter O'Rourke, the former Acting Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) under President Trump, the current President of the National Association for Veteran Rights (NAVR), and a proud Veteran. I strongly support North Dakota House Bill No. 1169 (HB 1169). HB 1169, as amended, seeks to ensure transparency and ethical standards in the compensation of individuals advising or assisting Veterans with their benefits claims. This legislation is vital in safeguarding the rights and well-being of Veterans and their families as they navigate complex VA benefits systems.

HB 1169 is essential for protecting Veterans from unethical practices within the claims assistance industry while granting them the freedom to choose how they navigate the complex process of filing disability claims. The provisions of HB 1169 align with NAVR's mission to promote ethical business practices and advocate for Veteran-owned businesses. We commend the bill's provisions, which prohibit predatory practices such as excessive fees, misleading guarantees, and improper access to Veterans' sensitive information. By requiring clear disclosures and written agreements, the bill ensures Veterans are informed of their rights and the availability of free services.

NAVR strongly supports the emphasis on protecting recently discharged Veterans during the critical one-year presumptive period, recognizing that no Veteran should be financially exploited at such a vulnerable time. Additionally, prohibiting nonrefundable fees and the use of international call centers to process sensitive personal information, further underscores the bill's commitment to privacy and security.

We believe this legislation strikes an important balance—encouraging Veterans to seek expert support while holding service providers accountable to the highest ethical standards. NAVR stands ready to assist in ensuring the successful implementation of this bill and to support further efforts that prioritize the dignity and trust our Veterans deserve.

Thank you for your dedication to Veteran advocacy and for championing HB 1169, demonstrating North Dakota's commitment to advocating for those who have served our nation.

Sincerely,

The Honorable Peter O'Rourke
President, NAVR