



North Dakota House of Representatives

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COMMITTEES:
Appropriations

HB 1180
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House GVA

Good afternoon Chair Schauer and GVA Committee:

Today, I stand before you to introduce House Bill 1180, a piece of legislation rooted in housekeeping but with significant implications for our dedicated veterans. Our intent on this bill is simple yet crucial: to clear up language in the North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) to reflect the verbiage used in VA letters on combined service-connected evaluations and Individual Unemployability (IU).

Intent of the Bill

We aim to align our state laws with the federal terminology used by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This bill seeks to eliminate the ambiguities and misinterpretations that arise due to differences in language.

Need for the Bill

While the main offices of the North Dakota Department of Transportation (DOT), the Tax Commissioner's office, and several others currently understand and differentiate between these laws, local staff and new employees may not be as familiar. This discrepancy occasionally results in veterans spending hours on phone calls and discussions to clarify their eligibility, delaying or even denying them their earned benefits.

Current Challenge

The verbiage used by our government employees sometimes conflicts with the VA's language, particularly regarding disability letters. For instance, the term "...a resident disabled veteran who has a one hundred percent service-connected disability as determined by the department of veterans' affairs, or a resident disabled veteran who has an extra-schedular rating to include individual unemployability that brings the veteran's total disability rating to one hundred percent as determined by the department of veterans' affairs..." needs to be better understood at all levels.

Clarifications on VA Disability Ratings

- **Service-Connected Disability:** A condition incurred or aggravated during military service for which the veteran receives VA benefits.
- **Combined Service-Connected Evaluation:** The aggregate rating for all service-connected disabilities.

- **Individual Unemployability (IU):** This allows veterans to be compensated at the 100% rate even if their combined service-connected evaluation is not 100%, as their conditions prevent them from maintaining gainful employment.

For clarity, VA ratings add each disability individually, combining them for an overall rating, which is then rounded to the nearest 10%. Using VA math, it would require five disabling issues rated at 50% to equal a total 100% disability.

Outcome of the Bill

The outcome we seek is to align the NDCC language with that of the federal VA, reducing confusion and ensuring our veterans receive the benefits they have earned without undue hassle. Importantly, this bill does not introduce new benefits but ensures the fair and accurate delivery of existing ones.

In conclusion, House Bill 1180 represents a step forward in streamlining our processes, honoring our commitment to veterans, and ensuring they receive the respect and clarity they deserve. I urge you all to support this bill and help us make this necessary adjustment to better serve our veterans.

Behind me, are the experts, who can explain this math, and show the examples of how this bill will help our veterans.

I stand for questions.

Thank you.

Brandy L. Pyle