

# House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

## Testimony by MG Murray G. Sagsveen (NDARNG Ret.) Opposing House Bill 1315

January 24, 2025

Chair Schauer and members of the Committee. I am Murray Sagsveen, a former member of the North Dakota Army National Guard, personally testifying in opposition to House Bill 1315.

I enlisted in the Army in 1968. During Basic and Advanced Infantry Training, there were three categories of training soldiers: soldiers who enlisted were always at the head of lines (especially at the mess hall), soldiers who were drafted were placed in the middle of lines, and soldiers in the National Guard were always relegated to the end of the lines. It was my experience that active Army personnel, from the drill sergeant to the company commander did not respect members of the National Guard.

Shortly after arriving in the Republic of Korea in late 1968, I was assigned to a military intelligence unit until I was discharged from active duty in January 1971.

Later in 1971, I received a reserve direct commission in military intelligence and joined the North Dakota Army National Guard. In 1973, after graduating from the UND School of Law, I was assigned to judge advocate positions in combat engineer units and the state headquarters. In 1996, I was promoted to brigadier general and assigned as the Army National Guard Special Assistant to the Judge Advocate General of the Army, which was the senior judge advocate position in the Army National Guard.

In 1997 and 2011, I was recalled to state active duty as a state major general and the State Flood Recovery Coordinator for the Red River and Souris River floods.

Accordingly, my military career spanned more than four decades, which offered me an opportunity to observe the evolution of the Army National Guard from an organization that trained and trained (but was seldom called to active duty) to a superbly trained, combat ready, essential component of the U.S. Army. The Air National Guard is similarly an essential component of the U.S. Air Force.

Now, the U.S. Army and Air Force rely on the Army and Air National Guard to accomplish their assigned missions. Last year, General Daniel R. Hokanson, Chief, National Guard Bureau, provided this testimony to a House subcommittee:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense, on A Review of the President's FY2025 Funding Request and Budget Justification for the National Guard and Reserve, April 30, 2024.

In 2023 alone, the National Guard served the equivalent of nearly 16 million days. This included more than nine million days overseas supporting Combatant Commanders, conducting peacekeeping missions, and deterring strategic competitors and adversaries. Meanwhile, our Guardsmen, in both Federal and state duty statuses, conducted homeland defense operations, held training exercises, and responded to disaster events in the 50 states, three territories, and the District of Columbia. National Guardsmen saved 476 lives, distributed hundreds of thousands of meals and bottles of water, and cleared more than 1,500 miles of roadway in response to disasters. Whether it's at the request of the Combatant Commanders or our Nation's governors, we have never missed a mission.

I have also personally observed the importance of "citizen soldiers" in the volunteer military. During the "draft years," civilians continually passed through the Army, especially in the lower enlisted ranks. With the transition to the all-volunteer Army, that influx of non-career soldiers ceased. Now, with the integration of Army National Guard units with deploying Army units, active Army personnel and citizen soldiers are again serving side-by-side, which (in my opinion) benefits both the full-time soldier and the Army National Guard citizen soldier. Army National Guard members - who may live in Fargo/West Fargo, Jamestown, Grand Forks, Warwick, Bismarck/Mandan, Dickinson, or Minot - bring community wisdom, civilian skills, and North Dakota common sense to the U.S. Armed Forces.

To summarize, this country's armed forces depend on the National Guard to provide for the defense and national security of our homeland and allies

Finally, there are many U.S. constitutional and federal law reasons why this Committee should vote a "do not pass" recommendation, as will be explained by others, such as Rep. Olson, who plan to testify. Essentially, federal laws now grant substantial authority to the president, as commander-in-chief, to mobilize and deploy the military, including the National Guard, when deemed necessary for national security purposes. No state may frustrate that authority.

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