

TESTIMONY OF
BRIGADIER GENERAL MITCH JOHNSON
ADJUTANT GENERAL
NORTH DAKOTA NATIONAL GUARD
BEFORE
HOUSE GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS
24 JANUARY 2025
HOUSE BILL 1315

Good morning, Chairman Schauer, members of the committee, I am Brigadier General Mitch Johnson, Adjutant General of the North Dakota National Guard. I am here today to testify in opposition to HB 1315.

Our United States Military is a Total Force made up of the Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserves. The National Guard is the primary combat reserve of the Army and Air Force. As Adjutant General, my main mission is to ensure the United States, and the State of North Dakota, have a trained and ready force. I have over 1000 federally funded full time employees who help me organize, train, and equip your men and women of the North Dakota National Guard. Additionally, I have hundreds of millions of dollars of federal equipment for our federal mission sets.

If HB 1315 were to pass, North Dakota would become the only state where the federal government can no longer access the Guard unless congress passed a declaration of war. With this restriction in place, I would struggle to justify why missions, and equipment should not be moved to other states that are willing to support the national defense mission. Additionally, I expect that a significant number of guardsmen would leave North Dakota and join units in neighboring states or join the Reserves, because my guardsmen want to do their missions. For the guardsmen I would have left, I would expect to receive little to no funding for exercises and training. In a very short amount of time, I would expect to struggle with recruiting, morale, funding, and readiness. In my opinion this is an unjustifiable risk, especially when you consider that Congress has continued to lawfully carry out its war powers under the Constitution since World War II, even if it was not through a "formal" declaration of war.

Currently, your North Dakota National Guard is viewed with respect across our state and nation. I have guardsmen that are nationally recognized as leaders in their career fields and who are an example of how to do things right...the North Dakota Way. The support we receive from the North Dakota legislature ensures the state receives the full benefit of the approximate \$115 million in federal funds each biennium. This represents tremendous return on investment for both the Department of Defense and North Dakota. They receive well trained military units ready to carry out our national defense mission. The state receives an economic impact of over \$660 million, and more importantly, the benefit of 4100 professional Soldiers and Airmen from 200 North Dakota communities, all ready to serve our state during times of need. Your legislation and support have helped make that possible. I ask for your support again.

This concludes my testimony, and I stand for any questions.