

**Do Pass Testimony
of Doug Sharbono, citizen of North Dakota
on SB2407
in the Sixty-ninth Legislative Assembly Special Session #2 of ND**

Dear Chairman Bekkedahl and Chairman Vigesaa and members of the Joint Appropriations Committee,

I am writing as a citizen and believe SB2407 is important urgent legislation and ask for your Do Pass Recommendation.

Appropriation for the Military Gallery is the bill for which Special Session was called, no question. I am deeply disappointed that this was not accurately stated as the reason during the initial press conference and along the way. The urgency of Kratom with average 4 deaths per year does not meet the test when compared to the acceptability of alcohol related deaths being 347 per year. Kratom deaths pale in comparison to alcohol deaths. The debate on alcohol is a settled question and by action, considered an acceptable, but managed risk. How can we place urgency on the Kratom issue considering these statistics? Two regular sessions have passed since we have been incurring the Kratom problems of the same approximate magnitude as we are experiencing now. I find the stated special session reasons to be disingenuous and an insult to the legislature and the people. The urgency of this special session should rightly fully address the needed Military Gallery appropriation.

Full disclosure, I am a veteran and a fan of all the state historical sites. I love the Oscar Zero missile command site in particular. It is such a treasure that the state does well in managing. There are numerous other sites I have valued and visited. However, I do NOT think 2025 HB1018 should have appropriated funds to the Military Gallery in the first place. The \$78 million cost was unnecessary at that time, not reflecting North Dakota's notion of limited government and frugality. This is despite North Dakota being highly noted in having significant contributions to past worldwide war efforts. North Dakota veterans have sacrificed much.

However, now that we are engaged with the Military Gallery, it has to be completed. To break this down quite simply, we could pay \$78 million to stare at a hole in the ground, or we could pay \$78 million to now enjoy a nice space and tribute to our veterans. North Dakota is under contract, and we are very much in danger of going into default. We need to satisfy our obligation towards those we entrusted to build the Military Gallery.

I do not think the donations will come in, so it no longer makes sense to hold out for the donated money in the structuring of the bill language. It would have already happened if it was a worthy project. The money should be fully appropriated with no loan. If donations do come in after the fact, credit the funds back to the general fund. Please amend the bill to fully fund.

Please give SB2407 a Do Pass.

Thank you,

Doug Sharbono
1708 9th St S
Fargo, ND 58103