

## Testimony

by Russel W. Stabler

Fargo Memorial Honor Guard

As a veteran and a member of the Fargo Memorial Honor Guard, I am testifying before you to inform you of the necessity of funds to bring our building at the Fargo National Cemetery to completion.

We have been operating at the National Cemetery since its opening in September 2019, in this entire time not only have we endured all kinds of weather, but so have the families of the deceased veteran. We need this building to get these families and friends out of the various weather conditions. I will grant some of the younger family members might be able to handle the conditions, but the older folks that are frail cannot. Unfortunately, we have had 80- and 90-year-old wives and mothers out there in the below zero temperature with high winds to the degree we have had to scramble for blankets to keep these older females warm.

The VA cemetery affairs committee does have an open structure with a wall on the north and west sides of this pagoda type structure, it does not keep the wind and snow out entirely. Furthermore, if the wind and precipitation is coming in from the east and south it does not stop it all.

We need to get this building up and operating for these reasons and need it to secure the weapons of the honor in a permanent Armory build into the building.

Now there is a bathroom on the property, but there is no hot and cold running water, and, in the winter, it freezes up and cannot be used. In this case they

bring in a porta potty with no heat and no running water in it.

At the National Cemetery if there is a large number of family and friends and fellow veterans attending the internment and Memorial Service, the end up parking on County Road 20 creating a traffic hazard. The honor guard ends up parking on the lane for the cemetery so it's members can have their vehicles to get in out of the cold and extreme heat, which takes up spaces' family could use.

It is for these reasons and others I am supporting the effort in requesting the assistance of the North Dakota Legislation in securing funds to support getting this building complete and but in use as soon as possible.

I respectfully thank all of you for listening to me and my testimony today.

*Russel Stabler*