

Testimony for SB 2288
Veterans Club Expenses from Gaming Funds
Senator Dick Dever

Madam Chair, members of the committee, for the record, I am Dick Dever, Senator from District 32. I am also serving in my third year as Commander of Bismarck Amvets Post 9, and as Judge Advocate for VFW Post 1326.

I joined the VFW long enough ago that I don't carry my membership card because it stops me at metal detectors. I joined the VFW first because the name is on the VFW All Seasons Arena here in Bismarck and on the playground at Solheim Elementary School. They donated a lot of money to both projects; all from gaming funds.

Veterans organizations are struggling with dwindling numbers. At one time, the American Legion had a Club in Bismarck. The VFW struggled with a large facility and downsized and later closed. The Amvets has the only Veterans Club in town and is struggling to stay in business.

The Amvets Club would not exist without gaming and gaming would not exist without the Club. When a Club closes the Post suffers.

SB 2288 proposes to allow Veterans organizations to use up to 20% of the net proceeds from gaming for the costs of food and beverages in the operation of the Club. This would give those existing clubs a fighting chance to stay open and might enable those who have closed their clubs to reopen.

20% was an arbitrary figure. It was suggested that I introduce the bill at 50%. I thought that to be ambitious. If you would like to increase the number, I would be most supportive. The organizations are non-profit organizations. We can't continue to sustain losses, but we are still non-profit and would only use the necessary amount.

Why veterans organizations and why limit this to veterans organizations? By their existence, veterans organizations provide a patriotic, charitable, community service.

Deb McDaniels neither supports nor opposes this bill but suggested the language in a way that it can be controlled and regulated.

Why is the continuing viability of veteran's organizations necessary? In discussing the new Military Museum being considered, General Dohrmann talks about the rich military history of service by North Dakotans.

I add to that the fact that this country began its existence as an exercise in self-government. It has existed, does exist, and will only continue to exist, if and to the extent that its citizens recognize their responsibility to it.

Veterans provide honor guards at the funerals of veterans. Those honor guards serve in flag ceremonies at community events and in our schools. They promote civic responsibility to students and serve as living history of our nation's wars. The Amvets Department (State)

provides pocket Constitutions to every 8th grade student in the state in September.

This is an important bill in support of important community organizations that promote important values to keep our country strong.

I urge your favorable consideration of the bill. Thank you.