2019 HOUSE GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

HCR 3047

2019 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
Fort Union Room, State Capitol

HCR 3047
2/28/2019
33005

☐ Subcommittee
☐ Conference Committee

Committee Clerk: Carmen Hart

Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

Directing the Legislative Management to consider studying state and federal veterans' programs, the programs' eligibility requirements, and the efficiency of public or private entities responsible for the administration of state and federal veterans' programs to ensure all current and future ND veterans receive the care, assistance, and benefits to which the veterans are entitled

Minutes: Attachments 1-3

Chairman Kasper opened the hearing on HCR 3047.

Rep. B. Koppelman appeared in support. This resolution was put together to study the overall veterans' programs, services, and delivery of those items. I think there has been questions as to whether or not there are disconnects between the different generations of veterans and how they are served and by whom. After having this resolution drafted, I did speak with a couple of individuals who compared it to the task force that the governor is doing on veterans. This resolution is in front of all legislators on a committee. I think the perspective would be different and more likely to full _ if it came out of interim legislative committee than out of the governor's task force. (3:50)

Rep. Rohr: Is it a may or shall study?

Rep. B. Koppelman: I do believe it has the same meaning—to consider

Rep. Rohr: They have three piles there--may, shall, and consider. This might be No. 3.

Rep. B. Koppelman: I figure this would be the shortest pile, so it would get picked.

Rep. Karls: How is this different from the last time we were asked to study veterans' benefits?

Rep. B. Koppelman: This is my fourth session on GVA. Over that time, we have made studies in place of a bill, and I don't think they have been broad. I don't think they have been selected either. The point of this is to make this important enough to make the list.

Rep. P. Anderson: Are you aware of the high suicide rate of veterans? Is this the middle of what you are talking about?

Rep. B. Koppelman: I admit I don't have a vet study on any specific topic. I am very aware of the concern and the problem that we have in the area of suicide and suicide on younger aged veterans.

Rep. Laning: I am also a member of the governor's task force on veterans' affairs. We have similar goals. The task force is made up of four legislators, two senators and two reps. The national guard and ACOVA is there. There are 14 members. I think this is unnecessary.

Rep. B. Koppelman: The way the executive branch and the legislature solves problems are different. I think the outcomes are different.

Vice Chair Steiner: It troubles me to see governors setting up task forces and putting a few legislators on. Wouldn't you agree that the whole point of having a legislative study is to educate a wider range of legislators rather than four selected?

Rep. B. Koppelman: I believe the success rate is better for a legislative study versus a task force outcome. I do think there is a little bit of a mission creep when the task forces are trying to establish policy.

Neutral

Sean Cleary, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor, appeared in a neutral position. He stated he would provide the committee with an overview of the executive order and members of the governor's task force. Attachments 1-2. One of the reasons we decided to form the task force is we thought that it would be good to get buy in from the veterans throughout the process.

Rep. P. Anderson: Do you know if suicide is part of this task force's objectives?

Mr. Cleary: The task force has two primary objectives, and that is to look at the services provided to veterans by the state and how those coordinate with the veterans' services available in the state. It also is looking at the government structure that oversees ND veterans' affairs. Suicide is certainly something that the task force will be looking at.

Chairman Kasper: He read Line 24, Page 1. Wouldn't you perceive that as probably considering if the interim _ suicide and probably health when you use the words "care, assistance, and benefits"? Would that be broad enough?

Mr. Cleary: Yes.

Rep. Laning: There was a gentleman who spoke on suicide amongst veterans at this first meeting as well as the human services people. That was one of their major focuses. Exactly who sits on this task force?

Mr. Cleary: He reminded the committee that he would provide that list of 15 members. Attachment 3. We tried to get wide representation on this task force.

Rep. B. Koppelman: On Page 2, starting with Line 3, I think this study does have the goal about engaging the various veteran service agencies and veterans in general.

Chairman Kasper closed the hearing.

Chairman Kasper opened the meeting. (21:59)

Vice Chair Steiner made a motion for a DO PASS.

Rep. Rohr seconded the motion.

Rep. P. Anderson: I am going to do a do pass too. I just hope that this will pass and someone will figure out what to do about all the suicides we are having. That is a top priority in the veterans' affairs department right now.

A roll call vote was taken. 10-4, 0 absent.

Vice Chair Steiner will carry the bill.

Date: 2-28-19
Roll Call Vote#: 1

2019 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE
ROLL CALL VOTES
BILL/RESOLUTION NO. 3047

House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

☐ Subcommittee

Amendment LC# or Description: _____

Recommendation: ☐ Adopt Amendment
☒ Do Pass ☐ Do Not Pass ☐ Without Committee Recommendation
☐ As Amended ☐ Rerefer to Appropriations
☐ Place on Consent Calendar

Other Actions: ☐ Reconsider ☐ _____

Motion Made By Rep Steiner Seconded By Rep Rohr

Representatives	Yes	No	Representatives	Yes	No
Chairman Jim Kasper	X		Rep. Pamela Anderson	X	
Vice Chair Vicky Steiner	X		Rep. Mary Schneider	X	
Rep. Jeff Hoverson		X			
Rep. Craig Johnson		X			
Rep. Daniel Johnston	X				
Rep. Karen Karls	X				
Rep. Ben Koppelman	X				
Rep. Vernon Laning		X			
Rep. Scott Louser	X				
Rep. Karen Rohr	X				
Rep. Austen Schauer		X			
Rep. Steve Vetter	X				

Total (Yes) 10 No 4

Absent 0

Floor Assignment Rep Steiner

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

HCR 3047: Government and Veterans Affairs Committee (Rep. Kasper, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (10 YEAS, 4 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HCR 3047 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.

2019 SENATE GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

HCR 3047

2019 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
Sheyenne River Room, State Capitol

HCR3047
3/29/2019
34364

☐ Subcommittee
☐ Conference Committee

Committee Clerk: Pam Dever

Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:
Consider studying state & federal veterans' programs, the programs' eligibility requirements, & the efficiency of public or private entities responsible for the administration of state & federal veterans' programs to ensure all current & future N.D. veterans receive the care, assistance, & benefits to which the veterans are entitled.

Minutes:

Att #1 – Lonnie Wangen

Chairman Davison: Open the hearing on HCR3047.

Rep. Ben Koppelman, Dist. 16, W. Fargo: This resolution is calling for a comprehensive review of our veterans programs. We want to review the efficiencies. We also want to review the past and future things that will effect veterans. When you look at the needs for veterans in post-Vietnam and present, there are challenges. I hope we would find the efficiencies, but not change cultures. How can we include members better in the new conflicts? It took a while for the Vietnam vets to get involved, like they are now. We diagnose PTS now more than in the Vietnam timeframe. I did ask when this had been studies last. (3.23) There was a study during 2013-2014-time frame. It was not as comprehensive as this one. There was a study in 2007-08. Before that, it was 1983-4. This is not a witch hunt by any means. The younger veteran's groups were excited about this study.

Sen. Erin Oban: Are we the best to study these things? Who would you have at the table.

Rep. Koppelman: The governor has a task force that is looking into similar. I believe we are the right people to study this issue. The people making the decision about this study will be the same people that come back next session and attempt to put into law. With a governor's task force, some members could be partial they are used to or the way of doing things they are used to. May not reflect the balance changes from an outsider looking in. (6,19) As an independent juror is more like a legislative process. These could complement each other. The same groups may testify in both groups. What is the success rate of recommendations that come out of a commission vs one that come out of a legislative committee? Who will carry that torch in the legislature?

Sen. Kristin Roers: How much of this is generational and how much is stage of life? My dad got a purple heart in Vietnam and wanted nothing to do with vet organizations when he was

younger. Now, he loves being involved in many vet groups. He is in 70's and looking back more. (8.00) Some people are just not in their right place in their phase of life right now.

Rep. Koppelman: My intention is to make sure that our delivery is taking care of the veterans. Regardless of the age of the administrators and outreach, does not matter to me. The service needs to be there no matter what phase of life they are in. The younger generation are not joining American Legion or Am Vets. Pretty soon the young vets will be outnumbering the Korean and Vietnam vets. We need to be prepared.

Sen. Richard Marcellais: (11.17) I serve on the governor's task force. I agree with you and most don't know what benefits are state and what are federal benefits. We have 700 vets in our district. We only have two part-time service officers. You may have a bigger county with a bigger mill levy, so they have a full-time vets service officer. This is what I would like to be addressed out of this study. We need to share resources between counties to serve all veterans. Homelessness is a big issue. We have over 1500 veterans in N.D. that are homeless. We need to look at that. There is a program that the VA works with HUD (VASH). It is federal. It finds low rent housing for vets but they have to agree to counseling. (13.14)

Chairman Davison: Any more in support? Agency? Opposition?

Lonnie Wangen, Commissioner of Veterans Affairs (ACOVA: I am here opposed. I was not able to testify when it was in the House. (see att # 1) (16.00)

Chairman Davison: I am sorry to interrupt. We are trying to understand with this study. These are things we want to know how the vet's groups are doing to help. How so we make better decisions to create a better quality of product.

Lonnie: These studies that were done, result in bills that came before you over the years. (18.49)

Chairman Davison: How do we know that they improved quality?

Lonnie: You can talk to the CVSO's about that. Our latest audit had a questionnaire for services officers, and they ranked things quite high. He kept going through the history.

Chairman Davison: Rep. Koppelmann's point is that we do lots of things and we day 'yes', 'no' randomly and asking if we are making an impact. (20.03) Are we providing the tolls to make an impact. His intent is not a witch hunt. It is to say are we making right decisions and on the right kinds of data.

Lonnie: Since I have been here we have been studies and audited. We responded to lots of questions. Right now we have a task force for veteran's affairs. Last session the governor asked we take a 10% cut in staff across the board for all agencies. We ended up losing 30% of our staff as a small agency. This study takes time away from my agency. This study is not necessary. Three years ago, suicides were 22 per day. Now we are at 20 a day. 69% of suicides result in fire arm injury. Females in the military are 1.8 times higher than non-adult females to commit suicide. Male vets 55 years and older are the highest count for suicide.

Only 6 of the 20 suicides are in the VA system. (26.00) We are serving the younger veterans. (28.00)

Chairman Davison: Any more testimony? The hearing is closed. (28.31)

2019 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
Sheyenne River Room, State Capitol

HCR3047
3/29/2019
34368

☐ Subcommittee
☐ Conference Committee

Committee Clerk: Pam Dever

Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:
Consider studying state & federal veterans' programs, the programs' eligibility requirements, & the efficiency of public or private entities responsible for the administration of state & federal veterans' programs to endure all current & future N.D. veterans receive the care, assistance, and benefits to which the veterans are entitled.

Minutes:

Chairman Davison: Look at HCR3047.

Sen. Shawn Vedaa: I move a DO PASS. **Vice Chair Meyer**: I second.

Chairman Davison: Discussion.

Sen. Kristin Roers: One of the things that made an impression was one of the last things he said that he felt split with two studies being done. What that will do with already stretched thin staff. Maybe this is not the right time for this.

Sen. Shawn Vedaa: This is a study that legislative management will decide whether or not to do it. We are passing it to them. (.45)

Sen. Erin Oban: I think it is important, whoever is serving on legislative management, that when the discussion comes up, that they know there is a task force happening. I wish these conversations would happen together. (1.14)

Chairman Davison: Take roil: **YES -- 5 NO -- 2 -0-absent**
HCR3047 PASSED. **Sen. Shawn Vedaa will carry the bill.**

Done (1.53)

3-29-19

Date:
Roll Call Vote #: 1

2019 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE
ROLL CALL VOTES HCR 3047
BILL/RESOLUTION NO.

Senate Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

☐ Subcommittee

Amendment LC# or Description: _____

Recommendation: ☐ Adopt Amendment
☑ Do Pass ☐ Do Not Pass ☐ Without Committee Recommendation
☐ As Amended ☐ Rerefer to Appropriations
☐ Place on Consent Calendar

Other Actions: ☐ Reconsider ☐ _____

Motion Made By Sen. Vedaa Seconded By Sen Meyer

Senators	Yes	No	Senators	Yes	No
Chair Davison	/		Sen. Oban	/	
Vice Chair Meyer	/		Sen. Marcellais	/	
Sen. Elkin		/			
Sen. K. Roers		/			
Sen. Vedaa	/				

Total (Yes) 5 No 2

Absent -0-

Floor Assignment Sen Vedaa

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

HCR 3047: Government and Veterans Affairs Committee (Sen. Davison, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (5 YEAS, 2 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HCR 3047 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar.

2019 TESTIMONY

HCR 3047

#1
HCR 3047
2-28-19

— State of —
North Dakota
Office of the Governor

Doug Burgum
Governor

EXECUTIVE ORDER 2018-07

WHEREAS, North Dakota is home to more than 50,000 military veterans – men and women who have provided, and continue to provide, extraordinary service to our country and our state; and

WHEREAS, there is an array of specific services and benefits available to veterans across federal and state agencies and nonprofit organizations; and

WHEREAS, North Dakota is committed to providing coordinated, high-quality services to veterans and ensuring they are able to effectively access the benefits and services which they earned and deserve; and

WHEREAS, the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs was established by the forty-second legislative assembly in 1971 to oversee the general administration of veterans affairs in North Dakota; and

WHEREAS, proper organization of the State's services and resources is critical to effectively support veterans and their dependents in North Dakota; and

WHEREAS, convening a task force to examine the communication, collaboration, governance and delivery systems for veterans services, with input from a variety of interested stakeholders, will facilitate meaningful enhancements to accessibility and delivery of services to North Dakota's veterans and their dependents.

NOW, THEREFORE, Doug Burgum, as Governor of the State of North Dakota, hereby establishes the Task Force for Veterans Affairs. The Task Force shall consist of no less than eleven and no greater than fifteen members, appointed by the Governor, representing the interests of veterans and their dependents, members of State government and other applicable stakeholders. The Governor or his designee will serve as a non-voting member of the Task Force. The Governor shall designate the Chair of the Task Force.

I. The Task Force for Veterans Affairs shall:
   a. Examine the current structure of veterans affairs governance and service delivery, evaluating strengths and weaknesses in the current system.
   b. Identify areas for increased collaboration, communication and efficiencies in and among existing programs, state agencies and other resources utilized for the service of veterans in the state.
   c. Provide recommendations to improve the current governance structure and services for veterans in North Dakota.

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II. The Task Force shall meet at the call of the Chair. A simple majority of the Task Force shall constitute a quorum for purposes of taking any official action.

III. The Task Force may create working groups to increase input from veterans and other stakeholders throughout the State.

The Governor is vested with executive authority to issue this Order pursuant to Article V, Section 1 of the North Dakota Constitution.

The Order is effective immediately and shall remain in effect until further notice.

Executed at Bismarck, North Dakota, this 25th day of October 2018.

Doug Burgum, Governor

ATTEST:

Secretary of State

Deputy

#2
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2-28-19

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Burgum forms Task Force for Veterans Affairs to ensure governance, services are best positioned to support veterans

Friday, October 26, 2018 - 10:00am

BISMARCK, N.D. – Gov. Doug Burgum today signed an executive order creating a task force to assess the current system for supporting military veterans in North Dakota and comprehensively examine how the state's current resources can be organized to serve veterans most effectively.

The Task Force for Veterans Affairs also will examine the current governance structure for the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (NDVA), which is overseen by the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs (ACOVA).

In addition to the NDVA and ACOVA, there are a variety of nonprofit, federal, state and local organizations and programs that provide services to veterans in North Dakota. The North Dakota National Guard provides support to veterans through ND Cares, which was established by Gov. Jack Dalrymple in 2015, as well as other programs. The North Dakota Veterans Home, first established in 1893, provides long-term and basic care to veterans and their spouses. North Dakota is home to more than 50,000 veterans along with their families.

"We are deeply grateful for our service members and military veterans and the sacrifices they and their families have made for our state and country," Burgum said. "We greatly appreciate the work that has been done in North Dakota to serve veterans, and this task force is an opportunity to work with veterans to review our current system and ensure we are best positioned to support them."

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The ACOVA consists of 15 voting members appointed by the Governor and nominated by the AMVETS, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Vietnam Veterans of America, which are the five largest veterans service organizations in the state.

"We would like to thank the Governor for convening this task force to examine how we can best work together to support veterans in North Dakota," ACOVA chairman Dean Overby said.

"We look forward to working with this task force to build on the work we have been doing to serve veterans in North Dakota," said NDVA Commissioner Lonnie Wangen, who also serves as a member of the federal VA's Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee.

Burgum has appointed North Dakota National Guard Brig. Gen. Robert Fode to chair the Task Force. Fode has served in the North Dakota National Guard for 40 years and is set to retire on Oct. 30. Fode most recently led the National Guard's Land Component Command.

"Ensuring that the state's services are effectively organized and delivered is a crucial part of making sure we're prepared to best serve all our veterans as we encounter new challenges in the 21st century," Fode said.

The Task Force will consist of 11 to 15 members representing veterans and their families, officials from state government and other interested community stakeholders.

Individuals interested in serving on the Task Force should apply through the Boards section on www.governor.nd.gov by Nov. 16. Under "Navigation," select "Application Form for Boards and Commissions," and select "Task Force for Veterans Affairs" in the drop-down list in the application form.

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Governor Doug Burgum **Lt. Governor** Brent Sanford

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Navigation

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Board Details

Task Force for Veterans Affairs

Type of Board:	Task Force	**Pay/Benefits:**	n/a
Voting Members:	15	**Other Members:**	0
Non-Voting Members:	0	**Created by:**	Executive Order 2018-07
Length of Terms:	Open		
Frequency of Meetings:	At the call of the chair		
Address:	600 E Boulevard Ave Bismarck, ND 58505		
Phone:	7013282289		
Fax:			
Website:			
Email:	scleary@nd.gov		
Contact:	Sean Cleary		

The Task Force for Veterans Affairs shall: Examine the current structure of veterans affairs governance and service delivery, evaluating strengths and weaknesses in the current system. Identify areas for increased collaboration, communication and efficiencies in and among existing programs, state agencies and other resources utilized for the service of veterans in the state. Provide recommendations to improve the current governance structure and services for veterans in North Dakota.

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Member Name	Position	Work	County	Appt. Date	Term Ends
Barkus, Trent	Governor Appointee	(701) 298-9363	Cass	12/12/2018	Open
Ekstrom, Mandie	Governor Appointee		Cass	12/12/2018	Open
Flowers, John	Governor Appointee	(701) 730-5983		12/12/2018	Open
Fode, Robert	Governor Appointee -Chairman	(701) 328-1937	Morton	12/12/2018	Open
Gerving , Henry	Governor Appointee	(701) 872-4673	Golden Valley	12/12/2018	Open
Hollingsworth, Doug	Governor Appointee	(701) 922-6356	Ward	12/12/2018	Open
Jorgensen, Thea	Governor Appointee	(701) 934-2458	Burleigh	12/12/2018	Open
Laning, Vernon	Governor Appointee		Burleigh	12/12/2018	Open
LIVERSAGE, LAVONNE	Governor Appointee	(701) 239-3701	Cass	12/12/2018	Open
Marcellais, Richard	Governor Appointee	(701) 477-8985	Rolette	12/12/2018	Open
Mock, Dawn	Governor Appointee	(701) 328-1895	Burleigh	12/12/2018	Open
Overby, Dean	Governor Appointee	(701) 671-1509	Richland	12/12/2018	Open
Palmer, Alan	Governor Appointee	(701) 317-2284		12/12/2018	Open
Wangen, Lonnie	Governor Appointee	(701) 239-7165	Cass	12/12/2018	Open
Wicks, Tim	Governor Appointee	(701) 202-0408		12/12/2018	Open

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Governor Doug Burgum **Lt. Governor** Brent Sanford

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2-28-19

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Testimony of Lonnie Wangen Commissioner ND Department of Veterans Affairs on 66th Legislative Assembly HCR 3047 Senate GVA Senator Davison Chair

Some history on the study and auditing of the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs (ACOVA), ND Department of Veterans Affairs (NDDVA), and the County & Tribal Veteran Service Officers (VSO):

2004:

UND Study completed: 2003 study by UND Government Services Management study:" Understanding interactions between CVSO and individual veterans".

Performance Audit of ACOVA completed

- Many recommendations
  - Strategic plan- (*funding was secured and new plan developed*).
  - Policy updates
  - Etc.

After ACOVA implemented recommendations of Audit the State Auditors Office commented the ACOVA is the Model which other Committees and Boards should follow.

2005:

59th Legislative Assembly SB 2218 *Commissioner and CVSO duties*

Sponsors: Senators Syverson, Dever, Gary Lee. Representatives Belter, Bernstein, S. Kelsh

AN ACT to create and enact two new sections to chapter 37-18 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to funding and veterans' records; to amend and reenact sections 37-14-18 and 37-18-04 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to supervision of county veterans' service officers and duties of the commissioner of veterans' affairs; and to provide a continuing appropriation.

This bill:

- Removed from Commissioners duties:
  - Assist, supervise, advise, and direct the work of county service officers.
  - formation of county service to veterans' committees and to outline, assist, and direct the activities of such committees
- Added to Commissioners duties:
  - provide counties with recommended qualifications and standards for county veterans' service officers; to assist counties with training of county veterans' service officers; to

ask Aug 1/2

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provide county veterans' service officers with educational materials; to assist…in the performance of their duties

***bill passed House and Senate*

59TH Legislative Assembly HCR 3016 Legislative Study

Sponsors: GVA Committee Representative Haas Chairman

A concurrent resolution directing the Legislative Council to study the delivery of veterans' services by the state and counties.

**the year after the performance audit*not studied*

2007:

60th Legislative Assembly HCR 3063 Legislative Study

Sponsors: Representatives: Boehning, Amerman, Haas. Senators Dever, Krebsbach, Nelson.

A concurrent resolution directing the Legislative Council to study the delivery and funding of veterans' services by the state and counties.

***Study picked up. Resulting in HB 1057*

2009:

61st Legislative Assembly HB 1057

Sponsors: Legislative Council (Public Safety Committee)

AN ACT to create and enact a new section to chapter 37-18 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to department of veterans' affairs employees; to amend and reenact section 37-14-18 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to county veterans' service officers; to provide for reports to the legislative council; and to provide an appropriation.

First bill draft provided:

- County Veteran Service Officers (CVSO's) required accreditation with the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers (NACVSO)
- Veterans home under newly created 7-member Home Governing Board
    - Created by members appointed by Governor
    - 3 members must be veterans
- Commissioner appointed by Governor
- Commissioner located in Bismarck or Mandan
- ACOVA reduced to 7 members
    - Remove veteran organizations as nominating entities
    - Commissioner is Chairman
    - Provide compensation to ACOVA members of $150 per day
        - Current ACOVA refuses compensation

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- NDDVA to use up to two employees for training officers (already allowed in law)
- Appropriation of $20,000 for NACVSO accreditation training for CVSO's

Final bill passed and provided:

- County Veteran Service Officers (CVSO's) required accreditation with the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers (NACVSO)
- CVSO's may not serve as conservators
- NDDVA employees may not serve as conservators
- Report to Legislators of training results
- Appropriation of $20,000 for NACVSO accreditation training for CVSO's
- Intent of bill was to eliminate small county CVSO's and regionalize and/or bring under NDDVA

Study conducted: by University of Mary Structure of VSO's in ND and surrounding states. Financial aspect

2011:

62nd Legislative Assembly HB 1379 *Structure of ACOVA*

Sponsors: Representative Grande and Senator Dever

A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact sections 37-18.1-01, 37-18.1-02, and 37-18.1-03 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the administrative committee on veterans' affairs; and to repeal section 37-18.1-04 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to compensation for the administrative committee on veterans' affairs.

First draft provided:

- ACOVA reduced from 15 to 3 voting members and 3 non-voting ex-officio members
  - Three voting members:
    - Director of Department of Human Services
      - Secretary of State to be Secretary of the Committee
      - State Treasurer to be Chairman of the Committee
  - Three Ex-officio non-voting members
    - Veterans Administration director
    - Job Service Director
    - ND National Guard Adjutant General
  - ***NOTE: No veterans on the proposed ACOVA*
- Commissioner appointed by Governor
- Commissioner may appoint an advisory committee for recommendations

*****Bill FAILED in House 24-69***

62nd Legislative Assembly HB 1429 *CVSO Accreditation*

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Sponsors: Representative Boehning

A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact section 37-14-18 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to county veterans' service officers.

This bill would...

Remove the August 1, 2011 deadline for CVSO accreditation with the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers (NACVSO)

- Require new CVSO's to attend the NACVSO accreditation training at county expense
- Change CVSO "Duty" to "Shall" cooperate with and coordinate state and federal VA programs

Final bill provided:

- Commissioner of Veterans Affairs to recommend standards and qualifications, training, certification and accreditations set by NDDVA Commissioner for qualification as a CVSO
- Change from "accreditation" with NACVSO to "training" with NACVSO
- Committee recommended DO PASS as amended 12-0-1 HJ 705

PASSED HOUSE 92-1 HJ 79

Senate GVA Recommended DO NOT PASS (Dever Chair)

FAILED SENATE 1-46

2014:

Study Conducted by NDSU: Effectiveness of the Veterans Services Officers: ND, SD and Montana

2015:

64th Legislative Assembly SB 2346 *CVSO accreditation*

Sponsors: Senator Dever, Representative Fehr

A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact section 37-14-18 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to county veterans' service officers.

- Removes requirement for County Veteran Service Officer's to be accredited with "National Association of County Veteran Service Officers"
- Adds requirement for County Veteran Service Officer's to be accredited with any veteran service organization recognized by the US Department of Veterans Affairs
  ***Supported by CVSO's who fought for this requirement*.**

**PASSED SENATE

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House GVA amendment

- Changes requirement for County Veteran Service Officers to be accredited with "any" veteran service organization to being accredited with North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
- Added content of failed bill HB 1205 with amendments and lower fiscal note
    - provides qualified dependents of 90% disabled ND Veterans with 90% tuition waiver at ND institutions of higher education
    - fiscal note: $350,000 (not general fund dollars)

House Appropriations action:

- Recommend Do NOT pass on education and accreditation

***FAILED HOUSE**

2017:

AUDITS in 2017: 6 total audits on NDDVA: Highly Rural Transportation Grants Audit, VA OGC Audit, ND SAO bi-annual fiscal audit and two audit checks by OMB. All very satisfactory results. Also had Performance Audits.

Performance Audits: Legislative Audit and Fiscal Review committee directed ND State Auditors office to conduct a performance audit on **ND Veterans Home**, **NDDVA** and **Oversight Structure (ACOVA)**. Audit conducted July 2017-March 2018.

Objective of the oversight Audit

The Office of the State Auditor established two objectives for this performance audit of the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The objectives were:

"Are there opportunities to improve the way the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs and the Department of Veterans Affairs carry out their duties and responsibilities?"

"How does the organizational structure of the veterans affairs in North Dakota compare to other states?"

Results:

- Conducted confidential survey of County Veteran Service Officers on the NDDVA performance.
    - ***Over 95%*** of the CVSO responses were positive. (2 CVSO's not positive)
- State Auditors report had ***NO RECOMMENDATIONS*** formal or informal

***Auditors addressed many of the possible future concerns brought up in HB 1057 (2009) now 10 years later and the "Possible future concerns" have not happened.**

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2018:

Task Force Veterans Affairs: October 26,2018 Governor Burgum signs executive order creating a task force to examine current "governance structure for the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. (ACOVA) HCR 3047 duplicates this task force.

Chairman Davison and Senate GVA committee members,

NDDVA and the ACOVA have been studied, audited and re-studied and re-audited. Changes have been recommended and implemented in the distant and recent past. The ACOVA is a hard-working knowledge base of ND Veterans who refuse to accept compensation for their services and have only improved the lives of ND Veterans.

I was out of the state when HCR 3047 was introduced and heard by the House GVA. In listening to the House GVA audio and reviewing the minutes of the hearing the issues brought up have been studied and addressed in the recent past and could be answered by reviewing our website or asking myself. Issues such as…

- Disconnects between the different generations of veterans
- High Suicide rates among veterans
- Suicide on younger aged veterans

Answer to disconnect:

- This a perceived disconnect. ACOVA and NDDVA are working hard to reach out to the current "younger" veterans.
- Recent war veterans are entering veteran services at a much higher rate than any of the past war veterans did upon returning home.
- Historically veterans have not joined or participated in veteran service organizations until later in life-10-20 years after return.

Answer to Suicide rates:

3 years ago the average was 22 per day. Now the average is 20 per day

- 69% of all veterans suicide deaths result from a firearm injury
- Female Veterans: 1.8 times higher than non-veteran adult women
- Male Veterans:
  - 1.4 times higher than non-veteran adult males
  - Males 55 and older had the highest count of suicides
- Of the 20 veteran suicides per day
  - 3 are active duty military
  - 2 are current members of National Guard or Reserve
  - 6 out of the 20 are in VA system
  -

Please vote **NO** on HCR 3047.

Thank you.