

2025 HOUSE GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

HB 1403

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Government and Veterans Affairs Committee Pioneer Room, State Capitol

HB 1403
1/23/2025

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| Relating to the designation of Prisoner of War and Missing in Action Day as a state holiday. |
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5:11 p.m. Chairman Satrom opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Schauer, Vice Chairman Satrom, Representatives Bahl, Brown, Christy, Grindberg, Karls, McLeod, Rohr, Schneider, Steiner, VanWinkle, Wolff
Members absent: Representative Vetter

Discussion Topics:

- Third Friday in September to be a day of remembrance.

5:11 p.m. Representative Schneider, District 21, testified in favor and submitted testimony, #31026.

5:16 p.m. Senator Marcellais, District 9, testified in favor and submitted testimony, #30816.

5:19 p.m. Jim Nelson, Legislative Director for the North Dakota Veterans Legislative Council testified in favor, and submitted testimony, #31165.

5:25 p.m. Lonnie Wangen, Commissioner of the ND Department of Veterans Affairs, testified in favor and submitted testimony, #30791.

5:30 p.m. Vice-chairman Satrom moved a Do Pass

5:30 p.m. Representative Steiner seconded the motion.

| Representatives | Vote |
|--------------------------------|------|
| Representative Austen Schauer | Y |
| Representative Bernie Satrom | Y |
| Representative Landon Bahl | Y |
| Representative Collette Brown | Y |
| Representative Josh Christy | Y |
| Representative Karen Grindberg | Y |
| Representative Karen Karls | Y |
| Representative Carrie McLeod | Y |
| Representative Karen Rohr | AB |
| Representative Mary Schneider | Y |
| Representative Vicky Steiner | Y |
| Representative Lori VanWinkle | Y |
| Representative Steve Vetter | AB |

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Representative Christina Wolff | Y |
|--------------------------------|---|

5:32 p.m. Motion passed 12-0-2.

Representative Schneider will carry the bill.

Additional written testimony:

Mark Jorritsma, Executive Director, North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action, submitted testimony in favor, #29994.

5:33 p.m. Chairman Schauer adjourned the meeting.

Jackson Toman, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1403 ([25.0642.02000](#))

Government and Veterans Affairs Committee (Rep. Schauer, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (12 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 2 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1403 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.



NORTH DAKOTA

Family Alliance LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1403

Mark Jorritsma, Executive Director
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action
January 23, 2025

Dear Chairman Schauer and honorable members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee,

My name is Mark Jorritsma and I am the Executive Director of North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action. I am testifying on behalf of our organization in support of House Bill 1403 and respectfully request that you render a "DO PASS" on this bill.

HB 1403 seeks to designate the third Friday in September each year as Prisoner of War and Missing in Action Day. North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action supports honoring those who were held as prisoners during armed conflict, as well as soldiers who never returned home and are classified as MIA. We believe it is fitting to designate a day to remember the incredible sacrifices of these soldiers, and we believe that as a state, our dedication to the support of our military should always be a priority. For these reasons, North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action asks that you please render a "DO PASS" on House Bill 1403. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony, and feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Mark Jorritsma
Executive Director
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action

HB 1403

North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Lonnie Wangen-Commissioner

1/23/2025

House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
69th Legislative Session
Representative Schauer-Chair

Chairman Schauer and House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee,

Please accept this testimony in support of HB 1403.

Intent of this bill:

Establish the third Friday in September of each year as Prisoner of War Missing in Action (POW/MIA) day.

Background and need for bill:

- The official motto of the POW/MIA flag is “You Are Not Forgotten.” While this remains true all year long, each year, we mark the occasion with a designated day of remembrance.
- More than 130,000 American troops have been POWs since World War II, with tens of thousands of military members still MIA. ND: 362 according to DPAA (326WW2,9V,27K)
- National POW MIA Recognition Day is a day of reflection and giving back to the military community. Every September, we take a bit of extra consideration for Veterans who endured life as a prisoner of war along with those who never were found.
- Commemorating National POW MIA Recognition Day is a way to show families that have a loved one captured as a prisoner of war or that has never been found after combat, that they are not alone.
- 1972 the National League of Families designed a POW / MIA flag.
- August 10, 1990, Congress passed H.J. Resolution 467 designating September 21, 1990 as National POW MIA Recognition Day and recognizing the National League of Families POW/MIA flag.
 - POW/MIA day has taken place on the third Friday in September each year through an annual presidential proclamation.
 - There are many ways we can all honor POWs and those who went MIA during service:
 - Fly the POW/MIA flag to show support.
 - Reach out to those in your community affected by war and missing a loved one.
 - Give back to military charities by donating money, time, or both.
 - Learn more about the histories of POWs and those missing by visiting local military museums, reading a book, or watching a documentary.
- In ND a request must be made to the ND Governor to issue a proclamation.
 - Years missed: 2024, 2023, 2022.



Outcome of bill:

A request for a proclamation to the ND Governor would no longer be required. ND Governor would be directed by NDCC 01-03 to issue the proclamation each year.

Thank you for your consideration.
Lonnie Wangen Commissioner-NDDVA

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA

PROCLAMATION

POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY SEPTEMBER 17, 2021

WHEREAS, throughout American history, generations of patriots have bravely served in our military and sacrificed much to protect our country and preserve democracy around the world; and

WHEREAS, some of those brave men and women who answered the call to service were captured in conflict and imprisoned by our enemies, and some never returned from the battlefield; and

WHEREAS, our nation remains steadfast in its commitment to leave no servicemember behind; our men and women in uniform uphold this pledge every day, and our country further upholds it as we honor all those who serve, particularly those taken as prisoners of war or missing in action; and

WHEREAS, today and every day, we pay tribute to the American men and women who have not returned to the country they so valiantly defended, and we express profound gratitude to those who returned after facing unimaginable hardships; we will never forget the sacrifices they made to keep this nation free; and

WHEREAS, on this day, we honor those Americans who were prisoners of war and recognize them for the courage and determination they showed while enduring unspeakable conditions, and we honor those who remain unaccounted for, especially remembering the sacrifices of their families who face each day without knowing the fate of their loved ones; and

WHEREAS, all North Dakotans are encouraged to honor our servicemen and servicewomen for their courageous and selfless sacrifice, and especially those who have paid so high a price in service to this great nation.

NOW, THEREFORE, as Governor of the State of North Dakota, I do hereby proclaim September 17, 2021, POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY in the State of North Dakota.



Doug Burgum

 Doug Burgum
 GOVERNOR

ATTEST: *Alvin A. Jaeger*

 Alvin A. Jaeger
 SECRETARY OF STATE

Senator Richard Marcellais
Senate District 9
Testimony for HB 1403

Chairman Schauer members of the House Government Affairs Committee, for the record my name is Richard Marcellais Senator from District 9.

I am here today to testify in favor of HB 1403 relating to the designation of Prisoner of War and Missing in Action Day as a state holiday.

Nearly 81,000 American service members remain missing after have served in World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War and other conflicts involving the United States, according to the United States Department of Defense.

The National League of Families POW/MIA flag was adopted in 1972 and consists of the official emblem of the National League of Families of America Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia in white on a black background. In 2019 the National POW/MIA Flag Act was signed into law, requiring the POW/MIA flag to be flown on certain federal properties, including the U.S. Capitol Building, on all days the U.S. flag is flown.

The flag symbolizes support and care for the soldiers, airman, and sailors who served the United States in the Vietnam War, especially those who endured capture by the enemy.

Chairman Schauer, members of the House Government Affairs Committee thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of HS 1403.

INTRODUCTION

By Representative Mary Schneider

HB 1403--POW/MIA State Holiday

House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee, Austen Schauer, Chairman

January 23, 2025

Good afternoon, Chairman Schauer and distinguished colleagues and fellow committee members. I'm here today to introduce and support HB 1403, which would make the third Friday in September of each year Prisoner of War and Missing in Action Day, a state holiday in North Dakota. It would not be a paid holiday, or a day on which schools and other entities are required to close, but it would be a precious day of respect, reflection, and remembrance with an annual proclamation issued by our governors in perpetuity.

HB1403 establishes is a day of recognition for two very special groups of our veterans who sacrificed more for their country, and for us, than we realize, had a right to expect, or deserve.

There have been prisoners of war (or POWs) or service members missing in action (MIAs) in every war or conflict. The POWs who came home suffered unspeakable horrors and hardships in confinement that often impacted their lives, physically and mentally, ever after. To say American POWs were treated harshly is an understatement. Torment, torture, starvation, violence, untreated injuries, unmet medical needs, sadistic systems, exposure to the elements, psychological trauma, incessant indignities, and watching the suffering of their comrades, were just a few of the norms.

There were many who never came home. There are still over 80,000 who remain missing, and the pain to their families of their absence is compounded by the lack of closure, the cruelty of continued hope of return, the torture of trying to face reality without any certainty, and the inability to ever know their loved ones' stories and honor their achievements.

As legislators, we listen on the House floor with sadness, but with pride and great admiration too, when a bridge, a road, or a structure is named for one of our fallen North Dakota heroes. But the POW/MIA families may never have that chance. Their loved ones may have died as heroes or served in glory, but their stories remain unfinished, and largely untold.

So, a state holiday will at least give those POW/MIAs the dignity of a day they are recognized, remembered, and proclaimed. Perhaps it will be healing for those they left behind and who wish their loved ones back. We have an implied promise to those who fight for us--to bring

them home, to give them thanks, and to pay them tribute. The POW/MIA flag we fly and the holiday I hope you will proclaim will show we haven't forgotten, and that we continue our commitment to honor their sacrifices, answer their absence, and never stop trying to bring our heroes home.

The veterans who follow me will share some other information, but I will also be happy to answer your questions if I can.

Please honor these special service members who sacrifice so much to protect and preserve our lives and freedoms--by passing HB 1403.

POW/MIA DAY

If any good came out the Vietnam Conflict, surprisingly it was that POWs were accepted as Heroes. Probably the most notable was John McCain who was a prisoner of war in the infamous North Vietnam prison call the Hanoi Hilton He was so severely beaten that he lost most of his physical strength and was impaired the rest of his life. Experts agree that POWs are still widely misunderstood. Part of the problem, it is difficult to tell the real stories of those who have suffered at the hands of their captors. Some of us in this room remember Jane Fonda's visit to the Hanoi Hilton in 1972. During the sixties and seventies, she was a very outspoken critic of our involvement in the war. During her visit she met with some prisoners. According to Colonel Carrigan the Commandant of the USAF Survival School, a prisoner of war for 6 years, he and 5 others were paraded before Miss Fonda. When she asked him if he was sorry for bombing babies, he spat at her and was dragged away and severely beaten with a wooden baton causing lifelong double vision. The other five had earlier secreted a tiny piece of paper with their social security number on it. As Miss Fonda shook their hand, they palmed her their pieces of paper and to their shock after the camera was turned off, she immediately handed the papers to the officer in charge. 3 men died from the subsequent beatings.

Prisoners of War and the missing in action represents a significant part of our military history. Including WWII there was a staggering total of approximately 140,000 out of which 81,936 are still missing. In 1979 Congress passed a resolution designating the third Friday in September as National POW/MIA Recognition Day.

Understanding the statistics and numbers related to these brave service members provides insight into their sacrifices and it also highlights the on-going efforts to account for whereabouts. Each of these numbers represents an individual, a father, a son, a brother, and a husband who left their homes to serve and protect. POW/MIA Day is crucial to reflect on the collective sacrifices made by these service members. 362 individuals are still missing from North Dakota.

The NDVLC urges a numinous yes as we feel this is vitally important as very few of those who experienced imprisonment and torture in past wars are still with us today. If memory serves me the last living POW from North Dakota Vern Huber a Korean POW passed way a couple years ago. He was from Mandan

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Loren H. Torkelson

Rank, Service

Lieutenant Colonel O-5, U.S. Air Force

Veteran of:

U.S. Marine Corps Reserve 1961-1962

U.S. Air Force Reserve 1962-1963

U.S. Air Force 1963-1984

Cold War 1961-1984

Vietnam War 1966-1973 (POW)

Tribute:

Loren Torkelson was born on May 22, 1941, in Minot, North Dakota. He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve on March 3, 1961, and transferred to the U.S. Air Force Reserve on September 27, 1962. He was commissioned a 2d Lt in the Air Force through the Air Force ROTC Program at the University of North Dakota on August 10, 1963, and went on active duty beginning November 23, 1963. Lt Torkelson next completed Undergraduate Pilot Training, earning his pilot wings at Laughlin AFB, Texas, in October 1964, followed by F-4 Phantom II Combat Crew Training and Pilot Systems Operator Training from November 1964 to April 1965. His first assignment was as an F-4 pilot with the 389th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Holloman AFB, New Mexico, from April 1965 to April 1966, and then deployed with the 389th to Phan Rang AB and then DaNang AB, South Vietnam, from April 1966 until he was forced to eject over North Vietnam and was taken as a Prisoner of War on April 29, 1967. After spending 2,137 days in captivity, Capt Torkelson was released during Operation Homecoming on March 4, 1973. He was briefly hospitalized to recover from his injuries at Travis AFB, California, and then completed pilot requalification training in December 1973, and F-4 Combat Crew Training in May 1974. Maj Torkelson then served as an F-4 pilot and instructor pilot with the 311th Tactical Fighter Training Squadron of the 58th Tactical Fighter Training Wing at Luke AFB, Arizona, from May 1974 to August 1976, followed by an Air Force Institute of Technology assignment to attend the University of North Dakota School of Law from August 1976 to May 1979. LtCol Torkelson completed the Judge Advocate Staff Officer Course in September 1979, and then served as an Air Force JAG Officer and Assistant Staff Judge Advocate for the Air Force Tactical Fighter Weapons Center and with the 554th Combat Support Group at Nellis AFB, Nevada, from September 1979 until his retirement from the Air Force on October 1, 1984. Loren Torkelson died on September 17, 1995, and was buried at the Concordia Cemetery in Crosby, North Dakota.

His 1st (of 2) Silver Star Citation reads:

First Lieutenant Loren H. Torkelson distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as an F4C Aircraft Commander over North Vietnam on 29 April 1967. On that date, while under intense and accurate fire from unfriendly forces, Lieutenant Torkelson demonstrated cool courage, undaunted determination, and superior skill in pressing home devastating air attacks against hostile positions. Persevering in the face of danger, he relentlessly and effectively aided in neutralizing the hostile forces. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Lieutenant Torkelson has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



U.S. Unaccounted-For from the Vietnam War

Reported for: North Dakota

Prisoners of War, Missing in Action and Killed in Action/Body not Recovered

Total Unaccounted:

| Military Service | Country of Casualty | Name | Loss Rank | Status | Date of Incident | Home of Record |
|------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------|--------|------------------|------------------|
| USA | S.Vietnam | BERDAHL, DAVID DONALD | E3 | BB | 1972/01/20 | MINOT, ND |
| USAF | S.Vietnam | BOND, RONALD DALE | O4 | BB | 1968/03/11 | FARGO, ND |
| USAF | N.Vietnam | CUSHMAN, CLIFTON EMMET | O3 | XX | 1966/09/25 | GRAND FORKS, ND |
| USAF | N.Vietnam | FOWLER, JAMES ALAN | O4 | XX | 1972/06/06 | BISMARCK, ND |
| USAF | S.Vietnam | GREENLEY, JON ALFRED | O2 | BB | 1966/01/07 | FARGO, ND |
| USAF | Laos | POTTER, WILLIAM TOD | O2 | XX | 1968/02/05 | GRAND FORKS, ND |
| USAF | N.Vietnam | STEEN, MARTIN W | O3 | XX | 1966/05/31 | GRAND FORKS, ND |
| USA | S.Vietnam | ZUBKE, DELAND DWIGHT | E5 | XX | 1971/03/01 | GRASSY BUTTE, ND |

Report Total:

| | |
|---|----------|
| Total BB - Killed in Action, Body Not Recovered: | 3 |
| Total KK - Died in Captivity, Remains Not Returned: | 0 |
| Total MM - Missing (Civilians Only): | 0 |
| Total PP - Prisoner (Civilians Only): | 0 |
| Total XX - Presumptive Finding of Death: | 5 |
| Total: | 8 |

End of Report

| | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Status Codes: AR - AWOL/Deserter/Collaborator Returned | KK - Died In Captivity, Remains Not Returned | PP - Prisoner(Civilians Only) |
| BB -Killed In Action, Body Not Recovered | KR -Died In Captivity, Remains Returned | RR - POW Returnee |
| BR - Body Recovered | MM - Missing(Civilians Only) | XX - Presumptive Finding of Death |
| EE - Escapee | NR - Remains Returned/Remains Recovered | |

Report Prepared: 10/25/2019 05:53

2025 SENATE AGRICULTURE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

HB 1403

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee

Fort Union Room, State Capitol

HB 1403
2/21/2025

A bill relating to the designation of Prisoner of War and Missing in Action Day as a state holiday.

9:30 a.m. Chairman Luick opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Luick, Vice-Chair Myrdal, Senator Marcellais, Senator Weston, Senator Weber, Senator Lemm

Discussion Topics:

- Suffering and misunderstanding of Prisoners of War
- Number of American veterans that remain missing
- Lack of closure and healing
- National League of Families Prisoner of War/Missing in Action National POW/MIA Flag Act and flying requirements
- National League of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia
- Military history and John McCane
- Vietnam Veterans Coin
- Escape and evasion of enemies school
- Vietnam POWs and training provided

9:30 a.m. Representative Mary Schneider, District 21, testified in favor and submitted testimony #37991.

9:32 a.m. Senator Richard Marcellais, District 9, testified in favor and submitted testimony #38026.

9:35 a.m. Jim Nelson, Legislative Director for the Veterans Affairs Council, testified in favor and submitted testimony #38319.

9:40 a.m. Lonnie Wangen, Commissioner of the ND Department of Veterans Affairs, testified in favor and submitted testimony #38306.

9:44 a.m. Jason Pierce, resident of Devils Lake, ND, testified in favor.

9:49 a.m. Chairman Luick closed the hearing.

9:49 a.m. Senator Lemm moved a Do Pass.

9:49 a.m. Senator Myrdal seconded the motion.

| Senators | Vote |
|---------------------|------|
| Senator Larry Luick | Y |

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Senator Janne Myrdal | Y |
| Senator Randy D. Lemm | Y |
| Senator Richard Marcellais | Y |
| Senator Mark F. Weber | Y |
| Senator Kent Weston | Y |

Motion passed 6-0-0.

Senator Marcellais will carry the bill.

Additional written testimony:

Mark Jorritsma, Executive Director of the ND Family Alliance Legislative Action, submitted testimony #37781 in favor.

9:52 a.m. Chairman Luick closed the hearing.

Audrey Oswald, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1403 ([25.0642.02000](#))

Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee (Sen. Luick, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (6 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HB 1403 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.



Testimony in Support of House Bill 1403

Mark Jorritsma, Executive Director
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action
February 21, 2025

Dear Chairman Luick and honorable members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee,

My name is Mark Jorritsma and I am the Executive Director of North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action. I am testifying on behalf of our organization in support of House Bill 1403 and respectfully request that you render a "DO PASS" on this bill.

HB 1403 seeks to designate the third Friday in September each year as Prisoner of War and Missing in Action Day. North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action supports honoring those who were held as prisoners during armed conflict, as well as soldiers who never returned home and are classified as MIA. We believe it is fitting to designate a day to remember the incredible sacrifices of these soldiers, and we believe that as a state, our dedication to the support of our military should always be a priority. For these reasons, North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action asks that you please render a "DO PASS" on House Bill 1403. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony, and feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Bill Introduction

By Representative Mary Schneider

HB 1403--POW/MIA State Holiday

Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee

Senator Larry Luick, Chairman, and Senator Janne Myrdal, Vice Chairman

February 21, 2025

Chairman Luick, Vice Chairman Myrdal, and distinguished members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee:

HB 1403 would make the third Friday in September of each year Prisoner of War and Missing in Action Day a state holiday in North Dakota. It would not be a paid holiday, or a day on which schools and other entities are required to close, but it would be a precious day of respect, reflection, and remembrance with an annual proclamation issued by our governors in perpetuity.

HB1403 establishes a day of recognition for two very special groups of our veterans who sacrificed more for their country, and for us, than we realize, have a right to expect, or perhaps deserve.

There have been prisoners of war (or POWs) and service members missing in action (MIAs) in every war or conflict. The POWs who came home suffered unspeakable horrors and hardships in confinement that often impacted their lives, physically and mentally, forever after. To say American POWs were treated harshly is an understatement. Torment, torture, starvation, violence, untreated injuries, unmet medical needs, sadistic systems, exposure to the elements, psychological trauma, incessant indignities, and watching the suffering of their comrades, were just a few of the norms.

There were many who never came home. There are still over 80,000 who remain missing, and the pain to their families of their absence is compounded by the lack of closure, the cruelty of continued hope of return, the torture of trying to face reality without any certainty, and the inability to ever know their loved ones' stories and honor their achievements.

As legislators, we listen on the House and Senate floors with sadness, but with pride and great admiration too, when a bridge, a road, or a structure is named for one of our fallen North

Dakota heroes. But the POW/MIA families may never have that chance. Their loved ones may have died as heroes or served in glory, but their stories remain unfinished, and largely untold.

So, a state holiday will at least give those POW/MIAs the dignity of a day they are recognized, remembered, and proclaimed. Perhaps it will be healing for those they left behind and who wish their loved ones back. We have an implied promise to those who fight for us--to bring them home, to give them thanks, and to pay them tribute. The POW/MIA holiday will show we haven't forgotten, and that we continue our commitment to honor their sacrifices, answer their absence, and never stop trying to bring our heroes home.

The veterans who follow me will share some other information, but I will also be happy to answer your questions if I can.

Senator Richard Marcellais
Senate District 9
Testimony for HB 1403

Chairman Luick members of the Senate Agriculture & Veterans Affairs committee, for the record my name is Richard Marcellais Senator from District 9.

I am here today to testify in favor of HB 1403 relating to the designation of Prisoner of War and Missing in Action Day as a state holiday.

Nearly 81,00 American Veterans remain missing after have served in World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War and other conflicts involving the United States, according to the United States Defense Department.

The National League of Families Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (MIA/POW) flag was adopted in 1972 and consists of the official emblem of the National League of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia in white on a black background. In 2019 the National POW/MIA Flag Act was signed into law, requiring the POW/MIA flag to be flown on certain federal properties including the U.S Capitol Building, on all days the U.S. Flag is flown.

The flag symbolizes support and care for the Veterans who served the United States in the Vietnam War, especially those who endured capture by the enemy.

Chairman Luick members of the Agriculture & Veterans Affairs Committee, I am in favor of HB 1403 and will stand for any question.

HB 1403

North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Lonnie Wangen-Commissioner

2/21/2025

Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee
69th Legislative Session
Senator Luick-Chair

Chairman Luick and Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee,

Please accept this testimony in support of HB 1403.

Intent of this bill:

Establish the third Friday in September of each year as Prisoner of War Missing in Action (POW/MIA) day.

Background and need for bill:

- The official motto of the POW/MIA flag is “You Are Not Forgotten.” While this remains true all year long, each year, we mark the occasion with a designated day of remembrance.
- More than 130,000 American troops have been POWs since World War II, with tens of thousands of military members still MIA. ND: 362 according to DPAA (326WW2,9V,27K)
- National POW MIA Recognition Day is a day of reflection and giving back to the military community. Every September, we take a bit of extra consideration for Veterans who endured life as a prisoner of war along with those who never were found.
- Commemorating National POW MIA Recognition Day is a way to show families that have a loved one captured as a prisoner of war or that has never been found after combat, that they are not alone.
- 1972 the National League of Families designed a POW / MIA flag.
- August 10, 1990, Congress passed H.J. Resolution 467 designating September 21, 1990 as National POW MIA Recognition Day and recognizing the National League of Families POW/MIA flag.
 - POW/MIA day has taken place on the third Friday in September each year through an annual presidential proclamation.
 - There are many ways we can all honor POWs and those who went MIA during service:
 - Fly the POW/MIA flag to show support.
 - Reach out to those in your community affected by war and missing a loved one.
 - Give back to military charities by donating money, time, or both.
 - Learn more about the histories of POWs and those missing by visiting local military museums, reading a book, or watching a documentary.
- In ND a request must be made to the ND Governor to issue a proclamation.
 - Years missed: 2024, 2023, 2022.



Outcome of bill:

A request for a proclamation to the ND Governor would ***no longer*** be required. ND Governor would be directed by NDCC 01-03 to issue the proclamation each year.

Thank you for your consideration.
Lonnie Wangen Commissioner-NDDVA

POW/MIA DAY

If any good came out the Vietnam Conflict, surprisingly it was that POWs were accepted as Heroes. Probably the most notable was John McCain who was a prisoner of war in the infamous North Vietnam prison call the Hanoi Hilton He was so severely beaten that he lost most of his physical strength and was impaired the rest of his life. Experts agree that POWs are still widely misunderstood. Part of the problem, it is difficult to tell the real stories of those who have suffered at the hands of their captors. Some of us in this room remember Jane Fonda's visit to the Hanoi Hilton in 1972. During the sixties and seventies, she was a very outspoken critic of our involvement in the war. During her visit she met with some prisoners. According to Colonel Carrigan the Commandant of the USAF Survival School, a prisoner of war for 6 years, he and 5 others were paraded before Miss Fonda. When she asked him if he was sorry for bombing babies, he spat at her and was dragged away and severely beaten with a wooden baton causing lifelong double vision. The other five had earlier secreted a tiny piece of paper with their social security number on it. As Miss Fonda shook their hand, they palmed her their pieces of paper and to their shock after the camera was turned off, she immediately handed the papers to the officer in charge. 3 men died from the subsequent beatings.

Prisoners of War and the missing in action represents a significant part of our military history. Including WWII there was a staggering total of approximately 140,000 out of which 81,936 are still missing. In 1979 Congress passed a resolution designating the third Friday in September as National POW/MIA Recognition Day.

Understanding the statistics and numbers related to these brave service members provides insight into their sacrifices and it also highlights the on-going efforts to account for whereabouts. Each of these numbers represents an individual, a father, a son, a brother, and a husband who left their homes to serve and protect. POW/MIA Day is crucial to reflect on the collective sacrifices made by these service members. 362 individuals are still missing from North Dakota.

The NDVLC urges a numinous yes as we feel this is vitally important as very few of those who experienced imprisonment and torture in past wars are still with us today. If memory serves me the last living POW from North Dakota Vern Huber a Korean POW passed way a couple years ago. He was from Mandan

Veteran Tributes

Honoring Those Who Served

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Loren H. Torkelson

Rank, Service

Lieutenant Colonel O-5, U.S. Air Force

Veteran of:

U.S. Marine Corps Reserve 1961-1962

U.S. Air Force Reserve 1962-1963

U.S. Air Force 1963-1984

Cold War 1961-1984

Vietnam War 1966-1973 (POW)

Tribute:

Loren Torkelson was born on May 22, 1941, in Minot, North Dakota. He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve on March 3, 1961, and transferred to the U.S. Air Force Reserve on September 27, 1962. He was commissioned a 2d Lt in the Air Force through the Air Force ROTC Program at the University of North Dakota on August 10, 1963, and went on active duty beginning November 23, 1963. Lt Torkelson next completed Undergraduate Pilot Training, earning his pilot wings at Laughlin AFB, Texas, in October 1964, followed by F-4 Phantom II Combat Crew Training and Pilot Systems Operator Training from November 1964 to April 1965. His first assignment was as an F-4 pilot with the 389th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Holloman AFB, New Mexico, from April 1965 to April 1966, and then deployed with the 389th to Phan Rang AB and then DaNang AB, South Vietnam, from April 1966 until he was forced to eject over North Vietnam and was taken as a Prisoner of War on April 29, 1967. After spending 2,137 days in captivity, Capt Torkelson was released during Operation Homecoming on March 4, 1973. He was briefly hospitalized to recover from his injuries at Travis AFB, California, and then completed pilot requalification training in December 1973, and F-4 Combat Crew Training in May 1974. Maj Torkelson then served as an F-4 pilot and instructor pilot with the 311th Tactical Fighter Training Squadron of the 58th Tactical Fighter Training Wing at Luke AFB, Arizona, from May 1974 to August 1976, followed by an Air Force Institute of Technology assignment to attend the University of North Dakota School of Law from August 1976 to May 1979. LtCol Torkelson completed the Judge Advocate Staff Officer Course in September 1979, and then served as an Air Force JAG Officer and Assistant Staff Judge Advocate for the Air Force Tactical Fighter Weapons Center and with the 554th Combat Support Group at Nellis AFB, Nevada, from September 1979 until his retirement from the Air Force on October 1, 1984. Loren Torkelson died on September 17, 1995, and was buried at the Concordia Cemetery in Crosby, North Dakota.

His 1st (of 2) Silver Star Citation reads:

First Lieutenant Loren H. Torkelson distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as an F4C Aircraft Commander over North Vietnam on 29 April 1967. On that date, while under intense and accurate fire from unfriendly forces, Lieutenant Torkelson demonstrated cool courage, undaunted determination, and superior skill in pressing home devastating air attacks against hostile positions. Persevering in the face of danger, he relentlessly and effectively aided in neutralizing the hostile forces. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Lieutenant Torkelson has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



U.S. Unaccounted-For from the Vietnam War

Reported for: North Dakota

Prisoners of War, Missing in Action and Killed in Action/Body not Recovered

Total Unaccounted: 8

| Service | Country of Casualty | Name | Loss Rank | Status | Date of Incident | Home of Record |
|---------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------|--------|------------------|------------------|
| USA | S.Vietnam | BERDAHL, DAVID DONALD | E3 | BB | 1972/01/20 | MINOT, ND |
| USAF | S.Vietnam | BOND, RONALD DALE | O4 | BB | 1968/03/11 | FARGO, ND |
| USAF | N.Vietnam | CUSHMAN, CLIFTON EMMET | O3 | XX | 1966/09/25 | GRAND FORKS, ND |
| USAF | N.Vietnam | FOWLER, JAMES ALAN | O4 | XX | 1972/06/06 | BISMARK, ND |
| USAF | S.Vietnam | GREENLEY, JON ALFRED | O2 | BB | 1966/01/07 | FARGO, ND |
| USAF | Laos | POTTER, WILLIAM TOD | O2 | XX | 1968/02/05 | GRAND FORKS, ND |
| USAF | N.Vietnam | STEEN, MARTIN W | O3 | XX | 1966/05/31 | GRAND FORKS, ND |
| USA | S.Vietnam | ZUBKE, DELAND DWIGHT | E5 | XX | 1971/03/01 | GRASSY BUTTE, ND |

| Report Total: | |
|---|----------|
| Total BB - Killed in Action, Body Not Recovered: | 3 |
| Total KK - Died in Captivity, Remains Not Returned: | 0 |
| Total MM - Missing (Civilians Only): | 0 |
| Total PP - Prisoner (Civilians Only): | 0 |
| Total XX - Presumptive Finding of Death: | 5 |
| Total: | 8 |

| End of Report | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Status Codes: AR - AWOL/Deserter/Collaborator Returned | KK - Died In Captivity, Remains Not Returned | PP - Prisoner(Civilians Only) |
| BB -Killed In Action, Body Not Recovered | KR -Died In Captivity, Remains Returned | RR - POW Returnee |
| BR - Body Recovered | MM - Missing(Civilians Only) | XX - Presumptive Finding of Death |
| EE - Escapee | NR - Remains Returned/Remains Recovered | |

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