

HB 1143

The ND Veterans Legislative Council is in strong support of this legislation.

Patriotism is the feeling of attachment and commitment to a country, nation, or political community. The United States tends to be a very patriotic country. This patriotism is evidenced during the Fourth of July, when people take to the streets watching parades dressed in red, white, and blue, waving flags. Patriotism is so much more than waving a flag once a year. Children must learn about patriotism if they are to grow into well informed and active citizens.

Research has shown that today's young people do not have a strong sense of patriotism like their grandparents did. While young people still love America. It is hard to ignore the fact, love of country and patriotic values, are not being instilled in children today the way they were years ago.

The future of our way of life and the many freedoms we enjoy starts with patriotism. According to the Department of Defense the number of American citizens who qualify for service under the current standards is quickly decreasing with roughly 71 of 17-24- year-olds that not qualified for service.

When the draft was suspended after the Vietnam War, we assumed that Americans would voluntarily step up and take the oath to defend our country out of a sense of patriotism. This assumption was put the test after the attack on the Twin Towers by terrorists on September 11, 2001. The result was a disappointing reality with only 1 percent of Americans answering the call. Studies have shown that there is a severe disconnect between service in the military of the youth of today putting our country at risk. Surveys taken amongst young people that many have no desire or feel no obligation to serve in uniform. This needs to change, and we believe this bill is a good start towards that change.

In my old fashion view of things, one reason for this is because the abundances of our great nation have distracted us from teaching them how all this abundance became possible. Social Studies classes have been pushed into the backseat to science, math, and technology classes as the importance of S.T.E.M. (Science,

Technology, Engineering and Math) has skyrocketed. Civic Classes are largely a thing of the past. I received my elementary education in rural schools. Every morning we did three things, we gathered around the flagpole and raised the flag, we said the pledge of allegiance, and finally prayed the Our Father. We had a civics class where we learned about the three branches of government, state, and nation, we learned about the Constitution and its Amendments along with our role in being a responsible American.

But we also need to admit that part of the decline in patriotism comes from the “politically correct” culture within our educational system. A recent study commissioned by Stanford University and the University of Washington-Seattle in 2013. This study noted that American public schools have turned away from promoting patriotism. According to the report and I quote “the concept of patriotism itself has become contested in U.S. schools for a number of reasons.” It goes on to explain that those reasons include “the belief that the 21st century students’ affiliation should be to global citizenship and worldwide rights”

That is a real shame!!! Today’s young people are tomorrow’s public servants. They need to understand the greatness of America and the sacrifices that so many have made in the name of our freedom to fully appreciate their blessings.

The United States needs a citizenry that understand such patriotic ideals as the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, the meaning of the Pledge of Allegiance, the Constitution and Amendments, what it means to live in a republic and the meaning for liberty and justice for all.

Many of the organizations I represent have programs focused to instill a sense of patriotism in our young people. These organizations have made it their mission to do so. Starting with the AMVETS and its outreach to K-12 public, private and parochial students with our program called Americanism. This past year we partnered with the 917 Society and distributed close to 10,000 booklets of the Constitution of the United States to all the 8th graders in ND. The Boys and Girls State for junior and senior high school students and an oratorical competition for high school students and the 40 and 8 present American flags along with brochure discussing the significance of the flag. In Cass county an average of 2200 flags are distributed. The VFW has an essay competition Patriots Pen for students in grades 6-8 and the Voice of Democracy an audio/essay competition for high

school students. All these programs are voluntary and have local, state, and national level.

Inspiring a sense of patriotism in our children of all ages and walks of life is the best strategy to ensure a future for our military, national defense, and our country.

Although it would be nice to have this program follow a student into each elementary grade. We are proud to support this legislation and salute the Department of Instruction for seeing the need. Perhaps some-day we will be support a bill resurrecting civics

America needs more red, white, and blue in our schools, not less.

In closing, I'll leave you with this notion...a grade school education with out some knowledge of patriotism is like a medical education with knowledge of antomy

Thank you