

TESTIMONY OF
MAJOR JAY SHELDON
NORTH DAKOTA NATIONAL GUARD
BEFORE THE
SENATE AGRICULTURE & VETERANS AFFAIRS
10 MARCH 2023
HOUSE BILL 1389

Good morning, Chairman Luick, members of the committee, I am Jay Sheldon, Strategy and Policy Officer for the North Dakota National Guard (NDNG). I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 1389.

The North Dakota National Guard supports the expansion of the North Dakota Veterans Home that would allow certain former members of the North Dakota National Guard to become residents at the Veterans Home.

As the bill reads, changing honorably to all other than dishonorably is important. We found most that would be eligible under the requested changes sustained injuries during initial entry training (basic training or training for their military occupation) or while on a federal training status that didn't contribute to becoming a Veteran under the federal definition. If the individual was eventually discharged for the injury the categorization of the discharge is commonly something other than honorable, potentially even un-categorized.

Due to the unique circumstances that these individuals experienced and that once an individual is discharged from the National Guard, we are no longer able to track their care requirements. As we researched how many of our members or past members that this would impact, we found it difficult to determine exact figures but were able to identify approximate numbers.

We found that over the past 10 years there were approximately 10 members each year that met the criteria to potentially enroll in and receive care from the VA, in turn making them eligible for care at the Veterans Home if this bill becomes law. The difficult piece to quantify is how many of them did enroll and receive care from the VA and if they did, when.

Individuals in this group receive care for the injury prior to discharge and could later be eligible to enroll with and receive care from the VA for on-going issues or issues that arise later in life that are determined to be connected to the injury that occurred during military.

Due to the minimal number of members that could qualify and the desire of the Veterans Home to expand eligibility I ask for your support of HB 1389. I will stand by for any questions that you may have.