



## North Dakota Association of County and Tribal Veteran Service Officers

205 Owens Street, Manning, ND 58642

1/31/2025

Testimony in Support

House Bill 1504

My name is Christopher Deery and I'm the Cass County Veteran Service Officer and President of the North Dakota Association of County and Tribal Veteran Service Officers. Our Association's mission is to establish, maintain, and perpetuate service officers in our state. Membership comprises 52 out of the 53 counties and we work hand in hand with the ND Department of Veterans Affairs to support the over 60,000 veterans across our state. This relationship allows us to work with veterans and advocate for them on many important issues. HB 1504, where 50% of the Gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations is to be deposited in the Post War Trust Fund or ND Department of Veteran Affairs grant program is imperative for our state and assisting all eligible veterans to assist them with their specific needs. We meet veterans where they're at and we try to enhance their lives through utilizing VA healthcare, service-connected claims, wrap-around services, and grants. In most cases, these grants that the state offers through the PWTF fill in the gaps where possible thus helping the veteran, their families, and their overall livelihoods. Our association plays a crucial role in supporting both entities. We focus on collaborating with the ND Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure veterans' needs are being met which was incredibly impactful by previous grant dollars. Also, these funds can assist with emergency housing and shelter services, prevention, permanent supportive housing, and moving costs to include communication needs for our veterans. Our efforts to prevent and eliminate homelessness among ND veterans are crucial in ensuring they receive the care and support they deserve after serving our country. These grants help veterans regain stability and access essential services like supported housing, mental health care, and employment assistance.

For example, without the use of this grant fund, a veteran wouldn't have been able to get her water heater replaced due to a mechanical failure. The veteran was hospitalized for several days, on dialysis, and put into an induced coma because of a rare illness last year. Once, discharged from the hospital, this veteran came home to an inch of standing water in the furnace room. This veteran had not been working full-time because of illness and had limited funds to replace the much-needed item. The grant was submitted and approved as the veteran kept applying for more suitable employment as the primary employment was lost. This grant assisted the veteran to have one less worry, especially in the greatest time of need. HB 1504 passage would be a significant piece of legislation that could further assist veterans by addressing their specific grant needs.

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