
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Testimony of Matthew Jameson

Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1326
Before the North Dakota House of Representatives
Hearing on SB 2373
5 March, 2025

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 1326 and the many other charitable organizations across North Dakota that rely on charitable gaming to support our missions. I stand before you not only as a representative of the VFW but as a voice for the veterans and the communities we serve.

Charitable gaming is the financial backbone of our VFW post and countless other veteran service organizations. For our organization, the funds raised through charitable gaming directly support veterans in need—providing essential assistance such as emergency financial relief, mental health resources, and outreach programs to combat veteran homelessness and suicide. Additionally, these funds allow us to maintain and improve our facilities, support local scholarship programs, and contribute to community initiatives, from youth activities to aid for families facing hardship.

Our gaming operations take place in rural North Dakota, where alcoholic beverage establishments under the current law serve a dual purpose. These establishments often serve as community hubs. Many of these establishments allow minors during specific hours, as permitted by law, fostering a welcoming environment for families. These locations provide a safe and responsible setting for charitable gaming, where funds are raised to not only give back to the very people of the communities these games are played, but more importantly the people who have defended our country.

While I understand the intent behind SB 2373, I urge the committee to consider the unintended consequences it may have on veteran organizations and rural communities. If this bill places additional restrictions on gaming sites located in family-friendly establishments, it could significantly harm our ability to generate revenue for our mission.

For many rural posts like ours, there are limited venues willing or able to host charitable gaming. If we lose access to these locations, the lifeline that supports our veterans will be severely diminished. The funds we use to help a struggling veteran

pay rent, provide transportation to medical appointments, or simply ensure they have a place to turn in their darkest moments could be at risk.

Additionally, reducing our ability to raise funds through gaming would not only impact veterans but also the small communities we serve. Local businesses that benefit from the economic activity generated by charitable gaming would suffer, as would the residents who rely on the contributions we make to local projects and programs.

I respectfully ask this committee to carefully consider the full impact of SB 2373. The VFW, like many charitable organizations, operates under strict regulations and accountability measures to ensure that gaming revenues are used ethically and effectively. Any legislation that limits or removes access to viable gaming locations will not only threaten our ability to fulfill our mission but will directly affect the lives of the men and women who have served our country.

I ask that this bill receive a do not pass without further amendments to page 2 lines 15-20 to preserve the abilities of charitable organizations like the VFW the opportunity to conduct gaming in rural establishments. If this bill is passed in its current form, it would shut down hundreds of communities and organizations, and cost business owners thousands of dollars of renovations to remain complaint.

North Dakota has a proud tradition of supporting its veterans. I urge you to ensure that our charitable gaming operations can continue to thrive so that we may uphold our commitment to serving those who have sacrificed for us. time and consideration on this critical issue.

Thank you