



## Letter of Support – SB 2265

Friday, February 7, 2025

Chairman Luick and members of the Senate Veteran Affairs Committee,

For the record, my name is Katherine Grindberg, and I have the distinct pleasure of serving as the Executive Vice President for the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce (FMWF Chamber). On behalf of our over 1,700 members, I respectfully offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 2265.

At the FMWF Chamber, our mission is to protect and promote business, inspire individuals, cultivate communities, and influence action. Founded in 2019, the Fargo National Cemetery has become a cherished part of the local community, serving as a space to honor service members and support their families and loved ones. The cemetery has continued to grow since it was established, now spanning 35 acres, offering more space for connection, remembrance, and community.

This meaningful addition to our state warrants the creation of a structure that can provide shelter for families, veterans, and Honor Guard members during bouts of unsuitable weather, as well as house amenities to ensure those visiting the cemetery receive a positive experience. We are grateful for Senator Hoeven, who was pivotal in securing funding for the rural initiative that made this cemetery possible. Due to the rural nature, amenities such as buildings were not provided. As such, Senator Hoeven, along with the local community, have come together to find a suitable solution that properly honors those who have given everything for our country.

This creative solution is a statewide effort to fund the building of the structure, with the ownership and long-term upkeep of the facility being covered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The local community has already been hard at work raising the necessary funds and support for this project. The cities of Fargo, West Fargo and Harwood have all started strong support for this project, as demonstrated in the attached letter. Donations from private citizens and the business community have amounted to about \$1.4 million. The estimated cost for the project is around \$5 million, so we need the state's help to make this possible.

The Veterans Cemetery Center will ensure that the Fargo National Cemetery provides a setting worthy of those who have sacrificed so much. Key features will include:

- A gathering area for family and friends to meet before and after interment
- A gallery honoring veterans and showcasing their service
- Offices for Veterans Affairs staff to assist families and manage cemetery operations
- A breakroom for Honor Guard members, who dedicate their time to ensure dignified services
- Indoor restrooms to accommodate visitors year-round
- A garage for a hearse, ensuring proper funeral service operations
- A parking lot to improve accessibility and convenience

The benefits this facility will bring to the community cannot be overstated. It will bring safety, security, and a space in which families can properly honor their loved ones and those who served. Our state is fortunate to have received a National Cemetery, and as such, want to provide due honor for the service members and a proper experience for their families. For these reasons, we urge the committee to give this bill a DO PASS recommendation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your commitment to North Dakota.



Sincerely,

Katherine Grindberg  
Executive Vice President  
Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce