

2025 HOUSE GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

HB 1076

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

GOVERNMENT VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE PIONEER ROOM, STATE CAPITOL

HB 1076
1/16/2025

Relating to the payment of a death benefit to the beneficiary or next of kin of a member of the national guard who died while serving on state active duty.

9:30 a.m. Chairman Schauer opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Schauer, Representatives Bahl, Brown, Grindberg, Karls, McLeod, Rohr, Schneider, Steiner, VanWinkle, Vetter, Wolff

Members absent: Vice Chairman Satrom, Representative Christy

Discussion Topics:

- Definition of active duty
- Death benefits

9:31 a.m. Deputy Adjutant General Jackie Huber, North Dakota National Guard, testified in favor and submitted testimony, #29212.

9:42 a.m. Lonnie Wagnen, North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, testified in favor and submitted testimony, #29400.

9:45 a.m. General Huber testified in favor.

9:45 a.m. Chairman Schauer closed the hearing.

Jackson Toman, Committee Clerk

TESTIMONY OF
BRIGADIER GENERAL JACKIE HUBER
NORTH DAKOTA NATIONAL GUARD
BEFORE THE
HOUSE GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
16 JANUARY 2025
HOUSE BILL 1076

Chairman Schauer and members of the committee, for the record I am Jackie Huber, the Deputy Adjutant General of the North Dakota National Guard. I am here today to testify in support of HB 1076. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important matter today. First, I want to express sincere gratitude to the North Dakota Legislature for establishing the \$15,000 death gratuity during the 67th Legislative Session. This benefit has been an essential step in recognizing and supporting families who lose a loved one serving on State Active Duty. It reflects North Dakota's commitment to our service members and their families, honoring the sacrifices they make to protect and serve our communities.

However, I urge the committee to consider increasing this benefit to \$100,000 to align it with the federal death gratuity and better support families in their time of greatest need. When we look at other states, many have taken steps to increase their death gratuities for State Active Duty deaths to amounts that better reflect the cost of living and the financial burdens families face. For instance, Texas offers \$500,000 for service members who die in the line of duty, while California provides \$100,000. Raising North Dakota's gratuity to \$100,000 would keep us in line with these and other states.

Increasing this benefit not only provides crucial financial relief but also brings our state benefit in line with the federal death gratuity of \$100,000. This amount helps families address immediate needs, including funeral expenses, mortgage payments, and the costs associated with an abrupt loss of household income. For a grieving family, a \$15,000 benefit is significant, but it doesn't come close to meeting the needs that arise following such a tragedy. An increase to \$100,000 would provide families with the stability they need to manage these challenges.

Moreover, raising this gratuity honors the full extent of the service our National Guard and other military members provide to North Dakota. Whether called to serve in federal missions abroad or state missions here at home, these individuals face real risks and make tremendous sacrifices. Aligning this benefit with the federal amount demonstrates that North Dakota values their service equally, regardless of mission type.

Finally, increasing the gratuity could strengthen our National Guard by enhancing retention and recruitment efforts. Knowing that their families would be fully supported in the event of a tragedy provides reassurance to service members and their loved ones. This measure would reinforce our commitment to supporting those who stand ready to serve at a moment's notice.

In conclusion, I urge this committee to raise the State Active Duty Death Gratuity to \$100,000, aligning it with federal standards and matching the support other states provide. Thank you for considering this important matter and for continuing to honor the service and sacrifices of our North Dakota service members and their families.

Thank you and I will stand for questions.

HB 1076

North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Lonnie Wangen-Commissioner

1/16/2025

House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
69th Legislative Session
Representative Schauer-Chair

Chairman Schauer and House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee,

Please accept this testimony in support of HB 1076.

Intent of this bill:

Amend death benefit for ND National Guard members on State Active Duty (SAD) to match Federal benefit while on Federal status.

Need for bill:

ND National Guard members are not covered by any federal military benefits while on SAD. While on SAD the members are working for the state of North Dakota under the orders of the Governor. Pay scale and benefits are set and provided by the state.

It is important we are prepared in advance to care for those who may pay the ultimate sacrifice. Hopefully these funds will never be spent.

Outcome of bill:

ND National Guard members will be properly covered in the event of death during SAD.

Thank you for your consideration.
Lonnie Wangen Commissioner-NDDVA

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Government and Veterans Affairs Committee Pioneer Room, State Capitol

HB 1076
1/23/2025

Relating to the payment of a death benefit to the beneficiary or next of kin of a member of the national guard who died while serving on state active duty

11:44 a.m. Chairman Schauer opened the meeting.

Members present: Chairman Schauer, Vice Chairman Satrom, Representatives Bahl, Brown, Christy, Grindberg, Karls, McLeod, Rohr, Schneider, Steiner, VanWinkle, Vetter, Wolff

Discussion Topics:

- Committee work

11:48 a.m. Representative Rohr moved a Do Pass.

11:49 a.m. Representative VanWinkle seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Austen Schauer	Y
Representative Bernie Satrom	Y
Representative Landon Bahl	Y
Representative Collette Brown	Y
Representative Josh Christy	Y
Representative Karen Grindberg	Y
Representative Karen Karls	Y
Representative Carrie McLeod	Y
Representative Karen Rohr	Y
Representative Mary Schneider	Y
Representative Vicky Steiner	Y
Representative Lori VanWinkle	Y
Representative Steve Vetter	Y
Representative Christina Wolff	Y

11:50 a.m. Motion passed 14-0-0.

Representative Vetter will carry the Bill

Chairman Schauer closed the meeting.

Jackson Toman, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1076 ([25.8102.01000](#))

Government and Veterans Affairs Committee (Rep. Schauer, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (14 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1076 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.

2025 SENATE AGRICULTURE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

HB 1076

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee Fort Union Room, State Capitol

HB 1076
2/14/2025

A bill relating to the payment of a death benefit to the beneficiary or next of kin of a member of the national guard who died while serving on state active duty; and to declare an emergency.

9:42 a.m. Chairman Luick opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Luick, Senator Marcellais, Senator Weber, Senator Lemm

Members absent: Senator Weston and Vice-Chair Myrdal

Discussion Topics:

- Mission statuses
- Federal and state benefit matches
- Federal Death Gratuity
- Increased fiscal amount
- Mission dangers
- Adopted rules
- Active-duty determinations and training exercises
- Lump sum payout or insurance policy
- Southwest border and the ND National Guard

9:43 a.m. Jackie Huber, Deputy Adjutant General for the ND National Guard, testified in favor and submitted testimony #37568.

9:58 a.m. Chairman Luick closed the hearing.

9:59 a.m. Senator Marcellais moved a Do Pass.

9:59 a.m. Senator Lemm seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Larry Luick	Y
Senator Janne Myrdal	A
Senator Randy D. Lemm	Y
Senator Richard Marcellais	Y
Senator Mark F. Weber	Y
Senator Kent Weston	A

Motion passed 4-0-2.

Senator Lemm will carry the bill.

Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee

HB 1076

2/14/25

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Additional Testimony:

Cale Dunwoody, FMWF Chamber of Commerce, submitted testimony #37696 in favor.

10:00 a.m. Chairman Luick closed the hearing.

Audrey Oswald, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1076 ([25.8102.01000](#))

Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee (Sen. Luick, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (4 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 2 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HB 1076 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.

TESTIMONY OF
BRIGADIER GENERAL JACKIE HUBER
NORTH DAKOTA NATIONAL GUARD
BEFORE THE
SENATE AGRICULTURE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
14 FEBRUARY 2025
HOUSE BILL 1076

Chairman Luick and members of the committee, for the record I am Jackie Huber, the Deputy Adjutant General of the North Dakota National Guard. I am here today to testify in support of HB 1076. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important matter today. First, I want to express sincere gratitude to the North Dakota Legislature for establishing the \$15,000 death gratuity during the 67th Legislative Session. This benefit has been an essential step in recognizing and supporting families who lose a loved one serving on State Active-Duty. It reflects North Dakota's commitment to our service members and their families, honoring the sacrifices they make to protect and serve our communities.

However, I urge the committee to consider increasing this benefit to \$100,000 to align it with the federal death gratuity and better support families in their time of greatest need. When we look at other states, many have taken steps to increase their death gratuities for State Active-Duty deaths to amounts that better reflect the cost of living and the financial burdens families face. For instance, Texas and New Mexico, offer \$500,000 for service members who die in the line of duty, while some states like California, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Mississippi, and Pennsylvania provide \$100,000, while other states provide less and in some cases none. Raising North Dakota's gratuity to \$100,000 would keep us in line with these and other states. Some states have language that a "death gratuity payment equal to the amount allowed for service members in a federal active service status."

Increasing this benefit not only provides crucial financial relief but also brings our state benefit in line with the federal death gratuity of \$100,000. This amount helps families address immediate needs, including funeral expenses, mortgage payments, and the costs associated with an abrupt loss of household income. For a grieving family, a \$15,000 benefit is significant, but it doesn't come close to meeting the needs that arise following such a tragedy. An increase to \$100,000 would provide families with the stability they need to manage these challenges.

Moreover, raising this gratuity honors the full extent of the service our National Guard and other military members provide to North Dakota. Whether called to serve in federal missions abroad or state missions here at home, these individuals face real risks and make tremendous sacrifices. Aligning this benefit with the federal amount demonstrates that North Dakota values their service equally, regardless of mission type.

Finally, increasing the gratuity could strengthen our National Guard by enhancing retention and recruitment efforts. Knowing that their families would be fully supported in the event of a tragedy provides reassurance to service members and their loved ones. This measure would reinforce our commitment to support those who stand ready to serve at a moment's notice.

In conclusion, I urge this committee to raise the State Active-Duty Death Gratuity to \$100,000, aligning it with federal standards and matching the support other states provide. Thank you for considering this important matter and for continuing to honor the service and sacrifices of our North Dakota service members and their families.

Thank you and I will stand for questions.



Letter of Support – HB 1076

Friday, February 14, 2025

Chairman Luick and members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee,
For the record, my name is Cale Dunwoody, and I have the distinct pleasure of serving as the Vice President of Public Policy 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 House Bill 1076.

At the FMWF Chamber, our mission is to protect and promote business, inspire individuals, cultivate communities, and influence action. The North Dakota National Guard is a tremendous asset to our state, and we believe it is essential to support initiatives that enhance military excellence and position North Dakota as the most military-friendly state in the nation.

House Bill 1076 is a significant step in this direction. By increasing the death benefits for members of the North Dakota National Guard who make the ultimate sacrifices while on State Active Duty, this bill provides critical financial support to their families, helping them navigate the burdens that accompany a tragic loss.

As this 69th Legislative Assembly considers this legislation, we respectfully urge this committee to give HB 1076 a DO PASS recommendation, thereby reinforcing our state's commitment to military excellence and enhancing North Dakota's military friendliness.

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

Sincerely,

Cale Dunwoody
Vice President of Public Policy
Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce