

2025 HOUSE FINANCE AND TAXATION

HB 1504

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Finance and Taxation Committee Room JW327E, State Capitol

HB 1504
2/3/2025

Relating to allocation of veteran service organization gaming taxes.
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2:45 p.m. Chairman Headland called the meeting to order.

Members Present: Chairman Headland, Vice Chairman Hagert, Representatives Anderson, Dockter, Dressler, Foss, Grueneich, Ista, Motschenbacher, Nehring, Olson, Porter, Steiner, Toman

Discussion Topics:

- Affordable housing
- Veteran health care
- Post War Trust Fund
- Homeless veterans' unmet needs
- Community Action
- Charitable gaming proceeds

2:45 p.m. Chairman Headland opened the hearing.

2:46 p.m. Representative Mary Schneider introduced the bill and submitted testimony #33608.

2:54 p.m. Lonnie Wangen, ND Department of Veteran Affairs, testified in favor and submitted testimony #33459.

3:07 p.m. Scott Meske, ND Gaming Alliance, testified in favor.

3:10 p.m. Andrea Olson, Community Action Partnership of ND, submitted testimony in favor #33361.

3:17 p.m. Senator Richard Marcellais submitted testimony in favor #33151.

3:18 p.m. Marshall Smith, US Veteran, Bismarck resident testified in favor.

3:26 p.m. Christopher Deery, ND Association of County and Cass County Veterans Service Officer, submitted testimony in favor #33160.

3:29 p.m. Max Pontenila, SSVF Program Specialist, Community Action Partnership-Minot, testified in favor and submitted testimony #33494.

3:38 p.m. Richard Olek, Vietnam Combat Veteran, testified in favor and submitted testimony #34000.

3:45 p.m. Jim Nelson, Director ND Veterans Legislative Council, testified in favor and submitted testimony #34009.

3:47 p.m. Lonnie Wangen stood for questions from the committee.

3:54 p.m. Deb McDaniel, Director of Charitable Gaming, ND Office of Attorney General, stood for questions.

Additional written testimony:

Kristina Brownell, Executive Director, Community Action Region VI, testified in favor and submitted testimony #33362.

Lora Papachek, Executive Director, Dakota Prairie Community Action Agency, submitted testimony in favor #33368.

Brandon Kjelden, Southeastern ND Community Action Agency, submitted testimony #33455.

Erv Bren, Executive Director, Community Action Partnership-Dickinson, submitted testimony #33488.

Jacqueline Hassett, Executive Director, Red River Valley Community Action, submitted testimony #33628.

4:00 p.m. Chairman Headland closed the hearing.

Janae Pinks, Committee Clerk

Senator Richard Marcellais
Senate District 9
Testimony for HB 1504

Chairman Headland, members of the Finance & Tax Committee for the record my name is Richard Marcellais North Dakota State Senator in District 9.

As a Vietnam Veteran, member of the American Legion Post 262 Belcourt and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Rolette County its very important that these organizations receive this funding to continue service in the community. This funding will assist with the planning for these organizations. This will support our veterans plans in the commuinity.

I am here today to testify in favor HB 1504 and ask for the Finance & Tax Committees concurrence.
I will try an answer any questions.



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.

Christopher J Deery
President
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Community Action Partnership of North Dakota Testimony**RE: HB1504****February 1, 2025****Submitted by Andrea Olson, Executive Director**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee, My name is Andrea Olson and I serve as Executive Director for the Community Action Partnership of North Dakota (CAPND). Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB1504, a bill that will strengthen North Dakota's response to veteran homelessness by providing critical funding for long-term, sustainable housing solutions. By directing 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations into the Post War Trust Fund and the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program, HB1504 ensures that these critical resources remain dedicated to meeting the specific and growing needs of veterans facing housing instability.

Let me just take a quick moment to introduce Community Action. There are seven Community Action Agencies (CAA) across the state, and we operate programs that offer North Dakota residents opportunities to secure and maintain self-sufficiency. We are part of a National Network of over 1,000 CAA whose mission is helping people and changing lives. In North Dakota, our seven CAAs operate as private, non-profit organizations and collectively serve all 53 counties across the state and our Network annually serves 20,000 households who are experiencing hardship. Some of our programs include Head Start, Weatherization and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance. I am here today to share more about our Supportive Services for Veterans (SSVF), Program which serves low-income Veteran Families who are experiencing homelessness or who are on the brink of homelessness.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), is a federal program funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), helps low-income veteran households facing or experiencing homelessness. Since 2012, CAPND has administered this program statewide, providing housing

assistance, case management, healthcare navigation, employment support, and legal services to help veterans regain stability. The goal of SSVF is promoting housing stability among very low-income veteran families who reside in or who are transitioning to permanent housing. Each of our CAA is able to provide families with outreach, case management, healthcare navigation, legal services, and assistance in obtaining VA and other community benefits. SSVF Veteran families may be eligible for temporary financial assistance, including rental assistance, security deposit, utility assistance, hotel stays, transportation costs, moving costs, childcare assistance, and more. With additional funding from the VA, we are also able to offer Shallow Subsidies, an opportunity to provide a stable rental subsidy for up to two years for qualifying Veterans. CAPND also works closely with numerous partners to support SSVF; primarily the VA Medical Center's Homeless Service Program which includes HUDVASH (an intensive case management program that offers Housing Choice Vouchers to Veterans), Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP), the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs and the North Dakota Association of County and Tribal Veteran Services Officers.

HB1504 will expand the ability to provide targeted financial assistance, working to ensure that every veteran experiencing homelessness in North Dakota has access to stable housing, case management, and supportive services. With increased demand this funding is more critical than ever.

The ultimate goal for all of the partners working tirelessly for Veterans experiencing homelessness each day is to achieve and sustain functional zero—a well-coordinated, efficient system where homelessness among veterans is rare, brief, and non-recurring, ensuring that no veteran is left without housing. Through our statewide partnerships, CAPND ensures that veterans receive more than just temporary financial aid—we actively support their path to self-sufficiency and long-term stability.

Each year CAPND serves an average of 300 Veteran Families in the SSVF Program. In 2024, CAPND served 362 veteran households statewide, reflecting a 70-household increase from previous years—a clear indication of growing need. Of these, 199 were at imminent risk of homelessness, while

163 were already homeless when they sought assistance. Through SSVF's rapid response approach, 141 households successfully transitioned into permanent housing, while 22 moved into temporary housing. Unfortunately, 17 households returned to homelessness, underscoring the challenges faced by vulnerable veterans. Additionally:

- The average length of time it takes SSVF to provide housing for Veterans is only 36 days
- From 2022-2023, 288 new veterans enrolled in the SSVF program, followed by an additional 195 new enrollments from 2023-2024, highlighting the ongoing and growing need for these critical services.
- In 2024 the average Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) spent on an enrolled Veteran household: \$2,919. SSVF provided financial assistance for emergency housing assistance, general housing stability, rent assistance, security deposits. SSVF is a case management program first and foremost; financial assistance is secondary and intended to provide housing stability.

Veterans engaged with the SSVF Program often encounter multifaceted challenges, including, but not limited to: financial constraints, limited access to affordable healthcare, employment instability, mental health and/or substance abuse issues that further compound the complexity of experiencing homelessness. The systemic barriers involve gaps in financial assistance programs, and a lack of affordable housing options. These barriers are not just abstract challenges; they are the stark realities that veterans participating in SSVF face on a daily basis. As we engage with veterans in SSVF, we witness firsthand the intricate and interconnected nature of these hurdles.

By recognizing and understanding these challenges through our work with the SSVF program, we gain insight into the critical need for ongoing support and advocacy to break down these barriers and pave the way for veterans to reclaim stability and independence. And what we do works; allow me to share some successes:

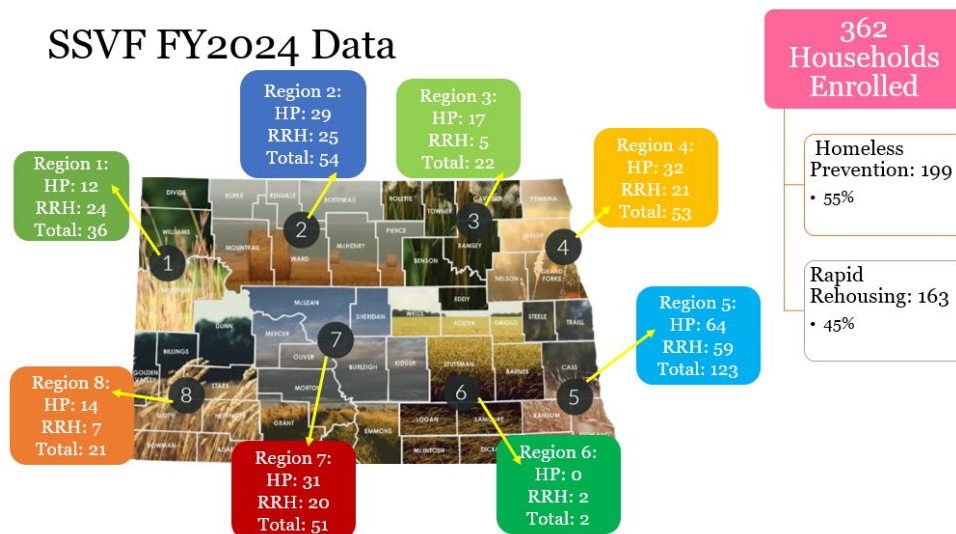
- A veteran in Williston was at risk of eviction due to rent arrears, facing the very real possibility of homelessness. Seeking assistance, the veteran enrolled in SSVF, which provided the necessary financial support to cover back rent and prevent eviction. Recognizing the importance of long-term stability, SSVF also connected the Veteran to the Williston Veteran Service Officer (VSO) to apply for VA disability benefits, ensuring additional financial security. To further support the veteran's transition to stability, SSVF collaborated with Veterans Inc., connecting the veteran with job services and providing gas cards to facilitate employment opportunities. As a result of these combined efforts, the veteran successfully secured two sources of income and now maintains permanent housing. Because of these coordinated services and the dedication of multiple agencies, this veteran has not only avoided homelessness but has also achieved long-term financial and housing stability.
- A veteran in Minot enrolled in SSVF was still facing significant transportation challenges, relying on co-workers for rides or walking over 1.5 miles to work each day. Understanding that reliable transportation was essential for maintaining employment and long-term stability, the veteran set a goal to save enough money to purchase a car. Through participation in the SSVF Shallow Subsidy program, the veteran was able to maintain steady employment for over two years, diligently saving funds without taking on loans or fees. During this time, they also worked closely with a HUD-VASH caseworker to ensure consistent access to medical care, addressing both physical and mental health needs. Thanks to perseverance and targeted support, the veteran successfully purchased a reliable vehicle, providing much-needed independence and stability. Now, they can commute to work and handle daily errands without the stress of unreliable transportation. Even more, they are paying it forward by giving co-workers rides, helping others who face similar barriers. Additionally, with regular medical care and a prescribed treatment plan, the veteran has achieved improved well-being and greater self-sufficiency. Through

determination, collaboration, and strategic support, this veteran has not only secured stability but is also giving back to their community while maintaining steady employment and a higher quality of life in Minot.

As you diligently consider HB1504 and reflect on the multifaced barriers faced by those experiencing homelessness, I urge you to reflect on the stories we have shared today. They underscore the importance of funding programs like SSVF that play a critical role in rebuilding lives and reintegrating veterans into stable, productive futures. They also reiterate long-term effects in fostering self-sufficiency, independence, and overall well-being. They emphasize the need for a holistic approach to support, collaborative partnerships and housing stability as a foundation for individuals to be able to address other aspects of their lives such as employment, mental health, and healthcare.

Supporting HB1504 is an investment in real, long-term solutions for North Dakota's veterans. This funding will directly expand access to stable housing, supportive services, and financial assistance, ensuring that homelessness among veterans is rare, brief, and non-recurring. By passing HB1504, this committee has the opportunity to make a tangible difference in the lives of those who have served our country. I urge you to support this critical legislation and help us continue this vital work.

Thank you for your time and your attention to this important matter.





Community Action Region VI
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Fax 701-252-7108
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February 1, 2025

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 1504

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee:

My name is Kristina Brownell, and I represent Community Action Region VI (CAP Region 6). We provide statewide healthcare navigation services under the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, ensuring that Veterans experiencing homelessness can access the critical medical care they need to regain stability.

I am writing in strong support of HB 1504, which directs 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) to be deposited into the Post War Trust Fund or the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program. This funding will directly support essential services for Veterans, including housing stability, medical navigation, and supportive services that help prevent and address homelessness among those who have served our country.

For many Veterans experiencing homelessness, healthcare access is a major barrier to regaining stability. Without proper medical care, chronic health conditions go untreated, mental health challenges worsen, and the ability to secure long-term housing becomes nearly impossible. Through SSVF's Healthcare Navigation program, CAP Region 6 helps Veterans enroll in VA healthcare and other medical coverage, schedule and coordinate medical appointments, and connect with critical mental health and substance use treatment. By ensuring they receive necessary care, we are giving them a real path toward stability.

HB 1504 ensures that more resources are directed to support programs like ours, which work daily to prevent Veteran homelessness. By supporting HB 1504, this committee has the opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of North Dakota's Veterans. Directing gaming tax revenue from VSOs into the Post War Trust Fund and Veterans Affairs grant programs is an investment that ensures our state continues to prioritize the well-being, housing, and healthcare access of those who have served our country.

I strongly urge you to support HB 1504 and the ongoing efforts to provide Veterans with the stability and care they deserve. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Kristina Brownell'.

Kristina Brownell
Executive Director

**DEVILS LAKE OFFICE**

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ROLLA OFFICE

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 PO Box 1026
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Re: HB1504

February 1, 2025

Submitted by: Lora Papachek, Executive Director

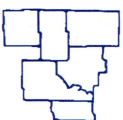
Mr. Chairman and Members of the House of Finance and Taxation Committee:

On behalf of Dakota Prairie Community Action Agency (DPCAA), I am writing in support of HB1504, which will direct 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations to the Post War Trust Fund or the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program. Ensuring that the veterans who have served our country have the necessary support to achieve self sufficiency and housing stability is of utmost importance. This bill would be instrumental in providing those needed services for our local veterans.

DPCAA is one of seven Community Action Agencies in the state of North Dakota that operate programs to help individuals and families to overcome poverty. DPCAA serves the counties of Ramsey, Benson, Eddy, Cavalier, Towner and Rolette providing a wide range of services such as housing assistance, money management, transportation, utility assistance, case management and employment support to low-income households, which includes low-income veteran households.

The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program has allowed us to provide direct assistance to veterans that were homeless or at risk of homelessness. The services included, but were not limited to, helping them to secure stable housing, referrals to the state healthcare navigator and getting them set up with resources to secure employment. In the past year DPCAA served ten (10) local veterans through the SSVF program but the need in our Region is growing and I feel like those numbers will rise in 2025. Many of the veterans face barriers such as employment instability, mental health challenges, lack of affordable housing and difficulty accessing VA benefits they would qualify for. Through Community Action's case management services, we are able to help them navigate these obstacles that they may struggle with on their own.

Region 3 is a very rural area with many small towns and not enough shelters available for the needs of our homeless community. Veterans can oftentimes find it difficult to get a roof over their head if the shelters are full or need to prioritize families with children over single adults. In the North Dakota winter this can be a very dangerous situation they find themselves in. Helping them to be self-sufficient and find stable housing is imperative.



Serving the Counties of Benson, Cavalier, Eddy, Ramsey, Rolette and Towner



**EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
HOUSING & EMPLOYMENT**

HB1504 would be a long-term solution to help us meet our ever present funding needs. Funding continues to be a challenge in meeting the needs of our veterans and we strive to ensure that no veterans are left behind.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out for any additional information needed.

Lora Papachek, Executive Director
Dakota Prairie Community Action Agency
701-662-6500, ext. 331
lpapachek@dpcaa.org



February 1, 2025

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee:

On behalf of Southeastern North Dakota Community Action Agency (SENDCAA), I am writing in strong support of HB1504, which will direct 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations to the Post War Trust Fund or the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program. This legislation is a critical investment in veteran services, ensuring that those who have served our country have the support needed to achieve housing stability and self-sufficiency.

SENDCAA is one of seven Community Action Agencies (CAAs) in North Dakota, operating programs that help individuals and families overcome poverty and build stable futures. Our agency serves Region V in North Dakota which includes Steele, Traill, Cass, Ransom, Richland and Sargent counties providing services such as housing assistance, case management, employment support, transportation, and financial education to low-income households—including veterans.

Through our partnership with the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, we provide direct assistance to veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness, helping them secure stable housing, healthcare navigation, and employment resources. Last year alone, we served 123 veterans through SSVF and witnessed firsthand the growing demand for veteran homelessness services. Many of the veterans we assist face significant barriers, including lack of affordable housing, employment instability, mental health challenges, and difficulty accessing VA benefits.

The number of veterans in our community needing access to our services continues to grow at a substantial rate. Our current data shows:

- Over 30 veterans in our community currently do not have access to permanent supportive housing and remain homeless.
- Current funding allows for approximately \$2500 per veteran enrolled in SSVF to receive supportive services and emergency financial assistance. Our evaluation shows the actual cost to provide comprehensive services is nearly \$5000 per veteran in our region.
- Although we have not turned any program eligible veteran away, we have been unable to truly provide the full set of services needed to allow veterans to reach self-sufficiency.

Despite our best efforts, funding remains a major challenge in meeting the rising need for veteran services. HB1504 will provide much-needed resources to ensure no veteran is left behind due to funding shortages.

On the following page you will read a story about John that demonstrates the true impact of the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program.

Recently, the Fargo Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program served an Army veteran who we will call John, who served over 20 years including tours during Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom. John, like many veterans, faced challenges transitioning back to civilian life. He exited military service with service-related disability and just enough income to survive but needed support and stability to thrive.

Housing Instability Experience:

When John first contacted SSVF, he had experienced homelessness for the past eight years, often hiking across the country. Recently, due to health reasons, he recognized the need to settle in one location. For the past couple of months, he has been paying for a hotel, but his limited income, from his VA benefits, was depleting his resources. He reached out for help to the local VA, who directed him to the only resource that could help- SSVF.

How SSVF and Case Manager Helped the Veteran:

The Fargo SSVF program immediately stepped in to help. With no available shelter beds or other community resources, SSVF intervened and covered the cost of the hotel for a few additional days until he could move into his new home. SSVF helped pay for the hotel while John sought housing. He applied for an apartment with support from his co-signer, his AA sponsor. The SSVF case manager contacted the management company and arranged for the apartment to be held for John.

Eight days after the veteran enrolled in the SSVF program, John moved into his apartment, exiting homelessness for the first time since 2017. The SSVF case manager continued to ask him what he needed support with to create a safe home, which included providing household necessities, a bed, and helping move.

Since moving into his new apartment, John has made significant progress. He is receiving care from the VA, which he is satisfied with, and has expressed a desire to maintain his stability without further assistance. John feels confident that he can manage on his own now that he has stable housing. As of January 27, 2025, John chose to exit the program, expressing gratitude to the SSVF program. He now has a stable living situation, which is crucial for his health and well-being.

Impact of HB1504:

HB1504 is an investment in long-term solutions, not just temporary relief. By aligning financial resources with the needs of North Dakota's veterans, we can ensure that homelessness among those who served is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Sincerely,



Brandon Kjelden

Executive Director

Southeastern North Dakota Community Action Agency

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HB 1504

North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Lonnie Wangen-Commissioner

2/3/2025

House Finance and Taxation Committee
69th Legislative Session
Representative Craig Headland-Chair

Chairman Headland and House Finance and Taxation Committee,

Please accept this testimony in support of HB 1504.

Intent of this bill...

- Increase the principal of Veterans Post War Trust Fund (PWTF)
- Address North Dakota's homeless veteran unmet needs

Background/History

Fund 410: Post War Trust Fund PWTF

Article X Section 25 of ND Constitution and NDCC 37-14-14

- 1969-1971 Issuance of Bonds and Surtax for Adjusted Compensation to ND Veterans of Vietnam War
- Funds remaining (\$41 million) after services for Vietnam Veterans were used for many projects such as ND State Veterans Cemetery, Veterans home, etc.
- 1988 PWTF established as Permanent Trust Fund (\$4.1 million)
 - The PWTF principal consist of money transferred *as authorized by legislation*
 - Investment of the PWTF is entrusted to the ND State Treasurer
 - Interest from investments is used for;
 - Investment expenses
 - Principal growth
 - Spendable interest income appropriated to the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs (ACOVA) on continuing basis
 - What is earned in a biennium is made available in next biennium
- The principal balance of PWTF was held at \$4.1 Million dollars until 2014
- 2013 Legislative action. **\$250,000** added to principal of PWTF
- 2015 Created Patriotic License Plates. Proceeds to principal. **\$105,710**
- 2019 Created Income Tax Check Off. Proceeds to principal. **\$136,614**
- Income to Veteran Programs Beginning of Biennium balance
 - 2013-2015: \$262,371.92 \$4.5 million
 - 2015-2017: \$274,545.96 \$5.6 million
 - 2017-2019: 218,369.06 \$6.2 million
 - 2019-2021: \$281,474.87 \$6.6 million
 - 2021-2023: \$232,369.67 \$7.9 million
- 2024.11 balance of PWTF: \$8,634,098

Fund 503: Charitable Gaming Operating Fund

NDCC 53-06.1-11.2 (and 12)

- 12/31/2024 balance: \$33,138,461.70
- ND ***Veteran Service Organizations with Charitable Gaming generate*** \$4,720,360 per biennium
 - 50% = \$2,360,180
 - Estimated amount per fund: \$1,180,090

Need for bill...

- Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs (ACOVA) receives spendable interest income from PWTF for use on programs of benefit to ND Veterans and their dependents.
 - Grants for unmet medical: Hearing Aids, Dental, Denture, Glasses, Housing, Transportation to medical appointments, and others. ***Income and asset based.***

Grants: Monthly Income limits2013:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Income Limit	\$1200	\$1400	\$1600	\$1800	\$2100	\$2400	\$2600

\$2,000 cash assets allowed. Can deduct ongoing medical expenses.

2025:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Income Limit	\$1379	\$1806	\$2042	\$2278	\$2513	\$2749	\$2985

\$5,500 cash assets

ND Fuel Assistance: 2025

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Income Limit	\$2977	\$3893	\$4809	\$5725	\$6641	\$7557	\$7728

*Deductions: Childcare, Child support, Medical, 27% income deduction on earned income, Employment, and Education, Representative payee fees, child or adult dependent costs.

- Interest income is not enough to cover needs
 - Donated and other resources are needed to assist in these grants
 - About 40% of applications are denied
- Interest rates are low, and inflation is high
 - Dental / Denture grant costs:
 - 2013: \$1,700 plate with Dental/Denture limit: \$4,000
 - 2025: Dental/Denture limit: \$5,000 x 2yrs \$10,000

- Hearing aids: (4-year limit)
 - 2013: \$1,500 ear
 - 2025: \$2,500 ear
- Housing:
 - 2013: \$500
 - 2025: \$2,500 (Deposit and 1 month rent)
 - Growing affordable housing needs in ND
- Legislative action is required to add to PWTF principal
- Programs no longer being funded:
 - Grants for outreach
 - Homeless veteran programs
 - Training grants
 - Veteran employment services grants
 - Transportation: DAV vans now in NDDVA budget
 - PTSD service animals: NDDVA budget
 - Legal services
 - Grants to uncovered needs at ND Veterans Home
 - County and Veteran service officer assistance

Outcome of Bill:

Stable PWTF. Sustainable interest earning capability. Increased ability for ACOVA and NDDVA to provide grants and services for the most vulnerable of ND Veterans and Dependents. Immediate ability to address and prevent ND Veteran Homelessness

Thank you for your consideration.

Lonnie Wangen Commissioner-NDDVA

North Dakota Constitution: [Article X Section 25](#):

The veterans' postwar trust fund shall be a permanent trust fund of the state of North Dakota and shall consist of moneys transferred or credited to the fund as authorized by legislative enactment. Investment of the fund shall be the responsibility of the state treasurer who shall have full authority to invest the fund only in the same manner as the state investment board is authorized to make investments. All income received from investments is to be utilized for programs which must be of benefit and service to veterans, who are defined by legislative enactment, or their dependents, and such income is hereby appropriated to the administrative committee on veterans' affairs on a continuing basis for expenditure upon those programs selected at the discretion of the [administrative committee on veterans' affairs](#).

NDCC 37-14-14 Veterans' postwar trust fund

The veterans' postwar trust fund is a permanent trust fund of the state of North Dakota and consists of moneys transferred or credited to the fund under this chapter and other laws.

Investment of the fund is the responsibility of the state treasurer who shall have full authority to invest the fund only in accordance with chapter 21-10. All income received from investments is to be utilized only for programs of benefit and service to veterans or their dependents, and all income earned in a biennium is appropriated to the administrative committee on veterans' affairs on a continuing basis in the following biennium and not in the biennium the income is earned for expenditure on these programs as authorized by law. Investment of all income received from investments is the responsibility of the state treasurer who has full authority to invest the income received only in accordance with chapter 21-10.

53-06.1-11.2. Charitable gaming operating fund - Attorney general - State treasurer - Allocations - Transfer to the general fund.

1. There is created in the state treasury the charitable gaming operating fund. The fund consists of all gaming taxes, monetary fines, and interest and penalties collected under this chapter.
2. Excluding moneys in the charitable gaming operating fund appropriated by the legislative assembly for administrative and operating costs associated with charitable gaming, the

attorney general shall allocate remaining moneys in the charitable gaming operating fund on a quarterly basis as follows:

- a. Ten thousand dollars to the gambling disorder prevention and treatment fund.
 - b. Subject to legislative appropriations, five percent of the total moneys deposited in the charitable gaming operating fund to cities and counties in proportion to the taxes collected under section 53-06.1-12 from licensed organizations conducting games within each city, for sites within city limits, or within each county, for sites outside city limits. If a city or county allocation is less than two hundred dollars, that city or county is not entitled to receive a payment for the quarter and the undistributed amount must be included in the total amount to be distributed to other cities and counties for the quarter.
3. On or before June thirtieth of each odd-numbered year, the attorney general shall certify to the state treasurer the amount of accumulated funds in the charitable gaming operating fund which exceed the amount appropriated by the legislative assembly for administrative and operating costs associated with charitable gaming for the subsequent biennium. The state treasurer shall transfer the certified amount from the charitable gaming operating fund to the general fund prior to the end of each biennium.

53-06.1-12. Gaming tax - Deposits. (Retroactive application - See note)

1. Except as provided in subsection 2, a gaming tax is imposed on the total adjusted gross proceeds received by a licensed organization in a quarter and the tax must be computed and paid to the attorney general on a quarterly basis on the tax return. This tax must be paid from adjusted gross proceeds and is not part of the allowable expenses. For a licensed organization with adjusted gross proceeds:
 - a. Not exceeding fifty thousand dollars the tax is one percent of adjusted gross proceeds.
 - b. Exceeding fifty thousand dollars the tax is five hundred dollars plus twelve percent of adjusted gross proceeds exceeding fifty thousand dollars.
2. For a licensed organization permitted to conduct raffles in this state with adjusted gross proceeds exceeding fifty thousand dollars, a gaming tax of one percent of gross proceeds is imposed on the total gross proceeds received by the licensed organization from raffles in a quarter. The tax must be computed and paid to the attorney general on a quarterly basis on the tax return. The tax must be paid from adjusted gross proceeds and is not part of the allowable expenses.
3. The tax must be paid to the attorney general at the time tax returns are filed.
4. The attorney general shall deposit gaming taxes, monetary fines, and interest and penalties collected in the charitable gaming operating fund.

Statewide Trial Balance - Special Funds
For the Month Ending Dec 31, 2024

Run Date: Jan 15, 2025

Fund: 503 Charitable Gaming Operating Fu

Account	Current Month	Biennium to Date
Balance Sheet Accounts		
105251 Cash & Equiv at BND - Current	(133,265.48)	41,864,059.67
124001 Accounts Receivable - Current	(7,581.76)	105,243.48
201001 Accounts/Vouchers Payable	1,778.01	(29.62)
303001 Fund Balance-Unreserved-Undes		(8,830,811.83)
Total Balance Sheet Accounts	(139,069.23)	33,138,461.70
Revenues		
416030 Gaming Tax	57,438.40	37,942,506.07
441015 Fines-Forfeitures-Escheat	2,516.34	148,213.94
463021 Misc. Sales And Services		40,448.12
463029 Sale Of Publications	96.75	1,654.05
473035 Other Reimb. - Jury Pay, Etc.		200.00
Total Revenues	60,051.49	38,133,022.18
Expenditures		
511005 Salaries Full Time	121,984.75	2,003,992.29
511020 Paid Annual Leave		2,355.80
514005 Overtime		1,450.11
516015 Employee Assist Program	27.79	508.90
516055 Health Insurance	29,657.60	534,822.60
516075 Basic Life Insurance	5.05	92.50
516095 Other Retirement	2,400.52	33,880.53
516165 Section 125 Adm Fee	319.55	6,191.85
516170 Social Security	9,025.96	147,765.02
516175 State Retirement	15,212.37	242,312.33
516205 Unemployment Insurance	988.84	2,308.84

Statewide Trial Balance - Special Funds
For the Month Ending Dec 31, 2024

Run Date: Jan 15, 2025

Fund: 503 Charitable Gaming Operating Fu

Account	Current Month	Biennium to Date
516210 Workers Comp Premium		6,973.62
521015 In State - Lodging	96.30	5,188.20
521020 In State - Meals		2,509.50
521035 Meals Taxable		1,036.00
521045 Motor/Aircraft Pool	412.65	4,975.83
521046 Motor Pool Replacement Exp	54.45	586.01
521065 Other Transportation & Misc Ex		336.00
521070 Out of State-Air Transportatio		6,139.52
521075 Out of State - Lodging		14,503.38
521080 Out of State - Meals		3,130.10
521085 Out of State-Other Comm Transp		1,182.49
531010 IT - Equipment Under \$750		68.49
531020 Software/Licenses Under \$5,000		119.99
532020 Books		27.99
533010 Clothing		1,778.18
534040 Fuel & Oil - Vehicle	210.84	2,991.78
534100 Other Bldg. & Equip. Supplies		148.19
535015 Equip Under \$750		112.47
535085 Supplies Not Classified		14.80
536005 Central Supply	932.82	5,870.76
536015 Office Supplies		1,494.04
541015 Postage or P.O. Box Rental	78.18	3,687.64
542005 Central Duplicating - Printing		1,744.72
542035 Printing From Others (Non Ctrl		5,593.95
552075 Other Equipment		195.99
553010 Furniture & Furnishings		5,115.47
571030 Risk Management Premiums		3,258.10

Statewide Trial Balance - Special Funds
For the Month Ending Dec 31, 2024

Run Date: Jan 15, 2025

Fund: 503 Charitable Gaming Operating Fu

Account	Current Month	Biennium to Date
581010 Copier Rental	94.34	1,689.55
582060 Rent Of Building Space		107,472.36
591055 Repair Equipment-Automobiles		103.76
591085 Repair Service-Radios		1,768.00
591120 Service Contract-Office Equip		3.50
591125 Service Contract-Other		2,856.00
601005 Data Processing Service	1,436.03	27,162.51
602005 Cellular Phones	47.54	827.82
602065 Telephone ITD	509.23	9,369.30
603020 IT-Consultant/Development		37,000.00
611010 Dues & Memberships		500.00
611020 Professional Development	29.62	10,395.27
611030 Tuition Fees		2,156.00
611040 Leg Reportable Dues&Membership		425.00
621060 Awards, Rewards, Prizes		475.00
621285 Licenses & Taxes		170.00
621325 Other Operating Fees	13.00	470.99
621885 AG Office Buy Fund		3,500.00
623015 Artistic & Design Service		350.00
623020 Audit		1,773.00
623100 Legal		2,169.00
623105 Legal - Administrative Hearing		279.50
623140 Medical Including Hospital		634.00
623175 Professionals Not Classified	3,947.04	68,527.53
692005 Passenger Vehicles		46,758.43
693030 IT Equip / Software Over \$5000	11,636.25	278,260.00
712105 Grants To Cities		345,549.31

Statewide Trial Balance - Special Funds
For the Month Ending Dec 31, 2024

Run Date: Jan 15, 2025

Fund: 503 Charitable Gaming Operating Fu

Account	Current Month	Biennium to Date
712115 Grants To Counties		29,450.67
722285 TSFR TO COMP GAMBLING PREVENTI		560,000.00
722513 Tsfr to Charitable Gaming Tech		400,000.00
Total Expenditures	199,120.72	4,994,560.48



Community Action Partnership Regions 1 (Williston) and 8 (Dickinson)

RE: HB1504

February 1, 2025

Submitted by Erv Bren, Executive Director

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee:

My name is Erv Bren, the Executive Director of Community Action Partnership in Williston and Dickinson. I am writing in support of HB1504, which will direct 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations to the Post War Trust Fund or the North Dakota Department of Veteran Affairs grant program. This legislation is a critical investment in veteran services, ensuring that those who have served our country have the support needed to achieve housing stability and self-sufficiency.

Community Action Partnership Regions 1 and 8 is one of seven Community Action Agencies in North Dakota operating programs that help individuals and families overcome poverty and build stable futures. Our Agency serves the following counties in Western North Dakota: Adams, Billings, Bowman, Divide, Dunn, Golden Valley, Hettinger, McKenzie, Slope, Stark, and Williams, providing services such as housing assistance, case management, employment support, transportation, and financial education to low-income households – including veterans.

Many of the veterans we assist face significant barriers, including lack of affordable housing, employment instability, mental health challenges, and difficulty accessing VA benefits. Through our partnership with the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, which is a federal

program funded by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, we help low-income veteran households with the above-stated challenges to become self-sufficient through case management and limited financial assistance.

The number of veterans in our service area receiving assistance has increased over the past couple of years, putting strain on our current funding for meeting their needs. HB1504 will expand the ability to provide targeted financial assistance, working to ensure that every veteran experiencing homelessness in North Dakota has access to stable housing, case management, and supportive services. With the increased demand and few resources, like the absence of homeless shelters in our service area, this funding is more critical than ever.

Supporting HB1504 is an investment in real, long-term solutions for North Dakota's veterans. This funding will directly expand access to stable housing, supportive services, and financial assistance, ensuring that homelessness among veterans is rare, brief, and non-recurring. By passing HB1504, this committee has the opportunity to make a tangible difference in the lives of those who have served our country. Our appreciation to the men and women who have fearlessly served our country will never be enough. It is our duty as American citizens to ensure they receive the gratitude and support they so rightly deserve.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erv Bren", with a stylized, cursive script.

Erv Bren
Executive Director



Community Action Partnership of North Dakota

Testimony

RE: HB1504

February 1, 2025

**Submitted by Max Pontenila
SSVF Program Specialist
Community Action Partnership—Minot Region**

Bottineau, Burke, McHenry, Mountrail, Pierce, Renville, Ward



2020 - 8th Avenue SE • Minot, ND 58701-5035
(701) 839-7221 • (800) 726-8645 • Fax (701) 839-1747 • TDD (701) 852-3028
Email agency@capminotregion.org • Website www.capminotregion.org





Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee, my name is Max Pontenila and I work for Community Action Partnership (CAP)–Minot Region. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB1504, a bill that will strengthen North Dakota’s response to veteran homelessness by providing critical funding for long-term, sustainable housing solutions. By directing 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations into the Post War Trust Fund and the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program, HB1504 ensures that these critical resources remain dedicated to meeting the specific and growing needs of veterans facing housing instability.

Before we begin, let me introduce myself. In my current role, I serve as a case manager for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. Prior to this position, I worked for the Department of Veterans Affairs where I was exposed firsthand to the homeless veterans crisis and the services that they offered to homeless veterans. I am a veteran of the United States Air Force, having retired honorably after 20 years of active duty service. I have multiple deployments under my belt, to include time spent in Iraq in 2004. Working with veterans is something that I am very passionate about as I have had many shared experiences and struggles with many of the clients that I now provide services to.

As a SSVF case manager my primary responsibility is to help homeless veterans and veterans at risk of homelessness. I cover seven counties within the CAP-Minot Region area of responsibility (Bottineau, Burke, McHenry, Montrail, Pierce, Renville, Ward). My roles and responsibilities



include, but are not limited to; providing direct case management, assisting veterans to find or maintain permanent and stable housing, assisting them with employment resources, coordinating with various agencies to provide wrap-around care to address mental health, substance abuse, medical, and social services needs. I work very closely with social workers from the Department of Veterans Affairs, their HUD-VASH program case manager, county Veteran Service Officers (VSOs), local landlords, and hotel managers. Without these critical relationships we would not be able to provide immediate shelter and services to homeless veterans and veterans at risk of homelessness. I also assist veterans apply for VA benefits (medical, disability, veterans pension program) by explaining to them what they are potentially eligible for and then getting them connected with the local VSOs and VA outpatient clinics in our region. The other part of my job as a SSVF case manager is to do outreach with local organizations, civic groups, and to base leadership on Minot AFB. By doing this, I am able to educate them about the SSVF program so if they are interacting with any veterans they are able to ask them about their housing stability, and if needed, provide a direct referral to our program. By providing base leadership with veteran resources in the local area, they are able to provide that information to servicemembers as they prepare to transition into civilian life. I also partner with local organizations to do homeless street outreach, doing so allows me to screen any homeless personnel and determine if they are a veteran and their potential eligibility for the SSVF program.

If a veteran is not already connected with military resources, sometimes the SSVF program is their first interaction with anything related to the services provided by the Department of Veterans



Affairs. Often the veterans are very surprised at the level of assistance, both in the case management and financial capabilities that the SSVF program can provide to them. Knowing that there are folks willing to help them significantly lowers their stress levels and can sometimes be the difference between life and death, given your current weather conditions.

As a case manager, we often at times do not know what types of struggles that the veteran will present with when they walk through our door. Therefore, it is important to establish trust and rapport with a veteran so that they are able to let their guard down and we are able identify their needs and get the right resources to them at the right time. As a veteran, I know firsthand how hard it is to allow yourself to raise your hand and say “I need help”. This because the military has trained us to be self-sufficient and to be able to overcome any situation regardless of the cost, be it mental, physical, or more often than not both. It was often perceived within the military sub-culture that asking for help was a sign of weakness. Within this context, veterans will sometimes wait until it is too late and they are deep in a crisis spiral before they even begin to ask for help. This negative spiral often leads to mental health issues, suicidal ideations, substance use and abuse, legal troubles, relationship issues, unemployment, and much more.

The SSVF program operates on the “Housing First” model; once a veteran is placed into permanent housing, case managers are able to work with the veteran to address all of the other issues that they present with. I once had a veteran disclose to me that in the days prior to his SSVF enrollment, he was on the brink of committing suicide. He had lost his job, was on the brink of being evicted, was



in financial trouble, and was suffering from loss and grief as he had recently ended a long-term relationship. With the case management provided by the SSVF program; we were able to get him into a new apartment, he was able to find a new job, and we were able to get him connected with the VA clinic for proper medical care. Over the course of a few months, he was able to maintain his employment so he was enrolled into the SSVF Shallow Subsidy program. The Shallow Subsidy program is a long-term rental assistance program where we cost share a 50-50 rental assistance for a maximum eligibility period of 24 months. Towards the end of his Shallow Subsidy contract he was able to find a new job that paid him much more than his previous job. He was able to reach his self-sufficiency goals ahead of his projected schedule, therefore he chose to graduate early from the Shallow Subsidy program and wanted us to “use that other money for veterans in need”.

The continued funding of the SSVF program allows veterans, that often times present with multiple issues, to be provided the stability of case management, services, resources, and vital support to ensure their success. I would like to highlight a few success stories that would not have been possible without the continued funding of the SSVF program:

- This Veteran was living temporarily with his son and daughter-in-law outside of the Minot area. He had reached out to the HUD-VASH and SSVF caseworkers asking for assistance as he was getting kicked out of their home. He had previously run his own business but due to age and injuries, he could no longer maintain steady employment. He wanted to move to Minot as there were no resources in the small town that they were currently living in. I was able to find him a new apartment, we used another CAP-Minot Region program

grant to pay for him to get new dentures which in-turn drastically increased his quality of life. I was able to co-manage his case with our HUD-VASH case manager. After we met his initial stabilization needs, we began to transition him into the long-term stabilization phase. He was transitioned to the HUD-VASH housing voucher and he was able to get enrolled into VA healthcare services. To date, he is still actively using VA healthcare services and continues to utilize the HUD-VASH voucher due to his limited income.

- This Veteran was staying temporarily with a friend “couch surfing” and had needed to leave his friend’s house. Shortly after his enrollment into the SSVF program, I was able to get him moved into a new apartment. He was able to get connected with the VSO to apply for VA disability benefits even though we knew that it would be a long process. He was able to maintain his employment during this time, but one day he needed critical car repairs so that he could continue going to work and to attend his medical appointments. The SSVF program was able to pay for his car repair so that he could continue to earn income and pay for his rent and utility bills. Eventually, and due to his medical conditions, the veteran was awarded a VA disability rating of 100%. This increase in income enabled him to meet his self-sufficiency goals and he successfully graduated from the SSVF program. He was able to move to another apartment that better suited his needs. He was able to get the proper medical, mental health, and medication management from the VA healthcare system. Currently he has his sights set for applying to the Fire Academy and is an active member in the local Volunteer Fire Department. Not only is he contributing to the local community, but he has since paid it forward by referring other veterans to the SSVF program.



The stories and experiences that I have shared above are not unique to just the Minot office. These are just many of the challenges and successes that myself and the other SSVF case managers face on a daily basis as we serve our North Dakota veterans. The military has a saying of “Leave no man behind”. The passing of HB1504 allows us, as a Nation, to keep the promise of taking care of our veterans, especially the homeless ones who often have no voice or someone advocating on their behalf. If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (701) 839-7221, or via email at max@capminotregion.org. Thank you very much for your time today.

Sincerely,

Max Pontenila

Max Pontenila
SSVF Program Specialist
Community Action Partnership – Minot Region

INTRODUCTION

By Representative Mary Schneider
of

HB 1504--Allocation of Veterans Service Organization Gaming Taxes

Finance and Tax Committee, Craig Headland, Chairman

February 3, 2025

HB 1504 proposes changes to ensure that a portion of gaming funds--funds only from veterans' service organizations--is directed towards services for veterans. The bill requests that 50% of gaming tax money from veterans' groups be allocated to two places; half would go to the Department of Veterans Affairs Post War Trust Fund, a source of funds for future veteran needs, and half would go to prevent and eliminate current homelessness among North Dakota's veterans. It would be using money generated by veterans' groups for the benefit of **future** veteran needs, and also the **present** critical need to address potential and current homelessness. This is a dual bill to allow veterans to help veterans--in the present and the future.

Veterans face significant challenges when it comes to homelessness. There are funding needs for rent, deposits, utilities, childcare, transportation, moving expenses, furniture, and other costs. Here are some other key factors and issues:

1. **Affordable Housing:** There is a severe shortage of affordable housing, which makes it difficult for veterans to find stable and safe places to live. High rental prices and limited availability exacerbate this problem.
2. **Health:** Many veterans struggle with mental health issues such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety. There are also issues getting access to general health care, ongoing treatment, and needed prescriptions. These problems can make it challenging to maintain stable employment and housing.
3. **Employment:** Transitioning from military to civilian life can be difficult, and finding stable employment is often a challenge. Service-connected disabilities may further complicate steady employment.
4. **Social Support:** The camaraderie and community found in military service are often missing in civilian life, which can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness. This lack of social support can make it harder for veterans to cope with the stresses of homelessness.
5. **Access to Benefits:** Navigating the VA healthcare system and accessing benefits can be complex and time-consuming. Many veterans may not receive the support they need due to bureaucratic hurdles and gaps in mental health services.
6. **Substance Abuse:** Some veterans turn to substance abuse to cope with their challenges, which can further complicate their efforts to find stable housing and employment.

7. **Families:** Veteran families face additional challenges, and if they have children, they are more likely to be homeless with children. Family-specific support is crucial for these veterans.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes providing affordable housing and auxiliary costs, mental health support, and social services and resources tailored to the unique needs of veterans.

You work hard on issues of finance and taxation in this committee. This bill is a bit different in that you're having a life and death impact. Homelessness can be as much a terminal condition as cancer. In my legal work, I had three veteran clients die from conditions related to homelessness: one from exposure, one hit by a train, one needing medical attention he couldn't get.

The veteran suicide rate in North Dakota is also a serious concern, and is often related to spiraling down in poverty, homelessness, and hopelessness. According to the 2022 North Dakota Veteran Suicide Data Sheet, the veteran suicide rate in the state was considerably higher than the national general population suicide rate. One of the years I've been in the legislature, our state's veteran suicide rate was the highest in the nation. That data highlights the need for continued efforts to support veterans and address the factors contributing to this tragic issue.

The fiscal note calculations would allow \$590,045 per year to the post war trust fund to grow that fund for future use for all veteran services, and that same amount to address the pernicious and persistent problem of homelessness for veterans over the next two years.

Our service men and women make a lot of sacrifices to help maintain our safety and security in the world and in our state. What we owe them when they call North Dakota home, is to have one to live in. This bill gives us that chance.



HB1504

2/2/2025

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee: My name is Jacqueline Hassett and I am the Executive Director at Red River Valley Community Action (RRVCA). We are one of the state's seven Community Action Agencies, serving Grand Forks, Pembina, Nelson and Walsh counties. On behalf of RRVCA, I am writing in strong support of HB1504, which will direct 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations to the Post War Trust Fund or the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program.

Through our partnership with the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, we provide direct assistance to veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness, helping them secure stable housing, healthcare navigation, legal assistance and employment resources. Here at RRVCA, we believe the case management we provide through the SSVF program should not be simply transactional, but transformational. Transformation into the well-being and stability of the lives of the veterans who gave so much to this country. We focus on supporting these men and women toward self-sufficiency, not a brief exchange or band-aide approach. Unfortunately, the need for these direct services is rising.

I've seen firsthand the increase in the need for these services. The phone calls, walk ins, and referrals we receive for veterans who are literally homeless have gone up in the last year.

Veterans have a particular need for someone to assist them in locating affordable housing in a market that is often hard to navigate on the fixed income many of them have. Gaps in services often prevent them from locating resources for mental and physical health needs. These veterans

need a case worker who can help organize and provide expertise such as navigating tenant rights and important paperwork. This work helps prevent the back and forth and unnecessary repetition of other services which drive up costs for the larger community.

The overall numbers of veterans we serve have become such that we need to hire another case worker. We want to continue to provide the same quality of services we do now and prevent from having to turn away any veterans who come to us for help. We are proud to be able to help veterans during crisis, while upholding the dignity they deserve. HB1504 will provide much-needed resources to ensure no veteran is left behind due to funding shortages.

I appreciate your consideration and service to our state. Please reach out I can provide additional information.

With Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JH' with a large loop and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jacqueline Hassett, LMSW

Executive Director

Red River Valley Community Action

4212 Gateway Drive, GF, ND 58203

701-746-5431

AMVETS Post #7 Fargo, North Dakota

HB 1504

February 2, 2025

Submitted by Rick Olek, Vietnam combat veteran, gaming chair for Jon. A. Greenley AMVET Post #7 Fargo, ND

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee, My name is Richard Olek, I am a Vietnam combat veteran, ARMY 1971-1972, retired city letter carrier who walked the streets of Fargo for 32 years and now volunteer my time to AMVET Post 7 in Fargo and the Fargo V.A. hospital.

Thank You for the opportunity to testify today. I testify today in strong support of HB1504.

This bill HB1504 will help our VETERANS in need. This bill will provide our Department of Veteran Affairs the funds to help my fellow VETERANS .

As a veteran who has walked the streets of Fargo and spends a lot of time with fellow VETERANS I see and hear the need of my fellow veterans. Many fear hunger, living expenses and homelessness. With the passing of HB1504 we can do some good for our veterans.

I serve as the gaming chairman for the house board at AMVETS POST 7 in Fargo . I review our quarterly gaming tax return done by our gaming manager. HB 1504 gives the State of North Dakota the opportunity to direct that portion of tax brought in by veterans organizations back to helping VETERANS in need.

The members and guests who use our veteran organization clubs are supporters of veterans. HB1504 is another way that the dollars they spend in gaming goes back to the veterans they came to support.

HB 1504 is not a tax increase or decrease. If passed it would just allocate 50% of those tax dollars brought in by veterans organizations (AMVETS, AMERICAN LEGION, VFW) to the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program and 50% to the Post War Trust Fund.

In closing as a combat, purple heart veteran I ask for your support for veterans with a DO PASS on HB1504.

Thank You

Veteran Rick Olek

Jin
Nelson

Homeless Veterans

Veteran homelessness is one of the top issues of concern for veterans according to a Mission Roll Call pole of veterans nationwide, more that 90% said they do not think enough is being done to address veteran homelessness,

Veterans make up about 7% of all homeless adults even though they represent around 6% of the total population. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, in 2023 35,574 veterans were experiencing homelessness. Just over half of these were staying in sheltered locations. In addition, they found there were certain groups among the homeless that are disproportionately affected. Men make up about 88% while female veterans are more likely to homeless with children, highlighting the need for family-specific support.

It's difficult to pinpoint and root cause of the veteran housing crisis; rather it's an accumulation of factors over time. Mission Roll Call has outlined 6 areas that are contributing to homelessness. Difficulties transitioning to civilian life. Navigating VA bureaucracy for access to benefits, service-related disabilities, Gaps in mental health support, legal difficulties and the growing disparity between housing costs and income.

A study by the National Health Care for Homeless Council found that homelessness significantly worsens veterans' health, both physically and mentally. Homeless veterans are 3 times

more likely to be infected with HIV. The study also found that homeless individuals are more likely to be victims of violent crimes. The trauma of homelessness can also lead to increased suicide rates. Suicide rates are 9 times that of the general population. While these federal programs do help, the number of veterans still struggling to permanent solutions to housing problems makes it clear that our current systems are not enough. Research has also shown that Americans have become more compassionate towards the homeless in recent years this along with legislative attention and public awareness of the issue and are important steps to ending veteran homelessness there is still more to do. I have said for years that there are two words that should never be used in the same sentence, they are **VETERAN AND HOMELESS**. The NDVLC asks for you yes vote, thank you

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Finance and Taxation Committee Room JW327E, State Capitol

HB 1504
2/4/2025

Relating to allocation of veteran service organization gaming taxes.
--

3:30 p.m. Chairman Headland opened the meeting.

Members Present: Chairman Headland, Vice Chairman Hagert, Representatives Dockter, Dressler, Foss, Grueneich, Ista, Motschenbacher, Nehring, Olson, Porter, Steiner, Toman
Members Absent: Representatives D. Anderson

Discussion Topics:

- Proposed amendment
- 501c3 donations

3:36 p.m. Representative Porter proposed an amendment to accept 501c3 donations to allocate to the 410 fund, testimony #34843.

3:39 p.m. Representative Porter moved to adopt amendment LC #25.1114.01001.

3:39 p.m. Representative Dockter seconded the motion.

3:41 p.m. Voice vote - motion passed.

3:42 p.m. Representative Porter moved a Do Pass as Amended and rerefer Appropriations.

3:42 p.m. Representative J. Olson seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Craig Headland	Y
Representative Jared Hagert	Y
Representative Dick Anderson	AB
Representative Jason Dockter	Y
Representative Ty Dressler	Y
Representative Jim Grueneich	Y
Representative Mike Motschenbacher	Y
Representative Dennis Nehring	Y
Representative Jeremy Olson	Y
Representative Todd Porter	Y
Representative Vicky Steiner	Y
Representative Nathan Toman	Y
Representative Austin Foss	Y
Representative Zachary Ista	Y

3:43 p.m. Motion passed 13-0-1.

3:43 p.m. Representative Porter will carry the bill.

3:43 p.m. Chairman Headland closed the meeting.

Janae Pinks, Committee Clerk

February 4, 2025

85 2/4/25
1 of 3

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO

HOUSE BILL NO. 1504

Introduced by

Representatives Schneider, Karls, Klemin, J. Olson, Pyle, Warrey, Marschall

Senators Boschee, Dever, Marcellais, Meyer, Paulson

1 A BILL ~~for an Act to amend and reenact section 53-06.1-12 of the North Dakota Century Code,~~
2 ~~relating to allocation of veteran service organization gaming taxes.~~ for an Act to amend and
3 reenact section 37-14-14 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the veterans' postwar
4 trust fund; and to provide an appropriation.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

6 ~~SECTION 1. AMENDMENT. Section 53-06.1-12 of the North Dakota Century Code is~~
7 ~~amended and reenacted as follows:~~

8 ~~53-06.1-12. Gaming tax - Deposits. (Retroactive application - See note)~~

9 ~~1. Except as provided in subsection 2, a gaming tax is imposed on the total adjusted~~
10 ~~gross proceeds received by a licensed organization in a quarter and the tax must be~~
11 ~~computed and paid to the attorney general on a quarterly basis on the tax return. This~~
12 ~~tax must be paid from adjusted gross proceeds and is not part of the allowable~~
13 ~~expenses. For a licensed organization with adjusted gross proceeds:~~

14 ~~a. Not exceeding fifty thousand dollars the tax is one percent of adjusted gross~~
15 ~~proceeds.~~

16 ~~b. Exceeding fifty thousand dollars the tax is five hundred dollars plus twelve~~
17 ~~percent of adjusted gross proceeds exceeding fifty thousand dollars.~~

18 ~~2. For a licensed organization permitted to conduct raffles in this state with adjusted~~
19 ~~gross proceeds exceeding fifty thousand dollars, a gaming tax of one percent of gross~~
20 ~~proceeds is imposed on the total gross proceeds received by the licensed organization~~

1 from raffles in a quarter. The tax must be computed and paid to the attorney general
2 on a quarterly basis on the tax return. The tax must be paid from adjusted gross
3 proceeds and is not part of the allowable expenses.

4 ~~3. The tax must be paid to the attorney general at the time tax returns are filed.~~

5 ~~4. The~~ Except as provided in subsection 5, the attorney general shall deposit gaming
6 taxes, monetary fines, and interest and penalties collected in the charitable gaming
7 operating fund.

8 ~~5. The attorney general shall deposit fifty percent of gaming taxes, monetary fines, and~~
9 ~~interest and penalties collected from a veteran organization equally among the~~
10 ~~veterans' postwar trust fund and the department of veterans affairs fund 410 for use~~
11 ~~for homeless veterans' services to prevent and eliminate homelessness.~~

12 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 37-14-14 of the North Dakota Century Code is
13 amended and reenacted as follows:

14 **37-14-14. Veterans' postwar trust fund.**

15 1. The veterans' postwar trust fund is a permanent trust fund of the state of North Dakota
16 and consists of moneys transferred or credited to the fund under this chapter and
17 other laws. Investment of the fund is the responsibility of the state treasurer who shall
18 have full authority to invest the fund only in accordance with chapter 21-10. All income
19 received from investments is to be utilized only for programs of benefit and service to
20 veterans or their dependents, and all income earned in a biennium is appropriated to
21 the administrative committee on veterans' affairs on a continuing basis in the following
22 biennium and not in the biennium the income is earned for expenditure on these
23 programs as authorized by law. Investment of all income received from investments is
24 the responsibility of the state treasurer who has full authority to invest the income
25 received only in accordance with chapter 21-10.

26 2. A veterans organization as defined under 53-06.1-01 may donate funds to the
27 veterans' postwar trust fund for homeless veterans' services to prevent and eliminate
28 veteran homelessness.

29 **SECTION 2. APPROPRIATION - VETERANS' POSTWAR TRUST FUND - VETERANS'**
30 **HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND ELIMINATION.** There is appropriated out of any
31 moneys in the general fund in the state treasury, not otherwise appropriated, the sum of

- 1 \$2,360,180, or so much of the sum as may be necessary, to the veterans' postwar trust fund for
- 2 the purpose of providing homeless veterans' services to prevent and eliminate homelessness,
- 3 for the biennium beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2027.

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1504**

Finance and Taxation Committee (Rep. Headland, Chairman) recommends **AMENDMENTS** ([25.1114.01001](#)) and when so amended, recommends **DO PASS** and **BE REREFERRED** to the **Appropriations Committee** (13 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1504 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar.

Porter

Amend 1504 (Hoghouse)

Section 1

Allow the Post War Thrust Fund
to accept donations from
(501(c)(19) organizations.
(double check that this is their type)

Section 2

Allow the Veterans Affairs Fund 410
to accept donations from
501-C-19 organizations for the use
for ~~Homeless~~ Homeless Veterans' service to
prevent and eliminate veteran homelessness!

Section 3

there is appropriated out of the
general fund \$2,360,180.
1/2 of the money to the Post War
Thrust Fund 1/2 of the money
to the Veterans Affairs Fund 410 for the
use for Homeless Veterans Service to
prevent and eliminate veteran Homelessness

2025 HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS

HB 1504

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Appropriations Committee Roughrider Room, State Capitol

HB 1504
2/17/2025

A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact section 37-14-14 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the veterans' postwar trust fund; and to provide an appropriation.

11:26 a.m. Chairman Vigesaa called the meeting to order.

Members Present: Chairman Vigesaa, Vice Chairman Kempenich, Representatives Anderson, Berg, Bosch, Brandenburg, Fisher, Hanson, Louser, Martinson, Meier, Mitskog, Monson, Murphy, Nathe, Nelson, O'Brien, Pyle, Richter, Stemen, Swiontek, Wagner

Members Absent: Representative Sanford

Discussion Topics:

- Charities
- Homelessness
- Postwar Trust Fund

11:26 a.m. Representative Headland introduced the Bill.

11:32 a.m. Chairman Vigesaa closed the meeting.

Sierra Schartz, Committee Clerk

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Appropriations Committee Roughrider Room, State Capitol

HB 1504
2/20/2025

A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact section 37-14-14 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the veterans' postwar trust fund; and to provide an appropriation.

11:24 a.m. Chairman Vigesaa called the meeting to order.

Members Present: Chairman Vigesaa, Vice Chairman Kempenich, Representatives Anderson, Berg, Bosch, Brandenburg, Fisher, Hanson, Louser, Martinson, Meier, Mitskog, Monson, Murphy, Nathe, Nelson, O'Brien, Pyle, Richter, Sanford, Stemen, Swiontek, Wagner

Discussion Topics:

- Transfer of excess gaming funds

11:24 a.m. Chairman Vigesaa introduced amendment LC #25.1114.02001, #38226.

11:26 a.m. Representative Pyle introduced testimony #38224.

11:31 a.m. Chairman Vigesaa closed the meeting.

Krystal Eberle for Risa Berube, Committee Clerk

Hi Brandy—could you check on the status/fate of a veterans' bill I'm worried about? It's HB1504 which would provide desperately needed help for homeless veterans. It was presented to Appropriations yesterday if the schedule was correct.

HB 1504 was originally heard in Finance and Tax instead of Government and Veterans Affairs (because of an overload in GVA, I think). Testimony was strongly in favor of the bill. I know of at least five people from the eastern part of the state who drove to Bismarck in the blowing snow to testify in person at the hearing. (I attached the testimony listed entries, and know other testimony was presented that day.) There was NO TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION, and witnesses were well-received by the committee.

Austen Schauer would have normally presented the bill to Appropriations if it had been in GVA, and he understands the Post War Trust Fund and veteran homeless issues. He was not the presenter at Appropriations, of course, and I got an email from a veteran today that indicated Chairman Headland from Tax, who did present, seemed to not understand the bill and answered incorrectly when questioned about it. I haven't had a chance to watch the video, and can't determine if any action has been taken or what the bill's future is.

The funding is needed and is not duplicative of any other funding source. The appropriation is to bridge the gaps in funding for homeless veterans. The funding request passed Finance and Tax unanimously at 13-0, so I hate to see it fail because of a lack of available information. Lonnie Wangen usually testifies at Appropriations on veterans' bills, but he said he didn't get notice on his tracking system for HB1504, and even if he had, he was burying his brother in the Cities yesterday when it was heard.

Would you let me know if it's still possible for the veterans who co-sponsored this bill, or others who testified for it or otherwise support it, can or should contact Appropriations Committee members to continue to urge funding passage?

Thanks, Brandy, for your help.

Mary

Representative Mary Schneider

Committee Hearing Testimonies for HB 1504

Measure A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact section 37-14-14 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating

Title: to the veterans' postwar trust fund; and to provide an appropriation.

Search Testimonies for HB 1504

Testimony In Favor

Date/Time	Testimony	Committee	Presenter	Org/Role	City/State	Phone/Email	Original Filename	Document #
02/3/2025 02:45 PM	View	House Finance and Taxation	Nelson, Jim	ND Veterans Legislative Council , Director			Jim Nelson HB 1504 02032025.pdf	34009
02/3/2025 02:45 PM	View	House Finance and Taxation	Olek, Rick				Rick Olek HB 1504 02032023.pdf	34000
02/3/2025 11:00 AM	View	House Finance and Taxation	Bren, Erv	Community Action Partnership - Dickinson/Williston Executive Director	Dickinson, ND	7012270131 administration@dickinsoncap.org	HB1504.pdf	33488
02/3/2025 11:00 AM	View	House Finance and Taxation	Brownell, Kristina	Community Action Region VI Executive Director	Jamestown, ND	7012521821 kristina@cap6.com	SSVF HCN HB1504.pdf	33362
02/3/2025 11:00 AM	View	House Finance and Taxation	Deery, Christopher	North Dakota Association of County and Tribal Veteran Service Officers Cass County Veteran Services	WEST FARGO, ND	7012415746 deeryc@casscountynd.gov	NDACTVSO support of 1504.pdf	33160
02/3/2025 11:00 AM	View	House Finance and Taxation	Hassett, Jacqueline M.	Red River Valley Community Action Executive Director	Grand Forks, ND	7017465431 jhassett@rrvca.com	HB1504.pdf	33628
02/3/2025 11:00 AM	View	House Finance and Taxation	Kjelden, Brandon	Southeastern North Dakota Community Action Agency Southeastern North Dakota Community Action Agency	3233 University Dr. S Fargo, ND 58104, ND	7012322452 brandonk@sendcaa.org	Fargo SSVF Testimony HB1504.pdf	33455
02/3/2025 11:00 AM	View	House Finance and Taxation	Marcellais, Richard	Legislative Assembly Senator	Belcourt, ND	7012780632 rmarcellais@ndlegis.gov	laws_upload.txt	33151
02/3/2025 11:00 AM	View	House Finance and Taxation	Olson, Andrea	Community Action Partnership of North Dakota Community Action Partnership of North Dakota	Fargo, ND	7013713492 andreao@capnd.org	HB1504_CAPND_Feb 1 2025.pdf	33361
02/3/2025 11:00 AM	View	House Finance and Taxation House	Papachek, Lora	Dakota Prairie Community Action Agency Executive Director Community Action	Devils Lake, ND	7016626500 lpapachek@dpscaa.org	Region 3, HB 1504.pdf	33368

02/3/2025 11:00 AM	View	Finance and Taxation	Pontenila, Max	Partnership-Minot Region SSVF Program Specialist	Minot, ND	7018397221 max@capminotregion.org	CAPND Testimony - HB1504 - Max Pontenila.pdf	33494
02/3/2025 11:00 AM	View	House Finance and Taxation	Schneider, Mary	ND State House of Representatives Representative- District 21	Fargo, ND	7013060860 mschneider@ndlegis.gov	Hearing INTRODUCTION to HB 1504--homeless veterans.pdf	33608
02/3/2025 11:00 AM	View	House Finance and Taxation	Wangen, Lonnie L.	ND Department of Veterans Affairs ND Department of Veterans Affairs	Fargo, ND	7012397165 lwangen@nd.gov	2025.2.3 HB 1504 NDDVA Commissioner Testimony.pdf	33459

Neutral Testimony

Date/Time	Testimony	Committee	Presenter	Org/Role	City/State	Phone/Email	Original Filename	Document #
02/4/2025 03:30 PM	View	House Finance and Taxation	Porter, Todd	ND Legislative Assembly District 34 Representative			Porter HB 1504 proposed amendment 02042025.pdf	34843

25.1114.02001
Title.

Prepared by the Legislative Council
staff for House Appropriations
Committee

February 17, 2025

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO FIRST ENGROSSMENT

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1504

Introduced by

Representatives Schneider, Karls, Klemin, J. Olson, Pyle, Warrey, Marschall

Senators Boschee, Dever, Marcellais, Meyer, Paulson

1 A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact section 37-14-14 of the North Dakota Century Code,
2 relating to the veterans' postwar trust fund; ~~and to provide an appropriation;~~ and to provide for a
3 transfer.

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

5 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 37-14-14 of the North Dakota Century Code is
6 amended and reenacted as follows:

7 **37-14-14. Veterans' postwar trust fund.**

8 1. The veterans' postwar trust fund is a permanent trust fund of the state of North Dakota
9 and consists of moneys transferred or credited to the fund under this chapter and
10 other laws. Investment of the fund is the responsibility of the state treasurer who shall
11 have full authority to invest the fund only in accordance with chapter 21-10. All income
12 received from investments is to be utilized only for programs of benefit and service to
13 veterans or their dependents, and all income earned in a biennium is appropriated to
14 the administrative committee on veterans' affairs on a continuing basis in the following
15 biennium and not in the biennium the income is earned for expenditure on these
16 programs as authorized by law. Investment of all income received from investments is
17 the responsibility of the state treasurer who has full authority to invest the income
18 received only in accordance with chapter 21-10.

1 2. A veterans organization as defined under section 53-06.1-01 may donate funds to the
2 veterans' postwar trust fund for homeless veterans' services to prevent and eliminate
3 veteran homelessness.

4 **SECTION 2. APPROPRIATION - TRANSFER - VETERANS' POSTWAR TRUST FUND -**

5 **VETERANS' HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND ELIMINATION.** There is appropriated out
6 of any moneys in the general fund in the state treasury, not otherwise appropriated, the sum of
7 \$2,360,180, or so much of the sum as may be necessary, which the office of management and
8 budget shall transfer to the veterans' postwar trust fund for the purpose of providing homeless
9 veterans' services to prevent and eliminate homelessness, ~~for~~during the biennium beginning
10 July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2027.

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Appropriations Committee Roughrider Room, State Capitol

HB 1504
2/21/2025

A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact section 37-14-14 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the veterans' postwar trust fund.

3:58 p.m. Chairman Vigesaa opened the meeting.

Members Present: Chairman Vigesaa, Representatives B. Anderson, Berg, Bosch, Brandenburg, Fisher, Hanson, Louser, Martinson, Meier, Monson, Murphy, Nathe, J. Nelson, O'Brien, Pyle, Richter, Stemen, Swiontek, Wagner

Members Absent: Vice Chairman Kempenich, Representatives: Mitskog, Sanford

Discussion Topics:

- Committee Action

4:02 p.m. Representative J. Nelson moved to amend to remove Section 2.

4:05 p.m. Representative Martinson seconded the motion.

4:06 p.m. Roll Call Vote

Representatives	Vote
Representative Don Vigesaa	Y
Representative Keith Kempenich	AB
Representative Bert Anderson	Y
Representative Mike Berg	Y
Representative Glen Bosch	Y
Representative Mike Brandenburg	Y
Representative Jay Fisher	Y
Representative Karla Rose Hanson	AB
Representative Scott Louser	Y
Representative Bob Martinson	Y
Representative Lisa Meier	Y
Representative Alisa Mitskog	AB
Representative David Monson	Y
Representative Eric J. Murphy	Y
Representative Mike Nathe	Y
Representative Jon O. Nelson	Y
Representative Emily O'Brien	Y
Representative Brandy L. Pyle	Y
Representative David Richter	Y
Representative Mark Sanford	AB
Representative Gregory Stemen	Y

Representative Steve Swiontek	Y
Representative Scott Wagner	Y

4:06 p.m. Motion passed 19-1-3.

4:07 p.m. Representative J. Nelson moved a Do Pass as Amended.

4:07 p.m. Representative Stemen seconded the motion.

4:07 p.m. Roll Call Vote

Representatives	Vote
Representative Don Vigesaa	Y
Representative Keith Kempenich	AB
Representative Bert Anderson	Y
Representative Mike Berg	Y
Representative Glen Bosch	Y
Representative Mike Brandenburg	Y
Representative Jay Fisher	Y
Representative Karla Rose Hanson	Y
Representative Scott Louser	Y
Representative Bob Martinson	Y
Representative Lisa Meier	Y
Representative Alisa Mitskog	AB
Representative David Monson	Y
Representative Eric J. Murphy	Y
Representative Mike Nathe	Y
Representative Jon O. Nelson	Y
Representative Emily O'Brien	Y
Representative Brandy L. Pyle	Y
Representative David Richter	Y
Representative Mark Sanford	AB
Representative Gregory Stemen	Y
Representative Steve Swiontek	Y
Representative Scott Wagner	Y

4:07 p.m. Motion passed 20-0-3.

4:07 p.m. Representative J. Nelson will carry.

4:08 p.m. Chairman Vigesaa closed the meeting.

Krystal Eberle for Risa Berube, Committee Clerk

February 24, 2025

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO
FIRST ENGROSSMENT**

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1504

Introduced by

Representatives Schneider, Karls, Klemin, J. Olson, Pyle, Warrey, Marschall

Senators Boschee, Dever, Marcellais, Meyer, Paulson

1 A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact section 37-14-14 of the North Dakota Century Code,
2 relating to the veterans' postwar trust fund; ~~and to provide an appropriation.~~

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

4 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 37-14-14 of the North Dakota Century Code is
5 amended and reenacted as follows:

6 **37-14-14. Veterans' postwar trust fund.**

- 7 1. The veterans' postwar trust fund is a permanent trust fund of the state of North Dakota
8 and consists of moneys transferred or credited to the fund under this chapter and
9 other laws. Investment of the fund is the responsibility of the state treasurer who shall
10 have full authority to invest the fund only in accordance with chapter 21-10. All income
11 received from investments is to be utilized only for programs of benefit and service to
12 veterans or their dependents, and all income earned in a biennium is appropriated to
13 the administrative committee on veterans' affairs on a continuing basis in the following
14 biennium and not in the biennium the income is earned for expenditure on these
15 programs as authorized by law. Investment of all income received from investments is
16 the responsibility of the state treasurer who has full authority to invest the income
17 received only in accordance with chapter 21-10.
- 18 2. A veterans organization as defined under section 53-06.1-01 may donate funds to the
19 veterans' postwar trust fund for homeless veterans' services to prevent and eliminate
20 veteran homelessness.

1 ~~SECTION 2. APPROPRIATION - VETERANS' POSTWAR TRUST FUND - VETERANS'~~
2 ~~HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND ELIMINATION.~~ There is appropriated out of any
3 moneys in the general fund in the state treasury, not otherwise appropriated, the sum of
4 \$2,360,180 or so much of the sum as may be necessary, to the veterans' postwar trust fund for
5 the purpose of providing homeless veterans' services to prevent and eliminate homelessness,
6 for the biennium beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2027.

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
ENGROSSED HB 1504**

Appropriations Committee (Rep. Vigesaa, Chairman) recommends **AMENDMENTS** ([25.1114.02002](#)) and when so amended, recommends **DO PASS** (20 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 3 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HB 1504 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar.

2025 SENATE AGRICULTURE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

HB 1504

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee

Fort Union Room, State Capitol

HB 1504

3/14/2025

A bill relating to the veterans' postwar trust fund.
--

11:19 a.m. Chairman Luick opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Luick, Vice-Chair Myrdal, Senator Marcellais, Senator Weston, Senator Weber, Senator Lemm

Discussion Topics:

- Prevention and elimination of ND veteran homelessness
- Gaming funds from veterans' service organizations
- Future veteran's needs
- Challenges faced by veterans regarding homelessness
- Mental and physical health and veteran suicide rates
- Access to benefits, social support, and employment,
- Background/history of the Post war Trust Fund (PWTF)

11:19 a.m. Representative Mary Schneider, District 21, testified in favor, introduced the bill and submitted testimony #41417 and #41574.

11:30 a.m. Senator Richard Marcellais, District 9, testified in favor and submitted testimony #39957.

11:30 a.m. Lonnie Wangen, Commissioner, ND Department of Veterans Affairs, testified in favor and submitted testimony #41329.

11:38 a.m. Chris Deary, Cass County Veterans Officer, testified in favor.

11:42 a.m. Jim Nelson, ND Veterans Legislative Council, ND veteran, testified in favor.

Additional written testimony:

Andrea M. Olson, Executive Director, Community Action Partnership of ND, submitted testimony #40543 in favor.

Andrea Werner, Executive Director, Community Action Program Region VII, Inc, submitted testimony #40552 in favor.

Lora Papachek, Executive Director, Dakota Prairie Community Action Agency, submitted testimony #40610 in favor.

Brandon Kjelden, Southeastern ND Community Action Agency, submitted testimony #40800 in favor.

Jacqueline Hassett, Executive Director, Red River Valley Community Action, submitted testimony #40965 in favor.

Max Pontenila, SSVF case manager, Community Action Partnership - Minot Region, submitted testimony #41034 in favor.

Erv Bren, Executive Director, Community Action Partnership, submitted testimony #41137 in favor.

Karen J. Busse, SSVF Case Manager, Community Action Region 7, submitted testimony #41271 in favor.

Marshall R. Smith, resident of Bismarck, ND, submitted testimony #41453 in favor.

Nathan E. Huntington, member and registered lobbyist, American Legion Department of ND, submitted testimony #41465 in favor.

11:42 a.m. Chairman Luick closed the hearing.

Audrey Oswald, Committee Clerk

Senator Richard Marcellais
Senate District 9
Testimony for HB 1504

Chairman Luick members of the Senate Agriculture & Veterans Affairs Committee for the record my name is Richard Marcellais, North Dakota State Senator in District 9.

As a Vietnam Veteran, member of the American Legion Post 262 Belcourt, and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Rolette County its very important that these organizations receive this funding to continue service in the community. This funding will assist with the planning for these organizations. This will support our veterans plans in the community.

I am here today to testify in favor of HB 1504, and will try answer any questions you may have.

Community Action Partnership of North Dakota Testimony**RE: HB1504****March 11, 2025****Submitted by Andrea Olson, Executive Director**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee, my name is Andrea Olson and I serve as Executive Director for the Community Action Partnership of North Dakota (CAPND). Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in strong support of HB1504, a bill that will strengthen North Dakota's response to veteran homelessness by providing critical funding for long-term, sustainable housing solutions. By directing 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations into the Post War Trust Fund and the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program, HB1504 ensures that these critical resources remain dedicated to meeting the specific and growing needs of veterans facing housing instability.

Let me just take a quick moment to introduce Community Action. There are seven Community Action Agencies (CAA) across the state, and we operate programs that offer North Dakota residents opportunities to secure and maintain self-sufficiency. We are part of a National Network of over 1,000 CAA whose mission is helping people and changing lives. In North Dakota, our seven CAAs operate as private, non-profit organizations and collectively serve all 53 counties across the state and our Network annually serves 20,000 households who are experiencing hardship. Some of our programs include Head Start, Weatherization and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance. I am here today to share more about our Supportive Services for Veterans (SSVF), Program which serves low-income Veteran Families who are experiencing homelessness or who are on the brink of homelessness.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), is a federal program funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), helps low-income veteran households facing or experiencing homelessness. Since 2012, CAPND has administered this program statewide, providing housing

assistance, case management, healthcare navigation, employment support, and legal services to help veterans regain stability. The goal of SSVF is promoting housing stability among very low-income veteran families who reside in or who are transitioning to permanent housing. Each of our CAA is able to provide families with outreach, case management, healthcare navigation, legal services, and assistance in obtaining VA and other community benefits. SSVF Veteran families may be eligible for temporary financial assistance, including rental assistance, security deposit, utility assistance, hotel stays, transportation costs, moving costs, childcare assistance, and more. With additional funding from the VA, we are also able to offer Shallow Subsidies, an opportunity to provide a stable rental subsidy for up to two years for qualifying Veterans. CAPND also works closely with numerous partners to support SSVF; primarily the VA Medical Center's Homeless Service Program which includes HUDVASH (an intensive case management program that offers Housing Choice Vouchers to Veterans), Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP), the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs and the North Dakota Association of County and Tribal Veteran Services Officers.

HB1504 will expand the ability to provide targeted financial assistance, working to ensure that every veteran experiencing homelessness in North Dakota has access to stable housing, case management, and supportive services. With increased demand this funding is more critical than ever.

The ultimate goal for all of the partners working tirelessly for Veterans experiencing homelessness each day is to achieve and sustain functional zero—a well-coordinated, efficient system where homelessness among veterans is rare, brief, and non-recurring, ensuring that no veteran is left without housing. Through our statewide partnerships, CAPND ensures that veterans receive more than just temporary financial aid—we actively support their path to self-sufficiency and long-term stability.

Each year CAPND serves an average of 300 Veteran Families in the SSVF Program. In 2024, CAPND served 362 veteran households statewide, reflecting a 70-household increase from previous years—a clear indication of growing need. Of these, 199 were at imminent risk of homelessness, while

163 were already homeless when they sought assistance. Through SSVF's rapid response approach, 141 households successfully transitioned into permanent housing, while 22 moved into temporary housing. Unfortunately, 17 households returned to homelessness, underscoring the challenges faced by vulnerable veterans. Additionally:

- The average length of time it takes SSVF to provide housing for Veterans is only 36 days
- From 2022-2023, 288 new veterans enrolled in the SSVF program, followed by an additional 195 new enrollments from 2023-2024, highlighting the ongoing and growing need for these critical services.
- In 2024 the average Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) spent on an enrolled Veteran household: \$2,919. SSVF provided financial assistance for emergency housing assistance, general housing stability, rent assistance, security deposits. SSVF is a case management program first and foremost; financial assistance is secondary and intended to provide housing stability.

Veterans engaged with the SSVF Program often encounter multifaceted challenges, including, but not limited to: financial constraints, limited access to affordable healthcare, employment instability, mental health and/or substance abuse issues that further compound the complexity of experiencing homelessness. The systemic barriers involve gaps in financial assistance programs, and a lack of affordable housing options. These barriers are not just abstract challenges; they are the stark realities that veterans participating in SSVF face on a daily basis. As we engage with veterans in SSVF, we witness firsthand the intricate and interconnected nature of these hurdles.

By recognizing and understanding these challenges through our work with the SSVF program, we gain insight into the critical need for ongoing support and advocacy to break down these barriers and pave the way for veterans to reclaim stability and independence. And what we do works; allow me to share some successes:

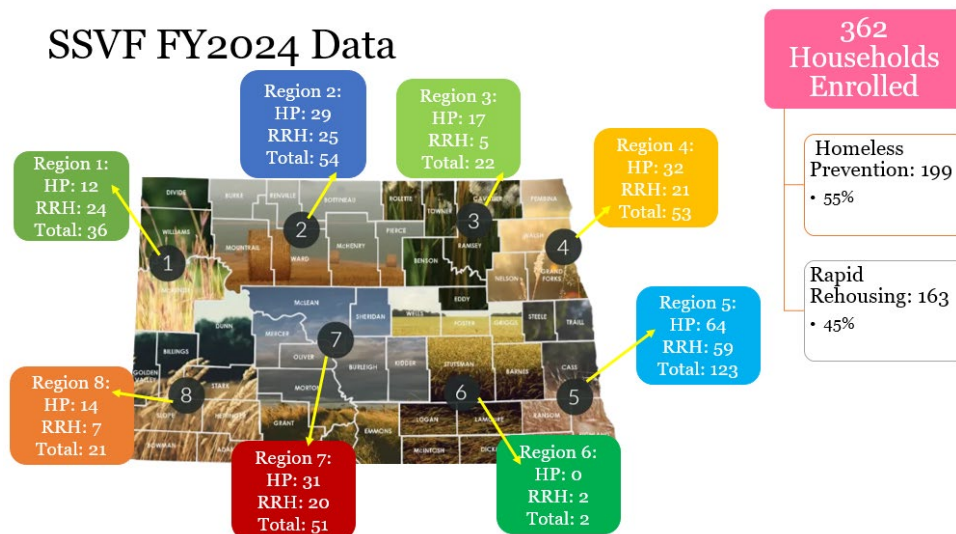
- A veteran in Williston was at risk of eviction due to rent arrears, facing the very real possibility of homelessness. Seeking assistance, the veteran enrolled in SSVF, which provided the necessary financial support to cover back rent and prevent eviction. Recognizing the importance of long-term stability, SSVF also connected the Veteran to the Williston Veteran Service Officer (VSO) to apply for VA disability benefits, ensuring additional financial security. To further support the veteran's transition to stability, SSVF collaborated with Veterans Inc., connecting the veteran with job services and providing gas cards to facilitate employment opportunities. As a result of these combined efforts, the veteran successfully secured two sources of income and now maintains permanent housing. Because of these coordinated services and the dedication of multiple agencies, this veteran has not only avoided homelessness but has also achieved long-term financial and housing stability.
- A veteran in Minot enrolled in SSVF was still facing significant transportation challenges, relying on co-workers for rides or walking over 1.5 miles to work each day. Understanding that reliable transportation was essential for maintaining employment and long-term stability, the veteran set a goal to save enough money to purchase a car. Through participation in the SSVF Shallow Subsidy program, the veteran was able to maintain steady employment for over two years, diligently saving funds without taking on loans or fees. During this time, they also worked closely with a HUD-VASH caseworker to ensure consistent access to medical care, addressing both physical and mental health needs. Thanks to perseverance and targeted support, the veteran successfully purchased a reliable vehicle, providing much-needed independence and stability. Now, they can commute to work and handle daily errands without the stress of unreliable transportation. Even more, they are paying it forward by giving co-workers rides, helping others who face similar barriers. Additionally, with regular medical care and a prescribed treatment plan, the veteran has achieved improved well-being and greater self-sufficiency. Through

determination, collaboration, and strategic support, this veteran has not only secured stability but is also giving back to their community while maintaining steady employment and a higher quality of life in Minot.

As you diligently consider HB1504 and reflect on the multifaced barriers faced by those experiencing homelessness, I urge you to reflect on the stories I have shared. They underscore the importance of funding programs like SSVF that play a critical role in rebuilding lives and reintegrating veterans into stable, productive futures. They also reiterate long-term effects in fostering self-sufficiency, independence, and overall well-being. They emphasize the need for a holistic approach to support, collaborative partnerships and housing stability as a foundation for individuals to be able to address other aspects of their lives such as employment, mental health, and healthcare.

Supporting HB1504 is an investment in real, long-term solutions for North Dakota's veterans. This funding will directly expand access to stable housing, supportive services, and financial assistance, ensuring that homelessness among veterans is rare, brief, and non-recurring. By passing HB1504, this committee has the opportunity to make a tangible difference in the lives of those who have served our country. I urge you to support this critical legislation and help us continue this vital work.

Thank you for your time and your attention to this important matter.





Community Action Program Region VII, Inc.

March 11, 2025

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 1504
Submitted by Andrea Werner, Executive Director

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee:

On behalf of Community Action Program Region VII, Inc., I am writing in strong support of HB1504, which will direct 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations to the Post War Trust Fund or the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program. This legislation is a critical investment in veteran services, ensuring that those who have served our country have the support needed to achieve housing stability and self-sufficiency.

Community Action Program Region VII, Inc. is one of seven Community Action Agencies (CAAs) in North Dakota, operating programs that help individuals and families overcome poverty and build stable futures. Our agency serves the following counties in Region VII which includes Burleigh, Emmons, Grant, Kidder, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sheridan, and Sioux in providing much needed services such as housing assistance, case management, employment support, transportation, and financial education to low-income households—including veterans.

Through our partnership with the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, we provide direct assistance to veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness, helping them secure stable housing, healthcare navigation, and employment resources. In the past year Community Action Region VII has served 51 veteran households through SSVF, and we have witnessed firsthand the growing demand for veteran homelessness services.

We continue to see an increase in the number of veterans coming to our agency for assistance and support. Many of the veterans we assist face significant barriers, including lack of affordable housing, employment instability, mental health challenges, and difficulty accessing VA benefits. Funding remains a challenge in meeting the rising need for veteran services.



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HB1504 will provide much-needed resources and is an investment in long-term solutions, it focuses on ensuring that veterans in North Dakota receive the housing and support necessary to thrive and prevent homelessness. I strongly urge you to view this as a chance to create meaningful change in the lives of our veterans.

Thank you again for your time, attention, and dedication to supporting veterans experiencing homelessness in North Dakota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrea Werner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrea Werner, Executive Director
Community Action Program Region VII, Inc.

Re: HB1504
March 11, 2025
Submitted by: Lora Papachek, Executive Director

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee:

On behalf of Dakota Prairie Community Action Agency (DPCAA), I am writing in support of HB1504, which will direct 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations to the Post War Trust Fund or the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program. Ensuring that the veterans who have served our country have the necessary support to achieve self-sufficiency and housing stability is of utmost importance. This bill would be instrumental in providing those needed services for our local veterans.

DPCAA is one of seven Community Action Agencies in the state of North Dakota that operate programs to help individuals and families to overcome poverty. DPCAA serves the counties of Ramsey, Benson, Eddy, Cavalier, Towner and Rolette providing a wide range of services such as housing assistance, money management, transportation, utility assistance, case management and employment support to low-income households, which includes low-income veteran households.

The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program has allowed us to provide direct assistance to veterans that were homeless or at risk of homelessness. The services included, but were not limited to, helping them to secure stable housing, referrals to the state healthcare navigator and getting them set up with resources to secure employment. In the past year DPCAA served ten (10) local veterans through the SSVF program but the need in our Region is growing and I feel like those numbers will rise in 2025. Many of the veterans face barriers such as employment instability, mental health challenges, lack of affordable housing and difficulty accessing VA benefits they would qualify for. Through Community Action's case management services, we can help them navigate these obstacles that they may struggle with on their own.

Region 3 is a very rural area with many small towns and not enough shelters available for the needs of our homeless community. Veterans can oftentimes find it difficult to get a roof over their head if the shelters are full or need to prioritize families with children over single adults. In the North Dakota winter this can be a very dangerous situation they find themselves in. Helping them to be self-sufficient and find stable housing is imperative.

HB1504 would be a long-term solution to help us meet our ever-present funding needs. Funding continues to be a challenge in meeting the needs of our veterans and we strive to ensure that no veterans are left behind.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out for any additional information needed.

Lora Papachek, Executive Director
Dakota Prairie Community Action Agency
701-662-6500, ext. 331
lpapachek@dpcaa.org



March 11, 2025

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee:

On behalf of Southeastern North Dakota Community Action Agency (SENDCAA), I am writing in strong support of HB1504, which will direct 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations to the Post War Trust Fund or the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program. This legislation is a critical investment in veteran services, ensuring that those who have served our country have the support needed to achieve housing stability and self-sufficiency.

SENDCAA is one of seven Community Action Agencies (CAAs) in North Dakota, operating programs that help individuals and families overcome poverty and build stable futures. Our agency serves Region V in North Dakota which includes Steele, Traill, Cass, Ransom, Richland and Sargent counties providing services such as housing assistance, case management, employment support, transportation, and financial education to low-income households—including veterans.

Through our partnership with the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, we provide direct assistance to veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness, helping them secure stable housing, healthcare navigation, and employment resources. Last year alone, we served 123 veterans through SSVF and witnessed firsthand the growing demand for veteran homelessness services. Many of the veterans we assist face significant barriers, including lack of affordable housing, employment instability, mental health challenges, and difficulty accessing VA benefits.

The number of veterans in our community needing access to our services continues to grow at a substantial rate. Our current data shows:

- Over 30 veterans in our community currently do not have access to permanent supportive housing and remain homeless.
- Current funding allows for approximately \$2500 per veteran enrolled in SSVF to receive supportive services and emergency financial assistance. Our evaluation shows the actual cost to provide comprehensive services is nearly \$5000 per veteran in our region.
- Although we have not turned any program eligible veteran away, we have been unable to truly provide the full set of services needed to allow veterans to reach self-sufficiency.

Despite our best efforts, funding remains a major challenge in meeting the rising need for veteran services. HB1504 will provide much-needed resources to ensure no veteran is left behind due to funding shortages.

On the following page you will read a story about John that demonstrates the true impact of the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program.

Recently, the Fargo Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program served an Army veteran who we will call John, who served over 20 years including tours during Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom. John, like many veterans, faced challenges transitioning back to civilian life. He exited military service with service-related disability and just enough income to survive but needed support and stability to thrive.

Housing Instability Experience:

When John first contacted SSVF, he had experienced homelessness for the past eight years, often hiking across the country. Recently, due to health reasons, he recognized the need to settle in one location. For the past couple of months, he has been paying for a hotel, but his limited income, from his VA benefits, was depleting his resources. He reached out for help to the local VA, who directed him to the only resource that could help- SSVF.

How SSVF and Case Manager Helped the Veteran:

The Fargo SSVF program immediately stepped in to help. With no available shelter beds or other community resources, SSVF intervened and covered the cost of the hotel for a few additional days until he could move into his new home. SSVF helped pay for the hotel while John sought housing. He applied for an apartment with support from his co-signer, his AA sponsor. The SSVF case manager contacted the management company and arranged for the apartment to be held for John.

Eight days after the veteran enrolled in the SSVF program, John moved into his apartment, exiting homelessness for the first time since 2017. The SSVF case manager continued to ask him what he needed support with to create a safe home, which included providing household necessities, a bed, and helping move.

Since moving into his new apartment, John has made significant progress. He is receiving care from the VA, which he is satisfied with, and has expressed a desire to maintain his stability without further assistance. John feels confident that he can manage on his own now that he has stable housing. As of January 27, 2025, John chose to exit the program, expressing gratitude to the SSVF program. He now has a stable living situation, which is crucial for his health and well-being.

Impact of HB1504:

HB1504 is an investment in long-term solutions, not just temporary relief. By aligning financial resources with the needs of North Dakota's veterans, we can ensure that homelessness among those who served is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Sincerely,



Brandon Kjelden

Executive Director

Southeastern North Dakota Community Action Agency

3233 University Dr. S

Fargo, ND 58104

(701) 232-2452



HB1504

3/12/2025

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee: My name is Jacqueline Hassett and I am the Executive Director at Red River Valley Community Action (RRVCA). We are one of the state's seven Community Action Agencies, serving Grand Forks, Pembina, Nelson and Walsh counties. On behalf of RRVCA, I am writing in strong support of HB1504, which will direct 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations to the Post War Trust Fund or the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program.

Through our partnership with the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, we provide direct assistance to veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness, helping them secure stable housing, healthcare navigation, legal assistance and employment resources. Here at RRVCA, we believe the case management we provide through the SSVF program should not be simply transactional, but transformational. Transformation into the well-being and stability of the lives of the veterans who gave so much to this country. We focus on supporting these men and women toward self-sufficiency, not a brief exchange or band-aide approach. Unfortunately, the need for these direct services is rising.

I've seen firsthand the increase in the need for these services. The phone calls, walk ins, and referrals we receive for veterans who are literally homeless have gone up in the last year.

Veterans have a particular need for someone to assist them in locating affordable housing in a market that is often hard to navigate on the fixed income many of them have. Gaps in services

often prevent them from locating resources for mental and physical health needs. These veterans need a case worker who can help organize and provide expertise such as navigating tenant rights and important paperwork. This work helps prevent the back and forth and unnecessary repetition of other services which drive up costs for the larger community.

The overall numbers of veterans we serve have become such that we need to hire another case worker. We want to continue to provide the same quality of services we do now and prevent from having to turn away any veterans who come to us for help. We are proud to be able to help veterans during crisis, while upholding the dignity they deserve. HB1504 will provide much-needed resources to ensure no veteran is left behind due to funding shortages.

I appreciate your consideration and service to our state. Please reach out I can provide additional information.

With Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JH' with a large loop and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Jacqueline Hassett, LMSW

Executive Director

Red River Valley Community Action

4212 Gateway Drive, GF, ND 58203

701-746-5431



Community Action Partnership of North Dakota

Testimony

RE: HB1504

March 12, 2025

**Submitted by Max Pontenila
SSVF Program Specialist
Community Action Partnership–Minot Region**

Bottineau, Burke, McHenry, Mountrail, Pierce, Renville, Ward



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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee, my name is Max Pontenila and I work for Community Action Partnership (CAP)–Minot Region. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB1504, a bill that will strengthen North Dakota’s response to veteran homelessness by providing critical funding for long-term, sustainable housing solutions. By directing 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations into the Post War Trust Fund and the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program, HB1504 ensures that these critical resources remain dedicated to meeting the specific and growing needs of veterans facing housing instability.

Before we begin, let me introduce myself. I am a veteran of the United States Air Force, having retired honorably after 20 years of active duty service. I have multiple deployments under my belt, to include time spent in Iraq in 2004. Working with veterans is something that I am very passionate about as I have had many shared experiences and can relate to the struggles with many of the clients that I now provide services to.

In my current role, I serve as a case manager for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. Prior to this position, I worked for the Department of Veterans Affairs where I was exposed firsthand to the homeless veterans crisis and the services that they offered to homeless veterans. As a SSVF case manager my primary responsibility is to help homeless veterans and veterans at risk of homelessness. I cover seven counties within the CAP-Minot Region area of responsibility (Bottineau, Burke, McHenry, Montrail, Pierce, Renville, Ward). My roles and



responsibilities include, but are not limited to; providing direct case management, assisting veterans to find or maintain permanent and stable housing, assisting them with employment resources, coordinating with various agencies to provide wrap-around care to address mental health, substance abuse, medical, and social services needs. I work very closely with social workers from the Department of Veterans Affairs, their HUD-VASH program case manager, county Veteran Service Officers (VSOs), local landlords, and hotel managers. Without these critical relationships we would not be able to provide immediate shelter and services to homeless veterans and veterans at risk of homelessness. I also assist veterans apply for VA benefits (medical, disability, veterans pension program) by explaining to them what they are potentially eligible for and then getting them connected with the local VSOs and VA outpatient clinics in our region. The other part of my job as a SSVF case manager is to do outreach with local organizations, civic groups, and to base leadership on Minot AFB. By doing this, I am able to educate them about the SSVF program so if they are interacting with any veterans they are able to ask them about their housing stability, and if needed, provide a direct referral to our program. By providing base leadership with veteran resources in the local area, they are able to provide that information to servicemembers as they prepare to transition into civilian life. I also partner with local organizations to do homeless street outreach, doing so allows me to screen any homeless personnel and determine if they are a veteran and their potential eligibility for the SSVF program.

If a veteran is not already connected with military resources, sometimes the SSVF program is their first interaction with anything related to the services provided by the Department of Veterans



Affairs. Often the veterans are very surprised at the level of assistance, both in the case management and financial capabilities that the SSVF program can provide to them. Knowing that there are folks willing to help them significantly lowers their stress levels and can sometimes be the difference between life and death, given your current weather conditions.

As a case manager, we often at times do not know what types of struggles that the veteran will present with when they walk through our door. Therefore, it is important to establish trust and rapport with a veteran so that they are able to let their guard down and we are able identify their needs and get the right resources to them at the right time. As a veteran, I know firsthand how hard it is to allow yourself to raise your hand and say “I need help”. This because the military has trained us to be self-sufficient and to be able to overcome any situation regardless of the cost, be it mental, physical, or more often than not both. It was often perceived within the military sub-culture that asking for help was a sign of weakness. Within this context, veterans will sometimes wait until it is too late and they are deep in a crisis spiral before they even begin to ask for help. This negative spiral often leads to mental health issues, suicidal ideations, substance use and abuse, legal troubles, relationship issues, unemployment, and much more.

The SSVF program operates on the “Housing First” model; once a veteran is placed into permanent housing, case managers are able to work with the veteran to address all of the other issues that they present with. I once had a veteran disclose to me that in the days prior to his SSVF enrollment, he was on the brink of committing suicide. He had lost his job, was on the brink of being evicted, was



in financial trouble, and was suffering from loss and grief as he had recently ended a long-term relationship. With the case management provided by the SSVF program; we were able to get him into a new apartment, he was able to find a new job, and we were able to get him connected with the VA clinic for proper medical care. Over the course of a few months, he was able to maintain his employment so he was enrolled into the SSVF Shallow Subsidy program. The Shallow Subsidy program is a long-term rental assistance program where we cost share a 50-50 rental assistance for a maximum eligibility period of 24 months. Towards the end of his Shallow Subsidy contract he was able to find a new job that paid him much more than his previous job. He was able to reach his self-sufficiency goals ahead of his projected schedule, therefore he chose to graduate early from the Shallow Subsidy program and wanted us to “use that other money for veterans in need”.

The continued funding of the SSVF program allows veterans, that often times present with multiple issues, to be provided the stability of case management, services, resources, and vital support to ensure their success. I would like to highlight a few success stories that would not have been possible without the continued funding of the SSVF program:

- This Veteran was living temporarily with his son and daughter-in-law outside of the Minot area. He had reached out to the HUD-VASH and SSVF caseworkers asking for assistance as he was getting kicked out of their home. He had previously run his own business but due to age and injuries, he could no longer maintain steady employment. He wanted to move to Minot as there were no resources in the small town that they were currently living in. I was able to find him a new apartment, we used another CAP-Minot Region program

grant to pay for him to get new dentures which in-turn drastically increased his quality of life. I was able to co-manage his case with our HUD-VASH case manager. After we met his initial stabilization needs, we began to transition him into the long-term stabilization phase. He was transitioned to the HUD-VASH housing voucher and he was able to get enrolled into VA healthcare services. To date, he is still actively using VA healthcare services and continues to utilize the HUD-VASH voucher due to his limited income.

- This Veteran was staying temporarily with a friend “couch surfing” and had needed to leave his friend’s house. Shortly after his enrollment into the SSVF program, I was able to get him moved into a new apartment. He was able to get connected with the VSO to apply for VA disability benefits even though we knew that it would be a long process. He was able to maintain his employment during this time, but one day he needed critical car repairs so that he could continue going to work and to attend his medical appointments. The SSVF program was able to pay for his car repair so that he could continue to earn income and pay for his rent and utility bills. Eventually, and due to his medical conditions, the veteran was awarded a VA disability rating of 100%. This increase in income enabled him to meet his self-sufficiency goals and he successfully graduated from the SSVF program. He was able to move to another apartment that better suited his needs. He was able to get the proper medical, mental health, and medication management from the VA healthcare system. Currently he has his sights set for applying to the Fire Academy and is an active member in the local Volunteer Fire Department. Not only is he contributing to the local community, but he has since paid it forward by referring other veterans to the SSVF program.



The stories and experiences that I have shared above are not unique to just the Minot office. These are just many of the challenges and successes that myself and the other SSVF case managers face on a daily basis as we serve our North Dakota veterans. The military has a saying of “Leave no man behind”. The passing of HB1504 allows us, as a Nation, to keep the promise of taking care of our veterans, especially the homeless ones who often have no voice or someone advocating on their behalf. If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (701) 839-7221, or via email at max@capminotregion.org. Thank you very much for your time today.

Sincerely,

Max Pontenila

Max Pontenila
SSVF Program Specialist
Community Action Partnership – Minot Region

Community Action Partnership Regions 1 (Williston) and 8 (Dickinson)

RE: HB1504

March 12, 2025

Submitted by Erv Bren, Executive Director

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee:

My name is Erv Bren, the Executive Director of Community Action Partnership in Williston and Dickinson. I am writing in support of HB1504, which will direct 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations to the Post War Trust Fund or the North Dakota Department of Veteran Affairs grant program. This legislation is a critical investment in veteran services, ensuring that those who have served our country have the support needed to achieve housing stability and self-sufficiency.

Community Action Partnership Regions 1 and 8 is one of seven Community Action Agencies in North Dakota operating programs that help individuals and families overcome poverty and build stable futures. Our Agency serves the following counties in Western North Dakota: Adams, Billings, Bowman, Divide, Dunn, Golden Valley, Hettinger, McKenzie, Slope, Stark, and Williams, providing services such as housing assistance, case management, employment support, transportation, and financial education to low-income households – including veterans.

Many of the veterans we assist face significant barriers, including lack of affordable housing, employment instability, mental health challenges, and difficulty accessing VA benefits. Through our partnership with the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, which is a federal

program funded by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, we help low-income veteran households with the above-stated challenges to become self-sufficient through case management and limited financial assistance.

The number of veterans in our service area receiving assistance has increased over the past couple of years, putting strain on our current funding for meeting their needs. HB1504 will expand the ability to provide targeted financial assistance, working to ensure that every veteran experiencing homelessness in North Dakota has access to stable housing, case management, and supportive services. With the increased demand and few resources, like the absence of homeless shelters in our service area, this funding is more critical than ever.

Supporting HB1504 is an investment in real, long-term solutions for North Dakota's veterans. This funding will directly expand access to stable housing, supportive services, and financial assistance, ensuring that homelessness among veterans is rare, brief, and non-recurring. By passing HB1504, this committee has the opportunity to make a tangible difference in the lives of those who have served our country. Our appreciation to the men and women who have fearlessly served our country will never be enough. It is our duty as American citizens to ensure they receive the gratitude and support they so rightly deserve.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Erv Bren", with a stylized, cursive script.

Erv Bren
Executive Director



Community Action Program Region VII, Inc.

March 12, 2025

Submitted by Karen Busse, SSVF Case Manager

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee:

On behalf of Community Action, Region 7, I am writing in strong support of HB1504, which will direct 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations to the Post War Trust Fund or the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program. This legislation is a critical investment in Veteran services, ensuring that those who have served our country have the support needed to achieve housing stability and self-sufficiency.

Community Action, Region 7 is one of seven Community Action Agencies (CAAs) in North Dakota, operating programs that help individuals and families overcome poverty and build stable futures. Our agency serves the counties of Burleigh, Emmons, Grant, Kidder, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sheridan and Sioux, providing services such as housing assistance, case management, employment support, transportation, and financial education to low-income households—including Veterans.

Through our partnership with the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, we provide direct assistance to Veterans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, helping them secure stable housing, healthcare navigation, and employment resources. Last year alone, we served 51 through SSVF and witnessed firsthand the growing demand for Veteran homelessness services. Many of the Veterans we assist face significant barriers, including lack of affordable housing, employment instability, mental health challenges, and difficulty accessing VA benefits.

As a case manager for the SSVF program at Community Action, Region 7, I have had daily exposure to the number of Veterans seeking assistance because they are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Last year our program served 51 Veterans with obtaining stable housing. Some of the Veterans who are homeless come to SSVF with no resources and no support system to help them stabilize. Through SSVF services, Veterans are able to obtain or maintain stable housing which then allows them to work on other needs such as obtaining employment or accessing healthcare. It is a pleasure to watch Veterans succeed and turn their lives around. One example of this is a Veteran who was in danger of becoming homeless. He had drifted since his discharge from the service and had been unable to hold a steady job. The Veteran turned to SSVF and was assisted with starting a budget, support to maintain his apartment, and made a decision to enroll in college with his VA benefits. While in college, Veteran had months where he couldn't pay his rent, didn't have money for food, and needed transportation to get to and from classes. Veteran was assisted with all these areas and succeeded in graduating from college this spring. He also obtained employment with a local hospital and has now graduated from the SSVF program as well.



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This is just one example of the difference that the SSVF program can make in the lives of the Veterans who turn to SSVF for support and assistance. Veterans often say it is extremely difficult for them to ask for help because their service in the military taught them to be independent. However, once they overcome that barrier, SSVF can assist Veterans to make life-changing decisions.

Despite our best efforts, funding remains a major challenge in meeting the rising need for veteran services. HB1504 will provide much-needed resources to ensure no veteran is left behind due to funding shortages. Enhance case management services to connect veterans with stable employment and healthcare.

HB1504 is an investment in long-term solutions, not just temporary relief. By aligning financial resources with the needs of North Dakota's veterans, we can ensure that homelessness among those who served is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can provide additional information. Karen Busse, SSVF Case Manager, Community Action Region 7, 258-2240 or karenb@cap7.com.

*Respectfully,
Karen Busse*

HB 1504

North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Lonnie Wangen-Commissioner

3/14/2025

Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee
69th Legislative Session
Senator Luick-Chair

Chairman Luick and Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee,

Please accept this testimony in support of HB 1504.

Intent of this bill...

- Increase the principal of Veterans Post War Trust Fund (PWTF)
- Address North Dakota's homeless veteran unmet needs

Background/History

Fund 410: Post War Trust Fund PWTF and clearing account.

Article X Section 25 of ND Constitution and NDCC 37-14-14

- 1969-1971 Issuance of Bonds and Surtax for Adjusted Compensation to ND Veterans of Vietnam War
- Funds remaining (\$41 million) after services for Vietnam Veterans were used for many projects such as ND State Veterans Cemetery, Veterans home, etc.
- 1988 PWTF established as Permanent Trust Fund (\$4.1 million)
 - The PWTF principal consist of money transferred *as authorized by legislation*
 - Principal of PWTF not available for programs-only the interest income available.
 - Investment of the PWTF is entrusted to the ND State Treasurer
 - Interest from investments is used for;
 - Investment expenses
 - Principal growth
 - Spendable interest income appropriated to the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs (ACOVA) on continuing basis
 - What is earned in a biennium is made available in next biennium
 - Placed in Fund 410 clearing account.
- Legislative action to grow PWTF principal
 - 2013 Legislative action. **\$250,000** added to principal of PWTF
 - 2015 Created Patriotic License Plates. Proceeds to principal. **\$105,710**
 - 2019 Created Income Tax Check Off. Proceeds to principal. **\$136,614**
- | <u>Income to Veteran Programs</u> | <u>Beginning of Biennium balance</u> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ○ 2013-2015: \$262,371.92 | \$4.5 million |
| ○ 2015-2017: \$274,545.96 | \$5.6 million |
| ○ 2017-2019: 218,369.06 | \$6.2 million |
| ○ 2019-2021: \$281,474,87 | \$6.6 million |
| ○ 2021-2023: \$232,369.67 | \$7.9 million |
- 2024.11 Principal balance of PWTF: \$8,634,098

While the House Finance and Taxation Committee supported the funds for the PWTF and Veteran programs it was their intention to utilize general fund dollars rather than gaming tax. This is where the amount of \$2,360,180 comes from.

Fund 503: Charitable Gaming Operating Fund

NDCC 53-06.1-11.2 (and 12)

- 12/31/2024 balance: \$33,138,461.70
- ND *Veteran Service Organizations with Charitable Gaming generate* \$4,720,360 per biennium
 - 50% = \$2,360,180
 - Estimated amount per fund: \$1,180,090

Need for bill...

- Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs (ACOVA) receives spendable interest income from PWTF for use on programs of benefit to ND Veterans and their dependents.
 - Grants for unmet medical: Hearing Aids, Dental, Denture, Glasses, Housing, Transportation to medical appointments, and others. *Income and asset based.*

Grants: Monthly Income limits

2013:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Income Limit	\$1200	\$1400	\$1600	\$1800	\$2100	\$2400	\$2600

\$2,000 cash assets allowed. Can deduct ongoing medical expenses.

2025:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Income Limit	\$1379	\$1806	\$2042	\$2278	\$2513	\$2749	\$2985

\$5,500 cash assets

ND Fuel Assistance: 2025

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Income Limit	\$2977	\$3893	\$4809	\$5725	\$6641	\$7557	\$7728

*Deductions: Childcare, Child support, Medical, 27% income deduction on earned income, Employment, and Education, Representative payee fees, child or adult dependent costs.

- Interest income is not enough to cover needs
 - Donated and other resources are needed to assist in these grants
 - About 40% of applications are denied
 -

- Interest rates are low, and inflation is high
 - Dental / Denture grant costs:
 - 2013: \$1,700 plate with Dental/Denture limit: \$4,000
 - 2025: Dental/Denture limit: \$5,000 x 2yrs \$10,000
 - Hearing aids: (4-year limit)
 - 2013: \$1,500 ear
 - 2025: \$2,500 ear
 - Housing:
 - 2013: \$500
 - 2025: \$2,500 (Deposit and 1 month rent)
 - Growing affordable housing needs in ND
- Legislative action is required to add to PWTF principal
- Programs no longer being funded:
 - Grants for outreach
 - Homeless veteran programs
 - Training grants
 - Veteran employment services grants
 - Transportation: DAV vans now in NDDVA budget
 - PTSD service animals: NDDVA budget
 - Legal services
 - Grants to uncovered needs at ND Veterans Home
 - County and Veteran service officer assistance

Outcome of Bill:

Stable PWTF. Sustainable interest earning capability. Increased ability for ACOVA and NDDVA to provide grants and services for the most vulnerable of ND Veterans and Dependents.

Immediate ability to address and prevent ND Veteran Homelessness with funds in the 410-clearing account.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lonnie Wangen Commissioner-NDDVA

North Dakota Constitution: [Article X Section 25](#):

The veterans' postwar trust fund shall be a permanent trust fund of the state of North Dakota and shall consist of moneys transferred or credited to the fund as authorized by legislative enactment. Investment of the fund shall be the responsibility of the state treasurer who shall have full authority to invest the fund only in the same manner as the state investment board is authorized to make investments. All income received from investments is to be utilized for programs which must be of benefit and service to veterans, who are defined by legislative enactment, or their dependents, and such income is hereby appropriated to the administrative committee on veterans' affairs on a continuing basis for expenditure upon those programs selected at the discretion of the [administrative committee on veterans' affairs](#).

NDCC 37-14-14 Veterans' postwar trust fund

The veterans' postwar trust fund is a permanent trust fund of the state of North Dakota and consists of moneys transferred or credited to the fund under this chapter and other laws.

Investment of the fund is the responsibility of the state treasurer who shall have full authority to invest the fund only in accordance with chapter 21-10. All income received from investments is to be utilized only for programs of benefit and service to veterans or their dependents, and all income earned in a biennium is appropriated to the administrative committee on veterans' affairs on a continuing basis in the following biennium and not in the biennium the income is earned for expenditure on these programs as authorized by law. Investment of all income received from investments is the responsibility of the state treasurer who has full authority to invest the income received only in accordance with chapter 21-10.

53-06.1-11.2. Charitable gaming operating fund - Attorney general - State treasurer - Allocations - Transfer to the general fund.

1. There is created in the state treasury the charitable gaming operating fund. The fund consists of all gaming taxes, monetary fines, and interest and penalties collected under this chapter.
2. Excluding moneys in the charitable gaming operating fund appropriated by the legislative assembly for administrative and operating costs associated with charitable gaming, the

attorney general shall allocate remaining moneys in the charitable gaming operating fund on a quarterly basis as follows:

- a. Ten thousand dollars to the gambling disorder prevention and treatment fund.
 - b. Subject to legislative appropriations, five percent of the total moneys deposited in the charitable gaming operating fund to cities and counties in proportion to the taxes collected under section 53-06.1-12 from licensed organizations conducting games within each city, for sites within city limits, or within each county, for sites outside city limits. If a city or county allocation is less than two hundred dollars, that city or county is not entitled to receive a payment for the quarter and the undistributed amount must be included in the total amount to be distributed to other cities and counties for the quarter.
3. On or before June thirtieth of each odd-numbered year, the attorney general shall certify to the state treasurer the amount of accumulated funds in the charitable gaming operating fund which exceed the amount appropriated by the legislative assembly for administrative and operating costs associated with charitable gaming for the subsequent biennium. The state treasurer shall transfer the certified amount from the charitable gaming operating fund to the general fund prior to the end of each biennium.

53-06.1-12. Gaming tax - Deposits. (Retroactive application - See note)

1. Except as provided in subsection 2, a gaming tax is imposed on the total adjusted gross proceeds received by a licensed organization in a quarter and the tax must be computed and paid to the attorney general on a quarterly basis on the tax return. This tax must be paid from adjusted gross proceeds and is not part of the allowable expenses. For a licensed organization with adjusted gross proceeds:
 - a. Not exceeding fifty thousand dollars the tax is one percent of adjusted gross proceeds.
 - b. Exceeding fifty thousand dollars the tax is five hundred dollars plus twelve percent of adjusted gross proceeds exceeding fifty thousand dollars.
2. For a licensed organization permitted to conduct raffles in this state with adjusted gross proceeds exceeding fifty thousand dollars, a gaming tax of one percent of gross proceeds is imposed on the total gross proceeds received by the licensed organization from raffles in a quarter. The tax must be computed and paid to the attorney general on a quarterly basis on the tax return. The tax must be paid from adjusted gross proceeds and is not part of the allowable expenses.
3. The tax must be paid to the attorney general at the time tax returns are filed.
4. The attorney general shall deposit gaming taxes, monetary fines, and interest and penalties collected in the charitable gaming operating fund.

INTRODUCTION

By Representative Mary Schneider
HB 1504--Funding for Homeless Veterans

Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee

Senator Larry Luick, Chairman, and Senator Janne Myrdal, Vice Chairman

March 14, 2025

HB 1504 started as a critical but simple concept of veterans helping homeless veterans. It proposed that a portion of gaming funds--funds only from veterans' service organizations--would be directed towards services for veterans. The bill originally requested that 50% of gaming tax money from veterans' groups be allocated to two places; half would go to the Department of Veterans Affairs Post War Trust Fund, a source of funds for future veteran needs, and half would go to prevent and eliminate current homelessness among North Dakota's veterans. It would be using money generated by veterans' groups for the benefit of **future** veteran needs, and also the **present** critical need to address potential and current homelessness. It was a dual bill to allow veterans to help veterans--in the present and the future.

Perhaps because of the heavy workload in the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee the bill was assigned to Finance and Tax. The Committee apparently did not want a floodgates effect of groups asking for their gaming tax back, but the members listened to the compelling testimony of the need for veterans' homelessness prevention and remediation funding and amended the bill to keep the same appropriation in the bill but have the money come from the general fund. The bill passed the Committee with a unanimous vote. On February 25, shortly before crossover, the bill you have before you was brought from House Appropriations to the floor. Although the general fund money was removed, the Human Services Appropriations Chairman explained that the funding would be considered with the Veterans Affairs budget, and they hadn't gotten to that yet, and still haven't. The bill passed the House unanimously, on a vote right after that speech, 89-0.

So to keep this important bill going, I'm going to ask that this Committee amend the bill back to its House Committee passage language with the appropriation in it to keep funding alive. It is a funding bill to address a really serious problem for some pretty special people.

Veterans face significant challenges when it comes to homelessness. There are funding needs for rent, deposits, utilities, childcare, transportation, moving expenses, furniture, and other costs. Here are some other key factors and issues:

1. **Affordable Housing:** There is a severe shortage of affordable housing, which makes it difficult for veterans to find stable and safe places to live. High rental prices and limited availability exacerbate this problem.
2. **Health:** Many veterans struggle with mental health issues such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety. There are also issues getting access to general health care, ongoing treatment, and needed prescriptions. These problems can make it challenging to maintain stable employment and housing.
3. **Employment:** Transitioning from military to civilian life can be difficult, and finding stable employment is often a challenge. Service-connected disabilities may further complicate steady employment.
4. **Social Support:** The camaraderie and community found in military service are often missing in civilian life, which can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness. This lack of social support can make it harder for veterans to cope with the stresses of homelessness.
5. **Access to Benefits:** Navigating the VA healthcare system and accessing benefits can be complex and time-consuming. Many veterans may not receive the support they need due to bureaucratic hurdles and gaps in mental health services.
6. **Substance Abuse:** Some veterans turn to substance abuse to cope with their challenges, which can further complicate their efforts to find stable housing and employment.
7. **Families:** Veteran families face additional challenges, and if they have children, they are more likely to be homeless with children. Family-specific support is crucial for these veterans.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes providing affordable housing and auxiliary costs, mental health support, and social services and resources tailored to the unique needs of veterans.

This bill can have a life and death impact. Homelessness can be as much a terminal condition as cancer. In my legal work, I had three veteran clients die from conditions related to homelessness: one from exposure, one hit by a train, one needing medical attention he couldn't get.

The veteran suicide rate in North Dakota is also a serious concern, and is often related to spiraling down in poverty, homelessness, and hopelessness. According to the 2022 North Dakota Veteran Suicide Data Sheet, the veteran suicide rate in the state was considerably higher than the national general population suicide rate. One of the years I've been in the legislature, our state's veteran suicide rate was the highest in the nation. That data highlights the need for continued efforts to support veterans and address the factors contributing to this tragic issue.

The fiscal note calculations would allow \$590,045 per year to the post war trust fund to grow that fund for future use for all veteran services, and that same amount to address the pernicious and persistent problem of homelessness for veterans over the next two years.

Our service men and women make a lot of sacrifices to help maintain our safety and security in the world and in our state. What we owe them when they call North Dakota home, is to have one to live in. This bill gives us that chance.

March 13, 2025

Submitted by Marshall Smith, Veteran

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in strong support of HB1504.

My name is Marshall Smith, and I am a veteran of the U.S. Navy. I served for ten years between active duty and the reserves. Thank you for taking the time to hear my statement in support of this bill and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. I was asked to share my experience with SSVF, an organization that has been instrumental in helping me regain stability.

As a veteran and a single father, my transition from military service to civilian life was filled with challenges. After being discharged from the Navy, I struggled to find stability, constantly moving from job to job and place to place. I was never able to hold a job for more than a few months to a year, and I rarely stayed in one place for more than six months. At times, I found myself couch-surfing, but I avoided acknowledging that I was homeless because admitting it meant confronting the painful reality of my situation.

What made it even harder was that my son had to witness this instability and dysfunction. It broke my heart every time he asked, “Why aren’t we living in the same place as before?” or “Why can’t we do this activity? Why don’t we have the money for things?” There were moments when I had to bury my shame because I couldn’t provide the stability he deserved. My financial and housing situation often kept me from spending the quality time with him that he needed.

A few years ago, I finally told myself I have had enough. I reached out to the VA for help, and a counselor there gave me some much-needed tough love. He challenged me to seek mental health counseling because he could see I was struggling, even if I was not ready to admit it. Through that process, I was connected with SSVF and other resources that the VA offered.

This is where SSVF made a real difference in my life. The counselors at SSVF treated me with dignity and respect. They didn’t see me as someone stuck in a difficult situation, they saw a veteran determined to change his circumstances. I didn’t want to be defined by my struggles, I wanted to rebuild my life and SSVF gave me the support to do just that either through services or just taking the time to listen and empathize. They helped me to develop a plan to regain stability. SSVF provided me with critical support, including housing and financial assistance, to help me rebuild my foundation.

When I first started with SSVF, they helped me secure a deposit and the first month’s rent for the duplex I now call home—and have lived in for the past six years. The counselors worked closely with me to assess my financial situation. Just like my housing struggles, I had avoided facing my financial difficulties. They helped me create a budget, ensuring that I could manage my VA disability benefits and any additional income coming into my household.

SSVF’s support extended beyond just housing and finances. There was a time in college when my vehicle broke down, leaving me unable to get to class. SSVF stepped in, helped me get it repaired, and got me back on the road so I would not miss classes. Because of their help, I was able to graduate this past December with my degree.

Beyond financial and housing support, SSVF continued to check in on me. They asked, “Do you have food? Do you need anything?” They truly look out for veterans. One winter, a counselor reached out to see if I or any other veteran needed boots. When I first moved into my home, they made sure I had basic essentials like plates, cups, and silverware.

SSVF goes above and beyond to support veterans, providing resources to help us regain stability—whether through financial assistance, household necessities, or housing support. Their impact

extends far beyond just one aspect of our lives. During my check-ins, I never feel judged—only supported. Speaking of my counselor she has been nothing short of phenomenal. She ensures that veterans like me never feel forgotten. For these reasons, I strongly support this bill and urge you to continue funding SSVF. This program changes lives, and I am living proof of the impact it can have on veterans in need. This program has truly helped me become successful because of their support.

Thank you.

Testimony in favor of HB 1504 to direct 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations to the Post War Trust Fund or the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Nate Huntington, from Bismarck, ND.

I am submitting testimony in favor of HB 1504 to direct gaming tax funds raised on Veteran Service Organizations' gaming to the Trust Fund so that the taxes raised on veterans will benefit veterans.

I am a veteran, a member of the American Legion Department of North Dakota (for which I am a registered Lobbyist), and a member of the Marine Corps Association Detachment 1419 in Mandan.

As a military veteran, and as a Department representing veterans, I (and we) believe that it is essential for you to allocate funds to the Post War Trust Fund. Directing tax money raised on the gaming of Veterans Service Organizations is logical and it ensures that the funds are available to support veterans and the organizations that serve them.

It is important to add funds to the Trust so that the interest income will grow because it is the interest income that supports the programs which provide services to our veterans. Your action to pass HB 1504 will provide sustainable interest earning capability for the Trust Fund, perpetuating the availability of grants and services for vulnerable ND veterans and their dependents, including the prevention of veteran homelessness.

We support HB 1504.

Thank you.

25.1114.03001
Title.

Prepared by the Legislative Council
staff for Representative Schneider
March 12, 2025

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO SECOND ENGROSSMENT

REENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1504

Introduced by

Representatives Schneider, Karls, Klemin, J. Olson, Pyle, Warrey, Marschall

Senators Boschee, Dever, Marcellais, Meyer, Paulson

1 A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact section 37-14-14 of the North Dakota Century Code,
2 relating to the veterans' postwar trust fund; to provide an appropriation; and to provide for a
3 transfer.

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

5 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 37-14-14 of the North Dakota Century Code is
6 amended and reenacted as follows:

7 **37-14-14. Veterans' postwar trust fund.**

8 1. The veterans' postwar trust fund is a permanent trust fund of the state of North Dakota
9 and consists of moneys transferred or credited to the fund under this chapter and
10 other laws. Investment of the fund is the responsibility of the state treasurer who shall
11 have full authority to invest the fund only in accordance with chapter 21-10. All income
12 received from investments is to be utilized only for programs of benefit and service to
13 veterans or their dependents, and all income earned in a biennium is appropriated to
14 the administrative committee on veterans' affairs on a continuing basis in the following
15 biennium and not in the biennium the income is earned for expenditure on these
16 programs as authorized by law. Investment of all income received from investments is
17 the responsibility of the state treasurer who has full authority to invest the income
18 received only in accordance with chapter 21-10.

- 1 2. A veterans organization as defined under section 53-06.1-01 may donate funds to the
2 veterans' postwar trust fund for homeless veterans' services to prevent and eliminate
3 veteran homelessness.

4 **SECTION 2. APPROPRIATION - TRANSFER TO VETERANS' POSTWAR TRUST FUND.**

5 There is appropriated out of any moneys in the general fund in the state treasury, not otherwise
6 appropriated, the sum of \$1,180,090, which the office of management and budget shall transfer
7 to the veterans' postwar trust fund, for the biennium beginning July 1, 2025, and ending
8 June 30, 2027.

9 **SECTION 3. APPROPRIATION - DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS - VETERANS'**

10 **HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND ELIMINATION - ONE-TIME FUNDING.** There is
11 appropriated out of any moneys in the general fund in the state treasury, not otherwise
12 appropriated, the sum of \$1,180,090, or so much of the sum as may be necessary, to the
13 department of veterans' affairs for homeless veterans' services to prevent and eliminate veteran
14 homelessness, for the biennium beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2027. This
15 funding is considered a one-time funding item.

Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee
69th Legislative Session
Senator Luick-Chair

Chairman Luick and Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee,

Please accept this testimony in support of HB 1504.

Intent of this bill...

- Increase the principal of Veterans Post War Trust Fund (PWTF)
- Address North Dakota's homeless veteran unmet needs

Background/History

Fund 410: Post War Trust Fund PWTF and clearing account.

Article X Section 25 of ND Constitution and NDCC 37-14-14

- 1969-1971 Issuance of Bonds and Surtax for Adjusted Compensation to ND Veterans of Vietnam War
- Funds remaining (\$41 million) after services for Vietnam Veterans were used for many projects such as ND State Veterans Cemetery, Veterans home, etc.
- 1988 PWTF established as Permanent Trust Fund (\$4.1 million)
 - The PWTF principal consist of money transferred *as authorized by legislation*
 - Principal of PWTF not available for programs-only the interest income available.
 - Investment of the PWTF is entrusted to the ND State Treasurer
 - Interest from investments is used for;
 - Investment expenses
 - Principal growth
 - Spendable interest income appropriated to the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs (ACOVA) on continuing basis
 - What is earned in a biennium is made available in next biennium
 - Placed in Fund 410 clearing account.
- Legislative action to grow PWTF principal
 - 2013 Legislative action. **\$250,000** added to principal of PWTF
 - 2015 Created Patriotic License Plates. Proceeds to principal. **\$105,710**
 - 2019 Created Income Tax Check Off. Proceeds to principal. **\$136,614**
- Income to Veteran Programs Beginning of Biennium balance
 - 2013-2015: \$262,371.92 \$4.5 million
 - 2015-2017: \$274,545.96 \$5.6 million
 - 2017-2019: 218,369.06 \$6.2 million
 - 2019-2021: \$281,474.87 \$6.6 million
 - 2021-2023: \$232,369.67 \$7.9 million
- 2024.11 Principal balance of PWTF: \$8,634,098

- Interest rates are low, and inflation is high
 - Dental / Denture grant costs:
 - 2013: \$1,700 plate with Dental/Denture limit: \$4,000
 - 2025: Dental/Denture limit: \$5,000 x 2yrs \$10,000
 - Hearing aids: (4-year limit)
 - 2013: \$1,500 ear
 - 2025: \$2,500 ear
 - Housing:
 - 2013: \$500
 - 2025: \$2,500 (Deposit and 1 month rent)
 - Growing affordable housing needs in ND
- Legislative action is required to add to PWTF principal
- Programs no longer being funded:
 - Grants for outreach
 - Homeless veteran programs
 - Training grants
 - Veteran employment services grants
 - Transportation: DAV vans now in NDDVA budget
 - PTSD service animals: NDDVA budget
 - Legal services
 - Grants to uncovered needs at ND Veterans Home
 - County and Veteran service officer assistance

Outcome of Bill:

Stable PWTF. Sustainable interest earning capability. Increased ability for ACOVA and NDDVA to provide grants and services for the most vulnerable of ND Veterans and Dependents.

Immediate ability to address and prevent ND Veteran Homelessness with funds in the 410-clearing account.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lonnie Wangen Commissioner-NDDVA

attorney general shall allocate remaining moneys in the charitable gaming operating fund on a quarterly basis as follows:

- a. Ten thousand dollars to the gambling disorder prevention and treatment fund.
 - b. Subject to legislative appropriations, five percent of the total moneys deposited in the charitable gaming operating fund to cities and counties in proportion to the taxes collected under section 53-06.1-12 from licensed organizations conducting games within each city, for sites within city limits, or within each county, for sites outside city limits. If a city or county allocation is less than two hundred dollars, that city or county is not entitled to receive a payment for the quarter and the undistributed amount must be included in the total amount to be distributed to other cities and counties for the quarter.
3. On or before June thirtieth of each odd-numbered year, the attorney general shall certify to the state treasurer the amount of accumulated funds in the charitable gaming operating fund which exceed the amount appropriated by the legislative assembly for administrative and operating costs associated with charitable gaming for the subsequent biennium. The state treasurer shall transfer the certified amount from the charitable gaming operating fund to the general fund prior to the end of each biennium.

53-06.1-12. Gaming tax - Deposits. (Retroactive application - See note)

1. Except as provided in subsection 2, a gaming tax is imposed on the total adjusted gross proceeds received by a licensed organization in a quarter and the tax must be computed and paid to the attorney general on a quarterly basis on the tax return. This tax must be paid from adjusted gross proceeds and is not part of the allowable expenses. For a licensed organization with adjusted gross proceeds:
 - a. Not exceeding fifty thousand dollars the tax is one percent of adjusted gross proceeds.
 - b. Exceeding fifty thousand dollars the tax is five hundred dollars plus twelve percent of adjusted gross proceeds exceeding fifty thousand dollars.
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3. The tax must be paid to the attorney general at the time tax returns are filed.
4. The attorney general shall deposit gaming taxes, monetary fines, and interest and penalties collected in the charitable gaming operating fund.

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee

Fort Union Room, State Capitol

HB 1504

3/20/2025

A bill relating to the veterans' postwar trust fund.
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2:54 p.m. Chairman Barta opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Luick, Vice-Chair Myrdal, Senator Marcellais, Senator Weston, Senator Weber, Senator Lemm

Discussion Topics:

- Committee action

2:55 p.m. Senator Lemm moved a Do Pass.

2:55 p.m. Senator Myrdal seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed 6-0-0.

Senator Marcellais will carry the bill.

2:56 p.m. Chairman Luick closed the hearing.

Audrey Oswald, Committee Clerk

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
REENGROSSED HB 1504 ([25.1114.03000](#))**

Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee (Sen. Luick, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (6 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HB 1504 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.