

**2025 SENATE INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS**

**SB 2218**

# 2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Industry and Business Committee Fort Union Room, State Capitol

SB 2218  
1/27/2025

A bill for an act to provide an appropriation to the insurance commissioner for a ND firefighter's association grant; and to declare an emergency.

3:00 p.m. Chairman Barta called the meeting to order.

Members present: Chairman Barta, Vice-Chairman Boehm, Senator Klein, Senator Kessel, Senator Enget

### Discussion Topics:

- Strategic Investment Improvement Fund
- Provisions of a home/facility
- National Professional Qualifications Board
- National Fire Prevention Association
- NDFA history, mission, and role
- Percentage of volunteer firefighters
- Centralized training inability
- Statewide training and certification
- Equipment storage security and expansion
- Description of proposal change and benefits
- Cost savings
- Three phase plan deployment and time frame
- NDFA financial information
- Insurance Regulatory Trust Fund
- Capital accumulation and PACE funding
- Estimated annual mortgage cost
- Current rent vs new lease
- Current location and training locations
- Regional fire classes, training, and cost
- Number of employees
- Property tax exemption
- Total building cost and estimated addition cost
- Phase two fund availability
- Advantages of mobility
- training variances in different locations
- WSI fund distribution
- Premium reduction potential

3:00 p.m. Senator Klein, District 14, testified in favor and introduced the bill.

3:03 p.m. Robert Knuth, Training Director for the ND Firefighter's Association, testified in favor and submitted testimony #31919.

3:24 p.m. Ken Wangen, Fire Chief of the Carrington Volunteer Fire and Rescue and President of the ND Fire Chief's Association and an Instructor for NDFA, testified in favor.

3:31 p.m. John Arnold, Deputy Insurance Commissioner, testified in favor and submitted testimony #31769.

3:34 p.m. Chairman Barta closed the hearing.

3:35 p.m. Senator Klein moved a Do Pass and Rerefer to the Appropriations Committee.

3:35 p.m. Senator Kessel seconded the motion.

<b>Senators</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Senator Jeff Barta	Y
Senator Keith Boehm	Y
Senator Mark Enget	Y
Senator Greg Kessel	Y
Senator Jerry Klein	Y

Motion passed 5-0-0.

Senator Klein will carry the bill.

**Additional written testimony:**

Tom Claeys, ND Forest Service, submitted testimony #31327 in favor.

3:35 p.m. Chairman Barta closed the hearing.

*Audrey Oswald, Committee Clerk*

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE**  
**SB 2218 ([25.1151.01000](#))**

**Industry and Business Committee (Sen. Barta, Chairman)** recommends **DO PASS** and **BE REREFERRED** to the **Appropriations Committee** (5 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2218 was rereferred to the **Appropriations Committee**. This bill does not affect workforce development.

**69<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY****Senate Bill 2218 - “Relating to an appropriation to the insurance commissioner for a North Dakota firefighter's association grant.”**

Senate Industry and Business Committee

January 27, 2025

Written Testimony Submitted by:

Tom Claeys, State Forester

North Dakota Forest Service

The North Dakota Firefighters Association (NDFA) is a trusted partner and an essential resource for North Dakota Firefighters. Their mission “*To Promote the Safety and Welfare of the North Dakota Firefighters Association Members Through Uniform and Established Training Standards*” is helps protect lives and property of North Dakotans.

The North Dakota Forest Service partners with the NDFA annually to provide wildland fire training at State Fire School. The agency also coordinates and collaborates with NDFA’s leadership and their membership. The NDFA is a valued and trusted partner and together we help make North Dakota a better, safer place to live, work and recreate in.

A centrally located office and training facilities are essential for the NDFA to deliver their mission. We encourage the committee to providing funding through the Insurance Commissioner to the NDFA for the purchase a new firefighter’s association building. The facility will benefit firefighters statewide, as well as their many partners, and most importantly, the public.

We greatly appreciate the ability to share the importance of the NDFA highlight this opportunity to consider providing funding for the purchase of a new facility.

###



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
Insurance Department

## **TESTIMONY SUPPORTING SB 2218**

*John Arnold, Deputy Insurance Commissioner*

Senate Industry and Business Committee

January 27, 2025

Good afternoon, Chairman Barta and members of the Committee. My name is John Arnold, I am the Deputy Insurance Commissioner, and I stand before you today in support for SB 2218.

To provide some context, the Insurance Commissioner's office allocates \$2.4 million biennially to the North Dakota Firefighters Association (NDFA) through the Insurance Regulatory Trust Fund, as outlined in section 18-03-07. These funds are crucial in helping the NDFA fulfill its important mission of strengthening the state's fire services. Specifically, the NDFA plays a key role in developing and implementing a statewide fire education and training plan. They coordinate training at all levels to ensure that firefighters across North Dakota receive consistent, high-quality education. In addition, the NDFA oversees the certification process for firefighter training, ensuring that professional standards are maintained, and that safety is prioritized throughout the state.

A critical component of the NDFA's ability to carry out these responsibilities is having the proper infrastructure. The funds provided by SB 2218 will enable the NDFA to secure a permanent facility, which will not only support their current operations but also allow for future expansion as needed.

Our office fully supports the allocation of these funds from the Strategic Investment and Improvements Fund or (SIIF) and would like to note that there will be no additional administrative burdens or complications in managing this one-time funding to help the NDFA acquire a new building and offset associated costs.

Chairman Barta and members of the Committee, I respectfully request your favorable consideration and a Do Pass recommendation for SB 2218 and your continued support of the fire service.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

## Senate Industry and Business Committee

27 January, 2025

## Testimony on Senate Bill 2218

Submitted by: Robert Knuth, Training Director, North Dakota Firefighter's Association

Chairman Barta and Senate Industry and Business Committee members, Good Afternoon. My name is Robert Knuth, and I am the Training Director of the North Dakota Firefighters' Association. I want to thank you for considering Senate Bill 2218.

The North Dakota Firefighters' Association (NDFA) is a 501(c)(3) organization. We are accredited by the National Professional Qualifications Board, also known as the ProBoard. Our training and certification programs meet nationally recognized standards developed by the National Fire Prevention Association or NFPA. NDFA was established in 1884 before North Dakota became a state. Throughout our existence, the association's mission has been to provide opportunities to train and certify firefighters in the state. In 2017, a legislative study was conducted to codify the duties and roles of the North Dakota Firefighters Association. As a result of this study, Section 18-03-01.1 of the North Dakota Century Code now reads:

The North Dakota Firefighter's Association shall:

1. Develop and adopt a statewide fire education and training plan;
2. Coordinate fire service training at all levels;
3. Establish procedures to govern the certification process for firefighter training.

NDFA is a mobile training organization that provides instruction and certification testing to individual departments. Due to the size of the state, having one centralized training facility is not feasible. 96% of our firefighters are volunteers with full-time jobs in their communities. In many cases, taking time away from work to travel, staying overnight, and the cost of fuel, meals, and lodging prevent many firefighters from traveling to receive vital training. NDFA has utilized federal and state grants for training props and equipment that must be stored securely to make this training available statewide. Some of which are temperature sensitive. Our current facility does not have the space to store these assets under one roof, forcing us to lease additional storage space.

Before 1996, the NDFA ran their business in the home offices of the elected executive board members. In 1996, our first Director was hired, and we began leasing office space. Since that date, we have moved offices several times to accommodate our growing mission and storage requirements. Last year, we were notified by our landlord that our lease, which was entered into in 2017, would see a substantial increase in cost when our renewal date for our main office building came up. In discussions with him, we found our rent amount would increase by approximately \$46,400.00 annually. This discussion led to an opportunity for us to relocate to a new facility that he was purchasing. This would be a lease, with the option to buy anytime. As part of the lease agreement, our current lease amount will remain the same until June 1, 2025, without a penalty for leaving our current lease, which would save over \$185,000.00 over the remaining life of the lease. His benefit is that he can lease our current location to a new tenant at the current market rate.

Senate Industry and Business Committee

27 January, 2025

Testimony on Senate Bill 2218

Submitted by: Robert Knuth, Training Director, North Dakota Firefighter's Association

We have developed a three-phase project for our new location. Once completed, NDFA would have one building large enough for all our administrative offices, Storage space for all our equipment, and space for meetings and classes available for the state's south-central region. Phase one is purchasing the property and the existing office building, which is large enough to house our current offices. Phase two is constructing an addition large enough to hold all our equipment and props and provide enough space to conduct hands-on training indoors, regardless of weather conditions. Phase three is refurbishing the first-floor offices into meeting and classroom spaces.

NDFA was initially funded through appropriation in 1893 and through dues collected by member departments. NDFA has continued to receive appropriate funds and collect dues to this day. Our current appropriated funding comes from the Insurance Regulatory Trust fund. This funding is for training and certification testing provided at zero cost to the individual fire departments, administrative costs of providing these services, salaries for our employees, and leases for our offices and storage facilities. Each year, we meet the requirements of our Century Code mandate. However, we have not been able to accumulate any capital to move forward with our plan for our building. To this point, the NDFA Executive Board has met with Pace Fundraising to create and manage a capital campaign to raise funding for the project. We are confident that this campaign will be successful. However, the timeline for accruing funds to move forward would exclude the opportunity for us to acquire the property and building at its current price.

SB 2218 will provide the NDFA with the funding to provide the 20% needed to enter into a mortgage and purchase the property. Once this 20% is received, the NDFA will be able to complete phase one of our project. I have attached our budget to this testimony. This budget shows our current appropriation, estimated dues coming in, a small lease amount we receive from the ND Fire Marshal's office, and an amount awarded through the WSI-STEP grant program, which we use to fund specific training. Unfortunately, we cannot use these grant funds for the building. Under the NDFA Office line, we have put the estimated annual cost of what we would be paying in a mortgage if both Phase One and Phase Two were complete, even though we know Phase Two will not be completed before the end of 2025. We set that amount to show we would have a positive balance at the end of December, which is the estimated funding availability from our capital campaign, according to Pace Fundraising. This shows our ability to maintain our current funding and justify our request for one-time funding.

I have also attached a breakdown of our current rent amounts, comparing them to the new lease amounts if we were to stay at our current location, our estimated payments with a mortgage after Phase 1 is completed along with the additional storage building, and our estimated mortgage payment after Phase 2 is completed.

Thank you for allowing me the time to present this testimony, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

\$0 -

4 Full +

2 PT

200 contracted



**North Dakota Firefighters Association  
2025 Proposed Budget**

<b>Income</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>
4000 • Sales	\$47,855.14	\$15,000.00
4100 • Dues	\$36,150.00	\$36,450.00
4115 • Leased Space	\$6,045.00	\$3,000.00
4200 • Grants	\$607,696.00	\$175,000.00
4300 • Registration	\$3,415.00	
4600 • Appropriations/ND	\$1,200,000.00	\$1,200,000.00
4700 • Testing Fees	\$2,820.00	
4800 • Reimbursed Expenses	\$28,283.50	
4820 • Donations	\$359.00	
4900 • Miscellaneous/Income	\$58.85	
Total Income	<u>\$1,934,706.49</u>	<u>\$1,429,450.00</u>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>\$1,934,706.49</b>	<b>\$1,429,450.00</b>

<b>Expense</b>		
6000 • NDFA Office	\$251,586.00	\$434,000.00
6100 • Annual Convention	\$10,903.00	\$15,000.00
6200 • State School	\$142,575.06	\$108,150.00
6300 • Regional School	\$85,966.24	\$40,000.00
6345 • AFG Grant	\$99,822.05	\$0.00
6350 • Department Level Training	\$19,223.93	\$21,000.00
6360 • HazMat Expense	\$21,309.96	\$32,900.00
6375 • Grant expenses-	\$46,758.81	\$0.00
6381 • WSI Grant	\$27,969.95	\$33,720.00
6400 • Conference	\$14,071.37	\$15,000.00
6500 • FF Certification	\$53,367.02	\$45,000.00
6551 • Pass Through Funds	\$1,600.00	\$0.00
6581 • Auto Extrication	\$46,567.02	\$50,000.00
6590 • Bank Service Charges	\$0.00	\$200.00
6600 • Insurance	\$11,385.48	\$15,000.00
66900 • Reconciliation	\$0.85	\$0.00
Discrepancies		
6700 • Interest Expense	\$0.00	\$0.00
6720 • Forms	\$523.53	\$500.00
6775 •	\$1,500.00	\$4,000.00
Membership/Dues/Subscriptions		
6800 • Payroll Expenses	\$413,741.83	\$460,000.00
6830 • Executive Board Expenses	\$12,528.36	\$8,000.00
6881 • Shop Equipment	\$458.68	\$6,000.00
6900 • Professional Fees	\$49,553.03	\$45,000.00
6925 • Repairs	\$3,360.79	\$6,000.00
6950 • Taxes	\$25,993.74	\$27,000.00
6960 • Training Library	\$29,652.12	\$15,000.00
6970 • Material for resale	\$19,505.76	\$15,000.00
8000 • Workshops	\$0.00	\$3,000.00
8110 • Vehicle Expense	\$12,056.58	\$15,000.00
8200 • Training Props	\$565,584.87	\$10,000.00
8217 • Fire Investigations	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Expense	<u>\$1,967,566.03</u>	<u>\$1,424,470.00</u>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>-\$32,859.54</b>	<b>\$4,980.00</b>

## Estimated Lease Payments vs. Mortgage Payment

### Current Grumman Rent

9045 SqFt  
9.5 per SqFt

### New Lease Grumman Rent

9045 SqFt  
16.5 per SqFt

### Current Platoon Rent

7,200 SqFt  
0.97 per SqFt

	Annual	Base	Base NNN
2017	\$85,927.50	\$7,160.63	\$7,660.63
2018	\$87,216.41	\$7,268.03	\$7,768.03
2019	\$88,524.66	\$7,377.05	\$7,877.05
2020	\$89,852.53	\$7,487.71	\$7,987.71
2021	\$91,200.32	\$7,600.03	\$8,100.03
2022	\$92,568.32	\$7,714.03	\$8,214.03
2023	\$93,956.85	\$7,829.74	\$8,329.74
2024	\$95,366.20	\$7,947.18	\$8,447.18
<b>2025</b>	<b>\$96,796.69</b>	<b>\$8,066.39</b>	<b>\$8,566.39</b>
2026	\$98,248.64	\$8,187.39	\$8,687.39

Annual	Monthly
\$149,242.50	\$12,436.88

Annual	Monthly
\$84,000	\$7,000

	Annual	Monthly	
Current Rent (both buildings)	\$180,796.69	\$15,066.39	
Estimated New Annual Rent (both buildings)	\$233,242.50	\$19,436.88	\$4,370.48 Total monthly increase
Est. Mortgage (Phase 1) <i>Time Inc</i>	\$220,800.00	\$18,400.00	This includes new building and current additional storage building rent.
Est. Mortgage (Phase 2)	\$315,000.00	\$26,250.00	This is estimated mortgage would be after Phase 2 is completed (2026)

*Buildng cost \$1.9m  
Addition \$2.3*

*Construction 14-18 months*

*10*

*Does have duplicate plan*

**2025 SENATE APPROPRIATIONS**

**SB 2218**

# 2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Appropriations - Government Operations Division Red River Room, State Capitol

SB 2218  
2/5/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the insurance commissioner for a North Dakota firefighter's association grant; and to declare an emergency.

9:04 a.m. Chairman Wanzek opened the meeting.

Members present: Chairman Wanzek, Vice-Chair Dwyer, Senator Burckhard, Senator Erbele, and Senator Sickler.

### Discussion Topics:

- Headquarters for Firefighter's Association
- Donations
- Property renovation
- Training area
- Training costs
- Mission and storage requirements
- Location lease
- Funding sources
- Century Code Mandate
- 2025 proposed budget
- Fundraising
- Southcentral Region training
- Cost savings of mortgage
- Project phases
- Nonprofit status
- Utilization of facilities by all first responders
- Total investment

9:04 a.m. Senator Klein, District 14, testified in favor.

9:12 a.m. Robert Knuth, Training Director of ND Firefighter's Association, testified in favor and submitted testimony #35297.

9:44 a.m. John Arnold, Deputy Commissioner of ND Insurance Department testified in favor.

9:45 a.m. Senator Dwyer moved a Do Pass for SB 2218.  
Senator Burckhard seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Terry M. Wanzek	Y
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y

Senator Michael Dwyer	Y
Senator Robert Erbele	Y
Senator Jonathan Sickler	Y

Motion passed 5-0-0

Senator Dwyer will carry the bill.

9:47 a.m. Chairman Wanzek closed the meeting.

*Carol Thompson, Committee Clerk*

2-5-25

## Senate Appropriations - Government Operations Division

5 February 2025

## Testimony on Senate Bill 2218

Submitted by: Robert Knuth, Training Director, North Dakota Firefighter's Association

Chairman Wanzek and Senate Appropriations - Government Operations Division Committee members, Good Morning. My name is Robert Knuth, and I am the Training Director of the North Dakota Firefighters' Association. I want to thank you for considering Senate Bill 2218.

The North Dakota Firefighters' Association (NDFA) is a 501(c)(3) organization. We are accredited by the National Professional Qualifications Board, also known as the ProBoard. Our training and certification programs meet nationally recognized standards developed by the National Fire Prevention Association or NFPA. NDFA was established in 1884 before North Dakota became a state. Throughout our existence, the association's mission has been to provide opportunities to train and certify firefighters in the state. In 2017, a legislative study was conducted to codify the duties and roles of the North Dakota Firefighters Association. As a result of this study, Section 18-03-01.1 of the North Dakota Century Code now reads:

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5 February 2025

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## Estimated Lease Payments vs. Mortgage Payment

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9.5 per SqFt

### New Lease Grumman Rent

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### Current Platoon Rent

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2023	\$93,956.85	\$7,829.74	\$8,329.74
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<b>2025</b>	<b>\$96,796.69</b>	<b>\$8,066.39</b>	<b>\$8,566.39</b>
2026	\$98,248.64	\$8,187.39	\$8,687.39

Annual	Monthly
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Annual	Monthly
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	Annual	Monthly	
Current Rent (both buildings)	\$180,796.69	\$15,066.39	
Estimated New Annual Rent (both buildings)	\$233,242.50	\$19,436.88	\$4,370.48 Total monthly increase
Est. Mortgage (Phase 1)	\$220,800.00	\$18,400.00	This includes new building and current additional storage building rent.
Est. Mortgage (Phase 2)	\$315,000.00	\$26,250.00	This is estimated mortgage would be after Phase 2 is completed (2026)

# 2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Appropriations Committee Harvest Room, State Capitol

SB 2218  
2/6/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the insurance commissioner for a North Dakota firefighter's association grant; and to declare an emergency.

11:01 a.m. Chairman Bekkedahl opened the hearing.

Members Present: Chairman Bekkedahl, Vice-Chairman Erbele, and Senators Burckhard, Cleary, Conley, Davison, Dever, Dwyer, Magrum, Mathern, Meyer, Schaible, Sickler, Sorvaag, Thomas, Wanzek.

### Discussion Topics:

- Rent Payments
- Purchase & Remodel of Building
- New Training and Equipment Facility

11:02 a.m. Senator Dwyer introduced the bill.

11:07 a.m. Senator Klein testified in favor.

11:08 a.m. Senator Dwyer moved a Do Pass.

11:09 a.m. Senator Burckhard seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Brad Bekkedahl	Y
Senator Robert Erbele	Y
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y
Senator Sean Cleary	Y
Senator Cole Conley	Y
Senator Kyle Davison	Y
Senator Dick Dever	Y
Senator Michael Dwyer	Y
Senator Jeffery J. Magrum	Y
Senator Tim Mathern	Y
Senator Scott Meyer	Y
Senator Donald Schaible	Y
Senator Jonathan Sickler	Y
Senator Ronald Sorvaag	Y
Senator Paul J. Thomas	Y
Senator Terry M. Wanzek	Y

Motion Passed 16-0-0.

Senator Dwyer will carry the bill.

11:10 a.m. Chairman Bekkedahl closed the hearing.

*Elizabeth Reiten, Committee Clerk*

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE**  
**SB 2218 ([25.1151.01000](#))**

**Appropriations Committee (Sen. Bekkedahl, Chairman)** recommends **DO PASS** (16 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2218 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.

**2025 HOUSE POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS**

**SB 2218**

# 2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Political Subdivisions Committee Room JW327B, State Capitol

SB 2218  
3/13/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the insurance commissioner for a North Dakota firefighter's association grant; and to declare an emergency.

8:59 a.m. Vice-Chairman Fegley opened the hearing.

Members Present: Chairman Longmuir, Vice-Chairman Fegley, Vice-Chairman Jonas, Representatives Bolinske, Davis, Hager, Hatlestad, Heilman, Klemin, Motschenbacher, Toman, Warrey

Members Absent: Representative Ostlie

### Discussion Topics:

- Intended uses of grant funds
- North Dakota Firefighter Training

9:00 a.m. Senator Jerry Klein, North Dakota Senator for District 13, introduced the bill.

9:05 a.m. Robert Knuth, Training Director of the North Dakota Firefighters' Association, testified in favor and provided testimony #41272.

9:15 a.m. Kenneth Wangen, President of the North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association, testified in favor and provided testimony #41112.

9:23 a.m. Doug Nelson, State Fire Marshal at the North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office, testified in favor and provided testimony #40436.

9:26 a.m. Representative Warrey moved a Do Pass and Rerefer to Appropriations.

9:26 a.m. Representative Hager seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Donald W. Longmuir	Y
Representative Clayton Fegley	Y
Representative Jim Jonas	Y
Representative Macy Bolinske	Y
Representative Jayme Davis	Y
Representative LaurieBeth Hager	Y
Representative Patrick R. Hatlestad	Y
Representative Matthew Heilman	Y
Representative Lawrence R. Klemin	Y
Representative Mike Motschenbacher	Y

Representative Mitch Ostlie	A
Representative Nathan Toman	Y
Representative Jonathan Warrey	Y

9:27 a.m. Motion passed 12-0-1.

9:27 a.m. Representative Hager will carry the bill.

9:28 a.m. Chairman Longmuir closed the hearing.

*Wyatt Armstrong, Committee Clerk*

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE**  
**SB 2218 ([25.1151.01000](#))**

**Political Subdivisions Committee (Rep. Longmuir, Chairman)** recommends **DO PASS** and **BE REREFERRED** to the **Appropriations Committee** (12 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). SB 2218 was rereferred to the **Appropriations Committee**.





## TESTIMONY SUPPORTING SB 2218

*Doug Nelson, State Fire Marshal*

House Political Subdivisions Committee

March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Good afternoon, Chairman Longmuir and members of the Committee. My name is Doug Nelson, I am the State Fire Marshal, and I stand before you today in support for SB 2218.

To provide some context, the Insurance Commissioner's office allocates \$2.4 million biennially to the North Dakota Firefighters Association (NDFA) through the Insurance Regulatory Trust Fund, as outlined in section 18-03-07. These funds are crucial in helping the NDFA fulfill its important mission of strengthening the state's fire services. Specifically, the NDFA plays a key role in developing and implementing a statewide fire education and training plan. They coordinate training at all levels to ensure that firefighters across North Dakota receive consistent, high-quality education. In addition, the NDFA oversees the certification process for firefighter training, ensuring that professional standards are maintained, and that safety is prioritized throughout the state.

A critical component of the NDFA's ability to carry out these responsibilities is having the proper infrastructure. The funds provided by SB 2218 will enable the NDFA to secure a permanent facility, which will not only support their current operations but also allow for future expansion as needed.

The Insurance Department along with the State Fire Marshal's Office fully supports the allocation of these funds from the Strategic Investment and Improvements Fund or (SIIF) and would like to note that there will be no additional administrative burdens or complications in managing this one-time funding to help the NDFA acquire a new building and offset associated costs.

Chairman Longmuir and members of the Committee, I respectfully request your favorable consideration and a Do Pass recommendation for SB 2218 and your continued support of the fire service.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

## House Political Sub Committee

Date 3/13/2025

## Testimony on Senate Bill 2218

Submitted by: Ken Wangen, Fire Chief Carrington Volunteer Fire and Rescue,  
President North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association

Chairman Longmuir and members of the Committee, Good Morning. I want to thank you for considering Senate Bill 2218.

NDFA was established in 1884 in the Dakota Territory. Throughout their existence, the association's mission has been to provide opportunities to train and certify firefighters in the state. In 2017, a legislative study was conducted to codify the duties and roles of the North Dakota Firefighters Association. Century Code now states:

The North Dakota Firefighter's Association shall:

1. Develop and adopt a statewide fire education and training plan.
2. Coordinate fire service training at all levels.
3. Establish procedures to govern the certification process for firefighter training.

Before 1996, the NDFA was very poor in hands on equipment but rich in knowledge, but it had no home base office for the DVD's, Videos Tapes, Slide Decks, Overhead projection gels and general library materials which had to reside where the current Sec/Treas lived. This became more and more compounded after hiring a director and the NDFA was able to obtain grants for Burn Trailers, Liquid Fuels simulators, Collapse Search and Rescue, Grain Bin Rescue and many other scenarios type simulators. Rest assured that list only touches part of the equipment the NDFA now owns and maintains. Other pieces are delicate technologies such as secure computers for testing candidates for Pro Board, Fire Fighter 1, Fire Fighter 2 and Hazmat. They also own state of the art mobile based simulator that allow a near real experience of Driving an emergency vehicle and Pump Panel operations that allow a safe real time experience without the danger of operating a real vehicle and possibly causing damage to apparatus that now easily costs \$1,000,000 to replace and or 10's of thousands to repair. Naturally a director needed staff to coordinate, instruct with, and maintain these simulators and other equipment. It was obvious the requirements of building they occupied would also change. Relocation was the only means to find a building that would fit. Obviously, the need for central location to maintain, house and repair this equipment is not in question. The equipment needs to be in top condition when delivered to the instructors so they can focus on the instruction and hands on of the training and not waste time trying to repair or make the simulators work.

With this investment as requested from SIIF the State of North Dakota would afford the NDFA the opportunity to acquire an actual piece of real property that they could build on and configure as they need, with the result being an investment vs. paying rent and having to move as the need changes. Having seen the multiple phases, the NDFA has planned on additions it is also fiscally sound and enables the NDFA to continue providing the training and expand as the need arises without having to relocate. To top it off they can make the payment at a lower cost then the rent and provide for more training with the saved dollars. That to me sounds like a very good investment to the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration, please pass SB 2218 so we can continue to train and support our Firefighters. I will stand for any questions you may have.

Ken Wangen

Fire Chief Carrington Volunteer Fire and Rescue

President North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association

NDFA Instructor in Grain Bin Rescue, Structural Live Fire, Heavy and Normal Extrication.

## House Political Subdivisions Committee

13 March 2025

## Testimony on Senate Bill 2218

Submitted by: Robert Knuth, Training Director, North Dakota Firefighter's Association

Chairman Longmuir and House Political Subdivisions Committee members, Good Morning. My name is Robert Knuth, and I am the Training Director of the North Dakota Firefighters' Association. I want to thank you for considering Senate Bill 2218.

The North Dakota Firefighters' Association (NDFA) is a 501(c)(3) organization. We are accredited by the National Professional Qualifications Board, also known as the ProBoard. Our training and certification programs meet nationally recognized standards developed by the National Fire Prevention Association or NFPA. NDFA was established in 1884 before North Dakota even became a state. Throughout our existence, the association's mission has been to provide opportunities to train and certify firefighters in the state. In 2017, a legislative study was conducted to codify the duties and roles of the North Dakota Firefighters Association. As a result of this study, Section 18-03-01.1 of the North Dakota Century Code now reads:

The North Dakota Firefighter's Association shall:

1. Develop and adopt a statewide fire education and training plan;
2. Coordinate fire service training at all levels;
3. Establish procedures to govern the certification process for firefighter training.

By Century code we are also required to conduct annual fire schools. This past February, our 71<sup>st</sup> annual State Fire School was held in Minot with over 900 individual firefighters, fire chiefs, and fire instructors attending. We also conduct Regional Fire Schools which rotate to different departments who open their doors to their regional mutual aid departments.

Due to the size of the state, having one centralized training facility is not feasible. NDFA is a mobile training organization that provides instruction and certification testing to individual departments at zero cost. Our current funding allows us to do this, so the individual departments do not have to spend their limited budget on necessary training. 96% of our firefighters are volunteers with full-time jobs in their communities. In many cases, taking time away from work to travel, staying overnight, and the cost of fuel, meals, and lodging prevent many firefighters from traveling to receive vital training. NDFA has utilized federal and state grants for training props and equipment that must be stored securely to make this training available statewide. Some of which are temperature sensitive. Our current facility does not have the space to store these assets under one roof, forcing us to lease additional storage space.

Before 1996, the NDFA ran their business in the home offices of the elected executive board members. In 1996, our first Director was hired, and we began leasing office space. Since that date, we have moved offices several times to accommodate our growing mission and storage requirements. Last year, we were notified by our landlord that our lease, which was entered into in 2017, would see a substantial increase in cost when our renewal date for our main office building came up. In discussions with him, we found our rent amount would increase by approximately \$46,400.00 annually. This discussion led to an opportunity for us to relocate to a new facility that he was purchasing. This would be a lease, with the option to buy anytime. As part of the lease agreement, our current lease amount will remain the same until June 1, 2025, without a penalty for



House Political Subdivisions Committee

13 March 2025

Testimony on Senate Bill 2218

Submitted by: Robert Knuth, Training Director, North Dakota Firefighter's Association

leaving our current lease, which would save over \$185,000.00 over the remaining life of the lease. The benefit to him is that he can lease our current location to a new tenant at the current market rate.

We have developed a three-phase project for our new location. Once completed, NDFA would have one building large enough for all our administrative offices, storage space for all our equipment, and space for meetings and classes available for the state's south-central region. Phase one is purchasing the property and the existing office building, which is large enough to house our current offices. Phase two is constructing an addition large enough to hold all our equipment and props and provide enough space to conduct hands-on training indoors, regardless of weather conditions. Phase three is refurbishing the first-floor offices into meeting and classroom spaces.

NDFA was initially funded through appropriation in 1893 and through dues collected by member departments. NDFA has continued to receive appropriate funds and collect dues to this day. Our current appropriated funding comes from the Insurance Regulatory Trust Fund. This funding is for training and certification testing provided, again, at zero cost to the individual fire departments, administrative costs of providing these services, salaries for our employees, and leases for our offices and storage facilities. Each year, we meet the requirements of our Century Code mandate. However, we have not been able to accumulate any capital to move forward with our plan for a permanent home. To this point, the NDFA Executive Board has met with Pace Fundraising to create and manage a capital campaign to raise funding for the project. We are confident that this campaign will be successful. However, the timeline for accruing funds to move forward would exclude the opportunity for us to acquire the property and building at its current price.

SB 2218 will provide the NDFA with the funding to provide the 20% needed to enter into a mortgage and purchase the property. Estimates right now show that our mortgage payment will be over \$1,000.00 less than what our lease amount would be monthly. Once this 20% is received, the NDFA will be able to complete phase one of our project. I have attached our budget to this testimony. This budget shows our current appropriation, estimated dues coming in, a small lease amount we receive from the ND Fire Marshal's office, and an amount awarded through the WSI-STEP grant program, which we use to fund specific training. Unfortunately, we cannot use these grant funds for the building. Under the NDFA Office line, we have put the estimated annual cost of what we would be paying in a mortgage if both Phase One and Phase Two were complete, even though we know Phase Two will not be completed before the end of 2025. This shows we would have a positive balance at the end of December, which is the estimated funding availability from our capital campaign, according to Pace Fundraising. This shows our ability to maintain our current funding and justify our request for one-time funding.

I have also attached a breakdown of our current rent amounts, comparing them to the new lease amounts if we were to stay at our current location, our estimated payments with a mortgage after Phase 1 is completed along with the additional storage building, and our estimated mortgage payment after Phase 2 is completed.

Thank you for allowing me the time to present this testimony, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

## 2025 Proposed Budget

<b>Income</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>
4000 • Sales	\$47,855.14	\$15,000.00
4100 • Dues	\$36,150.00	\$36,450.00
4115 • Leased Space	\$6,045.00	\$3,000.00
4200 • Grants	\$607,696.00	\$175,000.00
4300 • Registration	\$3,415.00	
4600 • Appropriations/ND	\$1,200,000.00	\$1,200,000.00
4700 • Testing Fees	\$2,820.00	
4800 • Reimbursed Expenses	\$28,283.50	
4820 • Donations	\$359.00	
4900 • Miscellaneous/Income	\$58.85	
Total Income	<u>\$1,934,706.49</u>	<u>\$1,429,450.00</u>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>\$1,934,706.49</b>	<b>\$1,429,450.00</b>

<b>Expense</b>		
6000 • NDFA Office	\$251,586.00	\$434,000.00
6100 • Annual Convention	\$10,903.00	\$15,000.00
6200 • State School	\$142,575.06	\$108,150.00
6300 • Regional School	\$85,966.24	\$40,000.00
6345 • AFG Grant	\$99,822.05	\$0.00
6350 • Department Level Training	\$19,223.93	\$21,000.00
6360 • HazMat Expense	\$21,309.96	\$32,900.00
6375 • Grant expenses-HMEP	\$46,758.81	\$0.00
6381 • WSI Grant	\$27,969.95	\$33,720.00
6400 • Conference	\$14,071.37	\$15,000.00
6500 • FF Certification	\$53,367.02	\$45,000.00
6551 • Pass Through Funds	\$1,600.00	\$0.00
6581 • Auto Extrication	\$46,567.02	\$50,000.00
6590 • Bank Service Charges	\$0.00	\$200.00
6600 • Insurance	\$11,385.48	\$15,000.00
66900 • Reconciliation Discrepancies	\$0.85	\$0.00
6700 • Interest Expense	\$0.00	\$0.00
6720 • Forms	\$523.53	\$500.00
6775 •	\$1,500.00	\$4,000.00
Membership/Dues/Subscriptions		
6800 • Payroll Expenses	\$413,741.83	\$460,000.00
6830 • Executive Board Expenses	\$12,528.36	\$8,000.00
6881 • Shop Equipment	\$458.68	\$6,000.00
6900 • Professional Fees	\$49,553.03	\$45,000.00
6925 • Repairs	\$3,360.79	\$6,000.00
6950 • Taxes	\$25,993.74	\$27,000.00
6960 • Training Library	\$29,652.12	\$15,000.00
6970 • Material for resale	\$19,505.76	\$15,000.00
8000 • Workshops	\$0.00	\$3,000.00
8110 • Vehicle Expense	\$12,056.58	\$15,000.00
8200 • Training Props	\$565,584.87	\$10,000.00
8217 • Fire Investigations	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Expense	<u>\$1,967,566.03</u>	<u>\$1,424,470.00</u>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>-\$32,859.54</b>	<b>\$4,980.00</b>

## Estimated Lease Payments vs. Mortgage Payment

### Current Grumman Rent

9045 SqFt  
9.5 per SqFt

### New Lease Grumman Rent

9045 SqFt  
16.5 per SqFt

### Current Platoon Rent

7,200 SqFt  
0.97 per SqFt

	Annual	Base	Base NNN
2017	\$85,927.50	\$7,160.63	\$7,660.63
2018	\$87,216.41	\$7,268.03	\$7,768.03
2019	\$88,524.66	\$7,377.05	\$7,877.05
2020	\$89,852.53	\$7,487.71	\$7,987.71
2021	\$91,200.32	\$7,600.03	\$8,100.03
2022	\$92,568.32	\$7,714.03	\$8,214.03
2023	\$93,956.85	\$7,829.74	\$8,329.74
2024	\$95,366.20	\$7,947.18	\$8,447.18
<b>2025</b>	<b>\$96,796.69</b>	<b>\$8,066.39</b>	<b>\$8,566.39</b>
2026	\$98,248.64	\$8,187.39	\$8,687.39

Annual	Monthly
\$149,242.50	\$12,436.88

Annual	Monthly
\$84,000	\$7,000

	Annual	Monthly	
Current Rent (both buildings)	\$180,796.69	\$15,066.39	
Estimated New Annual Rent (both buildings)	\$233,242.50	\$19,436.88	\$4,370.48 Total monthly increase
Est. Mortgage (Phase 1)	\$220,800.00	\$18,400.00	This includes new building and current additional storage building rent.
Est. Mortgage (Phase 2)	\$315,000.00	\$26,250.00	This is estimated mortgage would be after Phase 2 is completed (2026)

**2025 HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS**

**SB 2218**

# 2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## **Appropriations Committee** Roughrider Room, State Capitol

SB 2218  
3/24/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the insurance commissioner for a North Dakota firefighter's association grant; and to declare an emergency.

9:10 a.m. Chairman Vigesaa opened the meeting.

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

Members absent: Vice Chairman Kempenich, Representatives Mitskog

### **Discussion Topics:**

- Future construction grant

9:11 a.m. Representative Longmuir introduced the bill.

9:18 a.m. Robert Knuth, Instructor, ND Firefighter Association, answered questions.

9:34 a.m. Chairman Vigesaa closed the meeting.

*Krystal Eberle, Committee Clerk*



# 2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## **Appropriations Committee** Roughrider Room, State Capitol

SB 2218  
3/24/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the insurance commissioner for a North Dakota firefighter's association grant; and to declare an emergency.

11:41 a.m. Chairman Vigesaa opened the meeting.

Members present: Chairman Vigesaa, Vice Chairman Kempenich, Representatives Anderson, Berg, Bosch, Brandenburg, Fisher, Hanson, Louser, Martinson, Meier, Monson, Murphy, Nathe, Nelson, Richter, Sanford, Swiontek, Wagner

Members absent: Representatives: Mitskog, O'Brien, Pyle and Stemen

### **Discussion Topics:**

- New construction funding

11:41 a.m. Chairman Vigesaa opened discussion about SB 2218.

11:46 a.m. Chairman Vigesaa adjourned the meeting.

*Krystal Eberle, Committee Clerk*

# 2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Appropriations Committee Roughrider Room, State Capitol

SB 2218  
3/31/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the insurance commissioner for a North Dakota firefighter's association grant; and to declare an emergency.

10:49 a.m. Chairman Vigesaa opened the meeting.

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

Member absent: Vice Chairman Kempenich

### Discussion Topics:

- Committee Action

10:59 a.m. Representative J. Nelson moved Do Pass.

10:59 a.m. Representative Pyle seconded the motion.

11:00 a.m. Roll Call Vote

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

Representative Scott Wagner	N
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11:00 a.m. Motion failed 10-12-1.

11:06 a.m. Representative Murphy moved Do Not Pass.

11:06 a.m. Representative Nathe seconded the motion.

11:06 a.m. Roll Call Vote

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

11:06 a.m. Motion passed 12-10-1.

11:06 a.m. Representative Murphy will carry the bill.

11:08 a.m. Chairman Vigesaa closed the meeting.

*Krystal Eberle, Committee Clerk*

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE**  
**SB 2218 ([25.1151.01000](#))**

**Appropriations Committee (Rep. Vigesaa, Chairman)** recommends **DO NOT PASS** (12 YEAS, 10 NAYS, 1 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). SB 2218 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar.