

**Senate Judiciary Committee**  
**67<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session**  
**Senator Diane Larson-Chair**

Chairman Larson and Senate Judiciary Committee,

Please accept this testimony in support of SB 2246. I have served as the chair of the ND Veterans Court Exploratory Committee (VCEC) since 2010. Part of the purpose of the committee is to coordinate and collaborate resources and services available for ND Veterans who are "Justice Involved". Obtain data on ND Justice involved veterans. Determine necessity and actions needed to establish a specialty court for veterans in North Dakota. The VCEC has been involved in the meetings leading up to the creation of SB 2246 and fully support the bill as written. The VCEC members include members of...

- ND Department of Veterans Affairs
- Veteran Service Organizations
- Federal VA
- ND Department of Corrections Parole and Probation
- ND Legal Assist
- Human Services ND
- Veteran Service Officers
- District Court Judge
- Specialty Court Attorneys
- supports SB 2246.

Currently 41 states have an established Veterans Court. North Dakota is one of only 9 states which does not currently have an established physical Veterans court. SB 2246 utilizes many of the current programs and while it does not establish a Veterans "Court" but rather a "Veterans Docket" we believe it will be very cost affective. The states without a Veterans treatment court or Docket are...

- Iowa
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- New Mexico
- Nebraska
- North Dakota
- Vermont
- West Virginia
- Wyoming

Source: National Center of State Courts: <https://www.ncsc.org/topics/alternative-dockets/problem-solving-courts/veterans-court/state-links>

The Veterans Treatment Docket is not a “Get out of jail free card”. It is a win-win-win-win for all those involved.

- The Veteran gets the treatment needed.
- The prosecutor gets a conviction.
- The defense attorney gets the best outcome for their client (veteran).
- The community saves funds and hopefully gets a positive contributing member integrated back into their society.

North Dakota has two air bases and very successful National guard and reserve forces. A big part of what is considered on the Federal level when assigning these forces to the states is how the states support its military, dependents and veterans. This is one of many ways we can show that North Dakota appreciates and supports these Federally funded military services being located here.

I have worked extensively with many of North Dakota’s “Justice Involved” veterans over the last decade and I have found that having the option of utilizing the services available at the Federal VA as an option has been very successful in the past. Veterans courts in other states have proven their effectiveness and cost efficiency. It is time ND adds their name to the list of states that supports our veterans in legal affairs.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lonnie Wangen

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