

**Neutral Testimony
of Doug Sharbono, citizen of North Dakota
on HB1222
in the Sixty-eighth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota**

Dear Chairman Schauer and members of the House Government and Veterans Affair Committee,

I am writing as a citizen and am providing neutral testimony on HB1222. I have noticed in this legislation the definition of what a veteran is being revised.

I was a member of the North Dakota Army National Guard from 1990-1996 serving with HSC 142nd Engineer Combat Battalion (HV) in Fargo, ND as a Concrete/Asphalt Equipment Operator. I was a part of the battalion that volunteered for annual training in the Honduran mountains in 1991 for the Fuertes Caminos projects. We built schools, roads, and water tanks. One of my specific tasks was driving a M919 concrete mobile mixer. We could carry constituents to produce nine yards of concrete.

Officially, Honduras at that time was considered a non-combat zone. However, in reality this was not entirely true. There had been incidents of insurgency causing casualties. While we were there, we had our company-issued M16s and live ammo, which we carried at all times outside of the cantonment area. We were escorted from the airstrip to the cantonment area in convoy by Humvees with heavy machine guns. Admittedly, we were a little bare in defenses when we were driving the 40 ton concrete truck picking up rock, sand, and cement without escort with just two of us and our M16s. Although we had no casualties during our tour, the previous tour had a death when the truck's brakes failed in the mountains and became a runaway.

Despite some room for argument that Honduras was a combat zone, the Pentagon has remained steadfast that it was safe and only training and war games. Thus, many who served down there did not achieve veteran status without the combat zone designation.

[Central America War | Central America War \(1979 – 1992\) \(uscontrawar.com\)](http://uscontrawar.com)

HB1222 has caught my attention as it would change my veteran status. I really am indifferent as to whether this happens, but I do have some questions and concerns for the sponsors and the GVA committee:

1. Will this new proposed state provision cause conflict with the federal definitions of veteran?
2. Are there other states that have this revised definition?

3. Have the Veteran Service Organizations been contacted for their position on this bill?
4. Has the North Dakota National Guard been contacted for their position on this bill?
5. When a number of prior service military members achieve veteran status, what will the financial costs to the state be for this change as they potentially could qualify for more benefits? A fiscal note would have been handy.
6. What is the reason or source driving this change of veteran definition?
7. Will this revision cheapen the current veteran status of those who are currently recognized for serving in combat zones?

Thank you Chairman Schauer and members of the House GVA committee for allowing me to provide this neutral testimony on HB1222.

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