

TESTIMONY OF
MAJOR JAY SHELDON
NORTH DAKOTA NATIONAL GUARD
BEFORE THE
SENATE AGRICULTURE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS
02 MARCH 2023
HOUSE BILL 1193

Good morning, Chairman Luick members of the committee, I am Jay Sheldon, Strategy and Policy Officer for the North Dakota National Guard (NDNG). I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 1193.

The North Dakota National Guard has many members that are state employees or employed by political sub-divisions that perform their duties under the rules of state employees. Regardless, they are all impacted by the current law that prevents them from using their military leave for drill weekends and other military duties like State Active Duty or the travel associated with military duties where orders are not produced.

Over the past couple of decades, the North Dakota National Guard along with other National Guards around the country have transitioned from the traditional 2-day drill periods to drill periods of 2.5 to 3 days, typically, Friday, Saturday, Sunday. The shift occurred mainly to make better use of the limited number of days we must train.

During a 2-day drill valuable time is spent on administrative requirements and the final preparations for training events. By expanding training periods units can meet more of their training objectives. By expanding drill periods units are also able to take a month off, traditionally during winter months, with the intent to avoid having members travel during the months that typically have severe weather.

It is during these expanded drill periods or in the performance of other military duties that based on current law our members are not allowed to use their military leave, forcing them to use personal leave or un-paid leave.

Anecdotally we have heard that many of our members employed in emergency response professions that implement rotational shifts are the most impacted by the current law. The impact has been enough that it influences their decision to continue their military career.

Granted, there are likely other contributing reasons for them leaving the National Guard, but this bill would provide a tool to reduce obstacles while they serve the state and their communities in their civilian capacity and as a member of the North Dakota National Guard.

I ask for your support of HB 1193 and will stand for questions.