

HOUSE BILL 2021 Testimony

Presented To

Committee on Appropriations

By Bruce Fischbach, Past State Commander

Kansas Veterans of Foreign Wars

Chairman Waymaster, Vice Chair Hoffman, Ranking Minority Member Wolfe Moore, Committee members Alcala, Ballard, Burroughs, Carlin, Carpenter, Concannon, Corbet, Estes, Francis, Helgerson, Humphries, Landwehr, Johnson, Owens, Parker, Proehl, Rahjes, Sutton, Tarwater and Williams.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today, in favor of HB2021.

On January 11, 2021, Representatives Proctor, Croft, Ellis, French, and T. Johnson and introduced a bill authorizing the issuance of bonds for the construction of a state veterans home.

As a past state VFW Kansas Commander and a past VCAP (Veterans Claims Assistance Program) Committee member (July 2015-January 2019) I would support the authorizing the issuance of bonds for the construction of a state veterans home.

The importance of passing HB 2021 legislation is twofold: first and foremost, it's the right thing to do for veterans. Today roughly 70% of the veterans in Kansas today live east of Hwy 81 and roughly 50% live east of Hwy 75. Douglass, Johnson, Leavenworth Shawnee and Wyandotte counties are hugely populated with veterans and a new Veterans home would make sense knowing the population. Many of these veterans are Vietnam era veterans who may in the near future need the services offered by these veteran's homes. Second the Veterans homes we currently have in Ft. Dodge, KS and Winfield, KS are not only becoming antiquated, but are a significant distance from the areas where most veterans in the State of Kansas are located.

By being so far out, it is a challenge for families to visit their loved one if they are living at one of the current state veterans' homes. For example, a trip to the veterans home in Ft. Dodge from Kansas City, KS is five hours away and to Winfield from Kansas City, KS is more than three hours away. A trip for the families would be a chore as well as in this

lockdown environment, even window visits aren't available. It is imperative we create a new home where the veterans and families are more apt to be.

In summation, the Ft. Dodge Soldiers home is an aging facility, with a domiciliary unit for 30, long term care unit for 30, a 26-bed special care unit for dementia, and 60 cottages. All of this and in years past It has been less than 60% utilized. Winfield is a good facility near where another large population of veterans are in the Wichita area. What got us here is not going to take us where we need to go, and we need a new facility where a majority of the veterans are located.

Thank you all for your time, and service to the State of Kansas. I would be honored to try to answer any questions you may have involving this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce R. Fischbach

Past State Commander, Department of Kansas Veterans of Foreign Wars

Current Commander of the Kansas Cooties #2 – (honor degree of VFW focusing on VA hospitals and services)