



**Veterans of Foreign Wars
Philip Billard Post No. 1650
3110 SW Huntoon Street
Topeka, Kansas 66604**

14 March 2017

FOR: Chairman Representative Steven Johnson, Kansas House Tax Committee

SUBJECT: Support for HB2261

- 1) VFW Post #1650 is the surviving VFW Post in Topeka out of the three that previously existed. Our Post has been a pillar in the Topeka Community for 88 years with many distinguished Kansans as members. We currently have 726 members of the 19,609 VFW members in Kansas. I urge you, on behalf of our Topeka VFW Post to send HB2261 to the floor for approval.
- 2) Currently our VFW does not qualify for the exempt status and is continually challenged to raise funds to sustain our operations. The Sales Tax collected from our Post in proportion to the State's overall revenue is miniscule in comparison, but enormously critical to our Post's ability to assist and support veterans and their families.
- 3) It is irrational that our VSOs do not merit the same status as many organizations already benefiting from sales tax exemptions. Many of these organizations serve very small populations within our Kansas communities with an equal or greater impact to Kansas Revenues.
- 4) Our Post paid \$3,749 in FY16 to Kansas Department of Revenue for State Sales Tax. I would like to take a moment to share with you what our Topeka Veterans and Topeka Community Received for that \$3,749:
 - Over 1,000 hours of volunteer service with Youth Development, Community and Veterans Services.
 - 300 hours of weekly socialization, entertainment, and exercise for over 70 persons of age 60 and over
 - Law Enforcement, Fire Fighter, and EMT Awards and gift certificates
 - Teacher Recognition and Awards
 - 28 Funeral Honor Guards for Topeka Veteran Families
 - \$600 in prize awards for Youth Recognition Programs; Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Essays
 - \$200 for Boy Scout/Eagle Scout Recognition Certificates
 - Five Parades and Civic Events
 - \$300 for Topeka's Five JROTC Recognition Awards Programs
 - \$1100 for sponsorship of two Kansas National Guard Unit Holiday Events
 - \$1,500 in relief funds for FY17
 - Four events honoring our Veterans; Women Veterans, Vietnam War Veterans, Korea War Veterans, Desert Storm Veterans
- 5) For our Post relief fund, we are only able to budget about \$1,500 annually. We habitually are unable to meet the needs of many of our veteran requests for assistance. It would be great to triple this budget with the added \$3,749 we would save by this exemption. Each week, we have at least one veteran submit a request for relief. For fear of running out of funds, we can only allocate about \$150 monthly for these unmet needs. It is just not enough to fulfill the needs in our community. Below are two examples of relief fund requests that we have partially fulfilled:

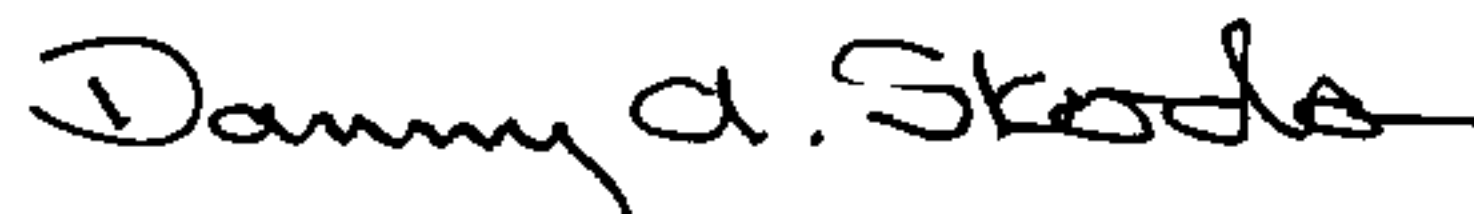
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- a. On 9 August, 2016, Lawrence E. Harnisch, a Vietnam Veteran, was unable to pay all of his bills with the small amount of income he received \$1,280. His monthly bills amounted to \$1,442.43. The Post paid \$156.43 for his Westar Energy Bill to avoid any additional late fees.
- b. Christopher Munro, was unable to find work and could not pay his rent for the month. He requested \$750, but our Post was only able to allocate \$350 for this request.

6) In conclusion, the list of contributions from our Topeka Post to our veterans and community came from just one of the 422 veteran service organization's Post and Chapters across Kansas. For each dollar of tax relief you could exempt us from, we will multiply your investment by five or more in giving back to each community in Kansas. I can not think of a better investment for our State than to approve this Bill. This is not for the sake of lost revenues, it is for the sake of our front line organizations who assist our veterans and our communities so greatly.



Danny Skoda
Quartermaster
Post No. 1650