



Greetings, Chair and Members. Representative Elkins, thank you for introducing this bill today. This bill is important to both of the statewide veterans advocacy organizations I represent and to the Minnesota Commander's Task Force.

My name is Dr. Kristy Janigo, and I am the American Legion Department of Minnesota Legislative Chair. I also represent the Minnesota Association of County Veteran Service Officers as their legislative chair, because I am an assistant county veteran service officer for my day job. I was a 92 whiskey or water treatment specialist in the ND Army National Guard from 2000 to 2006 in which they entrusted a teenager with a multimillion dollar piece of equipment.

When I was a young girl growing up in rural ND, I attended Memorial Day and Veterans Day observances with my granddad, who served in the Army in Okinawa in WWII. I learned respect for the flag and patriotism from a young age through the honor guard rituals and the gun salutes on those holidays. I'll never forget the image of the senior men including my granddad. Veterans who had bravely defended their country from tyranny and attacks overseas. Whose salutes to the red, white, and blue had become unsteady and rather shaky with age and declining health. But who still were the embodiment of sacrifice, pride, strength, patriotism, and faith, the best attributes of America. To me they were and remain heroes.

This bill will not move mountains. But it will mean a lot for local communities across Minnesota. It will maintain the rich tradition of honoring our veterans, and it will impact the young girls and boys like it did for me. We veterans do fear that the public forgets about our sacrifices and does not understand our issues. Having these observances can really help to educate the public. And we need that education to continue.

The bill allows counties to appropriate \$300 for Veterans Day observances, the same way state law already allows this funding for Memorial Day observances. This bill does not mandate for counties to fund Veterans Day observances. It does make it an option, however. County Veteran Service Officers like our Association President Josh Beninga of Lac qui Parle County are usually the agents who administer this funding to their local Legion, VFW, or other congressionally chartered veterans service organizations. And our CVSOs often are honored guests or speakers at these observances. It strengthens the relationships between veterans in the service organizations and county government, which increases their chances of seeking out assistance through the federal VA, state department of veterans affairs, or other entities that can provide life changing support to those who served.

Thank you again for hearing this important bill which means so much to the veterans community.

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