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Brigadier General Michael T. Venerdi
The Adjutant General and Director of
Emergency Management & Homeland Security

Laura Kelly, Governor

March 5, 2024

Committee on Veterans and Military
Kansas House of Representatives
Attn: Representative Ronald Ellis, Chair
Cc: Betty Boaz, Committee Assistant
State Capitol, Room 281-N
300 SW 10th Ave
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide **proponent** testimony in support of Senate Bill No. 292. Lieutenant Colonel Jacob McElwee, my Legal Advisor and Staff Judge Advocate, will testify on my behalf.

Senate Bill No. 292 provides administrative updates to Kansas Statutes Annotated (KSA) Chapter 48, which governs the organizational and administrative functions of the Kansas National Guard. First, it codifies how The Adjutant General selects and appoints the State Judge Advocate and assistant judge advocates. The bill also addresses the state military disability board, which determines benefits to national guard members who are injured or killed while in service to the State of Kansas. Currently, those who suffer a 100% disability while on State Active Duty are eligible for \$120 per month plus 12.5% of their monthly pay. For an E-5 Sergeant, that equates to approximately \$570 per month for 100% disability, which is woefully inadequate. The bill increases that to \$850 plus 12.5% of base pay. Current law also provides funeral expenses, not to exceed \$500, for members killed while on State Active Duty. The bill increases that limit to \$3500. It also addresses benefits for surviving spouses and children.

There are several terms and positions in KSA Chapter 48 that date back to the 19th century which have been re-defined, eliminated or updated that the SB 292 addresses:

- State finance officer: a position that has been replaced by the United States Property and Fiscal Officer for Kansas
- Muster and camp instruction: has been replaced by annual training
- The pool of available personnel is currently defined as able-bodied *male* citizens
- Current statute requires the Governor to coordinate uniforms and arms with the Secretary of War, which hasn't existed since 1947 (now the Secretary of Defense)
- Commanding officers are required to report by telegraph
- Armories are required to be open to the Grand Army of the Republic (a Civil War veterans organization) and the Spanish American War Veterans for meetings and events, but no mention of organizations like the Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion, which date

to the early 1900s and 1910s; the bill eliminates named organizations and gives the officer in charge authority over use for public functions deemed "advisable and proper"

As you can see, these administrative updates are long overdue, and we appreciate your consideration of this bill.

Thank you for your continued support of the Kansas National Guard and its nearly 7,000 soldiers and airmen, and their families. You are welcome to reach out to me if you need anything. You may also contact my legislative liaison, Lt. Col. Keith Marshall, at 785-646-0011 or keith.marshall.1@us.af.mil.

MICHAEL T. VENERDI
Brigadier General, Kansas National Guard
The Adjutant General