

Proponent Testimony Statement Regarding HB 2020

Subject Bill is "Requiring the Kansas commission on veterans affairs office to submit an initial application for a VA state veterans home construction grant."

Related appropriations bill, HB 2021, is "Authorizing the issuance of bonds for the construction of a state veterans home."

The purpose of HB 2020 is to support establishment of a skilled nursing facility for veterans in northeast Kansas through a construction grant program administered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

Other existing facilities proudly serve veterans near Winfield and near Dodge City. Both of these facilities are south and west of our center of population. The center of population for Kansas is in Chase County, three miles north of Strong City. Therefore, the skilled nursing facility proposed by this bill will serve veterans in a geographically unserved portion of the state.

Accordingly, this proposal supports geographic equity for veterans. If a veteran is living in a facility far from family, there is isolation and a negative mental health impact. Families in northeast Kansas will be able to visit more often; thereby improving the mental health and overall quality of life of veterans in this newly proposed facility.

Aging veterans need skilled nursing care and this facility will add to capacity for such care. The current availability of skilled nursing care is low. Operation of this facility will be supported by federal dollars in the appropriations of the Veterans Administration. Also, the Veterans Administration grant will support 65% of the construction cost.

The House Appropriations Committee has already approved related HB 2021.

This project is **the top legislative priority of veterans groups** across Kansas. I request the support of all members of the committee.

Respectfully submitted by
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