

Louis M. Lombardi
Veterans Service Officer

Brian Reybok
Assistant Service Officer

Kimberly Keller
Benefits Counselor/Administration

Grand Forks County Veterans Service Office

151 South 4th St. - P. O. Box 5547
Grand Forks, ND 58206-5547

Sixth Floor
County Office Bldg.
701-780-8296
Fax: 701-787-8603

Dear Senator Heitkamp,

I am advocating for the establishment of a full time Vet Center in Grand Forks County. The need is present given our current veteran population, active duty military presence at Grand Forks Air Force Base and our Army National Guard units.

Vet Centers across the country provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to combat veterans and their families. They are located in the following counties (cities) in North Dakota based on population size; Cass (Fargo), Burleigh (Bismarck), and Ward (Minot). Currently, one does not exist in Grand Forks.

Grand Forks County qualifies and must be added to this list. Veterans living in Grand Forks and the surrounding areas will substantially benefit from the Veterans Administration establishing a center here.

Vet Centers guide Veterans and their families through many of the major adjustments in lifestyle, often occurring after a veteran returns from combat. Services are free of cost and strictly confidential. Vet Center services may include:

- Individual and group counseling for veterans and their families in areas such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Bereavement counseling for families who experience an active duty death
- Military sexual trauma counseling and referral
- Substance abuse assessment and referral
- Screening and referral for medical issues including traumatic brain injury, depression, etc.
- Suicide prevention referrals

I would appreciate your support of this activity and have included several letters of support from our County Commissioners, City Mayor, and surrounding County Veteran Service Officers.

Respectfully,



Louis Lombardi
Veterans Service Officer

Grand Forks County

Diane K. Knauf
Grand Forks, ND

Gary Malm
Grand Forks, ND

Tom Falck
Grand Forks, ND

Cynthia Pic
Niagara, ND

David Engen
Northwood, ND

Board of Commissioners
P.O. Box 6372
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58206-6372



Dear Senator Heitkamp,

We have reviewed our veteran service officer's request for a vet center to be established in Grand Forks and fully support this effort.

Vet Centers are crucial in guiding veterans and their family's lifestyle adjustment, often occurring when veterans return home from battle. Our county veterans, active duty military and National Guard presence further supports the need to locate this agency here. The current state of military operations and force draw down activity will only increase the number of those eligible for services. Eligible family members are able to benefit from the services they perform as well.

Key services in the areas such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, alcohol and drug assessment and suicide prevention referrals are vital to this outreach effort. Knowing these services are available will encourage our combat veterans to seek out the necessary care, promoting early intervention before unfortunate situations arise.

Additionally, partnering with our nearby counties will prevent veterans residing near Grand Forks from traveling great distances for vital assistance.

We urge you to bring this effort before Congress as they consider Veteran Affairs funding this upcoming budget session.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane K. Knauf". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Diane Knauf
Chair, Grand Forks Commission



City of Grand Forks

255 North Fourth Street • P.O. Box 5200 • Grand Forks, ND 58206-5200

(701) 746-2607
FAX # (701) 787-3773

August 10, 2015

The Honorable Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senate
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-3407

I believe establishing a Vet Center in Grand Forks, North Dakota is the right thing to do; at the right time. We enjoy a great relationship with our active military, National Guard, and veteran population and want to help support our County Veterans Service Officer in this endeavor.

Vet Centers are crucial in guiding veterans and their family's lifestyle adjustment, often occurring when veterans return home from battle. War zones in Iraq and Afghanistan, combined with current military operations around the world has placed a severe strain on our combat veterans and their families. Returning combat veterans will find this service beneficial in easing their transition back into our local community. I believe this proactive approach will aid in a smoother readjustment experience for the service member and their families.

Key services in the areas such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, alcohol and drug assessment and suicide prevention referrals are vital to this outreach effort. Promoting these services is essential to our combat veterans seeking the necessary care and early intervention before unfortunate situations occur.

I urge you to fully support this effort as you advocate on behalf of our North Dakota veterans before Congress.

Additionally, I would like to assist with finding the ideal location within my community, because the nature of this service demands such strong focus and support. Please do not hesitate to contact me when you decide to establish the Vet Center in my city.

Sincerely,

Michael Brown, Mayor
City of Grand Forks

PHONE: (701) 352-5030
FAX: (701) 352-5031

ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING
638 COOPER AVE, SUITE 5

WALSH COUNTY
OFFICE OF
COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

GRAFTON, NORTH DAKOTA 58237

To whom it may Concern,

Veterans who have returned from fighting our nation's wars are plagued by an array of injuries. Some of these injuries can be observed such as burns or wounds from battle but others are not so easily recognizable such as adjustment disorder and Post Traumatic Stress. Mental health is a top priority for our nation's veterans and ensuring that we as a nation are doing everything in our power to see that these heroes are given the care that they deserve is our duty and obligation. Vet Centers can help fill the gap for many of these service members that are looking for treatment and counseling for many of the mental health issues that they are dealing with. These centers serve veterans and dependents and help to establish a groundwork toward healing. The Walsh County Veterans Service Office would not only be supportive of establishing a Vet Center in the city of Grand Forks, ND but our office believes that by establishing a Vet Center there, many of the veterans in the Northeast corner of North Dakota may finally have that quick access to the care that they need. Any assistance that our office can make in this endeavor will extended. Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris Kratochvil
Veterans Service Officer



VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

Trail County, North Dakota

Office: 701-636-4414, Cell: 701-430-7059, Fax: 701-636-4415

Emily Cost
Veterans Service Officer

P.O. Box 785
Hillsboro, ND 58045

July 7, 2015

To whom it may concern:

This letter is to address the strong support for establishing a Vet Center in Grand Forks, ND. A new location in Grand Forks would increase the opportunity and reduce the burden for Veterans in Traill County, ND to receive help when it is needed. Many Veterans will refuse to travel to Fargo to receive help because it is too far away and not convenient. Veterans in Traill County travel to Grand Forks for their needs, VA healthcare, and many work in Grand Forks, making a Vet Center a great opportunity for Veterans to receive help when they would choose not to otherwise. Adding a Vet Center location in Grand Forks will greatly benefit and make a positive impact for the Veterans of Traill County. Please contact me for any future questions or correspondence.

Most Sincerely,

Emily Cost
Veterans Service Officer
emily.cost@co.trail.nd.us



Eric Gauthier

Veteran Service Officer

301 Dakota St W #16

Cavalier, ND 58220

I am pleased to learn of Lou's efforts to establish a Vet Center in Grand Forks. Each time we expand services to our Veterans we acknowledge their sacrifice and service. Vet Centers in particular help returning Veterans adjust to life after deployment.

A Vet Center in the Grand Forks area will be a great community asset. Not just to the city or county proper, but to the whole state. It will be an asset to every Veteran that decides to make North Dakota their home, or to its sons and daughters that return home after deployment.

A Vet Center in the Grand Forks area will also help the rural communities such as the ones in Pembina County. We cannot do enough to support our Veterans.

A Vet Center in the Grand Forks area will also provide closer outreach for Veterans in North East North Dakota.

I wholly support this idea and commend Lou Lombardi for taking this task on to help our Veterans.

Eric Gauthier

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Gauthier", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

TO WHOM IT CONCERNS

Subject: Establishing a Vet Center in Grand Forks North Dakota

I understand that the Veterans Service Officer in Grand Forks , Mr. Lou Lombardi, is working on getting a Vet Center established in Grand Forks, North Dakota. I believe this would be an absolutely great idea with more and more veterans coming back from the Gulf with major mental issues. The Fargo VAMC is our closest vet center and I am sure they are being overwhelmed with clients.

I have held this position as the POLK County Veterans Service Officer for 16 years and have helped many veterans to get into the mental health system in Fargo. They do an outstanding job working with our veterans but travelling from the great NW in the middle of winter can be a challenge for any one. Locating a Vet Center in Grand Forks would serve this entire region both in ND and MN.

I know that the Fargo Vet Center does conduct meetings once a month in Thief River Falls setup by the Pennington Veterans Service Officer and is well attended by a variety of veterans from various wars. A Vet Center in Grand Forks could consolidate this service in one location.

Thank you for your favorable consideration on Mr. Lombardi's effort on this project. I am available to answer any questions .

Sincerely Yours

Leslie Goodwin

Veterans Service Officer