

January 23, 2023

Statement of  
Steve Kjonaas, Legislative Director  
Veterans of Foreign Wars, Colorado

For The Record  
Colorado State House  
Civic, Military, & Veterans Affairs  
With Respect To

**HB23-1053 Veterans Cemetery Department of Public Safety Gifts  
Grants Donations**

Chairman Woodrow and members of the State, Civic, Military, & Veterans Affairs Committee, I'm Steve Kjonaas, the Legislative Director and past State Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Colorado. On behalf of the 23,000 men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Colorado and its Auxiliary, thank you for the opportunity to provide our position on HB23-1053 Veterans Cemetery Department of Public Safety Gifts Grants Donations.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars history dates to the Colorado State Capitol where in 1899 a group of U.S. Soldiers of the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection from around the country founded the VFW. Our legacy and strengths around the world keep us focused on our membership.

Our legislative concerns and priorities are many while they are straight forward and always for the benefit of the Military, Veterans, and their Family members. We feel Veterans and military quality of life issues must be a priority of our State legislature, U.S. Congress, and the U.S. Administration.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars, Colorado supports the passage and adoption of HB23-1053 as written.

Veteran of Foreign Wars Posts along the Western Slope have supported the Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado through monetary donations, meals and gasoline for family members, and Color Guard performing honors during funerals. As well, several other Veterans Service Organizations along the Western Slope have helped as needed. The donations from Veteran Service Organizations are normally restricted for expenditure on funding shortfalls, unforeseen maintenance issues, along with others necessities as determined by the Cemetery Director.

VFW members, their spouses, community members ask whether there is something that can be done to further improve operation of the Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado. Now we have the chance to pass legislation that not only honors our fallen, but shows Colorado and its neighbors that veterans are important and that we need to provide every ounce of support and comfort to the families who lost their Veteran.

Right now, is our chance to prove to Colorado that Every Veteran Counts.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my written testimony, regrettably conflicting events prevents me from testifying in person or virtually.