



## **Minnesota Association of County Veterans Service Officers**

---

**Written Testimony on HF 3001  
Military discharge certificates recorded  
w/county recorder w/o fees  
Greg Peterson, New Ulm**

February 9, 2022

Labor, Industry, Veterans and Military Affairs Finance and Policy Committee  
Representative Rob Ecklund Chair

Dear Representative Ecklund and Committee members,

I submit this testimony as a Special Advisor to the Minnesota Commanders Task Force (CTF) which comprises the eight State-level Commanders of The American Legion, American Veterans, Disabled American Veterans, Jewish War Veterans, Marine Corps League, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

We give credit to Mike McLaughlin, the Blue Earth County Veterans Service Officer for identifying the language in this Statute as not encompassing all branches of the US Military, specifically the Air Force, Coast Guard, and now Space Force.

My own County [Brown County] experienced a dilemma in 1992 when an astute CVSO realized that we were providing free grave plots to Air Force Veterans which was contrary to the 1917 codified text of Statute 375.37 which provided free burials for "Soldiers, Sailors, and War Nurses." Assistant Attorney General Merwin Peterson opined<sup>i</sup> [that] "since the Air Force was split off of the Army, it seems reasonable to allow Air Force burials." The language was changed in the next session to follow statute 197.447; the definition of a Veteran.

Statute 386.20 was codified in 1919 specifying the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. While there have been at least 6 updates, this particular language has remained fixed since 1919.

For statistical purposes, the MN Department of Veterans Affairs reported that in CY21 they tabulated 5,300 discharges from all branches of the services. Over 4,000 came from the National Guard(s), and Reserves. There were 168 Air Force discharges, 8 Coast Guard, and zero Space Force discharges.

There is no indication that any County Recorder has charged a fee to record a discharge from an Air Force or Coast Guard member. I believe our County Recorders are following an unwritten guide that they provide recordation for all branches of the Armed Forces of the United States.

We concur with this language change which will always encompass all branches of the US Armed Forces.

Thank you.

*Greg Peterson*

MN Commanders Task Force  
MACVSO

---

<sup>i</sup> 5/19/1992, Veteran Burials, Letter to Dennis Forsberg, Director, MDVA