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## I. Introduction

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. For the record, my name is Walter Andonov, Assemblyman representing district 21 in Henderson. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present AB306 to you this morning.

## II. Lead-in

“No veteran should be denied the right to a proper burial with the special honors we accord to those who have served us all upon the ramparts of freedom.”

This quote from John Gwidzak, the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States expresses the sentiments that I believe every one of us in this room feels.

And it's not just those of us in this room who feel that way...throughout a grateful nation, people feel that we should repay our debt to those who made our peace and prosperity possible in the first place—America's military veterans.

I believe that all veterans deserve a dignified and honorable burial. I feel that there is a need to assist those who have served their country and then became homeless. All Americans who served their country deserve honor and respect in life, and certainly, dignity in death. The

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intention of this bill is to allow veterans groups to participate in a display of gratitude to those whose contributions to our security and to peace would otherwise have been forgotten.

What happens when a homeless or indigent veteran dies and there are no family members who come forward to claim the body? In Nevada, if a veteran's body is not claimed by family members, then those remains will be disposed of according to the minimal standards of our Nevada Revised Statutes. That means the body will be held for 30 days and then be sent to the "Committee of Anatomical Dissection"...this means the veteran's body will be cut up for scientific research. Or, as I have heard from representatives from veterans organizations -- such as the Marine Corps League in Henderson -- in some cases, the bodies can remain unclaimed at the morgue for an extended period of time. In both cases, the individual is denied the dignity of a respectful military funeral.

### **III. Purpose of legislation**

The purpose of Assembly Bill 306 is to allow recognized veterans organizations -- groups such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Marine Corps League I mentioned earlier, the American Legion, among others -- to claim the body of a deceased, indigent veteran and to perform a

#### **IV. Final comments**

This legislation is a small way of saying thank you and to show our respect to our military veterans who might otherwise be forgotten. It is not designed to replace existing governmental programs, only to enhance them.

Our current conflict in the Middle East highlights for all of us the brave, noble and selfless service that America's servicemen and servicewomen provide for us. I urge this committee to support this bill as a display of gratitude to those whose contributions and service to our country would otherwise be forgotten.

#### **V. Conclusion**

With that, Mr. Chairman, the Executive Director of the Nevada Office of Veterans Services, Mr. Chuck Fulkerson, as well as members of the Henderson chapter of the Marine Corps League, are all prepared to speak on behalf of this bill. So, unless there are any questions for me, I can turn the testimony over to Mr. Fulkerson.

dignified military funeral for the individual. Currently, charitable and religious organizations are empowered to claim bodies and provide these funerals right now, and this would simply add veterans to the list of recognized groups. This bill will also allow a veterans group to apply for a plot at a state veterans cemetery on behalf of the deceased veteran.

This legislation has no fiscal impact on state or local budgets, since the United States Code prescribes that veterans are eligible for a free burial at a veterans ceremony. The ceremonial additions – such as providing an honor guard – would be provided by the veterans organizations themselves.

A number of other states have passed similar legislation. They include Montana, Idaho, Missouri, California, among others. An intangible benefit that has been noted in these states is that it allows veterans groups to work together to provide services for their fellow military veterans. This helps create a great deal of camaraderie and friendship as a byproduct of this process.