



NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE®

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PATRICK YOES
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

JIMMY HOLDERFIELD
NATIONAL SECRETARY

January 19, 2026

Director Bill Peterson
State Historical Society of North Dakota
612 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Director Peterson,

I am writing on behalf of the 382,000 members of the National Fraternal Order of Police to express our full support for the concerns raised by the North Dakota State Lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police regarding your organization's recent receipt of an oil painting titled "*Big Medicine*," created by Leonard Peltier.

Mr. Peltier, a Native American activist, was convicted in 1977 for the 1975 execution-style murders of FBI Special Agents Jack Coler and Ronald Williams. Both agents were killed at close range while performing their sworn duties. His convictions were upheld through multiple appeals, and repeated requests for clemency were denied for decades. On February 18, 2025, President Joe Biden commuted Mr. Peltier's life sentence to home confinement, resulting in his release from federal prison. While this action changed the conditions of his incarceration, it did not alter the fact of his conviction for the murders of two federal law enforcement officers.

We recognize that the State Historical Society of North Dakota has a mission to preserve and interpret the history and culture of the state, and that accepting works of art from North Dakota residents may fall within the purview of that mission. However, the decision to publicly display such an item is not merely a curatorial choice, it is a public statement. Displaying artwork created by an individual convicted of the brutal murders of two federal law enforcement officers risks conveying a message that celebrates or glorifies violence and undermines respect for the rule of law.

Public institutions bear a responsibility to consider how their actions are perceived by the communities they serve. The men and women of law

Patrick Yoes, National President
Fraternal Order of Police

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enforcement in North Dakota, along with countless citizens who value justice and public safety, view the potential public exhibition of this painting as a profound affront to the memory of Agents Coler and Williams and to all officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

We respectfully urge the State Historical Society to carefully weigh its options in determining how this painting will be handled. In doing so, we ask that you consider not only the historical or artistic implications, but also the broader impact on the citizens of North Dakota, the law enforcement community, and the families who continue to bear the burden of this tragedy. Ultimately, we hope your conscience will guide actions that serve the greater interests of the people of your state.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your written response.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Yoes", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Patrick Yoes
National President