

ANDRÉ JACQUE

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Madison, WI 53707-7882

*Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs
State Senator André Jacque
January 16, 2020*

Chairman Skowronski and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill 591, relating to payments to certain state veterans organizations.

The American Legion is a not-for-profit Veteran Service Organization (VSO) chartered and incorporated by Congress in 1919. The American Legion is the nation's largest wartime veterans' service organization, committed to mentoring youth and sponsorship of wholesome programs in our communities, advocating Americanism and honor, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to our fellow service-members and veterans.

The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin, Veterans Service Office staff located at the VA Regional Office in Milwaukee (the Veterans Service Officer and seven support staff) work tirelessly to assist veterans and their families with VA disability benefits, provide referrals, resources on education, employment, business, death benefits and other important topics.

The economic impact of The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin, Service Office is extraordinary. From 6/1/17 to 5/31/18 the Service Office has performed over 27,000 client services and completed over 45,000 transactions totaling over 268 million dollars in earned benefits. Benefits include: education, vocational rehabilitation, burial, compensation, pension, death pension, automobile allowances and dependent indemnity compensation. They also assist veterans with obtaining awards, decorations, as well as applying for discharge upgrades.

The workload at the American Legion, Department of Wisconsin Veterans Service Office located at the Regional Office in Milwaukee has increased dramatically in the past decade. For example in 2007 they performed 16,034 Total Client Services. In 2018 that number increased to 81,588 Total Client Services performed.

Under current law, the Department of Veterans Affairs may make payments to certain state veterans organizations who apply for funding. The amount payable is equal to 50 percent of all salaries and travel expenses of the employees of the organization who are engaged in veterans claims service activities during the funding application period or \$100,000 whichever is less. Under our proposal the funding limit is increased from \$100,000 to \$175,000.

This bill is strongly supported by the Wisconsin American Legion.

Thank you for your consideration of Assembly Bill 591.



TONY KURTZ

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 50th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

2019 Assembly Bill 591

Relating to: payments to certain state veteran organizations.
Public Hearing: Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs
December 4, 2019

Thank you, Chairman Skowronksi and members of the committee for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 591 (AB 591).

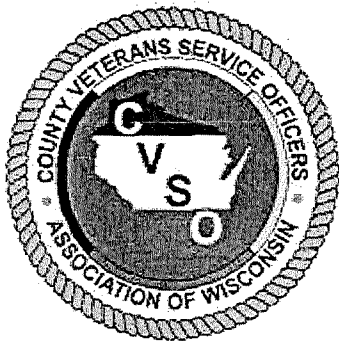
When veterans need to have a disability claim processed with the VA (Federal Department of Veterans Affairs), they can choose to represent themselves or they can choose to have a veteran service organization, such as the American Legion or the VFW, to do the work on their behalf.

When this happens, the service organization will apply for a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Veteran Affairs to help offset some of the costs of doing the work on behalf of the veterans.

Over time, more and more veterans have been choosing to have service organizations do this work, which has given rise in the workload of the service organizations. The problem has been, that while the workload has continued to rise, the grant amounts have not kept pace with the additional workload increase.

AB 591 seeks to correct this by increasing the grant to help the service organizations be able to help our veterans.

I thank you for your time and for listening to my testimony. I would be honored to have earned your support of AB 591 and will take any questions you have for me at this time.



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January 16, 2019

Chairman Skowronski and Committee Members, thank you for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill 591, relating to payments to certain state veterans organizations.

The service offices at the Milwaukee VA Regional Office, run by the Veterans Service Organizations, play important roles in the advocacy and assistance to Wisconsin Veterans, especially in their assistance, guidance, and support to Wisconsin's County Veterans Service Officers. As the VA's claims and appeals processes have become increasingly complex, the VSO service offices are vital to the quality control of claims submitted on behalf of Veterans and their family members. These offices assist CVSOs in the tracking of claims and appeals for benefits, helping us to meet deadlines. They track trends, keeping CVSOs aware of best practices, and helping us to avoid mistakes that delay claims processing. Service Offices are a vital link between CVSOs and Veterans Benefits Administration staff at the Milwaukee Regional Office, such as consolidating questions and concerns and facilitating training to help improve the processes of claims submission. The staff at Service Offices are extremely important in the appeals process, particularly in their representation of Veterans during hearings with the Board of Veterans Appeals.

The work our Service Offices do is not slowing down with the decline in Veteran numbers. As our Vietnam War Veterans age, their need for assistance is increasing. The debilitating diseases caused by Agent Orange are continuing to increase both in the numbers who suffer from them and in severity complicated by age. Pension applications for the survivors of our Korean War Veterans are increasing and the application process has become onerous. Our Gulf War Veterans, now middle aged, are turning to the veterans benefits their honorable service to our nation earned them, and because many of them served in our military's Reserve Components, their cases are far more complex. Our Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans, who are far better informed than past generations about their earned benefits, are rightly seeking to maximize them.

Wisconsin support for the Service Offices must continue and must keep pace with the increasing costs of operations. The County Veterans Service Officers Association of Wisconsin supports this legislation and urges its passage.

Nathan M. Bond

Nathan M. Bond
Legislative Committee Chair
CVSO Association of Wisconsin



THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN

Mr. Chair and members of the Committee. Thank you for holding this hearing on AB 591. I also want to thank the authors and their staffs for the work they have put into this important proposal.

The American Legion is the largest Veterans Service Organization in the Nation. In Wisconsin, we have over 50,000 members. We were founded on four pillars, one of which is Veterans and Rehabilitation. We have just over a century of advocating for veterans.

The American Legion is one of two Veteran Service Organizations that maintain state service offices at Zablocki VA Regional Office in Milwaukee. The Disabled Veterans of America use a National Service Officer to staff their office. They do not currently receive a grant under this program.

The American Legion Service Office assists veterans of Wisconsin in obtaining the Federal benefits they earned as a result of their service. The benefits include, but are not limited to:

- A. Compensation
- B. Death Pension
- C. Burial
- D. Vocation Rehabilitation

The office works closely with the County and Tribal Service Officers, who originate most of the claims. In fact, the American Legion Service Office developed changes in the claims process which have improved the process and eased the work load on the local Veterans Service Officers.

Staffing at the Service Office consists of one Service Officer, four full time service representatives, and four part time service representatives. They currently have over 45,000 active cases (VSO CLAIMS DATA FROM WDVA attached.) The number of cases has decreased as the VA backlog has decreased; however, we expect the caseload to increase again after the first of the year. Recent federal legislation has made naval personnel who served in the territorial waters of Viet Nam eligible for agent orange benefits. Claims are being submitted and the VA will start processing after the first of the year.

2017 Act 59 increased the minimum grant payment from \$70,000 to \$100,000. For this we are grateful. The American Legion budget for the service office is approximately \$400,000. Approximately \$290,000 is for salaries and travel of those directly involved in claims processing. This program is supported by the grant received from the state and the membership of The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin through dues and fundraising. Traditionally, we have primarily targeted membership in our fundraising. This is being reexamined at this time.

The American Legion Service Office is a major contributor to the Wisconsin economy. The office brings over \$30 million a month on average into the local economy. These monies touch every corner of the state. These benefits are spent in every county of the state and make a real difference in the lives of the veterans in those communities.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul Fisk
Legislative Chair
The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin

Fiscal Estimate - 2019 Session

Original
 Updated
 Corrected
 Supplemental

LRB Number 19-4726/1	Introduction Number AB-0591
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Description
 payments to certain state veterans organizations

Fiscal Effect

State:

<input type="checkbox"/> No State Fiscal Effect	<input type="checkbox"/> Increase Existing Revenues	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increase Costs - May be possible to absorb within agency's budget
<input type="checkbox"/> Indeterminate	<input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Existing Revenues	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increase Existing Appropriations		<input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Costs
<input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Existing Appropriations		
<input type="checkbox"/> Create New Appropriations		

Local:

<input type="checkbox"/> No Local Government Costs	5. Types of Local Government Units Affected	
<input type="checkbox"/> Indeterminate	<input type="checkbox"/> Towns	<input type="checkbox"/> Village <input type="checkbox"/> Cities
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Costs	<input type="checkbox"/> Counties	<input type="checkbox"/> Others
<input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory	<input type="checkbox"/> School Districts	<input type="checkbox"/> WTCS Districts
2. <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Costs		
<input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory		
3. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Revenue		
<input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory		
4. <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Revenue		
<input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory		

Fund Sources Affected	Affected Ch. 20 Appropriations
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GPR <input type="checkbox"/> FED <input type="checkbox"/> PRO <input type="checkbox"/> PRS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SEG <input type="checkbox"/> SEGS 20.485(2)(vw)	

Agency/Prepared By DVA/ Brett Coomber (608) 267-1785	Authorized Signature James Parker (608) 266-1843	Date 11/13/2019
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Fiscal Estimate Narratives

DVA 11/13/2019

LRB Number 19-4726/1	Introduction Number AB-0591	Estimate Type Original
Description payments to certain state veterans organizations		

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

Currently, three Veterans Service Organizations (VSO), the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the Military Order of the Purple Heart, request reimbursement for performing claims assistance services to Wisconsin Veterans. It should also be noted that the Military Order of the Purple heart will no longer be submitting for reimbursement, however, a new request for funding will likely be submitted from the Disabled American Veteran's (DAV) organization. Increasing the amount of funding a Veteran Service Organization (VSO) is eligible to receive in reimbursement for salaries and travel will increase the expenditures for the Department. The funding for this program is allocated from the Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) and any increase in spending will have a negative affect on VTF funding which is currently funded by General Purpose Revenue (GPR). Based on current estimates with the new applicant, it appears that in the first year of the bill the Department would incur increased spending of approximately \$150,000. Future fiscal year estimates, however, anticipate expenditures above \$150,000. The current spending authority for appropriation 20.485(2)(vw) is \$348,000. Based on past spending (approximately \$210,000) and the additional costs associated with the bill, The Department would be able to absorb the estimated increase in the first year but would need additional funding in future years to meet its obligations. Also, as mentioned above any increase would have a negative affect on the VTF.

Long-Range Fiscal Implications

For those who choose to listen and act in good faith. A personal testament for the men and women of the American Legion, Veterans Service Organization / Department Service Office, 5400 W. National Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

My narrative begins in 2005 as a senior non-commissioned officer in the United States Army Reserve, I have recently completed a 909-day Active Duty tour with a priority Training Support Battalion, out-processed and returned to Reserve status.

During medical evaluation it is determined because of a heart arrhythmia that I am no longer eligible for retention and am medically separated from service after 18 ½ honorable and distinguished years and placed in the retired reserve system.

Having the appropriate In Line of Duty paperwork in hand and completing the Veterans Administration online application I attend my Compensation & Pension examination process, and so a nearly 15-year struggle begins in order to receive benefits due and entitled to.

During this period throughout all the volumes of administrative paperwork, appeals, further Compensation & Pension exams, internal Veterans Administration policies and procedures, errors and delays, stress and frustration ... My representatives at The American Legion / Department Service Office never faltered, never quit, and stood faithfully with me throughout this process.

And there is more to be considered than just the human aspect, resources required of labor with materials, "The energy of logistic support" is proportionate to the task at hand. On numerous occasions my Compensation & Pension claim required my presence at the Department Service Office, and I must say the demand for representation by this organization is formidable judging by the number of veterans I have waited with. Please give your added support to this deserving organization.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael A. Pfannes

Michael A. Pfannes
SFC, USAR, Ret



January 15, 2020

Madam Secretary,

The Milwaukee Vet Center is a key community partner of the American Legion Service Office located at the VA Regional Office in Milwaukee. The Milwaukee Vet Center provides readjustment counseling services to combat veterans and their families. Vet Centers are part of the Readjustment Counseling Services Division within the Department of Veterans Affairs. Readjustment services include counseling for the following: reintegration into civilian life, post-traumatic stress, mood disorders, other mental health conditions, substance abuse, veterans benefits, individual and group therapy, marital and family counseling, career development, community education, and referral services.

The American Legion Service Office's veteran advocacy and benefits assistance seamlessly aligns with the Vet Center's unique mission of serving combat veterans and their families. Our offices maintain a two-way referral process to help veterans access mental health treatment and pursue veterans benefits which they've earned serving their country in wartime. The Milwaukee Vet Center supports the American Legion's application for a WDVA grant in order to expand their services and reach more veterans.

I respectfully recommend that you consider the American Legion's application. Please contact me at (414)254-3634 or azael.brodhead@va.gov if you have any questions about the Vet Center and its support. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Azael H. Brodhead

Azael H Brodhead, MS
Readjustment Counseling Therapist

To whom it may concern

My name is Kurt Goeller MMC(SW) RET. I retired from the military in 2005 with 30% disability. I never worked with an organization about my disability and knew nothing about claims. After I retired it was harder and harder to find employment because of my disabilities until I had to have knee replacement surgery. While on convalesce leave from my job I received a notice from my employer letting me go in 2016. I was still on rehab and unable to work. I had to take unemployment from the state of Wisconsin. I could not make my bills. I was slowly going bankrupt. While doing rehab I was talking to other veterans at the VA. They were discussing various disabilities they were going through and putting in claims. They asked if I was connected for my knee, I told them I did not know. They all, that's 20-25 vets, all stated I needed to specifically to go to American Legion and get help. Once I went to the American Legion things started to turn around. They got me service connected to my knee replacement with convalesce. Once awarded I received 100% for the duration of 13 months. Because of this award it helped me to support my family and help with bills. My other disabilities were getting worse which prevented me from working in the trades of installing equipment. I could not work these jobs. American Legion continued to work my claims and have increased my disability to 90%, and they are still working on other claims yet. While working with the American Legion Mitch Woytych noticed signs that I should seek mental health help, because I was extremely irritable and short tempered. I took his advice and it was a blessing I see a mental health professional which has helped me to get through this rough spot in my life. Mitch and James has been a great help without their direct help I know I would have extreme hardship. They not only took care of my disabilities but pointed me in the direction for care on my health. James and Mitch assisted in going back to college to collect BAH while I was looking for work. Not only did this also help me financially but I graduated with a degree, and continuing on to a master. I CAN HONESTLY SAY THEY HAVE TURNED MY LIFE AROUND FOR THE GOOD!!!! I recommend all vets that I cross paths with to go and talk to James or Mitch.

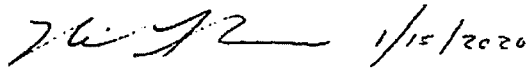
Kurt Goeller

KURT GOELLER

MMC(SW) RET.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Staff Sergeant Nicholas Thorn of the United States Air Force. I would like to take the time to express my gratitude to the American Legion especially my advocate Mitch Woytych. With the help of the American Legion in the claims process I was able to achieve a disability rating that will greatly impact my family and my future for the rest of my life. I attempted to go through this process alone however, I found it difficult to navigate. The American Legion was instrumental in the success of my final disability rating. The American Legion was my voice and advocate that I needed. In my opinion the American Legion went above and beyond to help me and my family and countless other veterans. The Milwaukee American Legion Office is amazing at advocating patriotism, honor, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to our fellow servicemembers and veterans.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicholas R Thorn", followed by the date "1/15/2020" written vertically.

SSgt Nicholas R Thorn

USAF Retired

American Legion Department Service Office Testimony

Prepared by Bruce Markert

RE: Value of the American Legion Department Service Office staff who have assisted me on benefits review and benefit claims.

I am a 70% disabled 77-year-old Viet Nam veteran and I rely on the American Legion Department service office staff to keep me abreast of any changes that would improve my "quality of life" due to my disabilities.

I have had the pleasure in working with the American Legion Department service office staff located at 5400 W. National Ave., Milwaukee during the past several years to review VA benefits that I may be eligible to receive. I also find the staff keeps me abreast of any changes due to my disabilities. I have observed that the staff just doesn't complete paperwork and/or reviews my history. They always will go the extra mile to work with whatever agency staff to relate my condition that will make a difference to me and my family.

I find no other organization working with veterans that consistently strives to go over and beyond what is required to "get a favorable answer". They are highly professional on a day to day basis and their success has moved the American Legion office to number one in the State of Wisconsin which demonstrates their ability and drive to get the job done that is best for veterans and their families.

Obviously their work load exceeds their staffing levels and I strongly suggest that the office receive a grant level that will allow them to continue their high degree of assistance to veterans and their families. Due to their success veterans have recognized their value and excellent reputation to assist them.

I have recently been diagnosed with an auto-immune disease called Polymyalgia rheumatica (PMR). A condition that may have resulted in my time in Viet Nam and that could be related to my contact with Agent Orange. You can be assured that I will use the American Legion Service office staff to further investigate this with the VA.

Testimony provided Jan. 14, 2020 to the American Legion Department Service Office.

Bruce Markert
630 Bayberry Ln.
Slinger, WI 53086

To whom it may concern,

My name is Joseph Tripp (VA Police Lieutenant/Sgt. United States Marine Corps.), and I am writing this letter on behalf of a Great Organization. When I first came home, I had initially worked with another agency on my Service Connection Disabilities. After a few years I realized that this agency was no longer focused on assisting me, so I researched a few others and quickly realized that the American Legion was the best fit for me and my needs. The American Legion has been extremely helpful in getting me new rated Service Connections, increases on ones that I had already and are currently working with me on a new claim. All the employees in the local American Legion Office (Milwaukee) have been great and I feel they have my best interest in mind. They have gone above and beyond in assisting me in all matters pertaining to my claims and other personal issues. To me these fit into the American Legion's Mission Plan of "Advocating patriotism and **honor**, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to our fellow servicemembers and veterans".

Sincerely,



Joseph Tripp

January 14, 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

In the service I was continually exposed to high decibel sounds specifically that of jet aircraft. I am extremely grateful to the American Legion in Milwaukee for their assistance in obtaining financial support for my hearing loss. As the process was ongoing to obtain support, they did not waiver in pursuing my eligibility.

Thanks much for your commitment and dedication to support veterans, many who suffer from physical or mental complications.

My first "go to" for any service-connected injuries is the American Legion. They were there for me and can honestly say that I was treated as a person and not just a number!

I salute the American Legion in Milwaukee, for going the extra mile to help me and many other veterans!

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael F. Woytych". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

Michael F. Woytych

To whom it may concern,

My name is Joshua Walz and I am an Army Veteran that served 5 years active duty. I transitioned from the Army in February of 2017 and was eager to get to work on my claims. My father is also an Army Veteran and he informed me to go to the Regional Benefits Office to work on my disability claims. With little to no knowledge about the claims process, I drove to the VA and met with a Veterans Affairs VSO. The VSO I met with appeared to have my best interest in mind, however when I began to speak about what I wanted to claim I felt like I was in a doctor's office. The VSO just typed what I said word for word and approximately 15 minutes later they said, "okay you should hear from someone in a few weeks about scheduling an appointment", and that was it. Feeling like I just left a car lot with no knowledge of what I just did, I felt puzzled.

A few months later I received an enormous packet which contained confusing paperwork from the VA. This paperwork denied my claims for various reasons. The claims were different than what I was trying to claim, for instance I was attempting to claim pain from a hernia that occurred during service. The paperwork focused on the scars from the surgery rather than the pain I was feeling from the hernia. Feeling confused and discouraged, I placed the packet in a file folder in my desk to sit for about 2 years.

Around June of 2019 I spoke with my father again about claims and he said, "why don't you go check out the American Legion? They always help me out". With a new-found motivation I decided to go the American Legion. When I entered the American Legion office, I sat down with Mitch and he asked to see my paperwork. Within minutes we were working on a solution to figure out what we could do for my claims. The American Legion was able to see what I couldn't and tell me in a way that I could understand. Mitch saw in one of my claims, medical staff favored a claim and said it was from service. The VA still denied the claim. I am currently in the process with the American Legion correcting the issues.

In closing, transitioning from Soldier to Civilian is a process. Filing disability claims is comparable to learning a foreign language. Without the help of Mitch and the American Legion, that folder would still be sitting in my desk.

Very Respectfully



Joshua Walz

01/14/2020



GENERAL SUMMARY ACTIVITY & MEMBERSHIP REPORT 2018

The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin

info@wilegion.org
www.wilegion.org

Tel: 608.745.1090
PO Box 388; 2930 American Legion Drive; Portage, WI 53901



FOUNDED ON FOUR PILLARS

The American Legion is a not-for-profit Veteran Service Organization (VSO) chartered and incorporated by Congress in 1919. The American Legion is the nation's largest wartime veterans' service organization, committed to mentoring youth and sponsorship of wholesome programs in our communities, advocating Americanism and honor, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to our fellow service-members and veterans.

The American Legion was founded on four pillars:

- 1. Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**
- 2. National Security**
- 3. Americanism**
- 4. Children & Youth**

Each of these pillars encompasses a variety of programs that benefit our nation's veterans, its service members, their families, the youth of America and ordinary citizens. These programs make a difference in hundreds of thousands of lives each year.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership for The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin at the conclusion of the 2017 membership year was 54,860 and for the 2018 membership year stood at 54,413.

Activities of The American Legion for this report reflect the functional programs conducted by the Department Headquarters, Veteran Service Office and Camp American Legion as well as those carried out in local communities across Wisconsin by over 500 local posts.

"In 2018, The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin stood at 54,413 members strong; serving veterans, their families and their communities."

OPERATIONS

Day-to-day operations of the Department are overseen by the Department Adjutant who is a full-time employee reporting directly to The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin's Executive Committee. The Department Adjutant acts as the Executive Director / Chief of Operations with direct oversight of:

- ⇒ Fiscal Services, Administrative & Major Events Manager, Membership Coordinator, and (2) Program Coordinators.
- ⇒ 2018 Department Operations Budget: ~3.2 Million Dollars
 - This does not include any capital improvements
 - The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin is reliant upon membership and fundraising as our source of revenue

VETERANS REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

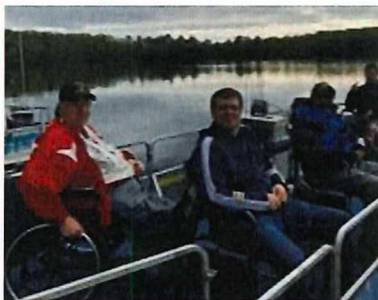
Camp American Legion, Lake Tomahawk

Camp American Legion has been operated by The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin since 1925 in conjunction with the State of Wisconsin - Department of Natural Resources and the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. Located on 300 acres of pristine lakefront property in Oneida County, Camp American Legion is nestled within the heart of The American Legion State Forest. Comprised of 19 cabins, a main lodge, a women quarters, recreational building, and main chapel providing an ideal setting for veterans, those still serving and their families to rest, recover and reconnect in a safe place.

In 2018, The American Legion Family, along with other generous supporters of Camp American Legion, identified a need for cabin dedicated to helping Gold Star Families who have endured unimaginable loss and hardship heal. Funds for the American Legion Family Cabin have been raised and building is tentatively scheduled to begin in the Spring of 2020.

Camp American Legion has and continues to serve and support patients of Veterans Administration hospitals, clinics; PTSD groups, long term care groups, community support programs, mental health intensive care management groups, spinal cord groups and more.

Camp has also built collaborative working relationships with many programs whose sole focus is helping our "High-Risk, Suicide Ideation" veterans by creating supportive, "Battle Buddy" type programs to help these veterans and their families heal in a Northwoods environment. Camp American Legion is taking an active role in stopping the high number of veterans and active duty military from taking their own lives.



Camp Operations

Operated by a Camp Director, 6 support staff and volunteers.

Free to veterans, those still serving and their families.

Operational May through the end of September.

In 2018, hosted over (30) specialized programs to include:

- o Camp Serenity (helping families who lost a loved one in service heal).
- o Woman Veterans Week
- o Vietnam Veterans Week
- o Korean Veterans Week
- o Post 911 Veterans Week
- o WI Army National Guard Suicide Prevention Week
- o Recovery, Risk, Reduction Week (Homeless & Substance Recovery)

In 2018, approximately 1,171 Veterans, their families, caregivers and service providers served by Camp.

2014 to 2018: Camp attendance increased by approximately 38%.

2014 to 2018: Camp operational budget increased ~45%.

2018 Camp Operational budget is approximately \$400,000, not including:

- ⇒ Capital Improvement Plans
- ⇒ Infrastructural Improvement
- ⇒ Program Development

Department Annual Events

The Department conducts an annual Convention, Spring and Fall business meetings and an annual Midwinter Conference. Each year a delegation of Wisconsin Legionnaires travels to Washington DC to lobby elected representatives on issues effecting Wisconsin Veterans. In addition, Wisconsin Legionnaires participate in the annual National convention of The American Legion and various national workshops.

VETERANS REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

Veteran Service Office

The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin, Veterans Service Officer and seven support staff work tirelessly to assist veterans and their families with VA disability benefits, provide referrals, resources on education, employment, business, death benefits and other important topics. The Department Service Office annual operating budget is approximately \$400,000.

The economic impact of The American Legion, Dept. of WI, Service Office is extraordinary. From 6/1/17 to 5/31/18 our Service Office has performed over 27,000 client services and completed over 45,000 transactions totaling over 268 million dollars in earned benefits.

Benefits include:

- Education
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Burial
- Compensation
- Pension
- Death Pension
- Automobile Allowances
- Dependent Indemnity Compensation

We also assist veterans with obtaining awards, decorations, as well as applying for discharge upgrades.



The American Legion, Department of WI, Veteran Service Office located at the VA Regional Office in Milwaukee, WI.

“From 6/1/17 to 5/31/18 Wisconsin’s American Legion Service Office has performed over 27,000 client services and completed over 45,000 transactions totaling over 268 million dollars in earned benefits.”

VA Hospital—Veteran Home Support/Volunteerism

The Department coordinates volunteer activities at US Department of Veterans Affairs and Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs facilities through the Department Hospital Committee.

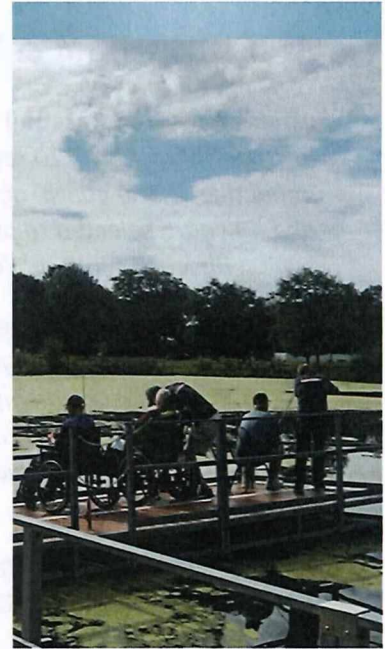
The Department maintains representatives at eight (8) VA and WDVA facilities, 14 VA Clinics, 4 Vet Centers, 1 Health Care Center and 1 Outstation facility. Department volunteers from the entire American Legion Family are very active at each of these facilities.

Veteran Home Support/Volunteerism

In addition to volunteers on site to visit and assist patients, notable among activities are the following:

Zablocki VAMC Milwaukee, Wisconsin

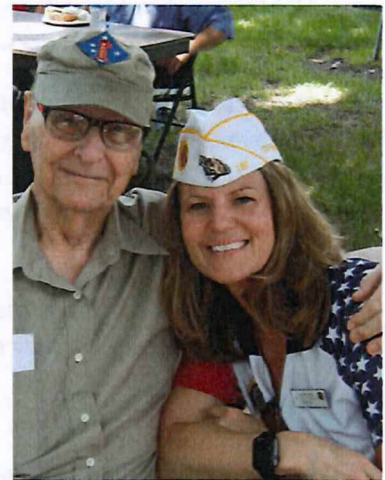
Poppy and Gift Shop maintained by The American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Wisconsin which hires disabled veterans and American Legion members to construct poppies for distribution. The Gift Shop provides hospitalized veterans who are bedridden with gifts to share with their family members during the holiday season.



Tomah VAMC Tomah, Wisconsin

The Annual Fishing Derby was held on the Hospital grounds at the fishing pond constructed by The American Legion in 1959. Meal service were provided by the local American Legion Posts.

Coordination of visits by patients from Tomah VAMC Chemical Dependency Unit to Camp American Legion.



Wisconsin Veterans Home King, Wisconsin

The Department of Wisconsin has sponsored "American Legion Day" at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King on Father's Day since 1955. On Father's Day (2018) members of the King Veterans home were treated to lunch featuring barbeque chicken, potato salad and ice cream. Live music was provided as volunteers and staff at the facility assisted the residents who enjoyed the meal in a park like setting. The program featured Department Commander Frank Kostka as well as other American Legion District and Department officers from around the state to include representatives from "The American Legion Family" (Auxiliary, Sons of The American and Legion Riders). The Legion Riders Association of Wisconsin led the annual parade. Funding to support the activities was provided by The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin.



AMERICANISM & YOUTH PROGRAMS

American Legion Baseball

In 2018, there were 220 registered American Legion Baseball teams impacting, 3,500 youth, ages 13-18, a \$1,000 scholarship winner and 48 youth selected to play at Miller Park as part of The American Legion Baseball All-Star Weekend.



Americanism & Government Test

High School students are given the opportunity to receive recognition and scholarships by taking an on-line test comprised of 50 multiple choice, true and false questions followed by an essay question of 300 words or less.

Badger Boys State (BBS)

June 9 -16th, 2018, the 77th session of BBS was held at Ripon College impacting over 862 young men from across the state of WI.



County Youth Government Day

Held throughout the state to give students a practical study of how county government works.

Oratorical Scholarship Contest

Helps high school students develop a deeper knowledge and appreciation for the U.S. Constitution. Winners are awarded scholarships at several levels throughout the competition.



Boy Scouts

Scout Posts throughout the state sponsor scouting programs. The Department annually awards a \$1,000 Eagle Scout of the Year award.

Scholarships

In 2018, thousands of dollars in various scholarships were awarded to deserving youth across the state of WI.



Shooting Sports Program

A gun safety education and marksmanship program which encompasses the basic elements of safety, education, enjoyment and competition. This program awards scholarships at the department to national level of the competition.

Sons of The American Legion

Supports the aims and purposes of The American Legion.

Wisconsin American Legion Law Enforcement Academy

(WALLECA) - June 18-22, 2018, was held at the Wisconsin State Patrol Academy at Ft. McCoy impacting 32 junior HS students from across the state of WI.



**The American Legion,
Department of Wisconsin**

The American Legion is focused on four primary missions; the Care and Rehabilitation of our fellow Veterans, promoting an intellectual commitment to Americanism, providing wholesome activities for Children & Youth and ensuring a strong National Defense.

This report, provided in accordance with 45.35 (3d) (b) WI Statutes, reflects The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin's efforts in achieving these goals.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber L. Nikolai

Amber L. Nikolai
State Adjutant
The American Legion,
Dept. of WI

NATIONAL SECURITY

Members of the American Legion Family throughout the state have adopted Wisconsin National Guard units and work with the Family Readiness teams to make sure military families are taken care of here at home while their service members are deployed. We believe that by taking care of the families, our heroes have one less worry on the battlefield and are able to concentrate on their mission overseas knowing that we have their backs here at home.

Our Son's of The American Legion have a G I Josh program which give the children of deployed military families a stuffed dog and a book entitled "I Will Be OK" which brings the child comfort while they are missing their mom or dad.



info@wilegion.org
www.wilegion.org

Tel: 608.745.1090
PO Box 388; 2930 American Legion Drive; Portage, WI 53901

VSO CLAIMS DATA *

VSO	FY Year	Amount Awarded	Caseload**	# Employees	Salary/Expenses	Notes
Veterans of Foreign Wars	2016	\$70,000	7,036	UNK	\$153,110.22	
	2017	\$70,000	9,277	UNK	\$237,336.61	Base salary increased by \$19,717 from 2016. They added \$64,509 of retained earnings to the total expenses. If the retained earnings are not counted total would be \$172,827.50.
	2018	\$83,842	8,892	UNK	\$210,793.70	Base salary increased by \$37,192 from 2017.
	2019	\$89,366	9,721	UNK	\$215,944.67	Base salary increased by \$9,888 from 2018.
Military Order of Purple Heart	2016	\$39,156	781	UNK	\$78,313.80	
	2017	\$30,520	548	UNK	\$61,040.98	
	2018	\$27,269	235	UNK	\$54,538.64	
	2019	\$20,223	173	UNK	\$40,446.49	
American Legion	2016	\$70,000	60,784	UNK	\$238,241.00	\$235,141 is for salaries and \$3,100 is for travel expenses. Salaries broken down: Service Officer = \$57,553; Claims Representatives = \$144,935; Administrative Assistants = \$32,653
	2017	\$70,000	53,370	UNK	\$259,225.00	\$253,253 is for salaries and \$5,792 is for travel expenses. Salaries broken down: Service Officer = \$62,308; Claims Representatives = \$162,785; Administrative Assistants = \$28,160
	2018	\$100,000	40,260	UNK	\$247,847.00	\$242,376 is for salaries and \$5,471 is for travel expenses. Salaries broken down: Service Officer = \$64,684; Claims Representatives = \$146,523; Administrative Assistants = \$31,169
	2019	\$100,000	35,749	UNK	\$282,991.78	\$280,652 is for salaries and \$2,339.68 is for travel expenses. Salaries broken down: Service Officer = \$70,731; Claims Representatives = \$174,086; Administrative Assistants = \$35,833

* Information in this spreadsheet was collected from annual grant documents submitted by the VSOs.

** Includes claims that may be pending action by the USDVA and not requiring work during the FY year.

POA: AMERICAN LEGION Award: All											
Station:	TOTAL AWARDS MTH Summary	TOTAL BENEFITS MTH Summary	TOTAL BENEFITS FYTD Summary	AVERAGE PAYMENT MTH Summary	NEW AWARDS MTH Summary	NEW AWARDS FYTD Summary	NEW AWARDS BENEFITS MTH Summary	NEW AWARDS BENEFITS FYTD Summary	TERMINATIONS MTH Summary	TERMINATIONS FYTD Summary	
330 Milwaukee	53,671	\$56,570,764	\$449,320,572	\$1,054	141	1,235	\$130,139	\$1,127,128	451	3,187	
POA: DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS Award: All											
Station:	TOTAL AWARDS MTH Summary	TOTAL BENEFITS MTH Summary	TOTAL BENEFITS FYTD Summary	AVERAGE PAYMENT MTH Summary	NEW AWARDS MTH Summary	NEW AWARDS FYTD Summary	NEW AWARDS BENEFITS MTH Summary	NEW AWARDS BENEFITS FYTD Summary	TERMINATIONS MTH Summary	TERMINATIONS FYTD Summary	
330 Milwaukee	32,172	\$43,199,646	\$342,949,378	\$1,343	46	349	\$49,907	\$352,967	127	758	
POA: VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE US Award: All											
Station:	TOTAL AWARDS MTH Summary	TOTAL BENEFITS MTH Summary	TOTAL BENEFITS FYTD Summary	AVERAGE PAYMENT MTH Summary	NEW AWARDS MTH Summary	NEW AWARDS FYTD Summary	NEW AWARDS BENEFITS MTH Summary	NEW AWARDS BENEFITS FYTD Summary	TERMINATIONS MTH Summary	TERMINATIONS FYTD Summary	
330 Milwaukee	27,045	\$30,636,722	\$242,856,808	\$1,133	88	597	\$76,197	\$580,374	158	1,219	
POA: WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS Award: All											
Station:	TOTAL AWARDS MTH Summary	TOTAL BENEFITS MTH Summary	TOTAL BENEFITS FYTD Summary	AVERAGE PAYMENT MTH Summary	NEW AWARDS MTH Summary	NEW AWARDS FYTD Summary	NEW AWARDS BENEFITS MTH Summary	NEW AWARDS BENEFITS FYTD Summary	TERMINATIONS MTH Summary	TERMINATIONS FYTD Summary	
330 Milwaukee	33,597	\$35,660,847	\$283,035,647	\$1,061	119	799	\$86,818	\$582,679	62	502	

May 2017

April 2019 - Workload Report - Organization Name	Stn Number	Regional Office	COMPLETED	PENDING	Grand Total
AMERICAN LEGION	330	Milwaukee	26,963	4,751	31,714
AMVETS	330	Milwaukee	1,229	261	1,490
BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION	330	Milwaukee	26		26
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS	330	Milwaukee	14,568	1,820	16,388
MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA	330	Milwaukee	4		4
MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART	330	Milwaukee	954	142	1,096
NATIONAL ASSOC. OF COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER	330	Milwaukee	2,008	199	2,207
PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA, INC.	330	Milwaukee	931	109	1,040
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE US	330	Milwaukee	11,639	2,224	13,863
VIETNAM ERA VETERANS ASSOCIATION	330	Milwaukee	4		4
VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA	330	Milwaukee	873	115	988
WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT	330	Milwaukee	117	6	123



**DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN
SERVICE OFFICE
5400 W NATIONAL AVE.
MILWAUKEE, WI 53214**

January 15, 2020

TO: The Department Adjutant
FROM: The Department Service Officer, James Fialkowski
SUBJECT: Activity Report and Statistics

End of year statistics	2007 *	2019
Incoming Calls	2664	4967
Walk in Clients	820	2542
Incoming Mail	10763	29046
Out Going Mail/Email	1730	20552
Decisions Reviewed	Did Not Track	2994
Hearings	47	55
Events Attended	10	11
SEP Transmittals	Did Not Track	2003
VIMS Database Entries	14539	25409
Total Client Services Performed	30573	87579

* 2007 is the first year I was in the service office and is there for reference

Your Service Office is honored to represent The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin. Your office is proud, knowing that veterans, war widows(ers) and orphans will receive their due benefits and possibly one day a college education because we were able to help.

We added 3,791 new client files in 2019 and are currently tracking 30,837 files. Of which we are tracking the gender for 25,982 files. We have 1,708 Female veteran and 24,274 male veterans. Note: for reference, we added 1,547 new client files in 2007 and were tracking approximately 6,600 files January of 2007.

Over the 2019 calendar year, your Service Office assisted veterans and their families in attaining over 393 Million dollars in due benefits. To accomplish this, we completed over 87,000 total services including over 25,000 database client services, 49,598 processed pieces of mail, almost 5,000 phone calls and assisted over 2,500 walk-in clients. VA Benefits administered include education, vocational rehabilitation, burial, compensation, pension, death pension, dependent indemnity compensation, automobile allowance, and adaptation for automobile and home.

Our office administers the National Level Children and Youth, Temporary Financial Assistance program (TFA), our Department Troop and Family Support (T&FS) Fund, and the Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF). Additionally, we speak at events, staff Veterans Benefit Supermarkets and Stand Downs around the state. We are in direct contact monthly with the Directors of the Milwaukee VA Medical Center and Regional Office.

We are proud the word is finally getting out about the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA). I am still filing claims and I have fielded many questions on the subject.

NOTE: The ongoing Veterans Benefits Administration transformation to digital submission of claim paperwork is changing the way we will track workload data in 2019. We have gone to digital processing of ratings, awards, and receipts (thanks again to Maynard for the hard work). These changes saved over \$1,300 in paper this year.

**** When I started in January 2007 our office was handling less than 1/4 of the workload that WDVA. In 2017 (May) our workload (indicated by VBA data of new awards) had surpassed WDVA (144 for American Legion compared to 119 for WDVA and for 1/10/2016 through 5/31/2017 are new awards numbered 1235 for compared to 799 for WDVA).

I do not have more recent data than 2017 with WDVA included. I can only attest that we are just as busy or more so than 2017. I have been told by some CVSOs that they only use our office.

Here is the recovery data for the current American Legion clients being tracked through the Service Office:

Lump Sum Retro and Recovery from 01/2019 thru 12/2019

Total benefits recovered for the year are over \$393 Million.

Average Monthly Benefits (\$) Recovered.

Burial	15,784.23
Compensation	24,139,674.16
Pensions	2,644,371.50
DIC	1,602,322.55
Education	4,163,896.68
Voc Rehab	210,859.55
Other	1,052.21
Total	32,777,960.88

Annual Federal Dollars **\$393,335,530.56**

Definitions

Burial Benefits – Includes plot and internment allowances and in some cases transportation.

Compensation – Payments related to service-connected disabilities.

Pension – Payments to wartime veterans or their surviving spouse who meet net worth, income, service and disability requirements.

DIC – Dependent Indemnity Compensation – Payments to a deceased veteran’s spouse, if the spouse meets marriage longevity requirements, for the death of the veteran due to active duty or a service-connected disability or for a death of a veteran who was rated 100% or TDIU for the required period of 1, 5 or 10 years depending on veteran’s qualifying status.

Education – Includes active duty, reserve and dependent education benefits.

Vocational Rehabilitation – Environmental assessment/adaptation, education, and training benefits for veterans who, due to their service-connected disability, require environmental assessment/adaptation, training, and education to have a better quality of life or to become gainfully employable.

Other - A “catch-all” category, for all other benefits. Example - Automobile purchasing allowance to qualifying veterans.

AMERICAN LEGION WI SVC OFFICE

Date: 04/22/2019

LUMP RETRO
 VETERAN AWARD RECOVERY FROM 04/18 THRU 03/19

TOTAL FILE

AWARD TYPE	AWARD AMOUNT (\$)	AVERAGE MONTHLY (\$)
UNKNOWN	11,005.56	917.13
BURIAL ALLOWANCE	163,316.74	13,609.73
COMPENSATION	269,211,962.95	22,434,330.25
PENSION-IMPROVED	21,465,637.03	1,788,803.09
PENSION-306	56,612.24	4,717.69
PENSION-PROTECTED	124,675.84	10,389.65
PENSION-SPEC ACT	0.00	0.00
DEATH COMPENSATION	728,280.06	60,690.01
DEATH PENSION-IMPROVED	8,554,251.22	712,854.27
DEATH PENSION-306	24,425.04	2,035.42
DEATH PENSION-PROTECTED	24,087.24	2,007.27
DEATH PENSION-CONF SERV	19,392.28	1,616.02
DIC	15,949,659.21	1,329,138.27
DIC SPECIAL ALLOWANCE	171,254.00	14,271.17
AUTOMOBILE	21,058.69	1,754.89
EDUC - CH 30	279,352.74	23,279.40
EDUC - CH 32	48,753.54	4,062.80
EDUC - CH 35	317,233.68	26,436.14
EDUC - SECT 901	2,808.00	234.00
VOC REHAB (CH 31)	2,049,900.47	170,825.04
EDUC - CH 33	37,801,055.99	3,150,088.00
	-----	-----
TOTAL	357,024,722.52	29,752,060.21



**DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN
SERVICE OFFICE
5400 W NATIONAL AVE.
MILWAUKEE, WI 53214**

Apr 30, 2019

TO: The Department Executive Committee

FROM: The Department Service Officer, James Fialkowski

SUBJECT: Activity Report, January - April 2019

January – I attended to duties at the Mid-Winter Conference meetings (and the awesome concert). We represented two veterans in video conferences for the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA) and one local hearing at the Regional Office, Milwaukee, WI. Attended Veteran Hospital (VAMC) and VA Regional Office (VARO) meetings.

February – We represented three veterans in BVA hearings at the VARO. I attended VAMC and VARO meetings. I attended Department Service Officer School and National Conference in Washington, DC. Bergmann & Moore (B&M), the new law firm has continued our training. As I have said before, the training was not to the same as the National Veteran Legal Service Program (NVLSP). They still do not have two tiers of classes as did the NVLSP. One for beginners and one for seasoned DSOs. Change is usually wrought with negativity, so I will concentrate on the positive aspects of the new format. B&M are getting better with our (Mine and fellow DSOs) suggestions and covered some court cases and law changes. Their approach has seasoned and new service officers and representatives (reps) sitting together as a team. This cultivates a mentorship environment. This helps the newer reps through the class and creates a cohesive team feeling. Since the teams change each training, the networking is increased. At the meetings, the BVA informed us that in the future, they will be scheduling BVA hearings.

March – Surprisingly, we had no local hearing BVA hearings this month. I attended VAMC and VARO meetings.

April – Submitted Service Office data required to submit WDVA Grant Request. We represented two veterans at BVA hearings in the Regional Office. We represented two veterans at local VARO hearings. The BVA scheduling change has started to cause problems. We have been unsuccessful at making changes to accommodate veterans that were easily handled when the VARO did the scheduling. An example would be creating a three-way video hearing between VARO Minneapolis, VARO Milwaukee, and the BVA in Washington, DC for a veteran who lives near Minneapolis in Wisconsin. Our requests were seemingly ignored. The veteran could not make the four plus hour drive and therefore, had to cancel his hearing.

The ongoing Veterans Benefits Administration transformation continues pressing for digital submission of claim paperwork. This is changing the way we track workload data.

Lump Sum Retro and Recovery from May 1st, 2018 – April 30th, 2019

Average Monthly Benefits (\$) Recovered.

Burial	13,170.81
Compensation	22,843,954.54
Pensions	2,544,722.20
DIC	1,424,613.04
Education	3,425,781.98
Voc Rehab	182,728.77
Automobile	2,672.02
Total	30,437,643.36

Annual Federal Dollars \$365,251,720.32

Definitions

Burial Benefits – Includes plot and internment allowances and in some cases transportation.

Compensation – Payments related to service connected disabilities.

Pension – Payments to wartime veterans or their surviving spouse who meet net worth, income, service and disability requirements.

DIC – Dependent Indemnity Compensation – Payments to a deceased veteran's spouse, if the spouse meets marriage longevity requirements, for the death of the veteran due to active duty or a service connected disability or for a death of a veteran who was rated 100% or TDIU for the required period of 1, 5 or 10 years depending on veteran's qualifying status.

Education – Includes active duty, reserve and dependent education benefits.

Vocational Rehabilitation – Home adaptation, education and training benefits for veterans who due to their service connected disability need training and education to become employable.

Automobile – A special allowance to help purchase a vehicle afforded severely disabled veterans. This vehicle is then adapted to the transportation or driving needs of the veteran.

Here is the recovery data for the current American Legion clients being tracked through the Service Office:

Lump Sum Retro and Recovery from 01/2018 thru 12/2018

Total benefits recovered for the year are over \$335 Million.

Average Monthly Benefits (\$) Recovered.

Burial	13,090
Compensation	20,893,099
Pensions	2,457,454
DIC	1,355,511
Education	3,049,429
Voc Rehab	151,437
Automobile	2,672
Total	27,922,690

Annual Federal Dollars **\$335,072,284**

Definitions

Burial Benefits – Includes plot and internment allowances and in some cases transportation.

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Education – Includes active duty, reserve and dependent education benefits.

Vocational Rehabilitation – Environmental assessment/adaptation, education, and training benefits for veterans who, due to their service connected disability, require environmental assessment/adaptation, training, and education to have a better quality of life or to become gainfully employable.

Automobile – A vehicle purchasing allowance to qualifying veterans



**DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN
SERVICE OFFICE
5400 W NATIONAL AVE.
MILWAUKEE, WI 53214**

October 11, 2018

TO: The Department Executive Committee

FROM: The Department Service Officer, James Fialkowski

SUBJECT: Activity Report, June - September 2018

JUNE – We represented four veterans in BVA Judge Hearings in the VA Regional Office. The Service office implementation of ongoing training with part-time and full-time employees was conducted (Monthly). We Attended VA Regional Office Service Officer Meetings. Represented two veterans in a local hearing at the VARO.

July – Attended Monthly VARO (VA Regional Office Milwaukee) and VA Medical Center Director's meetings. I attended Department Convention, I was not asked to speak to the Auxiliary this year. Represented two veterans at their Board of Veteran Appeals video hearings at the VA Regional Office Milwaukee. Represented three veterans in a local hearing at the VARO.

August – Mitchell, and I attended the continued education provided by the Bergman & Moore at American Legion DSO (Department Service Officer) School in Indianapolis. Attended Monthly VARO and VA Medical Center Director's meetings. Represented five veterans at their Board of Veteran Appeals Travel Board hearing at the VA Regional Office Milwaukee. Represented one veteran in local hearings at the VARO. Took part in meetings at National Convention in Minneapolis.

September – Conducted a class and assisted veterans at UW Milwaukee. Also provided support at Company F, 2nd Bn., 24th Marines. Attended Monthly VARO and VA Medical Center Director's meetings. Represented two veterans in local hearings at the VARO.

Our current total number of active clients we are tracking is 27,206. As I have stated before we purge clients that we are not actively serving. The workload overall is almost four times higher than when I started in the Service Office January 2007 considering we had just over 6,700 tracked clients at that time.

VBA INFORMATION: A surviving spouse may remarry at 57 years old or older and continue to qualify for Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) under the previous spouse.

Lump Sum Retro and Recovery from 10/2017 - 09/2018

Average Monthly Benefits (\$) Recovered.

Burial	9,196.40
Compensation	19,426,413.74
Pensions	2,461,457.08
DIC	1,364,336.79
Education	2,674,492.75
Voc Rehab	132,963.32
Housing	776.54
Automobile	917.13
Total	26,070,553.75

Annual Federal Dollars **\$312,846,645.00**

Annual Federal Dollar Circulated Value to WI **\$2,189,926,515.00**

Definitions

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Automobile – A vehicle purchasing allowance to qualifying veterans



**DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN
SERVICE OFFICE
5400 W NATIONAL AVE.
MILWAUKEE, WI 53214**

January 11, 2019

TO: The Department Executive Committee

FROM: The Department Service Officer, James Fialkowski

SUBJECT: Activity Report, October - December 2018 / End of year statistics

End of year statistics	2007 *	2018
Incoming Calls	2664	5150
Walk in Clients	820	2513
Incoming Mail	10763	24155
Out Going Mail/Email	1730	18325
Decisions Reviewed	Did Not Track	2739
Hearings	47	57
Events Attended	10	10
SEP Transmittals	Did Not Track	2607
VIMS Database Entries	Did Not Track	26032
Total Client Services Performed	16034	81588

Whether I am the speaking at a veteran's center at a collage or simply walking in a parade, I enjoy representing The American Legion. Your Service Office is honored to represent The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin. Your office is proud, knowing that veterans, war widows(ers) and orphans will receive their due benefits and possibly one day a college education because we were able to help. We are currently tracking 27,975 client files. Over the last 12 months, your Service Office assisted veterans and their families in attaining over 335 Million dollars in due benefits. To accomplish this, we completed over 81,000 total services including over 26,000 database client services, almost 42,500 processed pieces of mail, over 5,000 phone calls and assisted over 2,500 walk in clients. VA Benefits administered include education, vocational rehabilitation, burial, compensation, pension, death pension, dependent indemnity compensation, automobile allowance, and adaptation for automobile and home.

* 2007 is the first year I was in the service office and is there for reference

Our office administers the National Level Children and Youth, Temporary Financial Assistance program (TFA), our Department Troop and Family Support (T&FS) Fund, and the Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF). Additionally, we speak at events, staff Veterans Benefit Supermarkets and Stand Downs around the state. We are in direct contact monthly with the Directors of the Milwaukee VA Medical Center and Regional Office. We are proud the word is finally getting out about the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA). I am still filing claims and I have fielded many questions on the subject. The Service Office received the WDVA Grant of \$100,000.

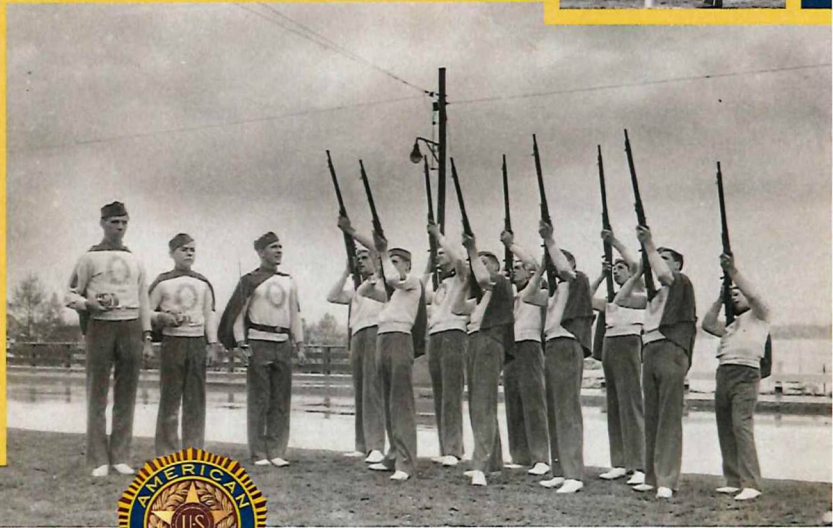
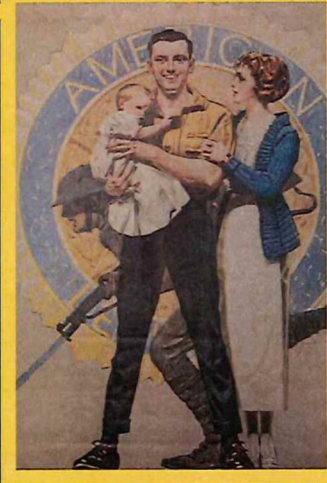
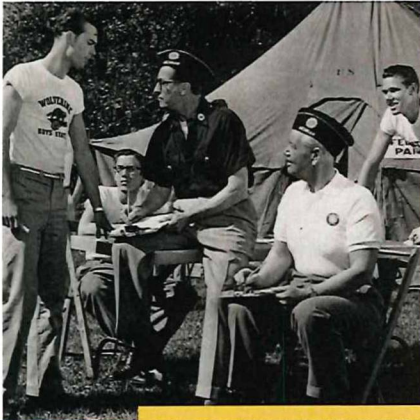
NOTE: The ongoing Veterans Benefits Administration transformation to digital submission of claim paperwork is changing the way we will track workload data in 2018. We have gone to digital processing of ratings, awards, and receipts from CVSOs (thanks again to Maynard for the hard work). These changes are focused on the reduction of office supplies cost and streamlining the process, lowering workload intensity. Look for more changes to come.

October – Attended Department Fall Committee meetings and submitted report to the DEC. Attended monthly VARO and VAMC Service Officer Meetings. I was once again requested to represent the Veteran Service Organizations while training the new VA Hospital Social Workers. We provided services at a Veterans event in Milwaukee. Represented two veterans at their hearings at the VA Regional Office Milwaukee and one veteran at their Board of Veteran Appeals Video Board hearings at the VA Regional Office Milwaukee.

November – Attended American Legion tour of the Chippewa Falls WDVA Veterans Home and a meeting with the Commandant. Provided services at UW Green Bay at a veteran's event. Represented two veterans at their hearings at the VA Regional Office Milwaukee. I continue to be a VARO fire marshal. Attended monthly VARO and VAMC Service Officer meetings. Represented two veterans at their Board of Veteran Appeals Travel Board hearings at the VA Regional Office Milwaukee.

December – Attended American Legion tour of the Milwaukee VA Medical Center and a meeting with the Director. Attended monthly VARO and VAMC Service Officer Meetings. Represented three veterans at their Board of Veteran Appeals Video Board hearings at the VA Regional Office Milwaukee. Attended monthly VARO and VAMC Service Officer meetings.

The returning Warrior's spirit perceives life through a new paradigm - J.F.



THE AMERICAN LEGION

A BRIEF HISTORY

The American Legion was founded March 15-17, 1919, by members of the American Expeditionary Forces still stationed in Europe awaiting passage home from World War I. Their experiences in what was called the “war to end all wars” would shape an enduring agenda for what became the nation’s largest organization of veterans.

Many of the Legion’s founders had voluntarily drilled in civilian military camps before the United States entered the war. Trained in the “Preparedness Movement,” several future Legion founders were commissioned as officers in the war and discovered firsthand the nation’s deficiencies in defense, citizenship and education. Soon after the war’s end, they

also realized how poorly prepared the United States was to assist a wave of disabled and unemployed veterans who faced uncertain futures in their communities, states and the nation.

The American Legion’s emergence and rise to prominence was based on a mission to strengthen the nation through programs, services and advocacy that helped millions throughout the organization’s first century.

The American Legion built its legacy with a vision to make the nation prouder, stronger, smarter and more respectful of those who have sacrificed some, or all, in defense of the nation. Following are some The American Legion’s achievements during its first century.

VETERANS



- Formed a network of service officers in 1919 that now exceeds 3,500 to help disabled veterans, free of charge, file for government benefits
- Successfully campaigned to put all veterans services under one federal authority, the Veterans Bureau in 1921, predecessor to the Veterans Administration in 1930 and the Department of Veterans Affairs in 1989
- Assisted millions of veterans in pursuit of rewarding careers; by June 1922 had already placed more than

500,000 veterans in permanent jobs and 200,000 more in temporary positions

- Successfully lobbied Congress to protect veterans benefits, VA hospitals, training programs and services on the federal budget chopping block over the decades
- Developed programs and advanced research into what became post-traumatic stress disorder as early as 1921, when it was mischaracterized as “shell shock”
- Produced studies that led to official diagnosis of PTSD in 1980 and proved that service-connected exposure to Agent Orange and atomic radiation caused diseases that demanded government accountability
- Achieved Veterans Preference Hiring for federal jobs
- Drafted, presented, promoted and pushed to passage the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, the original GI Bill that transformed U.S. economy and culture in the second half of the 20th century
- Worked to improve the GI Bill for post-9/11 veterans, including the 2017 Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act, the “Forever GI Bill”

NATIONAL SECURITY

- Lobbied persistently for a better-funded and more efficient national system of defense
- Called for the establishment of a separate service branch for aeronautics as early as 1919, which helped give birth to the U.S. Air Force in 1947
- Pushed Congress for “universal military training” for decades, culminating in the Reserve Forces Act of 1955
- Conducted thousands of troop-support programs, including deployment ceremonies, welcome-home events and provision of needed items in theater
- Established and staffed thousands of local first-response units and civil patrols during World War II
- Provided financial and volunteer aid for military parents through American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance and Family Support Network programs established during the Gulf War
- Began The American Legion Blood Donor Program in 1942, and became the largest organizational blood donor to the Red Cross in the nation
- Re-established the Blue Star Banner program to recognize military families with deployed loved ones after 9/11
- Launched a program to provide comfort items for U.S. military personnel recovering from wounds in DoD hospitals or transition units, ultimately named Operation



Comfort Warriors in 2008; has distributed millions of dollars of goods, games, books, music, recreational equipment and event passes for troops and their families

- Provided emergency grants for members of the U.S. Coast Guard who had pay delays due to the January 2019 federal government shutdown
- Fought to protect military retirement benefits and TRICARE insurance
- Stood as a national leader in the recovery and repatriation of all U.S. POWs and MIAs
- Passed and reaffirmed national resolutions, beginning in 2005, supporting the troops *and their mission* in the global war on terrorism

AMERICANISM



- Actively promoted responsible U.S. citizenship and patriotic awareness beginning in 1919
- By January 1920, began providing U.S. citizenship and naturalization programs for immigrants, with support from Congress
- Led flag conferences in 1923 and 1924 that established the first standard rules for treatment and respect of the U.S. flag, adopted in 1942 as U.S. Flag Code
- Established official retirement ceremonies for worn-out U.S. flags, most often a joint activity with Boy Scouts of America units
- Began American Legion Boys State in Illinois in 1935 to counter communist-inspired youth camps in the United States and to teach the way government operates in a democracy, a program that went national in 1946 and ultimately became American Legion Boys Nation
- Strongly advocated for active participation in the voting process, conducting thousands of candidate forums and a national Get Out the Vote program
- Assembled the Citizens Flag Alliance after the controversial 1989 Supreme Court ruling defining deliberate flag desecration as free speech and began a campaign to seek a constitutional amendment to return to the states the right to pass laws to protect the flag

CHILDREN & YOUTH

- Urged American Legion support for Boy Scouts of America as the organization's first youth program supported by resolution, in November 1919
- Established an enduring relationship in 1921 with the National Education Association "to cooperate in securing for America a program of education adequate to meet the needs of the 20th century ... which will make all, native or foreign-born, good American citizens."
- Launched American Legion Baseball in 1925 to promote citizenship through sportsmanship, a program that would grow to field thousands of teams over the century
- Developed and operated marksmanship competitions that became the national American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program in 1991
- Sponsored thousands of Junior ROTC programs across the country and at American schools overseas
- Created and operated a National Oratorical Contest beginning in 1938, continuing today, that requires high school-age orators to speak on the U.S. Constitution
- Established a national network of child-support field representatives in the 1920s and operated orphanages throughout the country to assist kids who needed stable homes and mentorship
- Formed the Child Welfare Foundation in 1954 to provide grants to support organizations and agencies that assist young people facing challenges not of their making



- Provided thousands of scholarships for high school students seeking college educations
- Launched an ongoing program in 1926 that recognizes with School Award Medals young people for their character, service and citizenship.
- Was chosen by Samsung Corp. in 1995 to administer a \$5 million fund to provide scholarships for Boys State or Girls State participants who are descendants of U.S. wartime veterans
- Established an American Legion Legacy Scholarship in 2001 that provides college funds for children of military personnel killed or 50 percent or more disabled

COMMUNITY SERVICE

- Immediately established civil defense as a function of The American Legion and began a century of support in communities wracked by disasters, from mining accidents to tornados, wildfires and hurricanes
- Launched a Community and Civic Betterment Bureau in 1923 to help municipalities build and improve parks, playgrounds, health-care facilities, swimming pools, schools and theaters throughout the United States
- Served meals, provided housing for refugees and searched for survivors of the massive Mississippi and Ohio River floods of 1927 and 1937
- Sponsored soup kitchens at American Legion posts to help destitute citizens during the Depression throughout the country
- Helped establish state highway patrols, and supported them, as they emerged across the country
- Established the National Emergency Fund in 1989 to formalize The American Legion's long program to provide disaster relief
- Delivered millions of dollars in National Emergency Fund grants for relief efforts after Hurricane Katrina, Wilma and Rita on the Gulf Coast, and the flooding that followed in New Orleans
- Conducted dozens of natural disaster relief efforts, following Superstorm Sandy, Hurricanes Irene, Michael, Maria and others, wildfires in California, devastating flooding in the Midwest and other crises

HONOR & REMEMBRANCE

- Took a lead role in 1920 to formally observe Memorial Day at the graves of U.S. military personnel laid to rest in some 2,400 temporary cemeteries in Europe
- Was actively involved in the development of the American Battle Monuments Commission in 1923
- Backed legislation in 1920 to install the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery, dedicated Nov. 11, 1921
- Helped dedicate the towering Liberty Memorial in Kansas City during the third national convention, in 1921
- Raised funds in 1926 to help build the Ossuary at Verdun, France, to remember the cost of World War I
- Pushed for 24-hour guarding for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in 1937 and purchased lights for the shrine in 1969
- Raised over \$1.2 million, most by any organization, to build the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, dedicated in a Legion-sponsored 1982 "Salute to Vietnam Veterans"
- Passed a resolution in 1985 to open every official American Legion meeting with a prayer for all American POW/MIAs
- Raised funds and provided marketing support for the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.
- Raised more than \$3 million for the construction of the National World War II Memorial, dedicated in 2004
- Pledged funds to help construct a National World War I Memorial in Washington, D.C.
- Conducted thousands of local memorial services a year at funerals, special events and ceremonies honoring those who served their country and lost their lives
- Argued in court, including the U.S. Supreme Court in 2019, to protect veterans and military memorials from removal due to religious symbolism in their design



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