



ROGER ROTH

PRESIDENT

WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

October 22, 2019

Senate Committee on Transportation, Veterans, and Military Affairs

2019 Senate Bill 446

Relating to: the University of Wisconsin Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project and making an appropriation.

Imagine being in the position of sending off your son, daughter, or other family member to serve our country in wartime: World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and up through today. Surely there are a multitude of emotions involved: a mix of pride, uneasiness, patriotism, and worry.

Now imagine receiving the message that your loved one will not be returning home. For many Wisconsin families, that was the heart-wrenching news they received. But a few of those families never received the closure of knowing what happened to their loved ones – their family members were labeled “MIA.”

Of the 82,000 missing in action service members nationwide, 1,500 are from Wisconsin. That’s not just a number or a statistic. That is a family member in every corner of our state. For each one of those missing there are fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, friends, and other loved ones that live without closure and have lost hope.

What is being done?

Historically, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) has been in charge of recovering the remains of all MIA service members. More recently DOD has partnered with academic groups like the UW Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project to recover and identify the remains of MIAs. In fact, Wisconsin’s MIA Project was the first such program in the nation authorized by the DOD.

Wisconsin’s MIA Project has carried out three successful recovery missions since 2014, along with the field work of a fourth mission completed this summer 2019. Due to the success of the Wisconsin Project, the DOD now partners with roughly 30 similar programs at universities and non-profits throughout the United States and the world.

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While that model has seen success, it's not an easy or quick process. A single recovery mission can cost \$1.5 million and take up to two years.

These cases are funded by DOD and assigned to the Wisconsin MIA Project, however to date, the DOD has not assigned the team any Wisconsin MIA cases.

With a multi-year backlog in locating the remains of MIAs, and many World War II, Korean, and Vietnam-era family members advancing in age, time is of the essence.

What more can we do?

The bill I am bringing forward today funds the recovery, identification, and repatriation specifically of Wisconsin MIA Service Members.

With state support, the Wisconsin MIA Recovery Project can immediately begin research efforts on behalf of Wisconsin MIAs and their families – at considerably lower cost and greater effectiveness. For instance, they could conduct recovery missions in areas of the world that are off limits to DOD missions.

Under Senate Bill 446, the MIA Recovery Project will submit a mission plan and funding request to this committee, its counterpart in the Assembly, and the Joint Committee on Finance. The veterans committees may submit to JFC a written recommendation on the proposal before funds are released.

Upon conclusion of the mission, the MIA Recovery Project will submit to the standing committees, JFC, and the executive branch a report on the mission's findings and accounting of expenditures.

Wisconsin has led the way on this endeavor nationally. Now, we can become the first state in the nation to fund this mission for our own MIAs. Wisconsin has the opportunity and capacity to honor our fallen service members by fulfilling our nation's promise to bring them home to their families.

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DALE KOOYENGA
STATE SENATOR · 5TH DISTRICT

State Capitol · P.O. Box 7882 · Madison, WI 53707-7882 · (608) 266-2512

October 22, 2019

TO: Senate Committee on Transportation, Veterans and Military Affairs
FR: Senator Dale Kooyenga
RE: support for Senate Bill 446 – Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project

Thank you for holding a hearing on Senate Bill 446. This bill provides funding to support the identification and recovery of Wisconsin's Missing in Action (MIA) service members.

Since WWII, there are approximately 80,000 Missing in Action United State Service Members around the globe - this includes more than 1,500 Wisconsin Service Members.

America is the only country that has a dedicated department and program to locate and identify America's fallen. Wisconsin is also the state with the most robust program and this bill can further set us apart as citizens of a state and country that are as loyal to our heroes as they have been to us.

In 2014, the University of Wisconsin Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project (UW MIA RIP) was founded at the UW-Madison Biotechnology Center by Charles Konsitzke. The UW MIA RIP was the first academic institution to partner with the United States Department of Defense (DoD) - the agency responsible for identifying and repatriating the remains of United States service members.

When I first learned of the UW project, I was immediately reminded of a book I recently read titled, *Bringing Mulligan Home*, and a podcast titled, *The Dead Drink First*, by Dale Maharidge. Dale Maharidge is a journalist and a professor at Columbia University who spent 18 years searching for his father's missing WWII buddy, Herman Walter Mulligan. Mr. Mulligan died during the battle of Okinawa and his body was listed as "unrecovered." The story told by Mr. Maharidge is powerful and moving and underscores the importance of recovering our missing service men and women so that the surviving family members and friends can honor their loved ones.

The bill before you provides \$360,000 over the 2019-2021 biennium for the purpose of partially funding the UW MIA recovery project and would make Wisconsin the first state in the nation to provide funding to support its own MIA Service Members.

The modest funding provided by SB 446 is the least we can do to honor those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for protecting and defending our freedoms.

Thank you for your attention to this legislation. I respectfully ask for your support of SB 446.



KEN SKOWRONSKI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 82nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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October 22, 2019

Good Morning Chairman Petrowski and Committee Members.

I want to thank you for hearing SB 446 today. As you may know, there are eighty two thousand American Service Members still missing. Over fifteen hundred of them are from Wisconsin.

SB 446 would provide \$180,000 annually during the 2019-2021 biennium to the Missing in Action Recovery Identification Program to recover **Wisconsin** MIAs. Currently the program is assigned a US Veteran, however none of those recovered have been from Wisconsin. This assistance would streamline **Wisconsin** veterans coming home.

Time is precious. Every year key individuals that would aid in the return of **Wisconsin** Veterans pass away. The group needs those who saw it first. From the farmers who saw a plane go down, to the town's people that helped the troops on the ground. Those are the individuals that we are losing.

This bill's minimal funding will bring closure to many families each year, and that is the least we can do honor those families.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Skowronski". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



October 22nd, 2019

TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation, Veterans and
Military Affairs
FROM: Charles Konsitzke, Team Lead, UW Missing in Action Recovery and Identification
Project
RE: Senate Bill 446 Testimony

Greetings Chairman Petrowski and members of the committee. My name is Charles Konsitzke, and I am the associate director of the University of Wisconsin Biotechnology Center, and founder and team lead of the University of Wisconsin Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project (MIARIP).

I would like to begin by thanking you all for the opportunity to testify and express our team's support for Senate Bill 446, which would provide over \$180,000 annually to the MIA recovery project for missions to investigate, recover, report and repatriate missing in-action service members from the great state of Wisconsin.

Nationally, there are over 82,000 American service members unaccounted for since the onset of World War II, of these, over 1,500 are from Wisconsin, with every corner of our state still missing at least one service member.

These Wisconsin MIAs include a group of young Wisconsin men who fought and were trapped in the Philippines in the spring of 1942 and captured by the Imperial Japanese Army. After enduring the Bataan Death March, they suffered over three years of harsh imprisonment, facing disease, malnutrition, and brutality. These soldiers came to be collectively known as "the Janesville 99."

Missing service members also include Wisconsin soldiers whose remains are in the jungles of New Guinea; Wisconsin Coast Guardsmen who went down in the icy North Atlantic on the USS Escanaba; Wisconsin airmen who crashed into the fields of Northern France; Wisconsin soldiers whose remains are still buried on a Belgian hillside after their loss during the initial stages of the Battle of the Bulge; and Wisconsin soldiers, airmen, and Marines in North Korea and in Vietnam.

In addition, besides annual recovery missions, our historical research team can compose closure reports for those families whose MIA relatives are deemed unrecoverable, such as in cases of maritime loss. These reports are far more substantive than telegrams and other notices received by the families during the times of war.

I would like to close my portion of our team's remarks by thanking all of the bill's authors as well as all legislative staff who have assisted us along the way. We have one additional member from our team who has prepared remarks and then we would be happy to answer any questions.



October 22nd, 2019

TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation, Veterans and Military Affairs
FROM: Torrey Tiedeman, Student Volunteer, UW Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project
RE: Senate Bill 446 Testimony

Greetings Chairman Petrowski and members of the committee. I would also like to begin by thanking you all for the opportunity to testify and express as both a student and an active duty veteran, the UW Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project's support for Senate Bill 446.

My name is Torrey Tiedeman, I am a senior at UW-Madison studying archaeology and graduating this coming spring, and a former active-duty United States Marine Corps infantryman with two overseas deployments.

The Project's team has successfully assisted with the recovery and identification of the remains of three previously MIA American service members to date, with efforts for a fourth ongoing. Without a doubt, this program has proven its capability and professionalism.

From a current student's perspective, this team has been the most dynamic collaboration of fellow students (including other student veterans), staff, faculty, and alumni that I've witnessed across UW-System institution campuses, consisting of individuals from a host of interdisciplinary backgrounds that include history, forensic anthropology, archaeology, biology, and genetics.

This collaboration successfully transcends institutional academic settings to facilitate viable field recoveries, with team members maintaining their focus on the goal of correctly conducting holistic research of a case, thoroughly surveying a potential crash or burial site, respectfully excavating the site, and extracting remains.

As a senior studying archaeology, the project has allowed me the opportunity to learn and conduct the practical application of many field skills and critical conceptualization while under the close guidance, mentorship, and supervision of a professional collegiate instructor. The project has totaled the involvement of over 30 students and has allowed many of those same students the opportunity to conduct archival research, which is a highly desirable skill for those pursuing a career in historical research.

As a former active-duty veteran, the project has afforded me the opportunity to continue to serve a cause immensely greater than oneself in a volunteer capacity over the past two summers, including the successful recovery of 2nd Lieutenant Walter B Stone from a crash site in northern France.

Most importantly, I cannot overstate that our team's mission is the very minimum that we as individuals, as communities, as a state, and even as a nation, owe to these armed forces members, who have died in service to our country and have not yet been located and brought home, and their families, especially while those who maintain living memory of the MIA service members are still with us.

I would also like to close my remarks by thanking the bill's authors and all the legislative staff who worked on this important effort. Thank you again to the committee and, at this time, we are open to any questions that you may have. Thank you.



FULFILLING OUR PROMISES
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED

Department of Wisconsin

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
AL LABELLE
DAV BENEFITS PROTECTION TEAM LEADER
DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
WISCONSIN STATE SENATE
OCTOBER 22, 2019**

Chairman Petrowski, Vice Chair Marklein, Ranking Member Carpenter, and Members of the Committee:

Good morning! Thank you for allowing DAV (Disabled American Veterans) this opportunity to present our view on Senate Bill 446 (SB 446) Relating to: *the University of Wisconsin Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project*.

DAV is a congressionally chartered national veterans' service organization of more than one million wartime veterans, all of whom were injured or made ill while serving on behalf of this nation. In Wisconsin, we have approximately 15,000 members.

Each year, we help more than 1 million veterans with Benefits, Transportation, Advocacy, Employment, and Volunteerism. Over Eighty-five percent (85%) of our total expenditures go to Service.

DAV Wisconsin considers the Missing in Action or (MIA) issue a high priority. Currently, one of our members, Rodney Helegson, a combat wounded Vietnam veteran, sits on the DAV National Prisoner of War/Missing in Action or POW/MIA Committee.

The brave family of the missing continue to live in uncertainty and anguish. Finding and repatriating the remains of the missing is essential to finally give them a sense of closure.

We are grateful for the admirable work being done by the University of Wisconsin MIA Recovery and Identification Project (UW MIA Recovery Project) in conjunction with the United States Government's Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA). Finding the remains of three (3) World War II veterans in their short existence speaks volumes about the excellence of their work.

Under SB 446, the UW MIA Recovery Project may request the Joint Committee on Finance to provide \$180,000 in each fiscal year of the 2019-2021 fiscal biennium for missions to recover and identify Wisconsin veterans who are missing in action. The request must include a research prospectus and spending plan for the requested MIA mission. DAV Wisconsin finds the bill reasonable and well crafted. Its intent is certainly humane.

Pursuant to DAV National Resolution 176¹, DAV Wisconsin strongly supports SB 446 and urges this Committee and the legislature to pass the bill, hopefully unanimously, in an expeditious manner.

This concludes my testimony, Mr. Chairman. We would be pleased to respond to any questions you or other Committee Members may have.

¹ Resolution 176, *Seek the immediate release of any Americans who may still be held captive following any war and the return of the remains of any Americans who died during these wars* passed at DAV National Convention held in Orlando, Florida on August 6, 2019.



Volk Field Community Council

October 22, 2019

Senate PUBLIC HEARING
Committee on Transportation, Veterans and Military Affairs
Tuesday, October 22, 2019
1:01 PM
300 Southeast

RE: Senate Bill 446
Relating to the University of Wisconsin Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project

The membership of the Volk Field Community Council wholeheartedly supports the passage of Senate Bill 446 relating to the University of Wisconsin Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project. We believe this project is worthy of an appropriation to continue the extremely important work of recovering and identifying our fallen members of the Armed Services in past conflicts.

Volk Field Air National Guard Base in Camp Douglas, Wisconsin, was named after 1st Lt Jerome Volk in 1957 by the Wisconsin State Legislature. 1Lt Volk was killed in combat during the Korean War on November 7th, 1951. His F-80 Shooting Star aircraft was hit by enemy artillery fire during a low level bombing run in North Korea. He was unable to eject due to the damage to his aircraft. He was the first Airman of the Wisconsin Air National Guard to be killed in action during the Korean War.

1Lt Volk represents the best of the National Guard as the quintessential Citizen-Airman. Joining the Wisconsin Air National Guard after serving in the active duty during World War II was optional, but he decided to leave his personal life behind and answer his nation's call. Subsequent generations of the Wisconsin Air National Guard will be forever connected to and inspired by his service. It is critical for the Volk Field family and the Volk family that his remains be recovered and identified so he can be delivered to his final resting place. The military cemetery at the base that bears his name is prepared to receive him with full military honors.

The work of University of Wisconsin Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project is essential for missing in action cases such as 1Lt Volk. We hope that you will provide full support to this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Terry Whipple
Volk Field Community Council Chairperson

Wisconsin State Capitol
2 E. Main St.
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

October 22, 2019

Dear Legislators,

I am writing to ask that you support Bill #466 to provide funding to the UW-Madison MIA Recovery and Identification Project (RIP) to recover and identify the remains of Wisconsin MIA's.

As a lifelong Wisconsin resident and UW-Madison Alumna, I have a very personal connection to the effort. I was named after my Uncle, First Lt. Jerome A Volk USAF, who was killed in action while flying a low level bombing mission in North Korea on Nov. 7, 1951. Jerry was the first Air National Guard pilot from Wisconsin killed in the Korean conflict. In 1956, Volk Field at Camp Douglas, was dedicated in his name and in 2015 he was inducted into the Wisconsin National Guard Hall Of Fame.

Although this was a tremendous honor, sadly, due to the fact that Lt. Volk's remains have never been brought home, my family has not been able to find closure 68 years later. My father, his only sibling, dedicated his life to pursuing efforts to bring his brother home. Tragically he was not able to see it happen before he died in 2016. The fact that Jerry has never been returned has taken a toll on our entire family. It is my hope that one day he can be brought home and laid to rest in the cemetery at Volk Field.

Over the years my dad and I attended many annual Department of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) briefings in Washington D.C. and kept up with the efforts being made to bring MIA's home from Korea. In all honesty, with so many years having passed, I had little hope until recently that it would ever happen. The briefing I attended a year ago changed that when I found out about great advances in both science and technology that have made what was once impossible, now possible! Experts today can positively identify remains with much less DNA than ever before and this combined with other improvements is a game changer!

That said, with over 82,000 Americans still unaccounted for, the task facing the DPAA is daunting to say the least. Time is also of the essence with the aging generations of loved ones looking for closure.

With the synergy that exists between the DPAA and our own UW-Madison's MIARIP, it is imperative that funding be provided so Wisconsin can be the first in the nation to fund the return of its own MIA's. Also, I understand that the UW MIARIP can conduct recovery operations in areas, such as North Korea and China, which are off limits to DOD missions due to diplomatic relations between nations. Access to these countries has been the biggest impediment to bringing home our fallen heroes and the UW-Madison project may be the only hope we have to gain entry.

The funding in this bill would serve to honor those who have given the ultimate sacrifice, honor their families and loved ones by bringing closure, and honor and inspire our current and future service personnel and veterans by giving credibility to the commitment that "no soldier is left behind". Our heroes deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,



Jeri Volk Barry
968 Evergreen Lane
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