



FULLFILLING OUR PROMISES
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED

Department of Wisconsin

**STATEMENT OF
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DAV WISCONSIN BENEFITS PROTECTION TEAM LEADER
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON SPORTING HERITAGE, SMALL BUSINESS AND RURAL ISSUES
WISCONSIN STATE SENATE
MAY 12, 2021**

Chairman Stafsholt, Ranking Member Smith and Members of the Committee:

Good morning! Thank you for allowing DAV (Disabled American Veterans) this opportunity to present our view on Senate Bill 176 (SB 176) Relating to: *the disability rating at which veterans qualify for certain hunting and fishing authorizations and exemptions from state park and trail admission fees.*

As you may know, DAV is a non-profit veterans service organization (VSO) comprised of over 1 million wartime service-disabled veterans, nationwide. In Wisconsin, we have nearly 15,000 members.

Each year, DAV helps more than 1 million veterans with Benefits, Transportation, Advocacy, Employment, and Volunteerism. Well over Eighty percent (80%) of our total expenditures go to Service.

All our members are wartime wounded, injured or ill veterans, many of them severely. They have sacrificed much in defense of our freedoms.

Currently, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources or DNR honors Wisconsin's disabled veterans with a WE SALUTE OUR VETERANS program. Under this program, the DNR offers discounts to eligible Wisconsin disabled veterans for certain licenses and cards.

They are the Spring Turkey Harvest License, the Disabled Veteran Recreation Card, the Disabled Veterans Fishing License, and the Disabled Veteran Park Admission Card.

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To be eligible for a Spring Turkey License, a service-connected disability rating of 50 percent or greater, as determined by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is needed. The discounted fee is \$10.00.

To be eligible for the Disabled Veteran Recreation Card, a service-connected disability rating of 50 percent or greater is required. The privileges granted under this card are for fishing, small game hunting, State Park Admission, and a State Trail Pass. The fee is \$7.00.

To be eligible for the Disabled Veteran Fishing License, a service-connected disability rating of 70 percent or greater is required. The fee is \$3.00.

To be eligible for the Disabled Veteran Admission Card, a service-connected disability rating of 70 percent or greater is required. The privileges granted under this card are for State Park Admission and a State Trail Pass. There is no fee.

As you can see, there is no consistency in the disability rating needed for the fee discount. The Spring Turkey License and the Disabled Veteran Recreation Card have a disability rating of 50 percent or greater to receive the fee discount.

While the Disabled Veterans Fishing License, and the Disabled Veteran Park Admission Card have a disability rating of 70 percent or greater.

SB 176 will lower the disability rating for the Disabled Veterans Fishing License, and the Disabled Veteran Park Admission Card to 50 percent. This will add consistency to the current program and lessen the confusion which it generates.

Additionally, DNR has a Conservation Patron License for the avid sportsman. Purchasing this license offers many different privileges. These include:

- Gun Deer Hunting License
- Archery License
- Crossbow License
- Small Game License
- Pheasant Stamp
- Annual Fishing License

- Great Lakes Trout & Salmon Stamp
- Inland Trout Stamp
- Sturgeon Hook & Line Licenses
- Trapping License
- Otter Application
- Fisher Application
- Turkey Licenses and Stamp
- Goose Permits
- Waterfowl Stamp

SB 176 will require the DNR to issue a Conservation Patron License to Wisconsin veterans with a service-connected disability rating of 50 percent or greater at a reduced fee. The current is \$165.00. The discounted fee will be \$60.25 plus a surcharge of \$4.00, making the total fee \$64.25.

In our opinion, the bill will alleviate the confusion contained in the current licensing process and the savings of over \$100.00 will be greatly appreciated by Wisconsin's disabled veteran hunters who will qualify.

Pursuant to our Resolution 2019-47, DAV Wisconsin strongly supports SB 176 and urges this Committee and the legislature to pass the bill in an expeditious manner.

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