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Gov Agency: Tribal Gaming—Veterans Affairs
Services to American Indian Veterans

Recommendations:

Paper No. 173 Alternatives: Using Funding from the Tribal Gaming Revenues
2A(1) and B(2)

Comments: This would provide funding for an American Indian services coordinator to assist state veterans of American Indian descent obtain federal and state veterans benefits. The big choice in this paper is deciding to fund this program with Tribal Gaming Revenues or with money from the Veterans Trust Fund. All in all, it sounds like a good program, and it would probably be okay to fund it from the Veterans Trust Fund. However, I don't know if there will be support for that. If there is, you can go with the same alternatives as above, and use the different funding source. The Alternatives make some modifications to the governor's proposal by adding in some necessary sunset language and restructuring the grant program in a way that just seems to make more sense.

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #173

Tribal Gaming Revenue Allocations

Services to American Indian Veterans (Veterans Affairs)

[LFB 1999-01 Budget Summary: Page 635, #4]

CURRENT LAW

Wisconsin Native American veterans are eligible for DVA benefits on the same basis as all other veterans. There is currently no targeted outreach program to reach Native Americans veterans nor any other specific minority veterans group.

GOVERNOR

Provide one-time funding of \$66,900 PR in 1999-00 and \$68,000 PR in 2000-01 and 1.0 PR project position to fund an American Indian services coordinator and to provide funding for a grants program to Indian tribes in Wisconsin. The overall goal of this initiative would be to assist state veterans of American Indian descent in obtaining federal and state veterans benefits. Create two sum certain annual PR appropriations, one to fund the position and one to fund grants to American Indian tribes and bands. Provide that the funding would come from tribal gaming revenues from appropriations created for this purpose under the Division of Gaming in DOA.

The tribal services coordinator would act as the DVA contact person for tribal governments and American Indian veterans and be involved in planning and coordinating DVA services to American Indians. Create a requirement for DVA to provide the grants to American Indian tribes and bands to develop a model program that would increase access by American Indian veterans to state and federal veterans programs. Provide the funding for the following: (a) \$51,900 PR in 1999-00 and \$58,000 PR in 2000-01 for the salary, fringe benefit and support costs of a project position; and (b) funding for the grants program of \$15,000 PR in 1999-00 and \$10,000 PR in 2000-01. The position would be authorized as a four-year project position (expiring July 1, 2003), even though funding for the position is provided as one-time funding.

The Executive Budget Book indicates that the coordinator position is intended to be a four-year project position, that grant funding is expected to be provided for four years and that the Governor recommends that DVA monitor the implementation of this position and grant funding using a performance assessment methodology.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. There are an estimated 488,700 veterans in the State of Wisconsin. Using USDVA data from 1990, there are an estimated 4,000 Native Americans, or 0.8 percent of the estimated total veterans population, in the state.

2. The Department does not know how many Native American veterans apply for and/or receive grants or loans from DVA under its programs because it does not generally collect ethnicity data on participants in its programs. However, DVA does collect such data for the personal loan and retraining grant programs. Experience over the last two years in the personal loan program has been that 1.2% of loan recipients have been Native American veterans, while Native American veterans have received 0.3% of the grants provided for retraining over the last five years. DVA also notes that in CY 1998 only one application was received from Menominee County for all of DVA's grants and loan programs, yet the county has an estimated eligible veteran population of over 300.

3. It is DVA's belief, based on discussions with tribal representatives, that only 5% of Wisconsin Native American veterans are aware of available veterans benefits programs in DVA. DVA compares this figure to a 1998 survey of 1,500 Wisconsin veterans, where 60% of those surveyed indicated they were aware of DVA programs.

4. Historically, DVA's most comprehensive outreach efforts have been conducted primarily through the county service veterans officers (CVSOs). The CVSO must be a veteran and is appointed for a two-year term by the county board, county executive, or county administrator in each county. Each county is required to have a CVSO, whose primary duties are to advise veterans of any benefits to which they may be entitled as a result of their military service.

5. DVA provides grants to counties for maintaining and operating a county veterans service office. The grants are based upon a county's population and range from \$8,500 to \$13,000 for a full time CVSO. Counties with part-time CVSOs receive a grant of \$500 annually. Currently, 69 counties have full-time CVSOs and three counties have part-time CVSOs.

6. The CVSOs perform various outreach activities, including holding town hall meetings and health fairs, to inform veterans of available programs. They also provide mailings and brochures on the WDVA programs to the veterans residing in the county. In addition, CVSOs are the central contact point for processing veteran applications for DVA programs and also refer veterans to the Milwaukee regional office of the USDVA for help in obtaining possible federal veterans benefits.

7. In addition to the CVSOs however, DVA also employs three regional veterans services coordinators who are responsible for enhancing communication between the CVSOs and DVA. The regional coordinators are considered field rather than central office employees and are intended to serve as the primary liaison between the Department and the CVSOs in their respective regions. The three coordinators divide the state into a southern region, a northwest region, and a central/northeast region. Among the coordinators' current responsibilities are the following: being a liaison with the CVSOs; promoting the veterans assistance program; creating networks with organizations interested in veterans issues; planning and recommending changes to DVA programs; and special assignments.

Proposed Initiative

8. The Department envisions the responsibilities of the proposed tribal veterans services coordinator to be similar to those of a regional coordinator except that the tribal services coordinator would also perform activities similar to a CVSO with selected tribal veterans to provide outreach to Native American veterans regarding their eligibility for and receipt of both state and federal veterans benefits. The tribal services coordinator would work with Native American veterans in each of the eleven Wisconsin tribes to educate these veterans about veterans benefit programs and to increase the number of applications for loans and grants from the eligible tribal population. Organizationally, the tribal coordinator position and program would be located in the outreach section of the Bureau of Program Services and report to the Bureau Director.

9. It is anticipated that the grant funding would be distributed to individual veterans in the tribes as an incentive for acting as the tribe's contact point for veterans issues in a fashion similar to how CVSOs act as representatives for all veterans in a county. However, applications would still be processed through the CVSOs since they have the electronic connections to submit applications directly to DVA. In terms of the actual distribution of grants to tribal representatives, DVA has not yet determined specific grant amounts but has indicated that the funding could be used for office operations as well as the costs of surveying tribal members as to eligibility for veterans benefits.

10. DVA has already hired a consultant to develop a project plan for the model Native American veterans tribal services network. The report is due on June 30, 1999.

11. In considering the Governor's recommendation, the Committee may want to examine the proposal in terms of individual component parts that would make up the services to Native American veterans initiative. The proposal can be separated into three distinct components: (a) the American Indian services coordinator position; (b) the grant program funding; and (c) the source of funding to be used for the initiative.

Coordinator Position

12. The Governor's recommendation differs to some degree from the Department's original request regarding the scope of the proposed initiative. The Department wanted a permanent

position to implement what it envisions as a new "mini-CVSO" structure with the tribal nations for enhancing services to American Indian veterans. The Committee could provide a permanent position as originally requested by the Department.

13. The Governor's recommendation is for a four-year project position to staff a pilot project to raise awareness among Native American veterans about available state and federal veterans benefits. The funding for both the position and the proposed grant program is included in the budget as one-time funding and consequently funding would have to be re-requested in the next biennium. However, if the Governor's intent were to be fully reflected in the budget, the separate appropriations that are created to fund the position and the proposed grant program ought to sunset at the end of the four-year period. If the Committee approves the Governor's recommendation for a four-year pilot project, the Committee should include language in the bill to sunset the appropriations and the pilot program at the end of the four-year period (sunset the program effective June 30, 2003).

14. There are, however, two other alternatives that could be considered by the Committee. The Committee could create a requirement that DVA institute a model Native Americans veterans services outreach program within the agency aimed at: (a) making Native American veterans aware of the state and federal veterans benefits that they may be eligible for; and (b) assisting such veterans in obtaining those benefits. Further, the Committee could specify that DVA should reprioritize the current responsibilities of the three existing regional veterans services coordinators to make the outreach program for Native American veterans a specific responsibility for each of the regional coordinators. DVA staff have acknowledged that the Department has not to date undertaken any organized outreach effort using existing staff and county CVSOs to increase the participation of American Indian veterans in state DVA programs.

15. However, DVA argues this approach would not be successful because they do not believe the regional coordinators would be able to dedicate sufficient time to cultivate the relationships necessary to link up tribal veterans with available DVA services and benefits. DVA argues that the existing outreach mechanisms of the Department cannot adequately address the cultural and sociological barriers that presently inhibit tribal veterans from seeking the benefits for which they may be eligible.

16. In this view, then, the Committee could consider a variation of the above alternative. The Committee could instead delete one of the three existing regional veterans services coordinator positions and instead, authorize a new American Indian tribal services coordinator position with responsibilities dedicated entirely to: (a) improving Wisconsin American Indian veterans' awareness of available veterans benefits; (b) establishing better contacts with the Indian tribes and nations in this state for that purpose; and (c) establishing a network using existing CVSOs or alternative methods to assist American Indians in this state in applying for both state and federal veterans benefits for which they are eligible. This would allow DVA to recruit for a person to fill this new position who might be specially qualified to work with the Wisconsin tribes and Native American veterans to overcome some of the cultural and economic barriers which DVA believes exist for Native American veterans in applying for veterans benefits.

Grant Program

17. The Governor's recommendation would provide \$15,000 PR in 1999-00 and \$10,000 PR in 2000-01 in one-time funding for a new grant program. The Governor's recommendation differs from both the Department's original request and/or current thinking in several ways. First, the Governor recommends a four-year grant program whereas DVA requested permanent funding. Second, the Governor recommends that the funds be used to develop an access model to eliminate the problems of inaccessibility and uncoordinated services to Native Americans. While DVA's original budget request included reference to creating an access model using the grants for surveys, the Department now indicates that it also views the grant funding as serving as an incentive for tribal representatives to participate in the DVA outreach program. Under DVA's original plan, grants would be used to offset the cost of office expenses for tribal representatives who participated in the program. Subsequently, the Department has indicated its view that the grants would be distributed to tribal governments that agreed to designate a tribal veteran services representative. The Department does not know precisely how the grants would be distributed, but has indicated that it assumed that the grant level for an individual tribe would be \$2,500.

18. With regard to the grant program, the Committee may want to consider what should be the purpose of the grants. For example, if the grants are intended to be used to conduct surveys to collect information on the number of Wisconsin Native American veterans by tribe and their specific needs for services, and to allow development of a plan for how to better serve these particular veterans, then \$25,000 for the tribes' cost of doing such work may be sufficient. Further, continued funding in the next biennium would presumably then not be needed.

19. Alternatively, the Committee could consider an approach for the grant program that is more akin to a mini-CVSO grant program. The Committee could modify the Governor's recommendation to instead establish the grant program as a permanent program and add direction to the grant program so that the grants would go only to those tribes that have designated one or more tribal members as tribal veterans services officers and have had a plan approved by DVA for how such officers will work with DVA and tribal members to enhance the provision of DVA services and state and federal veterans benefits to all members of the tribe who are eligible for such services and benefits. Under this type of approach, a standard grant amount for each tribe (which qualifies for the grant) of \$2,500 could be awarded. The funding amount in the grants program appropriation would have to be increased by \$12,500 PR in 1999-00 and by \$17,500 PR in 2000-01 to fully fund this type of grant program.

Funding Sources

20. The last component of the Governor's recommendation that the Committee may want to consider is what funding source should be used if the Committee decides to approve a Native American veterans services initiative.

21. As requested by DVA, this project would have been funded from the segregated veterans trust fund, similar to the funding source from which most of the veterans services and

programs (excluding the home loan mortgage program) in DVA are funded. However, under the Governor's recommendation, the funding for the program would be program revenue funding derived from tribal gaming revenues.

22. For most of the compacts (eight of the eleven), these new agreements contain government-to-government memoranda of understanding (MOUs) relating to the use of the increased tribal revenue payments negotiated under the compacts. In general, the stated purposes are: (a) economic development initiatives to benefit tribes and/or American Indians within Wisconsin; (b) economic development initiatives in regions around casinos; (c) promotion of tourism within the state; and (d) support of programs and services of the county in which the tribe is located. It could be argued that although the use of tribal gaming revenues for tribal veterans services activities would benefit American Indian veterans, this use does not appear to conform to purposes specified in the MOUs.

23. Further, it could be argued that there is no reason that services to American Indian veterans should be funded from a source different than that which is used to fund these same services when provided to non-American Indian veterans. In addition, the argument could be made that if a permanent program for the purpose of providing enhanced services to American Indian veterans is established, then a permanent revenue source (the veterans trust fund) should also be used to ensure continuity of the program. Under this alternative, the Committee could substitute VTF funding for the Governor's proposed use of tribal gaming revenues if the Committee chooses to approve a Native American veterans services initiative.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide one-time funding of \$66,900 PR in 1999-00 and \$68,000 PR in 2000-01 and 1.0 four-year project position to: (a) fund an American Indian veteran services coordinator and establish a grant program for Wisconsin Indian tribes to assist their members in obtaining federal and state veterans benefits; and (b) create two separate annual PR appropriations for this purpose.

Using Funding from Tribal Gaming Revenues

2. Fund the proposed program from tribal revenues as recommended by the Governor but modify the Governor's recommendation by selecting Alternative A1, A2, A3, A4, or A5 and Alternative B1, B2 or B3:

A. Coordinator Position

(1) Provide \$51,900 PR in 1999-00 and \$58,900 PR in 2000-01 and 1.0 four-year PR project position for the American Indian veterans services coordinator; create two annual appropriations; and include language to sunset the appropriations on June 30, 2003. (*Governor's recommendation with sunset language.*)

(2) Provide \$51,900 PR in 1999-00 and \$58,90 PR in 2000-01 and 1.0 permanent PR position for the American Indian veterans services coordinator and create two annual appropriations (*Department's original position request except funded from tribal gaming revenues*).

(3) Create statutory language directing the Department to institute a model Native American veterans services outreach program within the agency aimed at: (a) making Native American veterans aware of their potential eligibility for state and federal veterans benefits; and (b) assisting such veterans in obtaining these benefits. Further, specify that DVA shall make this outreach program a top priority effort for the agency's existing regional veterans services coordinators.

<u>Alternative 2A(3)</u>	<u>PR</u>
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- \$110,800
2000-01 POSITIONS (Change to Bill)	- 1.00

(4) Create statutory language directing the Department to institute a model Native American veteran services outreach program within the agency aimed at: (a) making Native American veterans aware of their potential eligibility for state and federal veterans benefits; and (b) assisting such veterans in obtaining these benefits. In addition, delete 1.0 PR existing regional veterans services coordinator position and create 1.0 PR tribal veterans services coordinator position.

<u>Alternative 2A(4)</u>	<u>PR</u>
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- \$110,800
2000-01 POSITIONS (Change to Bill)	- 1.00

(5) Maintain current law.

<u>Alternative 2A(5)</u>	<u>PR</u>
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- \$110,800
2000-01 POSITIONS (Change to Bill)	- 1.00

B. Grant Amounts

(1) Provide \$15,000 PR in 1999-00 and \$10,000 PR in 2000-01 for grants to tribal veterans services coordinators and survey funding (*same as Governor's recommendation*).

(2) Provide \$27,500 PR in 1999-00 and \$27,500 PR in 2000-01 to annually to fund a \$2,500 per tribe grant program for Wisconsin Indian tribes which designate a tribal veterans

services officer and which have had a tribal veterans services officer plan approved by DVA.

<u>Alternative 2B(2)</u>	<u>PR</u>
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	\$30,000

- (3) Maintain current law.

<u>Alternative 2B(3)</u>	<u>PR</u>
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	-\$25,000

Using Funding from Veterans Trust Fund

3. Fund the program with revenues from the veterans trust fund instead of from tribal gaming revenues and further modify the Governor's recommendation by selecting Alternative A1, A2, A3, A4 or A5 and Alternative B1, B2 or B3.

A. Coordinator Position

(1) Provide \$51,900 SEG in 1999-00 and \$58,900 SEG in 2000-01 and 1.0 four-year SEG project position for the American Indian veterans services coordinator; create two annual appropriations to fund the position; and include language to sunset the appropriations on June 30, 2003. (*Governor's recommendation except with SEG funding and sunset language.*)

<u>Alternative 3A(1)</u>	<u>PR</u>	<u>SEG</u>	<u>Total</u>
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	-\$110,800	\$110,800	\$0
2000-01 POSITIONS (Change to Bill)	- 1.00	1.00	0.00

(2) Provide \$51,900 SEG in 1999-00 and \$58,900 SEG in 2000-01 and 1.0 permanent SEG position for the American Indian veterans services coordinator and create two annual appropriations to fund the position (*Department's original request*).

<u>Alternative 3A(2)</u>	<u>PR</u>	<u>SEG</u>	<u>Total</u>
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	-\$110,800	\$110,800	\$0
2000-01 POSITIONS (Change to Bill)	- 1.00	1.00	0.00

(3) Create statutory language directing the Department to institute a model Native American veteran services outreach program within the agency aimed at: (a) making Native American veterans aware of their potential eligibility for state and federal veterans benefits; and (b)

assisting such veterans in obtaining these benefits. Further, specify that DVA shall make this outreach program a top priority effort for the agency's existing regional veterans services coordinators.

Alternative 3A(3)	PR
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- \$110,800
2000-01 POSITIONS (Change to Bill)	- 1.00

(4) Create statutory language directing the Department to institute a model Native American veteran services outreach program within the agency aimed at: (a) making Native American veterans aware of their potential eligibility for state and federal veterans benefits; and (b) assisting such veterans in obtaining these benefits. Delete 1.0 SEG existing regional veterans services coordinator position and create 1.0 SEG tribal veterans services coordinator position.

Alternative 3A(4)	PR
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	-\$110,800
2000-01 POSITIONS (Change to Bill)	-1.00

(5) Maintain current law.

Alternative 3A(5)	PR
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	-\$110,800
2000-01 POSITIONS (Change to Bill)	-1.00

B. Grant Amounts

(1) Provide \$15,000 SEG in 1999-00 and \$10,000 SEG in 2000-01 for grants to tribal services coordinators and survey funding; create two annual appropriations to fund the grant program; and sunset the appropriations on June 30, 2003 (*same as Governor's recommendation except with SEG funding and sunset language*).

Alternative 3B(1)	PR	SEG	TOTAL
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	-\$25,000	\$25,000	\$0

(2) Provide \$27,500 SEG in 1999-00 and \$27,500 SEG in 2000-01 to annually to fund a \$2,500 per tribe grants program for Wisconsin Indian tribes which designate a tribal veterans services officer and which have had a tribal veterans services officer plan approved by DVA.

<u>Alternative 3B(2)</u>	<u>PR</u>	<u>SEG</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- \$25,000	\$55,000	\$30,000

(3) Maintain current law.

<u>Alternative 3B(3)</u>	<u>PR</u>
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- \$25,000

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