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**WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**  
**ACT MEMO**

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**2003 Wisconsin Act 42**  
[2003 Assembly Bill 74]

**Tuition Vouchers for Sounding  
"Taps"**

2003 Acts: [www.legis.state.wi.us/2003/data/acts/](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2003/data/acts/)

Act Memos: [www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/act\\_memo/act\\_memo.htm](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/act_memo/act_memo.htm)

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) currently administers the military funeral honors program, with assistance from veterans service organizations and the Wisconsin National Guard. Under the program, the family of a deceased veteran may notify a funeral director of its desire to have military honors rendered at the veteran's funeral. Depending on the availability of personnel, various honors may be rendered, including firing rifle volleys, sounding "Taps," and folding the flag for presentation to the veteran's family.

Under 2003 Wisconsin Act 42, a student in grades 6 to 12 or in a Wisconsin public or private college or university is eligible for a \$25 tuition voucher if he or she sounds "Taps" on a bugle, trumpet, or cornet at a military honors funeral held in the state.

The Act requires the University of Wisconsin (UW) System Board of Regents and the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) Board to grant an eligible student a \$25 tuition or academic fee remission for each voucher issued to the student. The tuition voucher may be used at any time for the payment of tuition or academic fees at a UW System institution or a WTCS school. For UW System schools, the student must be enrolled as an undergraduate. The DVA is directed to encourage private colleges and universities to accept the vouchers. The vouchers are not transferable.

Act 42 requires the DVA to create a tuition voucher form for use by funeral directors and to distribute copies of the form, and an explanation of the form's use, to every operator of a funeral establishment. The department cannot charge a fee for the voucher form or for the distribution of the form.

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This memo provides a brief description of the Act. For more detailed information,  
consult the text of the law and related legislative documents.

The Act directs the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to encourage school boards to grant an excused absence to a student in grades 6 to 12 for the purpose of sounding "Taps" at a military honors funeral.

For additional information about the military funeral honors program, see the link to "funeral honors" at <http://dva.state.wi.us>.

***Effective Date:*** The Act takes effect on August 26, 2003.

***Prepared by:*** Pam Shannon, Senior Staff Attorney

August 15, 2003

PS:jal;wu

SUPPORT AND DOCUMENTATION FOR ASSEMBLY BILL

74

Present Veterans Affairs Committee

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for allowing me to address this issue.

My name is Marlin Phillips. I am the superintendent of schools in Sparta. I am here today with Al Wright to discuss a topic we believe is in the best interest of our veterans and the citizens, not only of this state, but of the nation.

My father was 80 years old at his last birthday and was an active veteran of WWII. The one thing he has asked of me and I suspect from talking to other veterans they have requested also, is military honors when they pass away.

My father served in the CC's prior to WWII, enlisted prior to WWII, and served throughout the war with an honorable discharge from Fort McCoy after the war. He has instilled in me pride in this country and state, and served as a positive role model for years.

I discussed with him the fact that we would come today, in front of you, to ask consideration of this request. His advice to me at that time was, "Well you might want to get a haircut and clean up."

Seriously, in my job I seem to ask a lot of you folks for other reasons such as school finance changes in revenue caps, etc. But in your leadership positions, I do understand how many critical issues come before you.

Today, I ask you to consider the bill to create a \$25.00 remission of tuition in the form of a voucher redeemable at our Wisconsin post high educational institutions. That is, universities and colleges - both public and private, technical schools - both public and private, and other accredited schools of higher learning. This voucher is given to persons who sound taps at funerals for veterans as part of the color guard ceremony in lieu of a tape or CD player.

In my opinion, the actual financial impact of this bill would be negligible. I believe that the positive public relations of schools, both those that allow students to participate and those that accept the vouchers, would far outstrip the cost that these institutes spend on just one advertisement for their college programs. Please remember this could be considered another means of providing minimal financial aid and great public relations for the colleges.

Today's young people, our future, care about our state, our country, and the world. The recent events of September 11, 2001, and now the Iraqi war, have caused in our schools a resonance of patriotism and dedication to freedom and the American way of life.

It is our job, in my opinion, as parents, teachers and community people, to do two things:

1. Continually teach the concepts of respect, honor and foster our civic responsibilities, and
2. Recognize and encourage participation in events soberly, somberly, and appreciatively to our veterans.

Most recently, I attended my uncle's funeral, Shirley Streeter of Prairie Du Chien, WI. At his funeral, the local veterans provided a color guard with appropriate dress and the sounding of Taps by live individuals. At the conclusion, the color guard presented the brass casings from the 21-gun salute to the surviving relatives.

Not too long after this, I attended another funeral with military honors. At the funeral the well-intentioned color guard was initially unable to get the tape recorder to operate, and when they did, the sound had to be adjusted. It cracked and popped and generally, in my opinion, detracted from the great honor that was intended.

Each of you here, most likely, has experienced recent electronic snafus that tend to detract from our good intentions. You know... microphones that don't work, impersonal messages, enter code to talk to ..., or no one here, or call someone else. This area needs a personal people contact.

Folks, please consider that this one event in our living community requires living people to react and respond to in a compassionate, considerate and personal manner. We must consider honoring our veterans with the best we can.

Very soon we will be sending even more new young men and women into harms way.

What will be their legacy? Tradition, honor, and respect or as Mr. Wright stated a “boom box” on the tombstone or placed along a gravel road?

### SPARTA HIGH POINT STUDENTS RECORD HISTORY WITH VETERAN INTERVIEWS

There are 19 million war veterans in the United States today, but every day we lose 1500 of them. This fact motivated Congress to pass Public Law 106-380, which was authorized by Ron Kind in the U.S. House of Representatives. This law calls upon the Library of Congress to collect and preserve audio and videotaped oral histories, along with documentary materials such as letters, diaries, maps, photographs, and home movies of America's war veterans and those who served in support of them.

A group of students from Sparta High Point School have been conducting interviews of veterans from World War II, The Korean Conflict, The Vietnam Conflict, and Desert Storm. The interviews have made history real to the High Point students. It has also helped them to develop a respect and understanding for veterans and this country. The students are improving their communication, organization, and problem-solving skills with this meaningful activity. They are also learning how to design a web page.

The interviews are audio- and videotaped. The audiotapes are used to transcribe the interviews. One videotape of the interview will be sent to the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., one will be housed in the Monroe County Historical Room, one tape will be used by High Point to make a web page and movie, and one copy will be given to the veteran.

The interviews so far have been fantastic. They demonstrate the heroism, patriotism, dignity, and courage of our local veterans. Their stories are remarkable and it is a privilege to learn about the experiences these people have had. These interviews are a great way to learn about history, but more importantly, they demonstrate the dedication and sacrifices our veterans have made for this country.

- 19,000 in the United States - Everyday we lose 1500 in the nation
- In Wisconsin last year, July 1 – June 30, about 4000 veterans passed away with between 1/3 and 1/2 requesting military honors
- These \$25.00 vouchers for just 2000 veterans equals \$50,000.00 in tuition remission or \$100,000 if everyone asked for this -  
16 technical colleges – 143,062 students and 13 Wisconsin universities - 143,362 students, this equals 286,429 students. And there are a number of private schools.
- Using just Wisconsin schools, adding this on to tuition would be \$.39 per student and less if the private schools participate .

- Schools could treat this as public relations or financial aide. To divide this between 29 schools would be \$1700.00 per school, per year or more , of course, for a Madison or larger school.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please consider this bill seriously and with the sincere intentions presented.

Prepared by

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## SUPPORT AND DOCUMENTATION FOR ASSEMBLY BILL 496

I would like to provide you with several exhibits concerning this proposal.

We have talked to the University of Wisconsin – LaCrosse Chancellor, with the WWTC College Director, the Post Commander at Fort McCoy, Veteran Affairs, assemblymen, senators, musicians and funeral directors. Each provides unrestricted support. Please note the following exhibits.

- Exhibit #1            what is new about Military Funeral Honors?
- Exhibit #2            Al Wright's letter "Honoring Those Who Served – The Sounding of Taps - The Final Tribute to a Fallen Comrade
- Exhibit #3            Shattered Dream
- Exhibit #4            mournful farewells
- Exhibit #5            A Wake-Up Call for Veterans
- Exhibit #6            Tapping the Emotions by Dan Rodricks, Sun Staff
- Exhibit #7            Honoring Those Who Served Information Sheet prepared by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, 1999
- Exhibit #8            The Origin of Taps, US Army Center of Military History  
Includes the verses of Taps  
                          "Day is done. Gone the sun.  
                          From the lake, from the hill, all is well.;  
                          Safely rest, God is nigh, safely rest.
- Exhibit #9            Boy Scout Related History
- Exhibit #10           24 Notes That Tap Deep Emotions

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