

pt 3



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Terry C. Anderson, Director
Laura D. Rose, Deputy Director

TO: SENATOR RONALD W. BROWN
FROM: Mary Offerdahl, Staff Attorney
RE: Comparison of Provisions Relating to National Guard Educational Benefits and Veterans' Education in 2003 Senate Bill 170, as Amended, and 2003 Wisconsin Act 33
DATE: August 20, 2003

This memorandum responds to your request for a comparison of the 2003 Wisconsin Act 33 provisions relating to veterans' education and part-time study grants to the comparable provisions in 2003 Senate Bill 170, as amended. Differences between 2003 Senate Bill 170, as amended (the Bill) and 2003 Wisconsin Act 33 (the Act) with respect to such provisions are as follows:

Section 21.49, Stats., National Guard Educational Benefits

The Act, at SECTIONS 741 to 743, expands the definition of "Qualifying school" in s. 21.49 (1) (b), Stats., to include, in addition to qualifying in-state schools, a public institution of higher education under the Minnesota-Wisconsin student reciprocity agreement under s. 39.47, Stats., and a public institution of higher education under an interstate agreement under s. 39.42, Stats. The Bill does not include these changes.

The Bill does not include the following amendment in SECTION 744 of the Act to s. 21.49 (3) (a), Stats., related to eligibility for tuition grants awarded by the Department of Military Affairs:

21.49 (3) (a) Any eligible guard member upon satisfactory completion of a full-time or part-time course in a qualifying school is eligible for a tuition grant equal to 100% of the actual tuition charged by the school or 100% of the maximum arithmetic average of resident undergraduate tuition tuitions charged by the university of Wisconsin-Madison 4-year institutions in the university of Wisconsin System for a comparable number of credits, whichever amount is less.

The Act does not include the provision in SECTION 1 of the Bill that would prohibit a guard member from receiving a grant under s. 21.49 (3), Stats., for any semester in which the guard

member received a grant under s. 45.25, Stats. This corresponds with the fact that the Act does not include the provision in SECTION 4 of the Bill that would have repealed s. 45.25 (2) (b), Stats., and thus would have had the effect of including guard members among those potentially eligible for tuition reimbursement under s. 45.25 (2), Stats.

Section 45.25, Stats., Veterans' Tuition Reimbursement Program

- SECTION 1088r of the Act creates the following definition under s. 45.25 (1g), which is not in the Bill:

45.25 (1g) DEFINITION. In this section, "tuition," when referring to the university of Wisconsin System, means "academic fees," as described in s. 36.27 (1), and when referring to the technical colleges, means "program fees," as described in s. 38.24 (1m) (a) and (b).

- In keeping with the above definition, the Act deletes "and fee" from "tuition and fee reimbursement program" in s. 45.25 (title), (1m) [renumbered], (2) (intro.), (c) and (d); and deletes "and fees" from "tuition and fees" and "or fees" from "tuition or fees" in s. 45.25 (3) (a) and (b) (intro.), Stats. The Bill does not make any of these changes.

- The provisions in SECTIONS 3, 5, 11, 12, and 13 of the Bill that would have changed "individual" to "veteran" were not made in the Act.

- The Act does not include the provision in SECTION 4 of the Bill that would have repealed s. 45.25 (2) (b), Stats., and thus would have had the effect of including guard members among those potentially eligible for tuition reimbursement under s. 45.25 (2), Stats.

- SECTION 1089 of the Act does not include the underlined language in SECTION 5 of the Bill that would have amended s. 45.25 (2) (c), Stats., as follows: "...applies for the tuition and fee reimbursement program for courses completed during a semester that started within 10 years after separation from the service." Instead, SECTION 1089 of the Act replaces the word "completed" with the word "begun" in s. 45.25 (2) (c), Stats.

- The Act does not include the following provision that SECTION 8 of the Bill would have created, relating to exceptions to eligibility:

45.25 (2m) EXCEPTIONS TO ELIGIBILITY. A course at the institution or school that the veteran attends that has been approved for credit through the department's Academic Credit for Military Experience Program, which evaluates military experience and determines the academic credit for that experience, is not eligible for reimbursement under this section. The credits approved for courses under the Academic Credit for Military Experience Program may not be counted toward the 12-credit requirement under sub. (2) (e).

- SECTION 1089e of the Act includes the following amendment to the end of s. 45.25 (3) (a), Stats., which is not included in the Bill:

...may be reimbursed an amount not to exceed the total cost of the individual's tuition ~~and fees~~ minus any grants or scholarships, including those made under s. 21.49, that the individual receives specifically for the payment of the tuition ~~or fees~~, or ~~85%~~ of the standard cost of tuition for a state resident for an equivalent undergraduate ~~course~~ semester at the University of Wisconsin-Madison ~~per course~~, whichever is less. Reimbursement is available only for tuition ~~and fees~~ that ~~are~~ is part of a curriculum that is relevant to a degree in a particular course of study at the institution.

- SECTION 1089g of the Act repeals and recreates s. 45.25 (3) (am) differently than does SECTION 10 of the Bill. The Bill would repeal and recreate s. 45.25 (3) (am) to permit reimbursement for a course at a qualifying institution other than the one from which the veteran is receiving his or her degree under certain circumstances. The Act does not do this, but instead repeals and recreates s. 45.25 (3) (am) to require that an individual eligible to receive reimbursement under par. (a) be reimbursed an amount not to exceed the amount determined under s. 45.25 (3) (am), 2001 Stats.

Section 45.396, Stats., Correspondence Courses and Part-Time Classroom Study

- The Act does not include the following provision that SECTION 26 of the Bill would create:

A course at the institution or school that the veteran attends that has been approved for credit through the department's Academic Credit for Military Experience Program, which evaluates military experience and determines the academic credit for that experience, is not eligible for reimbursement under this section if the veteran is eligible to obtain those credits through the Academic Credit for Military Experience Program.

- SECTION 1092g of the Act states that the term "Tuition" in s. 45.396, Stats., has the meaning given in s. 45.25 (1g), Stats., which was created by SECTION 1088r of the Act. (See the first item in the previous section of this memorandum.) In keeping with the definition, the Act deletes "fees and" from "fees and tuition" in ss. 45.396 (4), "and fees" from "tuition and fees" in s. 45.396 (5) (a), Stats. These provisions are not in the Bill.

- SECTION 1092p of the Act includes the following amendment to s. 45.396 (5) (a) [renumbered], Stats., which is not in the Bill:

45.396 (5) (a) Except as provided in ~~sub. (9) par. (b)~~, the amount of the reimbursement may not exceed ~~85%~~ of the total cost of the individual's tuition ~~and fees~~ or ~~85%~~ of the standard cost for a state resident for tuition ~~and fees~~ for an equivalent undergraduate course at the University of Wisconsin-Madison per course, whichever is less, and may not be provided to an individual more than 4 times during any consecutive 12-month period.

SECTION 1092q of the Act then proceeds to create s. 45.396 (5) (b), Stats., which is not in the Bill, as follows:

45.396 (5) (b) Any individual who is eligible to receive reimbursement under par. (a) shall be reimbursed an amount not to exceed the amount determined under s. 45.396 (9).

- The Act does not include the provision in SECTION 28 of the Bill that would have renumbered and amended s. 45.396 (7) (a) (intro.), Stats., as follows.

45.396 (7) (a) No veteran may receive a grant under this section if the department determines, ~~after disregarding any payment described under s. 45.85, 1997 stats.,~~ that the income of the veteran and his or her spouse exceeds ~~\$500~~ \$50,000 plus \$1,000 for each dependent in excess of 2 dependents ~~plus whichever of the following applies:~~

The Act also does not include the provision in SECTION 29 of the Bill that would have repealed subdivisions 1. and 2. of s. 45.396 (7) (a), Stats. When these subdivisions are read in conjunction with the stricken parts in SECTION 28 of the Bill, as shown above, it becomes clear that the "\$50,000 plus \$1,000" text added in SECTION 28 of the Bill would not have been what might otherwise be thought a large increase from the stricken \$500 figure, but rather would have been a more modest increase from a figure such as the \$47,500 figure in subdivision 2., which the Bill had intended to repeal. (Subdivision 2. states: "For applications for grants received beginning on July 1, 1994, \$47,500.")

- SECTION 30 of the Bill would repeal s. 45.396 (9), Stats. The Act, with the Governor's veto, retains sub. (9).

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact either me or Richard Sweet at the Legislative Council staff offices.

MO:tlu



Vets Grapevine



Volume XXXI

Number 5

August 2003

Serving student veterans since 1972

Veterans tuition grant to go to 100%

Tuition and fees

Wisconsin veterans

By Chuck Goranson

According to the governor's office, veterans will be reimbursed 100 percent of the cost of tuition and fees next fall thanks to a creative budget veto by Governor Jim Doyle. The increase from 85 percent is the result of a strange political process that could only happen in Wisconsin.

Last fall, the Department of Veterans Affairs asked for the increase but Governor Doyle did not include it in his budget request to the Legislature in February.

Last spring, the Republican-controlled Joint Finance Committee amended the budget proposal by introducing a Byzantine two-tiered plan that would have some veterans receiving 100 percent tuition but no fees while others would be eligible for 85 percent of tuition and fees. Disabled veterans and many other veterans attending technical schools would have gotten less than under the current law.

That proposal passed both houses of the Legislature as part of the state budget and was sent to the governor for his signature.

In Wisconsin the governor has the power to veto individual words in the budget. Apparently, the bill had enough words in just the right order that by carefully crossing some of them out, Doyle changed the proposal to make sure Wisconsin veterans will get 100 percent of tuition and fees.

In announcing his veto Doyle said, "We owe a sacred obligation to the brave men and women who have served and sacrificed on behalf of our country. Unfortunately, however, buried in this budget is a provision that would actually cut education benefits for many Wisconsin veterans including disabled veterans. I will be vetoing this provision because even in difficult times, I believe that we should be maintaining our commitments to veterans."

Assembly veterans committee chair Terry Musser (Republican-Melrose) is hesitant to approve of vetoes by the Democratic Governor, "but on this one he's right. This veto fixes problems created by the Joint Finance version," he said.

Last semester, ~~more than~~ ^{more than} 2,700 grants were awarded under the Veterans Tuition and Fee Reimbursement Grant Program for full-time students and the Part-Time Study Grant Program.

Assuming the Republican-controlled Legislature does not override Doyle's veto, the new rate will take effect this fall.



Doyle

Many Iraq War vets left out

Returning Iraq War veterans who are activated National Guard members will not be eligible for the 100 percent Tuition and Fees Reimbursement Grant because the law governing that program does not recognize them as veterans. They are eligible for most other state benefits, but not the Tuition and Fees Reimbursement Grant.

If they stay in the Guard they may be eligible for the recently reduced Guard tuition grant that is for somewhat less money than the veterans benefit.

**National Guard Tuition
Grant reduced
See page 2**



Badger Football game to feature a *Salute to Wisconsin Veterans*

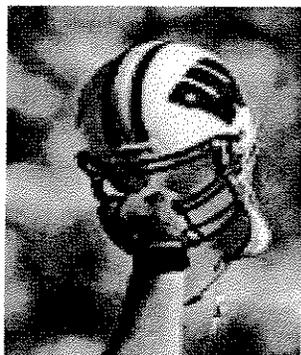
(MADISON) — The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Athletic Department and U-W Marching Band, will present a pre-game show "*Salute to Wisconsin Veterans*" at the Badger football game vs. Akron on September 6, 2003 at 2:30 p.m.

Veterans groups color guards and flag bearers from around the state will participate and march in the pre-game ceremony that will honor and recognize all veterans but especially recently returned veterans from overseas.

Each participant will receive a free ticket to the game.

U-W student veterans are encouraged to attend.

For more information, or to sign up a veterans group to participate, contact **Kathleen Scholl** at the WDVA by **August 8**, at **608-267-3582**.



National Guard tuition grants hit by budget

Madison and Milwaukee only UW schools affected

By Chuck Goranson

The new state budget contains a provision that will reduce by over 19 percent the amount that National Guard members can get under the Guard tuition grant at the UW-Madison. The new law sets the maximum amount of the grant at the "average resident undergraduate tuition charged by the 4-year institutions in the University of Wisconsin system." Since UW-Madison and Milwaukee charge much higher tuition than the other 11 campuses, only students at the two large schools will be hurt.

The National Guard has not officially announced the new maximum but using recently released tuition data from the Board of Regents, the average tuition charge at the UW's 13 four-year campuses will be about \$1,842 per semester. This compares to an actual tuition of \$2,277 at the UW-Madison, a \$435 difference. Fees will add \$292.35 to make the total \$2569.35.

While tuition will jump over 18 percent this year, the amount of reimbursement from the Guard tuition grant will actually drop about \$85 per semester from last year.

The bottom line is that Guard members will be reimbursed about 72 percent of the total tuition and fees they pay at the UW-Madison.

The new formula is a result of cost-cutting measures proposed by the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs, agreed to by the governor and adopted by both houses of the Legislature.

Several rumors are circulating. One says that the Guard will be contractually obligated to pay 100 percent to those who enlisted for it, or that members who have used it the past will be "grandfathered."

Another, more likely senerio, is that the difference could be made up by the Tuition Assistance Program.

Time will tell.

Summer Study Grant

Wisconsin veterans

Veterans may be reimbursed for up to 85% of tuition and fees after successfully completing summer courses at most Wisconsin schools.

In some instances, spouses and dependent children of deceased Wisconsin veterans may be eligible for this grant.

During a regular semester this program is called the Part-Time Study Grant. To qualify as a part-time student, undergraduates must carry 11 credits or less. Students enrolled in summer school are considered "part time" regardless of credit load.

Undergraduates can collect *both* full-time GI Bill and the part-time grant in summer. Students with Bachelor's degrees must carry 8 credits or less and have exhausted their GI Bill benefits. Students with Master's Degrees are not eligible.

The part-time course work must be related to the applicant's occupational, professional or employment objectives. Courses taken solely for personal edification do not qualify for reimbursement.

Education grant application process:

- For quickest service and to avoid missing deadlines, the best time to apply is during the last month of classes. To avoid missing the deadline, you must apply for the three-week intersession before the end of the eight week regular summer session.
- Call the Dane County Veteran Service Office to set up appointment, 266-4158. They will help you establish or confirm your eligibility and give you the application form. A copy of your latest federal tax return is required to demonstrate your income is less than \$47,500.
- Submit that form to UW Student Veteran Services, Room 141 of the Peterson Office Building, 750 University Avenue. At the end of the school term, Student Veteran Services will automatically confirm your grades and forward your application to the WDVA.
- Checks will be mailed directly to your home.

If you received a Wisconsin veterans tuition reimbursement grant last spring, it may be easier for you to apply on line at
<https://services.dva.state.wi.us/>

Vets Grapevine

Grapevine Staff:

Editor: *Cory Steinbrecher*

Contributors:

Chuck Goranson

Cory Steinbrecher

Vets for Vets President:

Keith Hofkens

Vets for Vets Vice President:

Cory Steinbrecher

Vets for Vets Treasurer:

Cassie Skelton

Published five times yearly by Vets for Vets, 714 University Ave., Madison, WI 53715, to improve communication and cooperation among student veterans at the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

E-mail:

vets@mail.studentorg.wisc.edu

Home-Page:

<http://vets.studentorg.wisc.edu/>

Veterans GI Bill to go up

Active duty veterans will see a boost in their GI Bill soon. The VA has announced that Chapter 30 GI Bill will increase from \$900 to \$985 on October 1 for full-time students. Since the VA pays at the end of the month, the increase will be reflected in checks received early in November.

No increase has been announced for other forms of GI Bill.

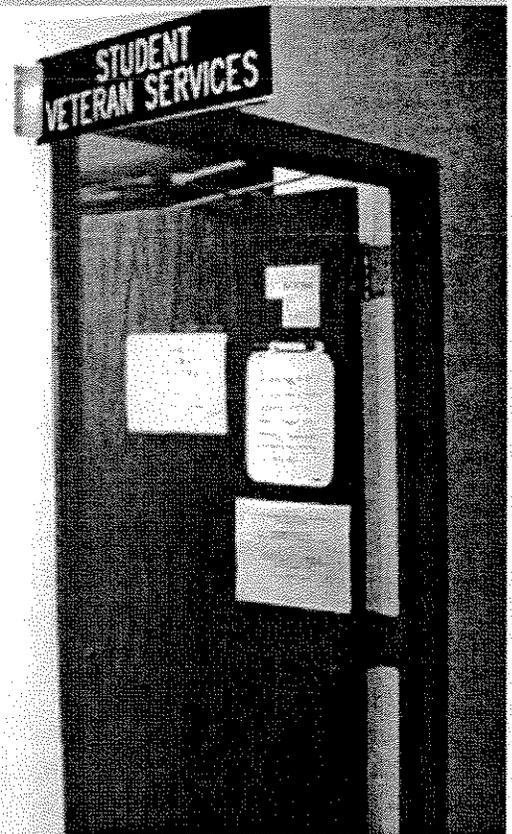
Student Veteran Services moves up

The UW-Madison Student Veteran Services Office has moved up one floor from the basement of the Peterson Building, 750 University Ave. It is now located in room 141 in the first floor hallway.

"It's a little smaller but it's a lot easier to find," said Veterans Coordinator Linda Struck.

The office is open most of the time between 8 and 4:30 to handle GI Bill paperwork. Dane County Veterans Service Officer Maria Kluever will be at the new location on most Thursdays to help with state veterans benefits.

The phone number will remain 265-4628.



Vets for Vets
University of Wisconsin
714 University Ave.
Madison, WI 53715
Phone (608) 263-3456
E-mail: vets@mail.studentorg.wisc.edu

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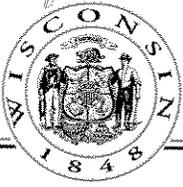
In This Issue

State vet grant to go to 100% of tuition and fees

National Guard "100% tuition grant" reduced

Chapter 30 GI Bill increase

RON BROWN
STATE SENATOR
STATE CAPITOL
MADISON INT-D-



State Senator Sheila Harsdorf

June 25, 2003

State Senator Ron Brown
Room 104 South
State Capitol
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Senator Brown, *Ron*

As I indicated in our recent conversation, I received a letter from a constituent outlining a number of concerns with Senate Bill 170. My constituent also serves as the Veterans Service Officer for St. Croix County.

I am providing you with a copy of his letter that outlines his concerns. I would greatly appreciate if you would take his concerns into account as you consider this legislation.

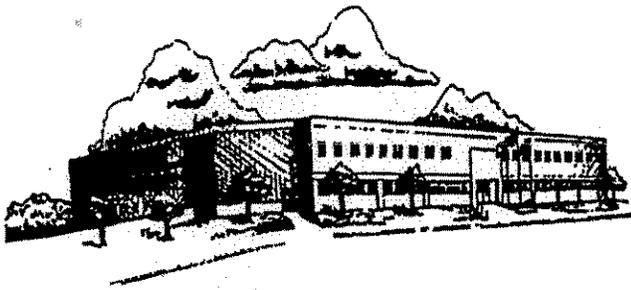
Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Sheila Harsdorf
State Senator
10th Senate District

cc: Lorin Sather, Director, St. Croix County Wisconsin Veteran's Service Office

SH/jj



**ST. CROIX COUNTY
WISCONSIN
VETERANS' SERVICE OFFICE
ST. CROIX COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER
1101 Carmichael Road
Hudson, WI 54016-7710
Phone: (715)386-4759 Fax (715)386-4756**

Lorin D. Sather, Director

June 9, 2003

Senator Sheila Harsdorf
10th District Room 131 South
State Capitol
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Harsdorf,

SHEILA,

Our Association's President, Mr. Mark Grams, testified before the Senate Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs and Homeland Security on Wednesday May 28, 2003 in Madison. In his testimony, he presented our Association's position regarding what is now SB 170. His testimony was largely supportive, in fact, our Association supports the vast majority of the proposed changes contained in SB 170.

We do, however, have areas of concern, which were addressed when Mr. Grams addressed the committee. They are as follows:

1. Proposed changes to the Health Care Aid Grant program would essentially eliminate the ability of a veteran, his/her spouse or their dependents from receiving aid for emergency care under the current language in the bill.
2. In the area of Service Delivery, we had discussions with Mr. Scocos of WDVA prior to the introduction of SB 170. Our notes from those meetings clearly reflect our support for WDVA's ability to process claims in conjunction with "Supermarkets", but did not extend beyond that. While the Federal VA does directly accept applications from veterans, their rules are established to cover the entire nation. Not every state has CVSOs in every county to advocate for and represent veterans the way Wisconsin does. It is the position of the Association, **that WDVA should work with the Association** to close any perceived gaps in service delivery.
3. Proposed changes to the Personal Loan Program (PLP) contained in SB 170, we believe to be unjustly restrictive to those veterans who do not have a property that they can offer as collateral on a loan. Under current rules, any veteran, whether using property or a co-signer can obtain a loan from WDVA for up to \$15,000. While we support raising the PLP loan limit to \$25,000 for those individuals who do have property to mortgage, we do not support lowering the lending limit for co-signer loans to \$5,000, but rather would support leaving that loan at \$15,000, or would consider a compromise position of lowering the loan limit for co-signers to \$10,000. WDVA has provided our Association with some historical data, which

reflects a higher delinquency rate for co-signer loans vice mortgage secured loans. Our Association believes that if data were to be collected from virtually any lending institution, you would find similar data. The co-signer interest rate is already set one full percentage point above the mortgage secured loan for this reason. We would suggest that WDVA's underwriting procedures "in-house" might require some revision. Rethinking the underwriting procedures would certainly be more palatable than drastically altering the current program as is currently proposed in SB 170. The Department sent out a pile of statistics regarding 'delinquencies', that, I believe, are distorted. It did not mention the number of loans that were not **collected**, only late. Again, if the guarantor loans are so bad (which they are not, veterans have higher repayment rates than the general public), maybe the Department underwriting needs help!

4. Proposed changes to language in the Statutes regarding what entity qualifies for a "full" CVSO Office grant is rather perplexing. We understand the intent of the bill's language, but remain unsure as to whether this language accomplishes that change, without creating further potential problems. The solution to this dilemma is not to change the law, but rather for a county with a part-time CVSO to employ a full-time CVSO and staff the office appropriately. **Sheila, our association strongly opposed this change, because it is the veterans best interest to have a full-time advocate in each county.**
5. Our Association has always supported raising the Education Grants to 100% of both tuition and fees. We remain committed to that position.

Our Association remains dedicated to preserving and enhancing veterans' benefits here in the State of Wisconsin. We have a unique perspective, in that we are in daily contact with the veterans who utilize both the State of Wisconsin and Federal Veterans' Benefits, and hear their concerns regularly. While we are generally supportive of program initiatives brought forth by WDVA and the Legislature, we do periodically have differing opinions.

I request that you take into consideration the concerns expressed by our Association.

We look for your support in modifying the current language of SB 170 to reflect our Association's position, and look forward to working with you and your staff.

Sincerely,



Lorin D. Sather
CVSO

Hi THERE,
I'D LOVE TO DISCUSS THIS &
OTHER STUFF - I'LL STOP BY -
OR CALL IF YOU'RE FREE - HERE -
LORIN



Jim Doyle, Governor
Raymond G. Boland, Secretary

STATE OF WISCONSIN, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

30 West Mifflin Street, P.O. Box 7843, Madison, WI 53707-7843
PHONE: (608) 266-1311 1-800-947-8387 (WIS VETS)
WEB SITE: <http://dva.state.wi.us>
E-MAIL: Headquarters@dva.state.wi.us
FAX: (608) 267-0403

June 20, 2003

Senator Ron Brown
State Capitol 104 South
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Dear Senator Brown,

On behalf of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, thank you for your outstanding work to preserve, protect, and enhance our state's veterans programs through the provisions of Senate Bill 170, the veterans omnibus bill that you introduced in the Senate and have guided thus far through the legislative process.

During your Committee's May 28, 2003 public hearing on the bill, a clear consensus was evident regarding all but a handful of the bill's provisions. Following the hearing, the eleven provisions of the amendment to S.B. 170 that you authored combined both thoughtful compromise and true leadership.

Yesterday, June 19, 2003, the Legislative and Program Review Committee of the Wisconsin Board of Veterans Affairs introduced and passed a resolution in support of S.B. 170 as amended, calling it, "an outstanding piece of legislation." Today, the Wisconsin Board of Veterans Affairs voted unanimously to accept the report of the Committee, including the resolution in support of S.B. 170.

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs is in full support of all provisions of S.B. 170, as amended and passed by a 5-0 vote on June 12, 2003 by the Senate Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs and Homeland Security.

Your leadership for the benefit of all of Wisconsin's veterans is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Raymond G. Boland
Secretary
Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs

Daniel P. Vrakas

Wisconsin State Representative

Chair: Assembly Committee on Labor & Employment
Majority Caucus Vice-Chair

The attached is provided for your information.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

FYI - We promised to forward the enclosed concerns on SB 170.

Thanks!

P.O. Box 8953 • Madison, Wisconsin 53708-8953
Message Hotline: 1-800-362-9472



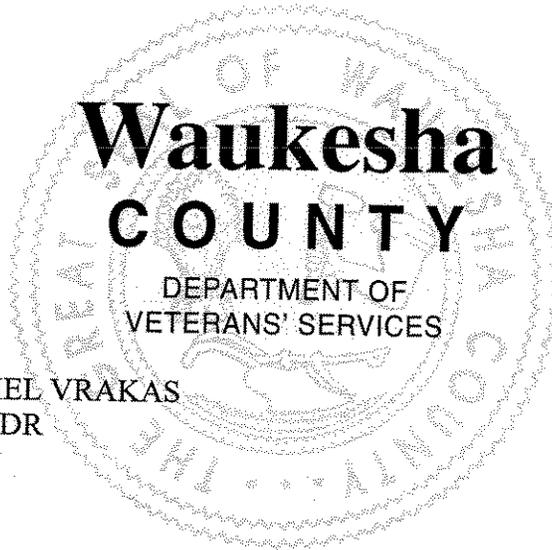
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Soy base ink

Daniel M. Finley
County Executive

John L. Margowski
Director



June 6, 2003

THE HONORABLE DANIEL VRAKAS
N45 W28912 E CAPITOL DR
HARTLAND WI 53029

JUN 20 2003

Dear Representative Vrakas:

The County Veterans Service Officers Association President, Mr. Mark Grams, testified before the Senate Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs and Homeland Security on Wednesday May 28, 2003 in Madison. In his testimony, he presented our Association's position regarding what is now SB 170. His testimony was largely supportive, in fact, our Association supports the vast majority of the proposed changes contained in SB 170.

We do, however, have areas of concern, which were addressed when Mr. Grams addressed the committee. They are as follows:

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2. In the area of Service Delivery, we had discussions with Mr. Scocos of WDVA prior to the introduction of SB 170. Our notes from those meetings clearly reflect our support for WDVA's ability to process claims in conjunction with "Supermarkets", but did not extend beyond that. While the Federal VA does directly accept applications from veterans, their rules are established to cover the entire nation. Not every state has CVSO's in every county to advocate for and represent veterans the way Wisconsin does. It is the position of the Association, that WDVA should work with the Association to close any perceived gaps in service delivery.
3. Proposed changes to the Personal Loan Program (PLP) contained in SB 170, we believe to be unjustly restrictive to those veterans who do not have a property that they can offer as collateral on a loan. The proposed change would also severely inhibit recently discharged veterans from obtaining loans for education purposes as most do not own property. Under current rules, any veteran, whether using property or a co-signer can obtain a loan from WDVA for up to \$15,000. While we support raising the PLP loan limit to \$25,000 for those individuals who do have property to mortgage, we do not support lowering the lending limit for co-signer loans to \$5,000, but rather would support leaving that loan at \$15,000, or would consider a compromise position of lowering the loan limit for co-signers to \$10,000. WDVA has provided our Association with some historical data, which reflects a higher

default rate for co-signer loans versus mortgage secured loans. Our Association believes that if data were to be collected from virtually any lending institution, you would find similar data. The co-signer interest rate is already set one full percentage point above the mortgage secured loan for this reason. We would suggest that WDVA's underwriting procedures "in-house" might require some revision. Rethinking the underwriting procedures would certainly be more palatable than drastically altering the current program as is currently proposed in SB 170.

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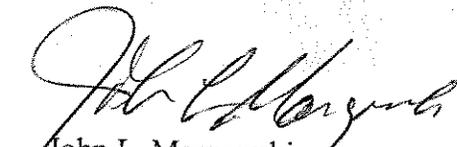
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I request that you take into consideration the concerns expressed by our Association.

You may contact me or any of the officers of our Association if you have further questions.

I look for your support in modifying the current language of SB 170 to reflect our Association's position, and look forward to working with you and your staff.

Sincerely,



John L. Margowski
Director of Veterans' Services

JLM/msm



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

*Terry C. Anderson, Director
Laura D. Rose, Deputy Director*

TO: SENATOR RONALD W. BROWN
renj
FROM: Richard Sweet, Senior Staff Attorney
RE: Applications for State Veterans Programs
DATE: June 18, 2003

This memorandum summarizes the current statutory provisions related to involvement in the application process for state veterans programs by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and county veterans' service officers (CVSOs).

The programs that provide assistance to veterans under state law, and the roles played by DVA and CVSOs, are set forth in ch. 45, Stats. Duties of DVA include employing regional coordinators and mobile claims officers to provide claim and benefit assistance to veterans. The statutes governing these duties are set forth in s. 45.35 (4) (b) and (d), Stats., which state as follows:

45.35 (4) (b) The department shall employ regional coordinators. **The duties of a regional coordinator shall include providing direct claims and benefit application assistance to veterans.** The regional coordinators shall coordinate claims and benefit application assistance with the appropriate county veterans' service officers under s. 45.43 to maximize the level of assistance and benefits provided to veterans.

...

(d) The department shall employ mobile claims officers in the department's southeast region and shall employ mobile claims officers in each of the department's other regions. **The mobile claims officers shall provide claim and benefit assistance to veterans.** The mobile claims officers shall coordinate that claim and benefit assistance with the appropriate county veterans' service officers under s. 45.43 to maximize the level of assistance and benefits provided to veterans. [Emphasis added.]

As shown by the above statutes, DVA, through its regional coordinators and mobile claims officers, is required to provide claims and benefit application assistance to veterans, in coordination with CVSOs. In addition, DVA is required to maintain contacts with CVSOs and local agencies, the American Red Cross, and veterans' organizations, and to contact and cooperate with federal agencies in securing benefits for veterans. [s. 45.35 (7), Stats.]

The duties of CVSOs with regard to providing assistance are set forth in s. 45.43 (5), Stats. The relevant provisions of that statute are as follows:

45.43 (5) DUTIES. The county veterans' service officer shall:

(a) Advise persons living in the service officer's county who served in the U.S. armed forces regarding any benefits to which they may be entitled or any complaint or problem arising out of such service and **render to them and their dependents all possible assistance.**

...

(c) Cooperate with federal and state agencies which serve or grant aids or benefits to former military personnel and their dependents. [Emphasis added.]

Two statutes specifically mention applying for benefits through a CVSO. Those statutes deal with retraining grants and mortgage loans.

Under s. 45.397, Stats., a veteran may apply for a retraining grant to the CVSO of the county in which the veteran is living. However, that statute also specifies duties for DVA, including determining the amount of the grant based on the veteran's financial need, and determining that the veteran's proposed program will provide retraining that could enable the veteran to find gainful employment. Therefore, while the statute dealing with the retraining grant program provides that application may be made to a CVSO, there is involvement by DVA.

With regard to the mortgage loan program, s. 45.79, Stats., provides that an authorized lender or a CVSO may, as agent for and with approval of DVA, make loans to eligible persons for qualified purposes. Applications for loans for purchases, construction, or refinancing must be made to an authorized lender designated by DVA. Applications for home improvement loans must be made to a CVSO. In addition, applicants must apply to DVA through a CVSO for certification of eligibility as a veteran.

The statutes described above relating to retraining grants and mortgage loans, which specifically mention CVSOs, are referenced in 2003 Senate Bill 170, a bill that generally deals with veterans benefit programs. SECTION 15 of Senate Bill 170 creates a statutory provision relating to service delivery that states that notwithstanding ss. 45.397 (1) and 45.79 (2) (a), Stats., applications for veterans benefits under ch. 45, Stats., may be submitted directly to DVA or to any qualified representative approved by DVA.

An amendment to the bill was introduced and recommended for adoption by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security, Veterans and Military Affairs and Government Reform. Senate

Amendment 1 modifies the service delivery language in the bill to state that applications for veterans benefits under ch. 45, Stats., may be submitted directly to DVA, to a CVSO, or to any qualified representative approved by DVA. The amendment further requires that DVA promulgate rules establishing the qualifications for those representatives, the approved places for submission of applications, and other administrative matters necessary to ensure efficient delivery of DVA services.

Feel free to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

RNS:jal;rv



Vietnam Veterans of America Wisconsin State Council

Marvin J. Freedman, Executive Director
Post Office Box 55363, Madison, WI 53705-5363
608-836-6586 ★ WIVVA@tds.net

June 18, 2003

The Honorable Ron Brown
The Wisconsin Senate
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

RE: 2003 Senate Bill 170

Dear Ron:

Thank you again for taking the time last Thursday to personally call me to discuss Senate Bill 170 and Senate Amendment 1 to SB 170, as well as the executive action your committee was taking when you called. I continue to appreciate the direct accessibility you provide to me and Vietnam Veterans of America [VVA] as we try to best serve the veterans of Wisconsin.

As I discussed with you last week, VVA continues to support virtually all of the provisions of SB 170. We appreciate the amendment you submitted for executive action that addressed the technical concerns we had about the new statutory language pertaining to the purchase of a Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs [WDVA] headquarters and included our suggested language regarding the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. And as we also discussed, in view of your extensive personal background in addressing the needs of Wisconsin firefighters, we have deferred to you and now support Section 37 of SB 170.

However, with regard to the substantive concerns raised at the SB 170 hearing by VVA, Disabled American Veterans and the CVSO Association of Wisconsin, we still cannot give SB 170 our unqualified support. To summarize the explanation I provided to you last Thursday on these provisions and the results of the subsequent review that VVA has made of our positions as you requested, I wish to advise you of VVA's current positions of the four sections of SB 170 which have been the focus of our concerns:

1. Section 15: Service Delivery

We expressed our very strong concerns, as did the CVSO Association and DAV, about the inclusion of this section in SB 170 as originally drafted when we testified at your committee hearing on May 28th. The revised language included in Senate Amendment 1 has not alleviated the concerns we had, but has actually added to them.

The focus of service delivery should remain a local one. WDVA's role in service delivery must continue to be a supportive one and local control of the CVSO system must be maintained.

If WDVA feels that some counties could be doing a better job of providing service delivery, WDVA should offer to cooperatively assist those CVSO offices and the CVSO Association in getting the job done. There is no basis for providing the suggested statutory powers to WDVA that would allow the department to dictate how counties choose to provide services to their veterans nor has the case been made that the department should be given competitive, concurrent authority to provide the very services that CVSOs currently provide in their 72 counties.

Furthermore, the Veterans Trust Fund is not in a financial position to fund a duplication of statewide service delivery functions.

We will continue to support providing WDVA with the statutory authority to accept claims in the course of their very successful "supermarkets", a program that has received our solid support since its inception. However, with this one exception, VVA still strongly opposes the substantive statutory changes to the service delivery function in Wisconsin proposed by WDVA.

2. Section 18: Health Care Aid Grants

As I explained last Thursday, VVA's concerns about the proposal relating to Health Care Aid grants goes beyond the concern expressed by the CVSO Association. In addition to covering emergency health care, VVA has always supported the continuation of using the Health Care Aid grant program to address the medical debt issue. And as we discussed, VVA does not feel that the way to deal with abuses by some of the medical debt aspect of the program is properly addressed by repealing the medical debt aspect of the program – the way to do so is to specifically target the specific abuses themselves.

However, at your request, VVA has reviewed the issue once again in view of your language in Senate Amendment 1 to SB 170 which we agree addresses the emergency care issue raised by the CVSO Association. **VVA will support your**

revised position if we have your assurance that you will work with VVA, the CVSO Association and other concerned parties to ensure that rules promulgated by WDVA with regard to emergency care will afford Wisconsin veterans the fullest possible coverage for emergency services.

3. Section 24: Personal Loan Program

VVA continues to believe that lowering the loan limit for personal loans using a guarantor from the current \$15,000 to \$5000 is ill-advised and we urge you to reconsider your position and support a guarantor limit of at least \$10,000.

As you know, our position has been shared by DAV – and the CVSO Association, which originally supported a limit of \$15,000 when it testified on SB 170, now also supports a \$10,000 limit as a reasonable compromise on the guarantor limit issue.

As discussed with you in part last Thursday, VVA's position is based on a number of concerns including, but not limited to, the following:

- a. We are not persuaded by WDVA's statistics on personal loan delinquency rates that higher guarantor limits are creating a serious drain on the Veterans Trust Fund. The more appropriate figures would be a review of the actual default rates for guarantor and mortgage-based personal loans during the last five fiscal years along with statistics on the actual dollar value of personal loans from each class that were written off during each of those last five fiscal years. I requested these statistics from WDVA Executive Assistant Anthony Hardie last Thursday and was assured that they would be forthcoming.
- b. Veterans using guarantors for personal loans currently pay a 1% premium compared to the rate paid by veterans supporting their loans with mortgages. If the 1% is insufficient to adequately address a greater default rate by those using guarantors, perhaps WDVA should be reevaluating its underwriting decisions rather than precluding the vast majority of veterans who currently use the guarantor option [almost 86%] from continuing to use what, in most cases, is the only option available to them.
- c. A \$5000 guarantor limit will create a hardship for younger veterans who are just starting out after leaving the service. For example, a young Persian Gulf War II veteran returns home. He is married with two children and has very limited assets. He wants to get a college degree and will have most of his tuition and fees paid for by the Tuition & Fees Reimbursement Program. However, he needs a personal loan to help pay for other living expenses that will not be covered by the part-time jobs he and his wife have. They have no

property to mortgage. There is no way that \$5000 is a realistic limit for them in the situation described which is by no means atypical of what may be expected. In fact, situations like this one actually support leaving the current \$15,000 limit in place. And they underscore the very reasonableness of the \$10,000 limit supported in a spirit of reasonable compromise by VVA, DAV and the CVSO Association.

d. We respectfully ask that you help VVA in determining whether or not Native American veterans will be unduly precluded from availing themselves of personal loans. Specifically, we are trying to determine if federal law has been changed to allow Native Americans to mortgage their reservation property for purposes of obtaining personal loans of the type in question.

4. Section 31: Alter Language for Part-Time Veterans Service Officers

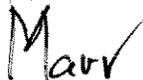
VVA supports the CVSO Association's position that this section, in its entirety, should be eliminated.

VVA does not believe that there is suitable language that can be drafted to address the unique concerns of Green County without creating potential long term problems for other CVSO offices and, ultimately, Wisconsin veterans. This provision is a well-intentioned one, but not a practical one.

Again, VVA commends you on your efforts on SB 170. With the very few exceptions cited above, VVA supports the bill. However, without the changes we outline above, Vietnam Veterans of America cannot support SB 170 in its present form.

VVA and I stand ready to work with you and others on SB 170 and if the concerns we have cited above are addressed adequately, we look forward to providing SB 170 our full and unqualified support.

With kind regards,



Marvin J. Freedman
Executive Director

cc: Members of The Wisconsin Senate Committee on Homeland Security, Veterans & Military Affairs and Government Reform

Members of The Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Veterans & Military Affairs



Wisconsin State Senator
Ron Brown
District 31

June 12, 2003

XXX
County Veterans Service Officer Association
XXX
XXX

Dear XXX:

Thank you for sharing your thoughts on Senate Bill 170 (SB 170). I appreciated receiving the perspective of the County Veterans Service Officer Association on this important piece of legislation.

The Senate Committee on Homeland Security, Veterans and Military Affairs and Government Reform will act on the attached amendment, which makes the following changes to SB 170:

- **Deletes provisions related to the Tuition and Fees Reimbursement Grant and the Part-Time Study Grant.** Given the changes recently made by the Joint Committee on Finance, modifying these grants at this point would be onerous for participating Veterans.
- **Adds the Veterans Museum to the provision authorizing DVA to purchase a headquarters.** The museum plays an integral role in the success of DVA. This change ensures the headquarters and museum will remain connected.
- **Deletes the current service delivery provision and directs DVA to promulgate an administrative rule concerning this matter.** As you stated in your letter, agreement exists that service delivery needs to be modified to accommodate Supermarkets. The administrative rule process, versus this piece of legislation, provides a better venue to address this issue.
- **Adds an exemption for emergency care under the Health Care Aid Grant.** Those who need emergency care should not be excluded from consideration for the Health Care Aid Grant. This change allows for emergency care, while addressing concerns related to abuse.
- **Deletes the provision related to County Veterans Service Office and adds an eligibility exception.** I believe counties should be eligible for the full grant if they are providing full-time service to veterans. Wording the provision in this manner more accurately captures this intent.

The amendment does not change the provisions related to the Personal Loan Program. After examining data related to this matter, I have determined that moving forward with the provision as written provides the best means of ensuring the fiscal stability of the Veterans Trust Fund.

Thank you again for your thoughts on SB 170 and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Ron Brown
State Senate
31st District



STATE OF WISCONSIN, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
30 West Mifflin Street, Madison, WI 53707-7843

Raymond G. Boland, Secretary

DATE: June 11, 2003
TO: Senator Brown
FROM: John A. Scocos
Deputy Secretary
SUBJECT: Health Care Aid Grant Program

Attached is a response that Secretary Boland gave to both the co-chairs of the Joint Committee on Finance in 1999. As directed under Act 9 the Department was to make revisions in the Health Care Aid Grant Program. This letter should give you some history on the Department's attempts to meet the needs of veterans.

If you have any questions, please contact me.



STATE OF WISCONSIN, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

30 West Mifflin Street, P.O. Box 7843, Madison, WI 53707-7843
PHONE: (608) 266-1311 1-800-947-8387 (WIS VETS)
WEB SITE: <http://badger.state.wi.us/agencies/dva>
E-MAIL: Headquarters@dva.state.wi.us
FAX: (608) 267-0403

Tommy G. Thompson, Governor
Raymond G. Boland, Secretary

December 28, 1999

JUN 13 2003

The Honorable Brian J. Burke
Senate Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 316 South, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

The Honorable John Gard
Assembly Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 315 North, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Senator Burke and Representative Gard:

Pursuant to directives in 1999 Wisconsin Act 9, the purpose of this letter is to submit a report on the results of the review and examination of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) Health Care Aid Grant (HCAG) Program.

Section 9155 of 1999 Wisconsin Act 9 states, "The department of veterans affairs shall review the health care aid grant program and examine program modifications that could restrain the expenditure growth of the program. No later than December 31, 1999, the department shall submit a report presenting the results of the review and examination, including any program changes that the department believes should be made in the program to the joint committee on finance."

Background

The HCAG still retains the philosophical foundation ascribed to it by the state legislature when a Post World War II Rehabilitation Trust Fund was created in which it was promulgated that "it is the policy of the State of Wisconsin to assume the responsibility for the rehabilitation and hospitalization of returning members of the armed forces...in cases where the federal government fails or refuses to provide such rehabilitation...in order to prevent want and distress."

Like other Wisconsin veterans benefits paid from the Veterans Trust Fund, the HCAG is not an entitlement. It requires financial need and is designed to provide assistance to veterans and their families when the federal government is unable to do so. Currently, the federal government extends health care services for most medical conditions to all categories of eligible veterans at no cost or for a nominal co-payment.

The current HCAG continues to provide financial assistance to those veterans and their eligible family members who cannot provide for themselves. A necessary need restriction is established to meet the routine and emergent needs of the low income veteran, that population that typically is ill-equipped to fund needed health insurance. For essential medical care services and emergency care, coverage is authorized for treatment that dates back 90 days. For non-emergency care, a Certificate of Entitlement is proffered prior to treatment.

To provide HCAG coverage, the WDVA requires that it be the payer of last resort; that is, that all other sources of aid must be exhausted first with allowance for retention of \$1,000 in liquid assets. Further, the veteran must be unable to qualify for a low interest rate WDVA Personal Loan. The typical HCAG recipient averages 56 years in age, has less than one dependent, and receives an average annual income of \$9,030.

Every HCAG applicant who is otherwise eligible may be afforded health care services in a maximum amount of \$5,000 per 12-month period for essential medical services. The aging of the veteran population coupled with rising medical costs and the inability to access affordable health care has resulted in a trend of increasing annual expenditures. For the 99-01 biennium, \$1,200,000 is programmed in the operating budget. Projections indicate that the demand under the current HCAG provisions may exceed the available budget in each year of the biennium.

Review and Examination

Upon direction in 1999 Wisconsin Act 9, the WDVA established a Process Action Team (PAT) of subject matter experts from the WDVA and the veterans community to review the current HCAG for its administrative and fiscal efficiency. The PAT was charged with conducting a critical review of the current HCAG program to identify deficiencies and to devise a cost effective health care program for low-income veterans and their dependents that will ensure the provision of otherwise unavailable health care.

The review process necessarily required identifying 'gaps' in federal veterans affairs (USDVA) health care coverage, examining the potential of other insurance services that may serve veterans, establishing administrative efficiencies to reduce processing times, and seeking opportunities to restrain the expenditure growth of the program.

As noted in s.45.351(1j) and VA 2.01(2)(b), the HCAG currently provides payments for essential medical services such as hospital and physician charges, eye glasses or contact lenses, hearing aids, and most dental care. Due to its expanded coverage to all categories of veterans, the USDVA now provides medical care services for the majority of the same purposes as covered by the HCAG. While federal initiatives are underway to further expand the number of eligible purposes for health care, USDVA medical centers that support the majority of Wisconsin veterans do not provide services to the typical HCAG applicant for high demand purposes such as glasses, hearing aids, and dental care.

An examination of the feasibility of providing insurance premium coverage for the typical low-income HCAG applicant is cost prohibitive.

The current program allows an otherwise eligible veteran to receive an HCAG for past health care within a period starting 90 days before the date WDVA receives an application. This rule has unnecessarily burdened the administrative efficiency in processing applications, has complicated the ability to accurately monitor budget expenditure projections, and has resulted in budget commitments of approximately \$400,000 to retroactive applicants. For HCAG applicants seeking prospective or future care, a Certificate of Entitlement based on estimated projected costs is awarded to the veteran.

Recommendations

To restrain expenditure growth, fill gaps in USDVA health care services and reduce duplication of coverage with state veterans benefits, provide health care benefits to more veterans and enhance the administrative efficiency of the Health Care Aid Grant, the WDVA believes that the following program redesign is necessary.

- restrict eligible purposes for health care services to dentures, basic dental care, eyeglasses/contact lenses, and hearing aids
- eliminate coverage for retroactive services
- negate the need for applicants to access alternate payment options for health care services
- provide annual cost limits on coverage for each allowable medical condition
- restrict eligibility to eligible veterans, spouses, and dependents with a household income up to 175% of the federal poverty level and with liquid assets less than \$2,500
- refine the Certificate of Entitlement process to allow for increased time to receive services but require an application to be completed within a 30-day period from initial WDVA receipt
- maximize the potential for automated efficiencies in the application and underwriting processes

It is the intent of the WDVA to further develop the HCAG Redesign recommendations and submit them for consideration in the next biennial budget process.

Sincerely,
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



Raymond G. Boland
Secretary

Wisconsin American Legion



STATE HEADQUARTERS
2930 American Legion Dr. P.O. Box 388
Portage, WI 53901 608-745-1090
FAX: 608-745-0179 E-mail: info@wilegion.org

June 5, 2003

Secretary of the Dept. of Veterans Affairs
Raymond G. Boland
30 W. Mifflin St.
PO Box 7843
Madison, WI 53707

Re: Subject S. B. 170

Dear Secretary Boland,

On behalf of State Commander Terry Troutman, and the 70,000 plus members of the Wisconsin American Legion we are happy to support S.B. 170.

If we can be of any further assistance to you or your office please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William West".

WILLIAM WEST
State Adjutant

WW/yv

MEMORANDUM**OFFICE OF SENATOR RON BROWN**

Date: May 30, 2003
To: Senator Brown
From: James
Re: Amendment to Senate Bill 170

After hearing the testimony of individuals at the Public Hearing on Senate Bill 170, related to the Department of Veterans Affairs, the following items will be included in an amendment:

Tuition and Fees Reimbursement Grant and the Part-Time Study Grant

- *Action:* delete provisions (page 5, line 1 to page 5, line 14 and page 10, line 21 to page 11, line 3).
- *Rationale:* given the changes made by the Joint Committee on Finance, modifying the program at this point would be onerous from an administrative perspective.

Authorization related to DVA headquarters and museum

- *Action:* add museum (page 7, line 4 and line 6).
- *Rationale:* the museum plays an integral in the success of DVA. Adding "museum" ensures the headquarters and museum will remain connected.

Service Delivery

- *Action:* delete provision and add language that directs DVA to promulgate an administrative rule concerning this matter (page 7, line 8 to line 10).
- *Rationale:* agreement exists that service delivery needs to be modified to accommodate Supermarkets. The administrative rule process, versus this piece of legislation, provides a better venue for addressing the specifics of how this gets done.

Health Care Aid Grant

- *Action:* add an exemption for emergency care (page 8, line 5).
- *Rationale:* those who need emergency care should not be excluded from consideration for the Health Care Aid Grant. Addressing this need through an exemption also will curtail abuse of the Grant.

County Veterans Service Office v. Officer

- *Action:* delete provision and add exception (page 11, line 14).
- *Rationale:* counties should be given the full grant if they are providing full-time service to veterans.

Health Care Aid

- ↳ drop
- ↳ except emergency - 90 day look back

Service Delivery

- ↳ Percentage rules → Add CVS0 to Delivery
- ↳ Rounding
- ↳ open to all vets groups
- ↳ current bill

Loans

- ↳ stay up to \$5,000

opens up the process

	63	1	ASM
	22	26	62
Museum	85	52	52
TFRG		22	

SECTION 31 - trying to do it for Green Co.

- ↳ get more specific

Morgan

MARC
GRAMS
(DODGE)

Freedman: Museum + Health Care Aid



VETERANS AFFAIRS

Jim Doyle, Governor
Raymond G. Boland, Secretary

STATE OF WISCONSIN, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

30 West Mifflin Street, P.O. Box 7843, Madison, WI 53707-7843
PHONE: (608) 266-1311 1-800-947-8387 (WIS VETS)

WEB SITE: <http://dva.state.wi.us>
E-MAIL: Headquarters@dva.state.wi.us
FAX: (608) 267-0403

Date: May 29, 2003
To: Senator Ron Brown
From: Raymond G. Boland, Secretary
Subject: S.B. 170

As you know, strong letters in support of S.B. 170 were submitted at yesterday's committee hearing on the bill from the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) Department of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans, Inc., and the National Association for Black Veterans, Inc. Comments in support of the legislation were delivered by a number of individuals testifying, including Larry Olson, Executive Assistant for the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs. However, as you are also aware, particular concerns with regards to six of the bill's 37 provisions were raised by Mr. Marvin Freedman of Vietnam Veterans of America and Mr. Mark Grams of the County Veterans Service Officers Association.

In order to further ensure that Wisconsin's veterans receive the best benefits and service delivery possible, the Department offers the following comments with regards to each of the concerns raised in the hearing.

Please feel free to contact Anthony Hardie, Executive Assistant for the Department, with any questions you may have. He can be reached at (608) 266-0517, or via email at anthony.hardie@dva.state.wi.us.

Sec. 14. DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS. While support was expressed for such an acquisition, the concern was raised that the bill's language did not additionally or specifically include the Veterans' Museum.

The Department has been working with the Committee prior to the hearing, and in a Memo to the Chair, dated May 23, 2003, requested that this language be added to the S.B. 170. Specifically, that memo stated:

" Amend Section 14 of the bill to read;

" 45.35 (20) DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS AND MUSEUM. The department may acquire by gift, purchase, or condemnation property for the purpose of providing both a headquarters and museum building, or buildings, for the department. "

In accordance with this earlier request, and in concurrence with the comments with concerns raised, the Department requests this amendment to S.B. 170.

Sec. 15. SERVICE DELIVERY. The concern was raised that this provision would allow the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs to directly accept applications for state veterans' benefits, rather than be required to submit applications via a County Veterans Service Officer.

The Department had earlier discussed, and Mr. Grams had agreed, that the ability of the Department to directly accept applications at the Department's Supermarkets of Benefits for programs that it administers should not be limited. Of note, the federal Department of Veterans Affairs directly accepts applications from veterans for most of the programs it administers.

The Department seeks the ability to enable Wisconsin veterans to directly apply for state veterans' benefits administered by the Department, should they so choose, and in complement to, not in competition with, the efforts by the county veterans service

offices. It is the position of the Department that there remain significant gaps in service delivery of veterans' benefits to the veterans of Wisconsin, and the Department seeks the ability to further augment the outreach activities of the veterans service organizations and county veterans service officers.

As such, the Department offers the following alternative as an amendment to replace the current language in Sec. 15 of S.B. 170.

" Section 15. 45.35(21) of the statutes is created to read.

" 45.35(21) SERVICE DELIVERY. Notwithstanding ss. 45.397(1) and 45.79(2)(a), applications for veterans benefits under this chapter may also be submitted directly to the department, to a county veterans service office, or to a qualified representative. The department shall promulgate rules establishing the qualifications of such representatives, the qualified places of submission for applications and other administrative matters as necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of department services.

Sec. 18. HEALTH CARE AID GRANTS. Mr. Grams and Mr. Freedman expressed opposition to the amended language contained in S.B. 170, expressing concerns that this language would cause the elimination of the Health Care Aid Grant for emergency medical treatment.

As the Department discussed with Mr. Grams prior to the hearing, the Department's intent is to reduce or eliminate the current abuse of the Health Care Aid Grant by requiring the issuance of a certificate of eligibility that would allow for up to 90 days to apply for the grant following emergency medical treatment, rather than open-ended as is currently the case. This application period would be promulgated in a rule—subject to enactment of this provision—that would go through the standard, formal public hearing process.

To codify this intent in the statutes, the Department requests the insertion of the following language into Sec. 18 after the word "entitlement":

" except for emergency care as determined by the department if the application for the health care aid is submitted to the department within 90 days after the emergency care ends. "

SEC. 24. PERSONAL LOAN PROGRAM. The concern was raised that this provision decreased the maximum allowable personal loan to \$5,000 for veterans applying with a guarantor. The current limit for such loans is \$15,000. Mr. Freedman expressed concern that this proposed change would "place undue hardship on veterans," and requested an amendment to \$10,000.

It is of note that debt-servicing fees on these loans is one of only two sources of replenishment for the veterans' trust funds.

Of additional note, Section 21 of S.B. 170 raises the overall limit of the program of the program from \$15,000 to \$25,000. After analysis by the Department, the Department recommended a maximum limit of \$2,500. The compromise position was a maximum limit of \$5,000.

The WDVA resists increasing guarantor personal loans beyond the proposed limit of \$5,000 for the following reasons [See attachment for further detail]:

1. Guarantor secured loans, as opposed to mortgage secured loans are ^{6.4}~~2.5~~ times as likely to come under default. [See historical chart, at Attachment]. Among all PLP loans, 86.4% of delinquent loans are secured by a guarantor, while only 13.6% are secured by a mortgage (as of May 28, 2003).
2. Due to the Department's fiduciary responsibility to the Veterans Trust Fund and the higher risks associated with issuing guarantor loans, it is not prudent fiscal management nor is it in the long-term viability of the fund to increase the limit beyond \$5,000.

While it would be desirable to alter the personal loan program to accommodate lower income veterans who are unable to secure a guarantor, for the reasons stated, at this time the Department must stand by the current language of Sec. 24 of S.B. 170.

Sec. 31. ALTER LANGUAGE FOR PART-TIME VETERANS SERVICE "OFFICER" TO "OFFICE". Mr. Grams raised concerns that the proposed change would not only allow for Green Co.—which currently staffs a full-time veterans' service office with a combination of a part-time service officer and part-time assistant service officers—to receive the full-time grant, but would

provide the ability for other Wisconsin counties to decrease county veterans service officer staffing, or consolidate such staffing with a neighboring county or counties.

The Department's intent is to provide Green County with the flexibility to provide full-time services to veterans with the combination of part-time, qualified veterans and assistant service officers determined by the county. The Department acknowledges the concerns of Mr. Grams and other CVSO's, including the Green County Veterans Service Office, and therefore requests the following amendment to this section, by deleting the existing language and inserting:

45.43(7)(c) Notwithstanding par. (b), an eligible county with a part-time county veterans' service officer shall be eligible for an annual grant not exceeding \$500, unless the county has a full-time county veterans' service office in which case par. (b) shall apply.

Sec. 37. REPEAL OF FIRE FIGHTERS CLAUSE IN 230.36 (2m) (a) 19. The concern was raised by Mr. Freedman that repeal of this section would negatively impact on the "fire fighters employed by the Department" at the state veterans' homes at King and potential future locations.

The Department no longer employs anyone with the classification title of "fire fighter", as specified in the statute subsection to be deleted under this section of S.B. 170. At the Wisconsin Veterans' Home (WVH) at King, Wisconsin, the Department currently employs individuals with the classification of "Security Officer", a classification that continues to be listed under statutory provisions listing hazardous employment and associated benefits. Duties performed include "first responder" duties to ensure resident and staff safety until municipal firefighters can arrive.

Additionally, for Security Officers and other employees employed at state institutions, bargaining agreement provisions define employee benefits. In the Wisconsin State Employees Union (WSEU) contract relating to employee benefits [See Attachment 3], hazardous duty benefits include coverage of injuries under qualifying circumstances in performance of official employment duties (13/16/1). Employees at the WVH at King are specifically referenced in this contract. The relevant section (Section 16: Hazardous Employment Status) of the contract is attached for reference.

The Department regards the deletion of this subsection of the Statutes as technical only, in order to remove statutes that are in disuse and no longer apply to current Departmental operations. As such, the Department stands by the current language in Sec. 37 of S.B. 170.

WDVA Loans

Delinquency Rates Compared between Loans Secured by a Guarantor and Loans Secured by a Mortgage

As of May 28, 2003

WDVA's Guarantor-secured loans, as opposed to mortgage-secured loans, are far more likely to come under default.

Security Type	# of Loans	# Delinquent	# Legal	Delinquent + Legal	Loans by Type as % of Total WDVA Loans	Delinquent/Legal by Type, as % of all Delinquent/Legal	Delinquent/Legal by Type, as % of all WDVA Loans
Secured by Mortgage	1633	91	41	132	27.6%	13.8%	2.2%
Secured by Guarantor	4293	615	224	839	72.4%	86.4%	14.2%
TOTAL	5926	706	265	971	100.0%	100.0%	16.4%

Note that 86.4% of all WDVA loan delinquencies (including those requiring legal action) come from personal loans secured by a guarantor. In fact, of the 16.4% (839 of 5,926) of all WDVA loans that are delinquent or in legal status, 86.4% (839 out of 5,926) of these are loans secured by a guarantor.

While 2.2% of all WDVA loans in a delinquent or legal status are secured by a mortgage, 14.2% of all WDVA loans in a delinquent or legal status are secured by a guarantor. In short, a loan secured by a guarantor is 636% more likely to be in a delinquent (including legal) status than a loan secured by a mortgage.

The average and median delinquency (30 days or more) for Mortgage-Secured and Guarantor-Secured PLP Loans are as follows:

	Avg. Days Delinquent	Median days Delinquent
Guarantor-Secured loans	221	115
Mortgage-Secured loans	114	58

In terms of raw numbers, the average and median number of days of delinquency for mortgage-secured PLP loans is half that of guarantor secured loans. The median number of days delinquent for a guarantor-secured loan is 205.4% greater than the median days delinquent for a mortgage-secured loan. The average number of days delinquent for a guarantor-secured loan is 193.9% greater than the average days delinquent for a mortgage secured loan. On average, guarantor-secured loans that are delinquent are delinquent for nearly 8 months, while fully half of delinquent mortgage-secured loans are in that status for only two months or less.

As these data show, WDVA loans secured by a guarantor are far more risky than loans secured by a guarantor. Loan proceeds come directly from the veterans' trust funds, and loans that must be written off are harmful to the long-term solvency of the veterans' trust funds and to Wisconsin's veterans.



STATE OF WISCONSIN, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
30 W. Mifflin St., P.O. Box 7843, Madison, WI 53707-7843
FAX: (608) 264-7616

FAX COVER SHEET

RUSH:

DATE: 05/30/03
ATTN: James Wawrzyn
FAX #: () 267. 2771
SENDER: Anthony Hardie
PHONE: () 266. 0517

FAX OPERATOR ONLY	
DATE SENT:	_____
TIME SENT:	_____
OPER INIT:	_____

TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES, INCLUDING THIS COVER PAGE: 5

Transmission of Confidential Information

The information being transmitted by this facsimile instrument from the State of Wisconsin, Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) is confidential. Failure to respect the confidential nature of this information may result in violation of both the laws of the State of Wisconsin and United States. Should this transmission be inadvertently received by a non-privileged party the transmission should be immediately destroyed. Any questions relating to the confidential nature of the information or the applicable laws protecting this information should be directed to the Office of Legal Counsel, Department of Veterans Affairs.

Both WDVA and the intended receiver acknowledge that these records are confidential and will not be released without written authorization. The release of any and all information by the WDVA is subject to s.45.36, Stats., and the Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter VA, specifically VA 1.10, and information which is not legally releasable will be kept confidential by the WDVA.

IF YOU HAVE ANY DIFFICULTY RECEIVING THE ABOVE SPECIFIED PAGES, PLEASE CALL THE SENDER AT THE NUMBER LISTED ABOVE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

COMMENTS TO THE RECEIVER:

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FAX OPERATOR:

SENATE BILL 170: OMNIBUS VETERANS BILL

Health Care Aid Grant

45.351 (1j) HEALTH CARE AID GRANTS. The department may grant to any veteran or dependents such temporary health care aid as the department considers advisable to prevent want or distress. Health care aid to meet medical or hospital bills under this subsection is limited to a payment of up to \$5,000 per veteran or dependent for a 12-month period beginning with the first day of care for which the person seeks reimbursement under this subsection. The department may ~~not give prior authorization for the payment of health care aid under this subsection but may~~ issue a certificate of entitlement stating that a veteran or dependent is eligible for a health care aid grant under this subsection if the treatment is received within a time period that the department promulgates by rule. **The department may not grant health care aid to pay for care provided to the veteran or dependent before the time period identified in the certificate of entitlement.** Health care aid may be used to provide payment for the treatment of alcoholism or other drug addiction or to provide payment for health care required because of alcoholism or other drug addiction or alcohol or other drug abuse. The department may not grant health care aid under this subsection unless the aid recipient's health care provider agrees to accept, as full payment for the medical treatment for which the aid is to be granted, the amount of the grant, the amount of the recipient's health insurance or other 3rd-party payments, if any, and the amount that the department determines the aid recipient is capable of paying. The department may not grant health care aid under this subsection if the combined liquid assets of the applicant for aid, and of the veteran and veteran's dependents who are living in the same household with the applicant, are in excess of \$1,000.

Service Delivery

45.35 (21) SERVICE DELIVERY. Notwithstanding ss. 45.397 (1) and 45.79 (2) (a), applications for veterans benefits under this chapter may be submitted directly to the department or to any qualified representative approved by the department.

Securing Veterans Loans

45.356 (12) Each loan made under this section, except a loan of \$5,000 or less made to an applicant whose total indebtedness for loans made under this section is \$5,000 or less, shall be evidenced by a promissory note and secured by a mortgage on real estate located in this state. A loan of \$5,000 or less made to an applicant whose total indebtedness for loans made under this section is \$5,000 or less shall be evidenced by a promissory note and secured by a guarantor or by a mortgage on real estate located in this state. A mortgage securing a loan made under this section is acceptable if the applicant has equity in the property subject to the mortgage equal to or exceeding a minimum amount that the department establishes by rule.

Delinquent PLP Loans						
Security	# of Loans	% of Total	# Del	#Legal	Del + Legal	% of Del + Legal
Mortgage Secured	1633	27.56%	91	41	132	13.59%
Guarantor Secured	4293	72.44%	615	224	839	86.41%
Total	5926	100.00%	706	265	971	100.00%

Delinquent PLP Loans						
Security	# of Loans	% of Total	# Delinquent	#Legal	Del + Legal	% of Total
Mortgage Secured	1633	27.56%	91	41	132	8.08%
Guarantor Secured	4293	72.44%	615	224	839	19.54%
Total	5926	100.00%	706	265	971	16.39%

> 2 1/2

Wawrzyn, James

From: Sweet, Richard
Sent: Thursday, May 29, 2003 2:08 PM
To: Wawrzyn, James
Cc: Offerdahl, Mary
Subject: SB 170

James:

These are the changes to SB 170 that we discussed at this morning's meeting:

1. Page 5, line 1 to page 5, line 14: delete the changes that relate to tuition, fees, and percentages.
2. Page 7, line 4: after "HEADQUARTERS" insert "AND MUSEUM".
3. Page 7, line 6: after "building" insert "and museum".
4. Page 7, line 8: delete the material beginning on that line and ending on page 7, line 10 and substitute:

45.35(21) SERVICE DELIVERY. Notwithstanding ss. 45.397(1) and 45.79(2)(a), applications for veterans benefits under this chapter may be submitted directly to the department, to a county veterans' service officer, or to any qualified representative approved by the department. The department shall promulgate rules establishing the qualifications for those representatives, the qualified places of submission for applications, and other administrative matters as necessary to ensure efficient delivery of department service.
5. Page 8, line 5: after "entitlement" insert "except for emergency care as determined by the department if the application for the health care aid is submitted to the department within 90 days after the emergency care ends".
6. Page 10, line 21 to page 11, line 3: delete the changes that relate to tuition, fees, and percentages.
7. Page 11, line 14: delete the material beginning on that line and ending on page 11, line 16 and substitute:

45.43(7)(c) Notwithstanding par. (b), an eligible county with a part-time county veterans' service officer shall be eligible for an annual grant not exceeding \$500, unless the county has a full-time county veterans' service office in which case par. (b) shall apply.

Please let me or Mary know if you need any changes to this language.

Dick Sweet
Senior Staff Attorney
Wisconsin Legislative Council
(608)266-2982
richard.sweet@legis.state.wi.us



STATE SENATOR DAVE ZIEN

ASSISTANT MAJORITY LEADER

CHAIRPERSON:

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, CORRECTIONS AND PRIVACY

VICE CHAIRPERSON:

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

MEMBER:

COMMITTEE ON SENATE ORGANIZATION

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

COMMITTEE ON LABOR, SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

SENTENCING COMMISSION

COUNCIL ON TOURISM

JUDICIAL COUNCIL

May 29, 2003

Senator Ron Brown, Chairman
Committee on Veteran & Military Affairs
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Brown,

Senator Zien would like the attached sheet entered as testimony regarding SB 170 that had a public hearing on Wednesday, May 28, 2003. If possible, could you also send us a list of the Vets organizations that testified at the hearing regarding the bill (Names of the organizations & Addresses if available).

Sincerely,

Kyle Johnson
Legislative Aide
Senator Dave Zien's Office





STATE SENATOR DAVE ZIEN

ASSISTANT MAJORITY LEADER

CHAIRPERSON

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, CORRECTIONS AND PRIVACY

VICE CHAIRPERSON

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

MEMBER

COMMITTEE ON SENATE ORGANIZATION

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

COMMITTEE ON LABOR, SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

SENTENCING COMMISSION

COUNCIL ON TOURISM

JUDICIAL COUNCIL

May 28, 2003

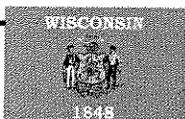
Senator Ron Brown, Chairman
Committee on Veteran & Military Affairs
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

RE: Senator Zien's comments regarding Senate Bill 170

God Bless You Veterans and Military Powerhouses, your peers, your networked coalitions and all those loved ones as you continue to enhance, inspire, and empower countless souls. Synergistically and ultimately, you enhance the quality of life for hundreds and thousands of individuals, families and communities into infinity. You serve our legacy - the mystique, the heritage of proud patriots - outstandingly well.

God Bless You,

Senator Dave Zien
23rd District





DALE W. SCHULTZ
Wisconsin State Senator



May 28, 2003

Senator Ron Brown, Chairman
& Members
Senate Committee on Homeland Security
Veterans & Military Affairs and
Government Relations

Dear Chairman Brown & Members,

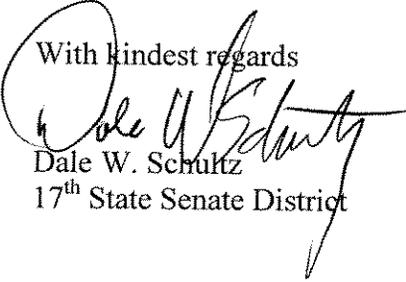
Thank you for promptly scheduling a hearing of Senate Bill 170 before your committee. As a Senate sponsor of this bill I encourage you to give favorable consideration to this legislation. This legislation is important as it protects, and in some cases expands, programs that provide important benefits to our states veterans.

During recent conflicts, many of those who were called to duty as part of the Reserve forces or National Guard are not eligible for many state benefits because of the arbitrary requirement that they had serve two full years of active duty. "Active duty" for two years should not be the qualifier of who is eligible to receive these benefits. Service to nation is not measured by length of service any longer. Service to our nation is measured more today by who is willing to give of themselves and serve regardless of their military status, be it regular military, reserve or guard.

Senate Bill 170 seeks to protect many of the programs this state has offered its veterans as our citizen's way of saying "thank you". It is important that we continue to offer the housing loans, educational benefits, and personal loans included in this bill. We need to remember that often times what a state offers it's veterans give additional incentive to serve.

I respectfully request that the committee give its unanimous support to this important legislation.

With kindest regards


Dale W. Schultz
17th State Senate District



Vietnam Veterans of America Wisconsin State Council

Marvin J. Freedman, Executive Director
Post Office Box 55363, Madison, WI 53705-5363
608-836-6586 ★ WIVVA@tds.net

May 28, 2003

The Honorable Ron Brown, Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security, Veterans
& Military Affairs and Government Reform
The Wisconsin Senate
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

RE: 2003 Senate Bill 170

Dear Ron:

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before your committee this morning with regard to SB 170.

Attached you will find a summary of the testimony I presented on behalf of Vietnam Veterans of America and Disabled American Veterans.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance to you in fine-tuning this bill before it moves forward. In this regard, I would like to share a suggestion with you that is prompted by the question raised by Sen. Zien. A substitute amendment for SB 170 could be prepared in relatively short order to address the concerns raised this morning. I do not see how doing so would adversely affect the progress of SB 170 since it is highly unlikely that it would be moved forward ahead of the pending budget bill.

I also would like to briefly comment on the portion of Chuck Gorenson's testimony that pertained to shifting the fiscal responsibility from the general fund to the Veterans Trust Fund in the case of activated National Guard members who return to non-active status after a call-up and who wish to avail themselves to tuition reimbursement: VVA is adamantly opposed to such a shift. Extending other state veterans benefits to previously activated Guard members is appropriate. However, the responsibility for the costs of tuition reimbursement for Guard members who have been previously activated should remain the responsibility of the Department of Military Affairs. As it is, the Veterans Trust Fund will be significantly impacted by extending all other state veterans benefits to previously activated Guard members.

As I mentioned this morning, by a copy of this letter, I am sharing copies of my testimony summary with the other members of the committee.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marv". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "M" and a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Marvin J. Freedman
Executive Director



NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
3312 W. Wells
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53208

PHONE
(800) 842-4597

FAX
(414) 342-1073

EMAIL
nabvets@nabvets.com

VETERANS UNITED FOR
COMMUNITY SERVICE (VUCS)
3330 W. Wells
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53208

PHONE
(800) 842-4597 ext. 276

FAX
(414) 342-1073

NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICE
P.O. Box 11432
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53211

PHONE
(800) 842-4597 ext. 274

FAX
(414) 342-1073

EMAIL
dannylvets@yahoo.com

DAYS OF HONOR
P.O. Box 11432
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53211

PHONE
(414) 345-4264

FAX
(414) 342-1073

ECLIPSE MAGAZINE
P.O. Box 11432
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53211

PHONE
(414) 345-4272

FAX
(414) 342-1073

EMAIL
editor@nabvets.com

NABVETS provides essential services and advocacy to empower all minority & low-income veterans while working in unity with the community to reduce homelessness and increase positive lifestyles for our youth.

28 May 2003

TO: Senate Committee on Homeland Security,
Veterans & Military Affairs and Government Reform

FROM: Thomas H. Wynn, Sr. 
Vice Chairman
National Command Council

Dear Committee Members,

Since 1970 the National Association for Black Veterans (NABVETS) has been privileged to serve as an advocate and service provider for Wisconsin Veterans, locally and nationally. We have served as founders and leaders of the NABVETS, National Command Council and State Command Councils, National Council of Churches Vietnam Generation Ministry, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, WDVA Council on Veterans Programs and the Milwaukee County Veterans Service Commission. We therefore have awareness of both local and national legislative actions introduced and implemented on behalf of our veterans.

It is our opinion that Wisconsin is probably the most progressive veterans affairs state in the nation. We are therefore extremely proud to endorse and support the passage of S.B. 170 as introduced this week in the Wisconsin State Senate. The passage of this bill ensures that Wisconsin Veterans will continue to receive the best total benefits package in the nation.

The scope and improvisation of S.B. 170 is truly creative and outstanding because it relates to the timely recognition of our National Guard and Reserve forces that have been designated as our leading contingent in world wide military action. They have made the ultimate sacrifice and in the name of justice they must be made equally eligible for veterans benefits in Wisconsin and throughout America. We applaud Wisconsin for again leading the charge for the nations veterans.

When our organization speaks to the nations veterans about the wonderful achievement record of WDVA through the Wisconsin legislature, they often reply - "My God - I wish I lived in Wisconsin - why can't my state have those benefits"? The passage of S.B. 170 will surely induce many of our veterans to return to Wisconsin after their tours of duty and become permanent residents thereby reducing our state's "brain drain" and contributing to our common good.

We implore you to pass S.B. 170 in its entirety so that we can continue to tell the wonderful story about how good the State of Wisconsin honors and serves its Veterans. S.B. 170 is very creative: it is your creativity that let's our veterans know that the Creator is present in our lives.

Veterans in Unity with the Community

2003 SENATE BILL 170

TESTIMONY SUMMARY OF MARVIN J. FREEDMAN,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WISCONSIN STATE COUNCIL,
VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

ON BEHALF OF
THE WISCONSIN STATE COUNCIL,
VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
&
THE DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN,
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

BEFORE THE WISCONSIN SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
VETERANS & MILITARY AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

MAY 28, 2003
STATE CAPITOL, MADISON, WISCONSIN

The Wisconsin State Council of Vietnam Veterans of America thanks you for the opportunity to appear today to testify for information only on Senate Bill 170. We appreciate the special effort that Sen. Ron Brown and Rep. Terry Musser have put into the development of this comprehensive bill. Overall, we support this legislation. However, there are three substantive provisions of this bill that we cannot support in their current form. If our concerns are addressed adequately, we look forward to providing our unqualified support for SB 170 in its entirety.

I also wish to advise you that Ken Kuehnl, Legislative Director of the Department of Wisconsin of Disabled American Veterans has asked me represent DAV at this mornings hearing and to inform the committee that DAV is in agreement with the VVA positions I will discuss and that DAV, like VVA, stands ready to work with the authors of SB 170 on possible modifications to SB 170 that would take into account the concerns shared by both VVA and DAV.

The substantive concerns which we have previously shared with Sen. Brown and the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs are:

★ **Section 15** [Page 7, Line 7-10]: **Service Delivery.**

VVA and DAV support the state's CVSO structure for the delivery of services at the local level through county CVSOs in each of Wisconsin's 72 counties. WDVA has

a role in assisting in the delivery of services provided that the WDVA activities are coordinated with or requested by local CVSOs.

Although a case can perhaps be made for allowing WDVA to accept applications for benefits during the department's veterans benefits supermarkets, Section 15, as drafted, is over-broad and creates the possibility of competition instead of coordinated cooperation between the department and county based CVSOs.

★ **Section 18** [Page 8, Lines 3-5]: **Health Care Aid Grants.**

Last session, WDVA and Governor McCallum proposed to eliminate emergency health care aid grants that provided relief to veterans faced with significant healthcare bills that they could not afford to pay. The veterans community and the CVSO Association of Wisconsin opposed the proposal arguing that veterans deserved to have their basic dignity and peace of mind preserved. A bipartisan effort in Joint Finance that was included by the Legislature and ultimately signed by Governor McCallum deleted the attempt to eliminate this use of the emergency healthcare aid grant.

WDVA included funding for the Health Care Aid Grant program at an increased level in its budget request. It asked to have the percentage of the funds available for dental and eye care increased from 25% of the total to 50%. VVA and DAV supported the proposals. Nothing was ever said in WDVA's budget requests that it was the department's intention to eliminate the use of the emergency healthcare aid grants for veterans without means who were dealing with the burdens of medical bills they could no longer afford to pay.

Now the department, through this bill, has asked the Legislature to do just that. And we oppose the inclusion of Lines 3-5 as presently drafted because we believe that veterans in the situations we described should continue to receive aid that allows them to maintain their dignity and peace-of-mind, especially in the case of older veterans in the twilight of their lives.

VVA and DAV are not naive about the fact that there are some who abuse this use of the Health Care Aid Grant. However, the solution is not to eliminate the use, but to amend the law to prevent such abuses.

★ **Section 24** [Page 10, Lines 1-9]: **Securing Veterans Loans.**

Under current law, veterans can secure personal loans up to \$15,000 utilizing a guarantor. Loans above \$15,000 require a promissory note secured by a mortgage on real property. This proposal would eliminate the guarantor option except on loans of \$5000 or less. VVA and DAV feel that this provision, as written, places an

undue hardship of low income veterans.

As we have previously advised you, Mr. Chairman, VVA would be comfortable supporting a \$10,000 guarantor cut-off and DAV feels the same way. Additionally, as we have previously mentioned, we advised the department that if they have data that provides compelling evidence that the \$5000 figure is the more appropriate figure, VVA would reconsider its position on this section, as would DAV. No such data has been provided to VVA to date.

We also have a couple of other concerns of a more limited nature:

★**Section 14** [Page 7, Lines 4-6]: We recommend that the words, "AND WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM FACILITIES" after the words "DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS" be added to the section title. And at Page 7, Line 6: We recommend that the words, "and the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Facilities." be added at the end of the sentence.

We make these recommendations because of the very special nature of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum and the past commitments of the Governor's office and the Legislature to guarantee that the museum remains on the Capitol Square.

★**Section 37** [Page 12]: We are concerned about the proposed repeal provided for in this section which would eliminate special coverage for fire fighters employed now or in the future at the state's veterans homes.

VVA and DAV stand ready to work with the authors of SB 170 to fine-tune the language for the sections we have mentioned.

We thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.



John O'Brien,
Legislative Officer/Judge Advocate

Wisconsin Department
Military Order of the Purple Heart
26570 Fiddlers Green Road
Richland Center, Wisconsin 53581

May 28, 2003

Senator Ron Brown, Chairman
& Members
Senate Committee on Veterans & Military Affairs
Madison, WI

RE; Senate Bill 170

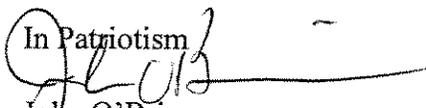
Dear Chairman Brown & Members,

The Officers & Members of the State Department of the Military Order of the Purple Heart send their greetings. Our organization represents those veterans who are recipients of the Purple Heart either as combat wounded veterans, prisoners of war or who were killed in the line of duty.

We encourage you to support Senate Bill 170, This bill will ensure that all veterans who are called to active duty by our nation continue to receive the benefits, which our state offers and our veterans have earned these benefits through their selfless service.

Many of the programs supported by Senate Bill 170 have served our states Veterans very well and should continue to do so. The Tuition and Fee Reimbursement Program, the Housing Loan Program, Aid to Homeless Veterans assistance and the Personal Loan Program are proven and fiscally responsible methods of providing assistance to these Veterans who have and continue to become productive members of Wisconsin's society.

Support of Senate Bill 170 sends a message from our elected officials to our state's servicemen and women. That message is, we appreciate what you have sacrificed, value your willingness to serve, and we honor you for the part you played in protecting our nation and the freedoms we all exercise each day.

In Patriotism

John O'Brien
Legislative Officer



WISCONSIN VIETNAM VETERANS CHAPTER III

P.O. Box 14, New Glarus, WI 53574



May 27, 2003

Senator Ron Brown, Chairperson
Committee on Homeland Security,
Veterans & Military Affairs &
Government Reform
State Capitol, Room S-104
P.O. Box 7882
Madison 53707-7882

Dear Senator Brown:

Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans Inc. is in strong support of S.B. 170. The bill would help ensure that Wisconsin's veterans continue to receive among the best state veterans' benefits in the country.

Of particular interest to Vietnam veterans are the provisions of the bill that expand and continue to provide programs that recognize the unique sacrifices made by veterans. Among those programs are the education grants, personal loan programs, home mortgage loan program, and programs to assist homeless veterans.

Additionally, given the fact that most of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans' Affairs funding comes from veterans' trust funds, we support the measure in the bill that would allow for the purchase of a headquarters and museum building, rather than continuing to expend those funds on a recurring lease.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill. We encourage your efforts to on behalf of Wisconsin's veterans.

Sincerely,

William F Hustad
Past President of WVV Inc.