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(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

**WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ...
PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS**

2005-06

(session year)

Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

**Committee on ... Veterans, Homeland Security,
Military Affairs, Small Business and Government
Reform (SC-VHSMASBGR)**

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
(**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution) (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
(**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution) (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

Senate

Record of Committee Proceedings

Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security, Military Affairs, Small Business and Government Reform

Senate Bill 613

Relating to: the transfer of funds to the veterans trust fund, exempting certain veterans from tuition and fees at the University of Wisconsin System and at technical colleges, eligibility for tuition fee remissions of unremarried surviving spouses and children of certain deceased veterans, information technology server and network infrastructure staff in the Department of Veterans Affairs, and making an appropriation.

By Senators S. Fitzgerald, Brown, Breske, Carpenter, Coggs, Darling, Erpenbach, Grothman, Hansen, Harsdorf, Kanavas, Kapanke, Lassa, A. Lasee, Lazich, Leibham, Olsen, Robson, Roessler, Stepp, Taylor, Wirch and Zien; cosponsored by Representatives Loeffelholz, Ainsworth, Albers, Bies, Boyle, Cullen, Davis, Fields, J. Fitzgerald, Freese, Friske, Gard, Grigsby, Gronemus, Gunderson, Gundrum, Hahn, Hebl, Hines, Hubler, Hundertmark, Kleefisch, Krawczyk, Kestell, Kreibich, Kreuser, Krusick, Lamb, F. Lasee, LeMahieu, Lothian, Meyer, Molepske, Montgomery, Moulton, Musser, Nelson, Nerison, Newcomer, Nischke, Ott, Owens, Petrowski, Pettis, Pridemore, Rhoades, Schneider, Sheridan, Sherman, Shilling, Sinicki, Steinbrink, Stone, Strachota, Suder, Towns, Townsend, Travis, Turner, Van Roy, Vruwink, Wieckert, M. Williams, Wood, Young and Zepnick.

February 20, 2006 Referred to Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security, Military Affairs, Small Business and Government Reform.

February 22, 2006 **PUBLIC HEARING HELD**

Present: (5) Senators Brown, Zien, Kanavas, Breske and Wirch.
Absent: (0) None.

Appearances For

- Scott Fitzgerald — State Senator, 13th Senate District
- John Scocos — Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA)
- Steve Lawrence, Oregon
- Margaret Lewis, Madison — University of Wisconsin System
- Mark Grams, Juneau — State of Wisconsin American Legion
- Rick Gates, Amery — CUSO Association of Wisconsin
- Kevin Kavanaugh, Cudahy — Military Order of the Purple Heart

Appearances Against

- None.

Appearances for Information Only

- Morna Foy, Madison — Wisconsin Technical College System
- Paul Gabriel, Madison — WI Technical College District Board Association

Registrations For

- Ann Stenavich, Racine
- Steve House, Waupaca — Vietnam Veterans of America
- Bob Wilson, Antigo
- Don Heileger, Stoughton
- John Margowski, Waukesha
- Glen Browen, Milwaukee
- Bud Mautz, Madison — American Legion
- Ken Wendt, Sturgeon Bay
- Pat Brown, Brookfield — WI Submarine Veterans WWII
- Russ Alsteen, Green Bay — Navy Clubs of Wisconsin
- Kathy Marschman, Sun Prairie
- Holly Hoppe, Green Bay — USAF Veteran
- Vera Roddy, Milwaukee
- Don Nelson — UW-Madison
- Walter Stenavich, Racine — WI Department of Veterans Affairs
- Mack Hughes, Milwaukee — WI Department of Veterans Affairs
- Robert Morzenti, Montreal — VVA
- Mary Lex, Antigo
- Donald Lander, Marshfield — SECE
- Ted Mynyk, Ridgeway
- Jon LiDonne, Waupaca — Waupaca County Veterans Services
- Michael Jackson, Madison
- Donna Chrzas, Montello
- James Young, La Crosse — CVSO
- Matilda Cheatham, Appleton — Fox Valley Technical College Student
- Jiakrs Noel, Tomah — Western WI Technical College Student
- Clifton Sorenson, Eau Claire — Vietnam Veterans of America
- Walter Peterson, Madison — Ex-POW
- Jerome Rabetski, Green Bay — Polish Legion of American Veterans
- William Hustad, Monticello — Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans Inc
- Paul Bialk, Hales Corners — Marine Corps League
- Paul Weprinsky, Greenfield — Jewish War Veterans
- Tim Thiers, Manitowoc — American Veterans
- Rick Chenore, New Berlin — Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)
- Ken Kuehul, Racine — Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
- Ronald Rutkowski, Greenfield — VVAW
- Mike Furgal, Madison — Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)

Registrations Against

- None.

February 22, 2006 **EXECUTIVE SESSION HELD**

Present: (5) Senators Brown, Zien, Kanavas, Breske and Wirch.
Absent: (0) None.

Moved by Senator Zien, seconded by Senator Breske that **Senate Amendment 1** be recommended for introduction.

Ayes: (5) Senators Brown, Zien, Kanavas, Breske and Wirch.
Noes: (0) None.

INTRODUCTION OF SENATE AMENDMENT 1 RECOMMENDED, Ayes 5, Noes 0

Moved by Senator Breske, seconded by Senator Zien that **Senate Amendment 1** be recommended for adoption.

Ayes: (5) Senators Brown, Zien, Kanavas, Breske and Wirch.
Noes: (0) None.

ADOPTION OF SENATE AMENDMENT 1 RECOMMENDED, Ayes 5, Noes 0

Moved by Senator Zien, seconded by Senator Wirch that **Senate Bill 613** be recommended for passage as amended.

Ayes: (5) Senators Brown, Zien, Kanavas, Breske and Wirch.
Noes: (0) None.

PASSAGE AS AMENDED RECOMMENDED, Ayes 5, Noes 0

Daniel Lindstedt
Committee Clerk

~~**Record of Committee Proceedings**~~

~~**Joint committee on Finance**~~

~~**Senate Bill 613**~~

SENATE BILL 613 (LRB -4498)

An Act to amend 20.485 (1) (gk), 36.27 (3n) (a) 1., 36.27 (3n) (a) 2., 36.27 (3p) (b), 38.24 (7) (a) 1., 38.24 (7) (a) 2. and 38.24 (8) (b); and to create 45.03 (20) of the statutes; relating to: the transfer of funds to the veterans trust fund, exempting certain veterans from tuition and fees at the University of Wisconsin System and at technical colleges, eligibility for tuition fee remissions of unremarried surviving spouses and children of certain deceased veterans, information technology server and network infrastructure staff in the Department of Veterans Affairs, and making an appropriation.

2006

02-20. S. Introduced by Senators **S. Fitzgerald, Brown, Breske, Carpenter, Coggs, Darling, Erpenbach, Grothman, Hansen, Harsdorf, Kanavas, Kapanke, Lassa, A. Lasee, Lazich, Leibham, Olsen, Robson, Roessler, Stepp, Taylor, Wirch and Zien**; cosponsored by Representatives **Loeffelholz, Ainsworth, Albers, Bies, Boyle, Cullen, Davis, Fields, J. Fitzgerald, Freese, Friske, Gard, Grigsby, Gronemus, Gunderson, Gundrum, Hahn, Hebl, Hines, Hubler, Hundertmark, Kleefisch, Krawczyk, Kestell, Kreibich, Kreuser, Krusick, Lamb, F. Lasee, LeMahieu, Lothian, Meyer, Molepske, Montgomery, Moulton, Musser, Nelson, Nerison, Newcomer, Nischke, Ott, Owens, Petrowski, Pettis, Pridemore, Rhoades, Schneider, Sheridan, Sherman, Shilling, Sinicki, Steinbrink, Stone, Strachota, Suder, Towns, Townsend, Travis, Turner, Van Roy, Vruwink, Wieckert, M. Williams, Wood, Young and Zepnick.**

02-20. S. Read first time and referred to committee on Veterans, Homeland Security, Military Affairs, Small Business and Government Reform 605

02-22. S. Public hearing held.

02-22. S. Fiscal estimate received.

02-22. S. Executive action taken.

02-24. S. Report introduction of Senate Amendment 1 recommended by committee on Veterans, Homeland Security, Military Affairs, Small Business and Government Reform, Ayes 5, Noes 0 (**LRB a2442**) 632

02-24. S. Report adoption of Senate Amendment 1 recommended by committee on Veterans, Homeland Security, Military Affairs, Small Business and Government Reform, Ayes 5, Noes 0 632

02-24. S. Report passage as amended recommended by committee on Veterans, Homeland Security, Military Affairs, Small Business and Government Reform, Ayes 5, Noes 0 632

02-24. S. Available for scheduling.

02-24. S. Withdrawn from committee on Senate Organization and rereferred to joint committee on Finance, pursuant to Senate Rule 46 (2)(c) 632

02-27. S. Executive action taken.

02-27. S. Report adoption of Senate Amendment 1 recommended by joint committee on Finance, Ayes 16, Noes 0 .. 634

02-27. S. Report passage as amended recommended by joint committee on Finance, Ayes 16, Noes 0 634

02-27. S. Available for scheduling.

03-01. S. Fiscal estimate received.

03-01. S. Fiscal estimate received.

03-01. S. Senate amendment 1 to Senate amendment 1 offered by Senator S. Fitzgerald (**LRB a2549**) 654

03-01. S. Placed on calendar 3-2-2006 by committee on Senate Organization.

03-02. S. Read a second time 660

03-02. S. Placed at the foot of the eleventh order of business on the calendar of 3-2-2006 660

03-02. S. Senate amendment 1 to Senate amendment 1 **adopted** 670

03-02. S. Senate amendment 1 **adopted** 670

03-02. S. Ordered to a third reading 670

03-02. S. Rules suspended 670

03-02. S. Read a third time and **passed**, Ayes 32, Noes 0 670

03-02. S. Ordered immediately messaged 670

03-06. A. Received from Senate 904

03-06. A. Read first time and referred to committee on Rules 905

03-07. A. Placed on calendar 3-9-2006 by committee on Rules.

03-07. A. Made a special order of business at 11:11 A.M. on 3-9-2006 pursuant to Assembly Resolution 51 933

03-09. A. Read a second time 958

03-09. A. Assembly amendment 1 offered by Representative Nelson (**LRB a2814**) 958

03-09. A. Laid on the table 958

05-04. A. Taken from the table 1123

05-04. A. Read a second time 1123

05-04. A. Assembly amendment 1 withdrawn and returned to author 1123

05-04. A. Ordered to a third reading 1123

05-04. A. Rules suspended 1123

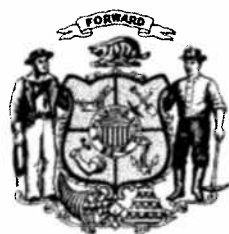
05-04. A. Read a third time and **concurred in** 1123

05-04. A. Ordered immediately messaged 1123

05-05.	S.	Received from Assembly concurred in	841
05-15.	S.	Report correctly enrolled on 5-15-2006	845
05-23.	S.	Presented to the Governor on 5-23-2006	856
05-30.	S.	Report approved by the Governor on 5-29-2006. 2005 Wisconsin Act 468	874
06-02.	S.	Published 6-12-2006	878



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE





STATE OF WISCONSIN, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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Jim Doyle, Governor
John A. Scocos, Secretary

February 22, 2006

Senator Ron Brown, Chair
Senate Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security,
Military Affairs, Small Business and Government Reform
State Capitol 409 South
Madison, WI 53708

RE: WDVA Support for 2005 Senate Bill 613 (and companion AB 1034)

Dear Chairman Brown and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of 2005 Senate Bill 613 a companion bill to Assembly Bill 1034.

Last year, the Legislature passed a Budget that provided for significant improvements to the way we serve veterans. Together with the support of our statewide veterans organizations and Veterans Board, we consolidated and streamlined some programs in order to ensure the long term solvency of our Veterans Trust Fund. And with the support of the members of this committee, the Budget Act also included a number of new programs to better serve our veterans – veterans both young and old.

The Wisconsin GI Bill provides 50% tuition remission for all qualified veterans at UW System and State Technical Colleges and also provides 100% tuition for all surviving spouses and children of disabled veterans. The Budget Act also created a property tax credit for 100% disabled veterans, age 65 or older, and their surviving spouses.

In addition to providing additional nursing positions at our flagship Veterans Home at King, the Budget also fully funded the staffing of a new 120 bed skilled nursing home at Union Grove – scheduled to open in May. And we'll also see a new donation line, or "check off" on our state tax forms this year enabling citizens to contribute to veterans programs.

It has been a successful year for Wisconsin veterans, and on their behalf, we thank you for your support.

We are in full support of this bill. SB 613 proposes a number of internal fixes for us at WDVA, and also proposes a few changes that help the agency to remain as financially self-sufficient as possible, while at the same time providing top quality services and benefits to our veterans.

The bill proposes to do three things. First, it permits WDVA to transfer what has been defined as "excess revenue" from the Home at King to the Veterans Trust Fund. "Excess revenue" is best described as Medical Assistance and federal VA per diem grants exceeding total costs.

As part of his 06-07 Budget proposal, the Governor requested that \$25M be transferred from the King Home to the state's general fund. Joint Finance rejected the request, and instead asked WDVA to review alternative ways to use the surplus generated at the King Veterans Home to better serve veterans.

The bill therefore permits the transfer of up to a maximum of \$16M of revenue "in excess of the operational needs at the King Home" to the Veterans Trust Fund where we would use the money to expand our revenue generating personal loan program and prolong the life of the Veterans Trust Fund. The bill also requires that the transfer occur prior to the end of fiscal year 2007.

And while it is true that \$16M will likely be available for transfer, I can assure you that the Department will take a very cautious and prudent approach to any possible transfer.

WDVA anticipates requesting increased staffing levels at King in the upcoming Budget. Additionally, we intend to confirm the occupancy rate at the new skilled nursing facility in Union Grove prior to deciding on any amount to transfer. Thus, while it appears at this time that we would be able to safely transfer some of any surplus, it remains indeterminate at this time as to the actual amount of any transfer. We are fully supportive of using excess Homes revenue to generate more revenue for the Veterans Trust Fund, but would prefer to wait until the end of the fiscal year – sometime in the spring of 2007 – and make a final decision at that time.

The second major provision of SB 613 proposes to restore 3.29 positions to our computer and information technology division – and therefore exempt us from the proposed server consolidation.

In exactly the same way that DOJ and the Public Defender were exempted, we'd like to have our 3.29 positions – positions funded by PR and SEG – to be restored.

Why do we want the exemption? Three reasons:

First, and based on preliminary estimates, DOAs current consolidation plan will cost WDVA – and the Veterans Trust Fund – an additional \$290,000 per year or approximately \$1M over three years. Second, we remain uncertain as to whether the current proposal will satisfy federal privacy laws that cover our handling of loan applications, student records, and medical files.

Third, the entire consolidation effort does not adequately address the necessary support and coordination required to manage large servers and systems at King and Union Grove. DOA's proposal is also inadequate for our 72 counties – and the 72 county veterans service officers who must handle the transfer of electronic data for loans, grants, and medical information. Given our experiences in working with DOA during their current server consolidation efforts, we are not convinced that DOA has an adequate plan to address all of our concerns.

The last major provision of SB 613 expands the current WI GI Bill from 50% tuition remission to 100% tuition remission – and also makes a couple of small common sense corrections to the original program.

It makes a minor change to the eligibility requirement – still requiring WI residency, but permitting a service member to receive their disability rating while still on active duty or living in another state. It also expands eligibility to include dependents of disabled veterans where the veteran died of his service connected disability, to include cases where the service connected condition was not known until death.

Recent data also shows that the new proposed expansion to 100% would save the Veterans Trust Fund approx. \$2.3M in the first two years and significantly improve the solvency and services provided by the Trust Fund. Also of note, Illinois has a similar program that provides free tuition for veterans.

As an example, here in Madison, we estimate that 60 students will be eligible for the full tuition remission program – or approximately 60 full time students out of a total student population of more than 40,000 students at UW-Madison.

Our Department is undertaking a review of all eligibility requirements – across the board – in preparation for our Budget submission this September. In fact, one of our process action teams is already underway.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of SB 613, and for your continued advocacy on behalf of Wisconsin's nearly half-million veterans.

Sincerely,
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John A. Scocos", written over a horizontal line.

JOHN A. SCOCOS
Secretary