



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ACT MEMO

2003 Wisconsin Act 83 [2003 Senate Bill 170]	Veterans' Benefits
2003 Acts: www.legis.state.wi.us/2003/data/acts/	Act Memos: www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/act_memo/act_memo.htm

2003 Wisconsin Act 83 modifies a number of statutes that relate to veterans' benefits, including statutes that relate to the purposes of veterans' programs, eligibility, and benefit levels.

National Guard Educational Benefits

This Act increases the maximum grant for National Guard educational benefits from 100% of actual tuition or 100% of the arithmetic average of resident undergraduate tuition charged by the four-year University of Wisconsin (UW) System institutions, whichever is less, to 100% of actual tuition or 100% of the maximum resident undergraduate tuition at UW-Madison, whichever is less. In addition, the Act states that a National Guard member is ineligible under this program for a semester in which he or she receives a grant under the veterans' tuition reimbursement program.

Veterans' Tuition Reimbursement

Under prior law, in order to be eligible for veterans' tuition reimbursement, a person generally must have served on active duty (not including active duty for training purposes) under honorable conditions in the U.S. Armed Forces for two continuous years or more or the full period of the initial service obligation, whichever is less. The Act repeals the current provision and instead changes references to "individual" in the statute dealing with veterans' tuition reimbursement to "veteran."

The Act also increases the income eligibility level under this program from \$47,500 plus \$500 for each dependent in excess of two dependents, to \$50,000 plus \$1,000 for each dependent in excess of two dependents. In addition, the Act states that reimbursement may be provided at a school other than the one from which the veteran is receiving his or her degree if specified conditions are met.

Health Care Aid Grants

The Act repeals the prior prohibition on prior authorization for a health care aid grant. The Act also states that the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) may not grant health care aid to pay for care provided

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

to the veteran or dependent before the time period identified in the certificate of entitlement, except for emergency care as determined by DVA if the application is submitted within 90 days after the emergency care ends.

Veterans' Personal Loans

The Act makes the following changes to the law that relates to veterans' personal loans: (1) the list of purposes for which DVA may make a personal loan is repealed; (2) the maximum loan amounts are increased from \$15,000 to \$25,000 or a lesser amount established by DVA; (3) DVA is given authority to periodically adjust the interest rates for loans; and (4) a loan of \$5,000 or less to an applicant whose total indebtedness under the program is \$5,000 or less must be evidenced by a promissory note and secured by a guarantor or by a mortgage on real estate in Wisconsin; all other loans must be evidenced by a promissory note and secured by a mortgage on real estate in Wisconsin.

Correspondence Courses and Part-Time Study Tuition Reimbursement for Veterans

The Act increases the income eligibility level under this program from \$47,500 plus \$500 for each dependent in excess of two dependents, to \$50,000 plus \$1,000 for each dependent in excess of two dependents. The Act also modifies the maximum tuition reimbursement available under this program to subtract any grants or scholarships that the veteran receives specifically for the payment of tuition.

Veterans' Housing Loan Program

The Act makes the following changes in the Veterans' Housing Loan Program: (1) the definition of the term "authorized lender" is expanded to include a servicer of loans and DVA is given authority to enter into contracts with persons other than authorized lenders for the servicing of loans; (2) the Act expands eligibility for the program to include persons who are serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces at the time of making application and who meet other residency requirements; (3) the Act allows applications for home improvement loans to be made to either DVA or a county veterans service officer (CVSO); in addition, applicants apply to DVA or a CVSO for certification of eligibility as a veteran; (4) the Act authorizes DVA to loan money from the Veterans Trust Fund to the veterans mortgage loan repayment fund to fund loans; (5) the statutory list of purposes for which the veterans mortgage loan repayment fund may be used is amended to include payment of obligations arising from DVA acquisition of a headquarters and museum; and (6) the Act states that any money appropriated or transferred by law from the veterans mortgage loan repayment fund for purposes other than those listed and other than moneys made temporarily available to other enumerated funds, must be repaid with a 5% annual interest rate.

Other Provisions

The Act: (1) modifies the definition of "war period" and amends other statutes to include references to the Iraq war; (2) authorizes DVA to provide a loan guarantee for multifamily transitional housing for homeless veterans; (3) modifies the definition of "veteran" for purposes of the statute relating to veterans cemeteries to exclude persons who served on active duty for training purposes; (4) deletes a statutory reference to a fire fighter at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King; and (5) authorizes DVA to acquire property for a headquarters and museum and amends the list of purposes for which the veterans' mortgage loan repayment fund may be used to include payments arising from the acquisition.

Effective Date: The Act takes effect on December 9, 2003.

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