



THOMAS WEATHERSTON

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 62ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony on SB 370 before Senate Committee on Government Operations, Public Works and Telecommunications November 6, 2013

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing on SB 370.

SB 370 creates a measurable goal for Wisconsin's Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Program by having state agencies attempt to award 1 percent of their total budget to a business owned by a disabled veteran. This bill will not impose any requirements, but having a target number will enable us to better determine how the program is working. The bill replaces the phrase "a portion" with the words "at least 1 percent."

The current Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Program was created in 2010 and is run by the Department of Administration. The Department maintains a database of all disabled veteran-owned businesses that have been certified under current statutes.

The way the Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Program operates is similar to the minority-owned business program. A state department receiving bids on a project may currently grant the contract to a disabled veteran-owned business as long as it is not more than 5 percent higher than the lowest qualified bid. An annual report issued by the Department of Administration uses the information on amounts awarded to disabled veteran-owned businesses along with minority owned businesses to show how the state is doing.

The goal set by this bill will allow the report to show how close state agencies are to meeting the 1 percent target. The old language of "a portion" does not provide any meaningful guidance for state agencies seeking to comply with the spirit of the law. 1 percent is both a small enough number that is can reasonable be met, while large enough to provide support and encouragement to disabled veterans who own their own businesses.

This bill has received wide support from veteran organizations, including the Wisconsin branches of the American Legion, the Veteran of foreign Wars, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, and the Disabled American Veterans.

Thank you again for holding this hearing. I hope that we can work together to strengthen the Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Program, and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



3825 Mineral Point Road
Madison, WI 53705
608.239.5808

November 6, 2013

Subject: Senate Committee on Government Operations, Public Works, and Telecommunications – Senate Bill 370 – State procurement and construction contracts with disabled veteran owned businesses

Dear Chairperson Farrow and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for holding this hearing on Senate Bill 370 and further aiding the strong and proud Veteran community in Wisconsin. My name is Chad Knutson. I am a disabled Veteran born and raised in Wisconsin. I served in the 75th Ranger Regiment within the Special Operations community. My fire team was deployed to combat 5 times; 3 in Afghanistan and twice to Iraq during my 4 years of service. Currently, I am the Founder and Principal at ScopeBridge here in Madison. We are a technology focused architectural and construction management firm. I established the company in February of 2011, a few months after and as a direct result of, the implementation of the DVB program.

I am proud to say that my business has finally found traction but I would welcome opportunities to contract with the State of Wisconsin. To date, we have submitted proposals as part of a team for large projects, as well as independently targeted very small jobs attached to the Department of Military Affairs and the Department of Veteran Affairs. Unfortunately, the projects were awarded to teams/companies with no DVB representation. I find the lack of DVB participation in these projects with direct ties to the military especially disappointing.

Personally, I am not looking for any handouts. I simply want an opportunity to prove that we will perform above expectations. The Wisconsin Veteran community shares a bond and the improvements this bill makes to the DVB program will not only help disabled veteran-owned business owners, but it will positively impact the group as a whole. I have sought out and hired Veterans; 3 of the 5 individuals within ScopeBridge have been deployed to combat. I have made helping Veterans an overt goal of my company because once discharged with no marketable skills, I have worked exceptionally hard to reach this point and want to help fellow Veterans overcome their obstacles. Coming from that background I understand why the unemployment rate of Veterans is so high. We, as a community, have a track record of success and in most cases are reinventing our careers, post-military. Setting a goal within the State will give us the opportunity to prove ourselves, again.

Thank you again for taking the time to further investigate this opportunity. I ask you to

ScopeBridge, LLC
3825 Mineral Point Road
Madison, WI 53705



3825 Mineral Point Road
Madison, WI 53705
608.239.5808

support this bill not only for us small business owners, but for our community as a whole.

The very best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chad Knutson".

Chad Knutson, MBA, LEED AP

Principal/Founder

ScopeBridge LLC

ScopeBridge, LLC
3825 Mineral Point Road
Madison, WI 53705



330 East Kilbourn Ave.
Suite 565
Milwaukee, WI 53202
414.716.4400 T
262.490.2744 C
www.middleton-cc.com

November 5, 2013

RE: Assembly Bill 466/Senate Bill 370

Dear Chairperson Farrow & Members of the Committee,

My name is Tom Middleton and I am the president and owner of Middleton Construction Consulting based in Milwaukee. We provide professional services such as construction cost estimating and owner representation to the architectural and engineering industry. We are focused on commercial construction projects. I am a retired Master Sergeant from the Army and National Guard. I served 22 years, including deployments to the Middle East, Haiti and Korea. I deployed twice for the Wisconsin Army National Guard in support of the global war on terrorism. My legal residence is in Oconomowoc.

For the past two years, our company has been enrolled in the State of Wisconsin's Disabled Veteran-Owned Business (DVB) program and we have participated in several construction projects with the Division of State Facilities. We are an established company with a proven track record of success tied to many public and private projects. In other words, we are not struggling in the same way as my fellow veterans who are just starting out or trying to grow their businesses in Wisconsin. Disabled veterans are facing tremendous challenges, especially in light of the weakened economy, and I feel we should be doing more as a state to support our disabled veteran-owned businesses and the DVB program. Assembly Bill 466/Senate Bill 370 is a strong step toward achieving that goal.

Currently, there are less than 20 disabled veteran-owned businesses certified with the state. Unfortunately, the DVB program lacks participation because no real goals for participation have been set since the program was established in 2009. I have seen first-hand how this absence of a benchmark by which to measure success has meant some past projects have moved forward without any DVB participation at all. As a result, our disabled veterans have missed out on work opportunities and our state has missed out on opportunities to aid job creation among deserving, disabled-veterans. If we "attempt to ensure" at least 1% of expenditures are paid to disabled veteran-owned businesses as outlined in AB-466/SB370, we will increase awareness of the program, grow opportunities for veterans, and improve DVB participation rates with the state of Wisconsin.

According to the Pew Research Center, one out of ten veterans alive today was seriously injured at some point while serving in the military. Additionally, according to the Final report for Veterans Disability Benefits Commission dated August 2007, a service disabled veteran in his 50's is 24 percent more likely to be unemployed than his peers, and to earn \$17,000 less per annum than his civilian counterparts. Clearly we need to support veterans returning from active duty with significant mental and physical challenges. Assembly Bill 466/Senate

Bill 370 does that by building on the success of the state's 5% goal for the Minority Business Enterprise program. Even though the 1% goal for the DVB is not a mandate, it will undoubtedly reinforce the importance of the program in the same way. Assembly Bill 466/ Senate Bill 370 strengthens our partnership with Wisconsin's disabled former service men and women who have the same desires to work and excel in civilian life that they demonstrated in the military.

Please join me in support of Assembly Bill 466/Senate Bill 370.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

Sincerely,



Tom Middleton, CPE
Middleton Construction Consulting
President

Scott Walker, Governor

John A. Scocos, Secretary



STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

201 West Washington Avenue

P.O. Box 7843

Madison, WI 53707-7843

Phone: (608) 266-1311

Toll-free: 1-800-WIS-VETS (947-8387)

Fax: (608) 267-0403

Email: WisVets@dva.wisconsin.gov

Website: www.WisVets.com

November 6 2013

Chairman Farrow, Ranking Member Wirch, and Members of the Committee,

I request your support of Senate Bill 370 (SB 370), which encourages state contracting with disabled veteran-owned companies by establishing a state minimum objective for procuring goods, services, and construction projects from such companies.

One of my priorities as Secretary has been to increase employment opportunities for veterans. SB 370 not only increases employment opportunities, but increases the opportunities for disabled veterans to strengthen our workforce. Of the approximately 400,000 veterans residing in Wisconsin, nearly fifteen percent have been determined disabled by the VA.

SB 370 will bolster our continuing efforts to assist disabled veterans to not only enter the civilian workforce, but to become successful job creators. A number of initiatives have been adopted in recent years that enhance the employment opportunities for veterans such as the civil service preference for veterans who are at least 30% service-connected disabled. Additionally, we've made strides and continue to work toward breaking down licensing and certification barriers for veterans to help them more quickly enter the civilian workforce.

By encouraging the use of disabled veteran-owned businesses, SB 370 benefits disabled veteran business owners as it promotes the well-being of disabled veterans. With your support of SB 370 we will establish an objective for contracting with disabled veteran-owned businesses and the State of Wisconsin will make a powerful statement that veterans belong in the entrepreneurial business world.

I respectfully urge your support of SB 370. Thank you.

Sincerely,
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John A. Scocos".

JOHN A. SCOCOS
Secretary