



DAVID STEFFEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 4TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**Prepared Testimony by Rep. David Steffen before the
Assembly Committee on State Affairs and Government Operations
Assembly Bill 114-Stolen Valor
April 2, 2015**

Chairman Swearingen and fellow committee members,

Thank you for scheduling a public hearing for Assembly Bill 114. This bipartisan bill would create a penalty for falsely claiming military service or honors in order to obtain benefit, an act more commonly known as Stolen Valor. Under this bill, an individual found guilty of committing Stolen Valor could face a charge ranging from a Class A misdemeanor up to a Class H felony.

Currently, the Stolen Valor Act of 2013 allows for federal level prosecution of cases involving military identity theft. However, after receiving contact from a constituent and former United States Marine, it became clear to me that a state-level law is necessary to better address this crime. Requiring a federal prosecutor to handle cases of Stolen Valor is inefficient and burdensome. 15 states have already enacted some form of a Stolen Valor law, evidence of a need for state-level authority in these cases.

Many of you may be familiar with top news stories covering cases of men and women who have lied about military service in order to achieve personal gain. One such case involved Jonathan Wade Short. Short used his stolen valor to gain benefits, discounts, and to solicit money from a woman who believed him to be an honorable soldier. Unfortunately, Short's story is not unique. Cases of stolen valor can be found across the country, including Wisconsin.

Further, committing the crime of Stolen Valor is only becoming easier. Medals and ribbons as well as blank DD-214 discharge forms can all be purchased online, making it nearly effortless for perpetrators to falsify service. Empowering our state to handle such cases is key to aggressively pursuing these criminals.

The victims of Stolen Valor range from businesses and non-profit organizations that offer military benefits and discounts, individuals offering financial support under false pretenses, and most notably the military men and women who know the true cost of serving our country.

The goal of this bill is simple: to ensure that Wisconsin has the necessary tools to prosecute stolen valor, so that we may protect earned valor.

Thank you for allowing me to testify, and I welcome your questions and ideas.

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Agents Association

March 31, 2015

Representative David Steffen
Wisconsin State Capitol
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

Re: AB 114

Dear Representative Steffen:

On behalf of the FBI Agents Association ("FBIAA"), which represents over 12,000 active and retired FBI Special Agents, I write to express our support for AB 114, the bill that you and other Wisconsin State Representatives have introduced to complement the *Stolen Valor Act of 2013*.

The FBIAA believes that any person who makes fraudulent claims about their military service does a grave disservice to the men and women who have sacrificed for our country. The FBIAA supports your effort to complement existing federal law by making it a crime under Wisconsin law to falsely claim military service in order to obtain tangible benefits or in the commission of other serious crimes.

The FBIAA greatly appreciates your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,



Reynaldo Tariche
President

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