

STATE SENATOR
Leah Vukmir

Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges

Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2017

Senate Bill 410

Chairman Harsdorf and committee members, thank you for taking the time for a public hearing on Senate Bill 410 today.

As a blue star mom, I pray someday my son who serves as a first lieutenant in the U.S. Army will become a veteran. I am proud of my son and am thankful for his service – just as I am for the service of his colleagues in every branch of our nation’s military. Those who serve our country and make the personal sacrifice to keep us safe deserve the certainty that government will honor its promises. This pledge applies to our soldiers while they serve, and also after they discharge and enter civilian life.

Currently, the state of Wisconsin pays for undergraduate tuition for the brave men and women who serve in the Wisconsin National Guard. Under no circumstances should administrative glitches prevent that from happening. Unfortunately, under current law, it is unclear whether differential tuition, which universities can charge for some specific programs like business or engineering, is covered under the grant. On occasion, this has resulted in a failure to reimburse military service members for the additional cost.

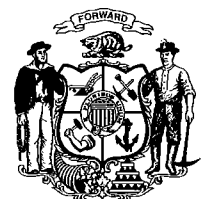
This bill also ensures that service members will be reimbursed in a timely manner. By removing red tape in the reimbursement process, universities will be able to work faster to help our veterans receive their grant money in time for the next semester’s tuition. The Department of Military Affairs will also be required to handle the reimbursement within 30 days of receiving verification that the veteran earned the minimum GPA for the grant.

Not only will this bill help veterans avoid late fees, but it will also provide them with the flexibility to avoid taking out costly student loans. Inefficient government should not be the reason why veterans have to pay interest on loans, especially when they should have received their tuition reimbursement from the state in a timely fashion.

I’m proud to have authored this piece of legislation so our veterans will not have to worry when pursuing their hard-earned education. As Wisconsinites, it’s the least we can do to say thank you.

Thank you for your time. Please let me know if I can answer any questions you may have.

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MIKE KUGLITSCH

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 84TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

DATE: October 11, 2017
RE: **Testimony on 2017 Senate Bill 410**
TO: The Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges
FROM: Representative Mike Kuglitsch

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Committee Members for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 410. This bill ensures that National Guard Members will be reimbursed the full cost of tuition under the Wisconsin National Guard Tuition Grant Program.

Currently, the University of Wisconsin schools are able to charge a fee, on top of base tuition, called differential tuition. The Board of Regents at each university has the ability to implement this additional fee. At some of our UW schools, differential tuition may be required to help support the costs of some programs (i.e., business or engineering) and additional services that the curriculum may require.

In the past, there has been confusion in statute about whether differential tuition is required to be covered by the Wisconsin National Guard Tuition Grant. In some instances differential tuition has been covered by the Department of Military Affairs while in others it has not been covered.

While some degree programs have a higher rate of tuition, charged in the differential tuition fee, this bill clarifies that a promise made will be honored and no matter what degree program a guard member may choose, the full cost of tuition will be covered. It should be noted that this bill is simply a clarification and differential tuition is currently being approved to be paid by the Department of Military Affairs. According to DOA, there will be no fiscal impact to the state due to this bill.

The bill also allows government to adapt as technology advances and make sure our veterans get reimbursed on time in order to avoid taking out additional costly loans. It does this by replacing the requirement for a hard copy paper form of approval sent in the mail with a process that would allow the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs to verify grant requirements electronically. Under the bill, reimbursement will be required to be processed within 30 days in order to avoid any need for Guard Members to take out additional loans.

As legislators, I believe it is imperative that we clarify this statute to make sure it does not matter what degree a member of the National Guard chooses, we want to keep our promise to pay 100% of tuition. Thank you for allowing me to testify and I ask that you support SB 410.