



KEN SKOWRONSKI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 82nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

(608) 266-8590
Toll-Free: (888) 534-0082
Rep.Skowronski@legis.wi.gov

P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708-8953

October 17, 2019

Good Morning Chairman Murphy and Committee Members.

I want to thank you for hearing AB 452 today. As you may know, there are eighty two thousand American Service Members still missing. Over fifteen hundred of them are from Wisconsin.

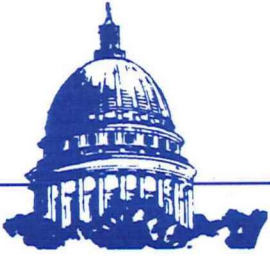
AB 452 would provide One Hundred and Eighty Thousand dollars annually to the Missing in Action Recovery Identification Program to recover Wisconsin MIAs. Currently the program is assigned a US Veteran, however none of those recovered have been from Wisconsin. This assistance would streamline Wisconsin veterans coming home.

Time is precious. Every year key individuals that would aid in the return of Wisconsin Veterans pass away. The group needs those who saw it first. From the farmers who saw a plane go down, to the town's people that helped the troops on the ground. Those are the individuals that we are losing.

This bill will not bring everyone home, but it will bring closure to many families each year.

Thank you,


Ken Skowronski



DALE KOOYENGA
STATE SENATOR · 5TH DISTRICT

State Capitol · P.O. Box 7882 · Madison, WI 53707-7882 · (608) 266-2512

October 17, 2019

TO: Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities
FR: Senator Dale Kooyenga
RE: support for Assembly Bill 452 – Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project

Thank you for holding a hearing on Assembly Bill 452. This bill provides funding to support the identification and recovery of Wisconsin's Missing in Action (MIA) service members.

Since WWII, there are approximately 80,000 Missing in Action United State Service Members around the globe - this includes more than 1,500 Wisconsin Service Members.

America is the only country that has a dedicated department and program to locate and identify America's fallen. Wisconsin is also the state with the most robust program and this bill can further set us apart as citizens of a state and country that are as loyal to our heroes as they have been to us.

In 2014, the University of Wisconsin Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project (UW MIA RIP) was founded at the UW-Madison Biotechnology Center by Charles Konsitzke. The UW MIA RIP was the first academic institution to partner with the United States Department of Defense (DoD) - the agency responsible for identifying and repatriating the remains of United States service members.

When I first learned of the UW project, I was immediately reminded of a book I recently read titled, *Bringing Mulligan Home*, and a podcast titled, *The Dead Drink First*, by Dale Maharidge. Dale Maharidge is a journalist and a professor at Columbia University who spent 18 years searching for his father's missing WWII buddy, Herman Walter Mulligan. Mr. Mulligan died during the battle of Okinawa and his body was listed as "unrecovered." The story told by Mr. Maharidge is powerful and moving and underscores the importance of recovering our missing service men and women so that the surviving family members and friends can honor their loved ones.

The bill before you provides \$360,000 over the 2019-2021 biennium for the purpose of partially funding the UW MIA recovery project and would make Wisconsin the first state in the nation to provide funding to support its own MIA Service Members.

The modest funding provided by AB 452 is the least we can do to honor those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for protecting and defending our freedoms.

Thank you for your attention to this legislation. I respectfully ask for your support of AB 452.



FULFILLING OUR PROMISES
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED

Department of Wisconsin

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
AL LABELLE
DAV BENEFITS PROTECTION TEAM LEADER
DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY
OCTOBER 17, 2019**

Chairman Murphy, Vice Chair Tranel, Ranking Member Shankland, and Members of the Committee:

Good morning! Thank you for allowing DAV (Disabled American Veterans) this opportunity to present our view on Assembly Bill 452 (AB 452) Relating to: *the University of Wisconsin Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project*.

As you may know, DAV is a non-profit veterans service organization (VSO) comprised of 1 million wartime service-disabled veterans, nationwide. In Wisconsin, we have approximately 15,000 members. DAV was founded in 1920 and Congressionally chartered in 1932.

Each year, we help more than 1 million veterans with Benefits, Transportation, Advocacy, Employment, and Volunteerism. Over Eighty-five percent (85%) of our total expenditures go to Service.

All our members were wounded, injured or became ill while in service to our nation, many of them severely. They have sacrificed much in defense of our country and state.

DAV Wisconsin considers the Missing in Action or (MIA) issue a high priority. Currently, one of our members sits on the DAV National Prisoner of War/Missing in Action or POW/MIA Committee.

The brave family of the missing continue to live in uncertainty and anguish. Finding and repatriating the remains of the missing is essential to finally give them a sense of closure.

We are grateful for the admirable work being done by the University of Wisconsin MIA Recovery and Identification Project (UW MIA Recovery Project) in conjunction with the United States Government's Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. Finding the remains of three (3) World War II veterans in their short existence speaks volumes about the excellence of their work.

Under AB 452, the UW MIA Recovery Project may request the Joint Committee on Finance to provide \$180,000 in each fiscal year of the 2019-2021 fiscal biennium for missions to recover and identify Wisconsin veterans who are missing in action. The request must include a research prospectus and spending plan for the requested MIA mission. DAV Wisconsin finds the bill reasonable and well crafted. Its intent is certainly humane.

Pursuant to DAV National Resolution 176, DAV Wisconsin strongly supports AB 452 and urges this Committee and the legislature to pass the bill, hopefully unanimously, in an expeditious manner.

This concludes my testimony, Mr. Chairman. We would be pleased to respond to any questions you or other Committee Members may have.



THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN

October 17, 2019

Chairman and members of the committee, I am Paul Fisk Legislative Chair of The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin.

The American Legion is the largest Veterans Service Organization in the Nation. In Wisconsin, we have over 50,000 members with just over a century of advocating for veterans.

I wish to thank the University of Wisconsin for developing this project. It will provide valuable experience for those members of the University Community who work on it. I also want to thank all of the members of the Legislature and their staffs for putting this valuable piece of legislation together.

Assembly Bill 452 relating to the University of Wisconsin Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project and making an appropriation has the full support of The American Legion. For a generation The American Legion has supported legislation and programs to account for those missing in action and the recovery of their remains. We must work to bring closure to the families of our comrades. It is important to the families that they know what happened to their loved one. It is a step forward that Wisconsin will work to bring this needed closure to Wisconsin families. The active role of the people of Wisconsin will make a difference.

The American Legion on both the national stage and here in Wisconsin works tirelessly to keep this issue front and center. At each Legion event there is either an empty chair or table to focus attendee's attention to those still missing. In many communities there is a silent march held in September. The participating Posts bring their colors and march several blocks to only the beat of a drum. It is a moving experience.

This bill gives hope to many families. We have seen the effect on families when they learn the fate of their loved one and the remains are returned home.

Very Respectfully,

Paul Fisk, Legislative Chairman
The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin



October 17th, 2019

TO: Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities
FROM: Torrey Tiedeman, Student Volunteer, UW Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project
RE: Assembly Bill 452 Testimony

Greetings Chairman Murphy and members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities. I would also like to begin by thanking you all for the opportunity to testify and express as both a student and an active duty veteran, the UW Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project's support for Assembly Bill 452.

My name is Torrey Tiedeman, I am a senior at UW-Madison studying archaeology and graduating this coming spring, and a former active-duty United States Marine Corps infantryman with two overseas deployments.

The Project's team has successfully assisted with the recovery and identification of the remains of three previously MIA American service members to date, with efforts for a fourth ongoing. Without a doubt, this program has proven its capability and professionalism.

From a current student's perspective, this team has been the most dynamic collaboration of fellow students (including other student veterans), staff, faculty, and alumni that I've witnessed across UW-System institution campuses, consisting of individuals from a host of interdisciplinary backgrounds that include history, forensic anthropology, archaeology, biology, and genetics.

This collaboration successfully transcends institutional academic settings to facilitate viable field recoveries, with team members maintaining their focus on the goal of correctly conducting holistic research of a case, thoroughly surveying a potential crash or burial site, respectfully excavating the site, and extracting remains.

As a senior studying archaeology, the project has allowed me the opportunity to learn and conduct the practical application of many field skills and critical conceptualization while under the close guidance, mentorship, and supervision of a professional collegiate instructor.

As a former active-duty veteran, the project has afforded me the opportunity to continue to serve a cause immensely greater than oneself in a volunteer capacity over the past two summers, including the successful recovery of 2nd Lieutenant Walter B Stone from a crash site in northern France.

Most importantly, I cannot overstate that our team's mission is the very minimum that we as individuals, as communities, as a state, and even as a nation, owe to these service members who have died in service to our country and have not yet been located and brought home.

As stated earlier, I would also like to close my remarks by thanking the bill's authors and all the legislative staff who worked on this important effort. Thank you again to the committee and, at this time, we are open to any questions that you may have.



October 17th, 2019

TO: Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities
FROM: Charles Konsitzke, Team Lead, UW Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project
RE: Assembly Bill 452 Testimony

Greetings Chairman Murphy and members of the committee. My name is Charles Konsitzke, and I am the associate director of the University of Wisconsin Biotechnology Center, and founder and team lead of the University of Wisconsin Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project (MIARIP).

I would like to begin by thanking you all for the opportunity to testify and express our team's support for Assembly Bill 452, which would provide over \$180,000 annually to the MIA recovery project for missions to investigate, recover, report and repatriate missing in-action service members from the great state of Wisconsin.

Nationally, there are over 82,000 American service members unaccounted for since the onset of World War II, of these, over 1,500 are from Wisconsin, with every corner of our state still missing at least one service member.

These Wisconsin MIAs include a group of young Wisconsin men who fought and were trapped in the Philippines in the spring of 1942 and captured by the Imperial Japanese Army. After enduring the Bataan Death March, they suffered over three years of harsh imprisonment, facing disease, malnutrition, and brutality. These soldiers came to be collectively known as "the Janesville 99."

Missing service members also include Wisconsin soldiers whose remains are in the jungles of New Guinea; Wisconsin Coast Guardsmen who went down in the icy North Atlantic on the USS Escanaba; Wisconsin airmen who crashed into the fields of Northern France; Wisconsin soldiers whose remains are still buried on a Belgian hillside after their loss during the initial stages of the Battle of the Bulge; and Wisconsin soldiers, airmen, and Marines at or above the 38th Parallel on the Korean Peninsula and in Vietnam.

In addition, besides annual recovery missions, our historical research team can compose closure reports for those families whose MIA relatives are deemed unrecoverable, such as in cases of maritime loss. These reports are far more substantive than telegrams and other notices received by the families during the times of war.

I would like to close my portion of our team's remarks by thanking all of the bill's authors as well as all legislative staff who have assisted us along the way. We have one additional member from our team who has prepared remarks and then we would be happy to answer any questions.

Wisconsin State Capitol
2 E. Main St.
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

October 17th, 2019

Dear Legislators,

I am writing to ask that you support AB 452 to provide funding to the UW-Madison MIA Recovery and Identification Project (RIP) to recover and identify the remains of Wisconsin MIA's.

As a lifelong Wisconsin resident and UW-Madison Alumna, I have a very personal connection to the effort. I was named after my Uncle, First Lt. Jerome A Volk USAF, who was killed in action while flying a low level bombing mission in North Korea on Nov. 7, 1951. Jerry was the first Air National Guard pilot from Wisconsin killed in the Korean conflict. In 1956, Volk Field at Camp Douglas, was dedicated in his name and in 2015 he was inducted into the Wisconsin National Guard Hall Of Fame.

Although this was a tremendous honor, sadly, due to the fact that Lt. Volk's remains have never been brought home, my family has not been able to find closure 68 years later. My father, his only sibling, dedicated his life to pursuing efforts to bring his brother home. Tragically he was not able to see it happen before he died in 2016. The fact that Jerry has never been returned has taken a toll on our entire family. It is my hope that one day he can be brought home and laid to rest in the cemetery at Volk Field.

Over the years my dad and I attended many annual Department of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) briefings in Washington D.C. and kept up with the efforts being made to bring MIA's home from Korea. In all honesty, with so many years having passed, I had little hope until recently that it would ever happen. The briefing I attended a year ago changed that when I found out about great advances in both science and technology that have made what was once impossible, now possible! Experts today can positively identify remains with much less DNA than ever before and this combined with other improvements is a game changer!

That said, with over 82,000 Americans still unaccounted for, the task facing the DPAA is daunting to say the least. Time is also of the essence with the aging generations of loved ones looking for closure.

With the synergy that exists between the DPAA and our own UW-Madison's MIARIP, it is imperative that funding be provided so Wisconsin can be the first in the nation to fund the return of its own MIA's. Also, I understand that the UW MIARIP can conduct recovery operations in areas, such as North Korea and China, which are off limits to DOD missions due to diplomatic relations between nations. Access to these countries has been the biggest impediment to bringing home our fallen heroes and the UW-Madison project may be the only hope we have to gain entry.

The funding in this bill would serve to honor those who have given the ultimate sacrifice, honor their families and loved ones by bringing closure, and honor and inspire our current and future service personnel and veterans by giving credibility to the commitment that "no soldier is left behind". Our heroes deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,

Jeri Volk Barry
968 Evergreen Lane
Neenah, WI 54956