



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #816

### **Care Facilities -- Computer Help Desk Services (Veterans Affairs -- Homes and Facilities for Veterans)**

[LFB 2003-05 Budget Summary: Page 462, #4]

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#### **CURRENT LAW**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) currently employs 1.0 PR position at the Southern Wisconsin Veterans Retirement Center (SWVRC) that provides computer help desk services to DVA staff at the SWVRC, the Milwaukee claims office and the Milwaukee veterans assistance site.

#### **GOVERNOR**

Provide \$50,000 PR annually to increase help desk services available to DVA staff in the southeastern area of the state. This funding would be supported with a combination of rates paid by veterans who live at the care facilities operated by DVA in southeastern Wisconsin and VA per diem payments DVA receives for the veterans who live at these facilities.

#### **DISCUSSION POINTS**

1. In its 2002-03 budget request, DVA requested funding to support 2.0 additional positions, one beginning in 2003-04 and a second beginning in 2004-05, to meet increased demand for information technology (IT) support services due to the growth in the number of DVA staff that use computers at several DVA sites in southeastern Wisconsin.

2. There are currently 92 users and 64 computer workstations in southeastern Wisconsin that use the services of the help desk. The following table identifies the growth in the number of computer users at these DVA sites during the past 10 years.

**TABLE 1**

**DVA PC Users in Southeastern Wisconsin**

Site	Location	Year	Users
Milwaukee Claims Office	Milwaukee	1993	19
Milwaukee Veterans Assistance Site	Milwaukee	1994	7
Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery	Union Grove	1997	6
Southern Veterans Assistance Site	Union Grove	1998	4
Fairchild Community-Based Residential Facility	Union Grove	2001	20
Shemanske Community-Based Residential Facility	Union Grove	2001	18
Gates Community-Based Residential Facility	Union Grove	2003	<u>18</u>
Current Facilities and Number of Users			92
Activities Building	Union Grove	2005	7
Adult Day Care	Union Grove	2005	3
Skilled Nursing Facility	Union Grove	2005	<u>75</u>
Future Facilities and Number of Users			85
Total Current and Future Facilities and No. of Users			177

The table shows that:

- Since 2001, the number of computer users at these sites has increased over 150%, from 36 to 92.

- There will be no additional growth in computer users at these sites until 2005, when an additional activities building, adult day care and skilled nursing facility are scheduled to open. A total of 85 additional users may be using these help desk services once these facilities open.

3. The current position at Union Grove assists DVA staff in a variety of IT support functions, including: (a) desktop IT hardware support, such as assistance with PCs, laptop computers, scanners, modems and FAX machines; (b) desktop software support (Microsoft Office applications); (c) application support for software that was developed in-house and by vendors to meet the specific needs of veterans programs, including software used for member care, medical specialty software, and veterans claims processing; (d) network support; (e) telecommunications support; (f) IT security functions; and (g) E-mail support. The position also provides assistance to residents with their personal computers.

4. DVA argues that, with additional IT support, DVA staff would have their IT problems resolved in a more timely manner than with current staff. For example, when the current staff member leaves the Union Grove campus to travel to a Milwaukee site, users in Union Grove do not have access to that position's services. IT staff in Madison seldom travel to Union Grove to provide

"hands on" assistance to DVA staff at that site when the current staff member is unavailable, but provide assistance on occasion over the telephone.

5. DVA is authorized 26 positions in the agency's Bureau of Information Systems -- 8.0 of which are located at the Veterans Home at King, 1.0 at Union Grove, and 17.0 in Madison. Of these positions, 4.0 positions in Madison currently provide the type of support services that would be available to DVA's southeastern Wisconsin sites under contract. These positions currently provide staff support to users in DVA's central office, the Veterans Museum, the Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Spooner, Veterans assistance program sites in Fort McCoy and Tomah, and county veterans services offices statewide. In total, these 4.0 positions provide help desk support to 162 users at these sites, excluding 155 users at county veterans services offices, which mostly receive assistance over the telephone from these staff.

6. The Committee could consider deleting funding for this purpose for several reasons. First, during periods when the current 1.0 position is unavailable to provide services at the Union Grove site because the staff member is working at a Milwaukee site, Madison IT staff could travel to Union Grove to address urgent problems that require "hands on" help. The travel time between Madison and Union Grove is approximately two hours. The Governor's recommendation is intended to provide "coverage" during periods when there are multiple demands on the current position's time, rather than to conduct activities that are currently not being performed at all.

Second, the number of DVA users in southeastern Wisconsin will not increase in the 2003-05 biennium. Consequently, if funding for this item is deleted, DVA would be required to continue to provide help desk support services with existing staff. If DVA determines that providing additional support for this function is essential, it could reallocate current IT staff to perform this function.

Third, increasing funding for this function would increase the costs of providing services at DVA sites. The rates DVA charges for its facilities are established at levels that enable the agency to recover the costs of operating these facilities.

7. In 2005-06, DVA expects to open a 120-bed skilled nursing facility, an activities building and an adult day care facility. Once these facilities open, DVA estimates that an additional 85 users would require help desk services. As an alternative to the Governor's recommendation, the Committee could consider either: (a) providing funding to increase contracted help desk services beginning in January, 2005 (\$12,500); or (b) providing funding for 1.0 PR position, beginning January, 1, 2005, to support additional help desk services (\$32,200 PR and 1.0 PR position, beginning in 2004-05).

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide \$50,000 PR annually for DVA to contract for help desk services.

2. Modify the Governor's recommendations by deleting \$50,000 PR in 2003-04 and \$25,000 in 2004-05 so that \$25,000 PR in 2004-05 would be provided to support contracted help desk services, beginning January 1, 2005.

<u>Alternative 2</u>	<u>PR</u>
<b>2003-05 FUNDING</b> (Change to Bill)	- \$75,000

3. Delete the Governor's recommendations to provide funding for contracted help desk services (-\$50,000 PR annually). Instead, provide \$30,300 PR in 2004-05 and 1.0 PR position to provide these services, beginning January 1, 2005.

<u>Alternative 3</u>	<u>PR</u>
<b>2003-05 FUNDING</b> (Change to Bill)	- \$69,700
<b>2004-05 POSITIONS</b> (Change to Bill)	1.00

4. Delete provision.

<u>Alternative 4</u>	<u>PR</u>
<b>2003-05 FUNDING</b> (Change to Bill)	- \$100,000

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