



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #693

Grants to Tribal Veteran Service Offices (Veterans Affairs -- Departmentwide, Veterans Programs, and Museums)

[LFB 2013-15 Budget Summary: Page 490, #5]

CURRENT LAW

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) provides grants to any federally recognized Indian tribe or band that appoints a tribal veterans service officer (TVSO) and that meets minimum budget and operating standards. The service officer must be a veteran and must serve as a full-time employee. The maximum annual grant amount is \$8,500. Base funding for these grants is \$61,200 PR (tribal gaming revenue).

TVSOs are required to: (a) advise veterans of any benefits to which they may be entitled and to provide assistance regarding any complaint or problem arising from such services; (b) make reports to their tribal board; (c) cooperate with federal and state agencies that serve or grant aid or benefits to former military personnel and their dependents; and (d) furnish information about veterans burial places within the county. These duties must be performed separately and distinctly from any county department.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$100,600 SEG annually from the veterans trust fund (VTF) to increase from \$8,500 to \$15,000 the maximum annual grant amount DVA may provide to support TVSOs. Modify a current SEG appropriation to authorize payments for these purposes. Under the bill, a total of \$161,800 (\$100,600 SEG and \$61,200 PR) would be available to support TVSOs.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. The Governor's recommended funding increase is the result of a request by the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council to increase TVSO grants from \$5,855 to \$25,000 per year. The

Governor responded to the request by increasing the maximum amount each tribe could receive to \$15,000 annually, and funding the increase with revenues from the VTF, rather than increasing the amount of tribal gaming revenue budgeted for this purpose.

2. In 2011-12, DVA awarded grants of \$5,855 to nine tribes, including the Bad River Band, Ho-Chunk, Lac Courte Oreilles, Lac du Flambeau, Menominee Nation, Oneida, Red Cliff, Sokaogon Chippewa, and Stockbridge-Munsee Tribes. In addition, DVA provided a one-time grant of \$8,500 to the Menominee Indian Tribe as a 2010-11 expenditure carried over into 2011-12. Total funding to tribes was approximately \$61,200. DVA indicates these same amounts will be provided in 2012-13. Two tribes, the Forest County Potawatomi Tribe and the St. Croix tribe, did not submit requests for grant funding because they currently do not meet the statutory requirements for TVSO grantees.

3. Under the bill, DVA would have sufficient funding to provide 10 tribes with grants of \$15,000, although only nine tribes are currently eligible. If 10 tribes received the total allowable grant award (\$15,000), the amount budgeted for these grants would exceed total grant amounts by \$11,800 annually. Under the bill, there would not be sufficient funding to provide the maximum grant amount to each tribe if all 11 qualified for the grants. The Committee may wish to budget funding for this program with the expectation that all 11 tribes could qualify for grants in the future.

4. Table 1 shows the number of federal benefit applications TVSOs have helped veterans complete in calendar years 2009 through 2011, as reported to DVA for the, 2010, 2011, and 2012 grant applications. The applications for 2013 grants are due in June and will contain information for calendar year 2012.

TABLE 1

Federal Benefit Applications Facilitated by TVSOs

<u>Tribe</u>	<u>Calendar Year</u>		
	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>
Bad River Chippewa	First Year	59	0
Ho-Chunk	51	48	24
Lac Courte Oreilles	201	189	179
Lac du Flambeau	534	337	268
Menominee Nation	459	95	144
Stockbridge-Munsee	Not Available	37	12
Oneida	474	678	756
Red Cliff	47	33	Not Available
Sokaogon Chippewa	151	159	3

5. In addition to assisting veterans with obtaining federal benefits, TVSOs are also expected to work toward achieving the goals and objectives they identify in their grant applications. In recent years, many of the TVSOs identify as their primary goals providing post-traumatic stress disorder outreach programs for tribal veterans, informing tribal veterans about the state and federal benefits available to them, developing outreach programs to Operation Enduring Freedom or

Operation Iraqi Freedom tribal veterans, and expanding information made available regarding the federal VA Native American veterans home loan program.

6. TVSOs provide the same services as county veterans service offices (CVSOs). CVSOs are also eligible for grants from DVA. In 2011-12 DVA provided grants to 69 of the state's 72 counties. Table 2 shows the number of CVSO grants awarded in 2011-12, by the amounts awarded. The bill would provide DVA with sufficient funding to provide TVSOs with \$15,000 annually, an increase of 156% from the 2011-12 grant awards and \$2,000 more than the largest CVSO award.

TABLE 2

Number of CVSO Grants Awarded by Amount

<u>Number of Counties</u>	<u>Award Amount</u>
1	\$500
17	8,500
21	10,000
9	11,500
21	13,000
Weighted Average	10,600

Table 2 shows that, under the bill, TVSOs would be budgeted annual grant amounts that exceed the amounts counties currently receive under the CVSO grant program. As counties may have a greater ability to support costs of veterans services than tribes, providing higher grant awards to tribes than counties may be justified.

Table 3 identifies several funding options that the Committee may wish to consider with respect to grants to TVSOs. These proposals include the amount that would be needed to support grants totaling \$15,000, \$10,000 and the current statutory maximum grant amount, \$8,500. Each option is presented as an alternative to this paper.

TABLE 3

Funding for Tribal Veteran Service Offices

<u>Tribe</u>	2011-12 Grant <u>Amount</u>	<u>Alternatives</u>			
		2 \$15,000/ <u>Tribe</u>	3 \$10,000/ <u>Tribe</u>	4 Statutory <u>Limit</u>	5 Maintain <u>Base*</u>
Bad River	\$5,855	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$8,500	\$5,564
Ho-Chunk	5,855	15,000	10,000	8,500	5,564
Lac Courte Oreilles	5,855	15,000	10,000	8,500	5,564
Lac du Flambeau	5,855	15,000	10,000	8,500	5,564
Menominee	5,855	15,000	10,000	8,500	5,564
Oneida	5,855	15,000	10,000	8,500	5,564
Red Cliff	5,855	15,000	10,000	8,500	5,564
Sokaogon Chippewa	5,855	15,000	10,000	8,500	5,564
Stockbridge -Munsee	5,855	15,000	10,000	8,500	5,564
Menomonee County	8,500	0	0	0	0
Forest County Potawatomi	0	15,000	10,000	8,500	5,564
St. Croix Tribe	0	15,000	10,000	8,500	5,564
Subtotal	\$61,195	\$165,000	\$110,000	\$93,500	\$61,200
Base (PR -- Tribal Gaming)	\$61,200	\$61,200	\$61,200	\$61,200	\$61,200
Annual Increase Needed		\$103,800	\$48,800	\$32,300	0
AB 40 -- Annual Funding Increase (SEG)		\$100,600	\$100,600	\$100,600	\$100,600
Annual Change to Bill		\$3,200	-\$51,800	-\$68,300	-\$100,600
Biennial Change to Bill		\$6,400	-\$103,600	-\$136,600	-\$201,200

*Assumes the Forest County Potawatomi and the St. Croix Tribe will qualify for grants.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the Governor's recommendations.
2. Increase funding by \$3,200 SEG annually so that \$165,000 (all funds) would be available annually to support 11 TVSO grants, budgeted at the maximum of \$15,000 per grant.

ALT 2	Change to Bill Funding
SEG	\$6,400

3. Reduce funding by \$51,800 SEG annually so that \$110,000 (all funds) would be available annually to support 11 TVSO grants, budgeted at the maximum of \$10,000 per grant.

ALT 3	Change to Bill Funding
SEG	- \$103,600

4. Reduce funding by \$68,300 SEG annually so that \$93,500 (all funds) would be available annually to support 11 TVSO grants, budgeted at the current statutory maximum of \$8,500 per grant.

ALT 4	Change to Bill Funding
SEG	- \$136,600

5. Delete provision and maintain base funding for the program (\$61,200 PR annually). Reduce funding by \$100,600 SEG annually.

ALT 5	Change to Bill Funding
SEG	- \$201,200

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