



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #837

Interagency Liaison (DVA -- General Agency Provisions)

Bill Agency

[LFB 2007-09 Budget Summary: Page 581, #8]

CURRENT LAW

Under 45.03 of the statutes, the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) is required to coordinate the activities of all state agencies and the University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority for veteran's services related to any of the following: (a) medical care; (b) placement and training; and (c) educational, economic, or vocational rehabilitation. The Department is specifically authorized to coordinate activities related to veterans benefits in the Department of Health and Family Services, the Department of Public Instruction, the Department of Workforce Development, the Wisconsin Technical College System Board, and the University of Wisconsin System, to insure that such benefits are provided promptly and effectively.

The Department is required to maintain contacts with county veterans service officers and local agencies, the American Red Cross, and veterans service organizations concerning the welfare of veterans. The Department is also required to contact and cooperate with the federal government in regards to veterans benefits.

GOVERNOR

Create a GPR appropriation for the administration of loans and aid to veterans and provide \$80,100 GPR in 2007-08 and \$100,500 GPR in 2008-09 for 1.0 GPR classified interagency liaison to coordinate the activities of all state agencies that provide veteran's benefits.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. The Department's duties relating to the coordination of veterans benefits were originally established under 1943 Wisconsin Chapter 443, which created a Veteran's Recognition Board for veterans that were returning after service in World War II.

2. Chapter 614 of the 1947 Wisconsin Laws moved the responsibility of coordinating the program from the Veteran's Recognition Board to the Department, however, the statutory language, regarding DVA's coordination duties, has remained basically unchanged since the statutory section was approved on July 1, 1943.

3. Through the remainder of World War II and five subsequent statutorily recognized war periods, the Department's statutory responsibilities, in regards to providing coordination of veterans benefits, has remained relatively unchanged.

4. It could be argued that there have been some significant changes in the number of programs offered for veterans over the last few biennia. The Department states that, while it does not directly administer new programs such as funding for veterans license plates, veterans trust fund tax check-offs, property tax relief for disabled veterans and their spouses, and tuition remission at the University of Wisconsin System and the Wisconsin Technical College System, there has been increased staff time related to application processing and disseminating information.

5. The Department argues that "in order to properly assign responsibility and foster consistent oversight of the Department's statutory responsibilities related to contacts and coordination, the Department needs to create a single point of contact. The requested interagency liaison position will serve that function. By filling this critical need, the Department will insure that our coordination and contact responsibilities are met."

6. If the Committee believes there have been sufficient additional duties to warrant an interagency liaison, then it could approve the Governor's recommendation.

7. However, it could also be argued that this coordination process has been a core duty of the Department for over 60 years, and staffing concerns have generally been addressed when program activity has been modified.

8. In addition, in regards to the education of veterans, the primary responsibility for the payment of tuition and fees for students attending in-state public institutions has transferred from the Department to the University of Wisconsin System and the Wisconsin Technical College System. Each of these institutions is now required to remit tuition and fees for eligible veterans, rather than DVA providing a reimbursement to those veterans. Additionally, it could be argued that the Department should have sufficient excess staffing due to these changes to transfer duties of staff that formerly worked on veterans education grant programs to providing interagency liaison services.

9. If the Committee believes that the coordination duties should continue to be

supported within current staffing levels, the Governor's recommendation could be removed.

10. However, if the Committee wishes to support the recommendation, but believes a veterans interagency liaison should be supported with agency resources, it could consider supporting the position from the veterans trust fund.

ALTERNATIVES TO BILL

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation.

ALT 1	Change to Bill		Change to Base	
	Funding	Positions	Funding	Positions
GPR	\$0	0.00	\$180,600	1.00

2. Modify the Governor's recommendation by providing \$80,100 in 2007-08 and \$100,500 in 2008-09 from the veterans trust fund (SEG) rather than the general fund (GPR).

ALT 2	Change to Bill		Change to Base	
	Funding	Positions	Funding	Positions
GPR	-\$180,600	- 1.00	\$0	0.00
SEG	<u>180,600</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>180,600</u>	<u>1.00</u>
Total	\$0	0.00	\$180,600	1.00

3. Delete provision.

ALT 3	Change to Bill		Change to Base	
	Funding	Positions	Funding	Positions
GPR	-\$180,600	- 1.00	\$0	0.00

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