



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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May 2, 2007

Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #846

### **Continuation of "Mission Welcome Home" Outreach Services (DVA -- Aids to Veterans and Veterans Organizations)**

#### *Bill Agency*

[LFB 2007-09 Budget Summary: Page 585, #8]

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#### **CURRENT LAW**

The Department is required under s. 45.03(13)(j) of the statutes, to provide materials to eligible persons who administer a program to identify, train, and place volunteers at the community level to assist National Guard members, members of the U.S. armed forces, and members incorporated in the U.S. armed forces, and their spouses and dependents, who return to Wisconsin after serving on active duty about state and federal benefits for veterans and their families. Base funding for the program is \$25,000 GPR annually. The program sunsets after June 30, 2007.

#### **GOVERNOR**

Provide \$25,000 GPR annually to continue the program.

#### **DISCUSSION POINTS**

1. The Department states that funding under this program was provided for the following purposes during the 2005-07 biennium: (a) providing printed materials to returning veterans on state and federal benefits; and (b) publication of a DVA published brochure entitled "Military Families in Transition." Total expenditures were \$16,990 in 2005-06 and, to date, \$5,937 in 2006-07.

2. Under 2005 Wisconsin Act 25, the Legislature approved one-time funding of \$25,000 GPR annually for the 2005-07 biennium. The bill would provide the same amount of funding in 2007-08 and 2008-09. However, the current law language would not allow for expenditure of the revenues, since the sunset date of June 30, 2007, is maintained.

3. Currently, the statutes specify that no funds may be expended from the Mission Welcome Home annual appropriation after June 30, 2007. In addition, the statutes governing the purposes for which funding may be expended specifies that the purposes do not apply after that sunset date.

4. If the Committee wishes to approve the Governor's recommendation of providing funding on an ongoing bases (without a sunset date), a technical change to the bill should be made to delete the sunset provisions.

5. On the contrary, the Committee may wish to consider whether to continue funding for this program, since funding was initially appropriated on a one-time basis with the understanding that funding would not be provided after the 2005-07 biennium. It could be argued that the funding was designed to be one-time in nature in order for the Department to prepare materials that would be provided to returning service members, and to locate and train community ambassadors for veterans outreach activities. If the Committee believes that this one-time funding should not be continued, then it could delete the Governor's recommendation.

6. Alternatively, it could be argued that there is still a need for Mission Welcome Home services, since service members continue to serve in conflict areas in the Middle East and Afghanistan and there is still a need for information on benefits programs. Under this alternative, the Committee could choose to extend the sunset date to June 30, 2009. In conjunction with the 2009-11 budget, the Committee could review whether U.S. armed forces are continuing to serve during armed conflict periods at rates significant enough to necessitate general fund support of this program.

7. Finally, given expenditure levels in 2005-06 and in 2006-07 to date, if the Committee decides to continue the program in the 2007-09 biennium, a lower funding level may be appropriated. Based on prior expenditures funding could be established at \$17,000 GPR annually. Funding under the bill could, therefore, be reduced by \$8,000 GPR annually.

## ALTERNATIVES TO BILL

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation and specify that the sunset date of June 30, 2007, be deleted, in order to allow for expenditures for "Mission Welcome Home" on a continuing basis.

ALT 1	Change to Bill Funding	Change to Base Funding
GPR	\$0	\$50,000

2. Modify provision by specifying that funding could not be expended from the "Mission Welcome Home" appropriation after June 30, 2009.

3. In addition to Alternatives 1 or 2, reduce funding for "Mission Welcome Home" by \$8,000 GPR annually to provide \$17,000 GPR annually.

<b>ALT 3</b>	<b>Change to Bill Funding</b>	<b>Change to Base Funding</b>
GPR	-\$16,000	\$34,000

4. Delete provision.

<b>ALT 4</b>	<b>Change to Bill Funding</b>	<b>Change to Base Funding</b>
GPR	-\$50,000	\$0

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