



Jim Doyle, Governor
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STATE OF WISCONSIN, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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DATE: October 22, 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR: William Kloster, Acting Secretary; Ken Abrahamsen, OPPB Director; James Stewart, Chief Legal Counsel; Seth Perelman, Administrator; Andrew Schuster, OPA Director; Ken Black, Administrator; Micabil Diaz-Martinez, Administrator; Bill Crowley, Commandant; Gary Wistrom, Acting Commandant; Richard Zeitlin, WVM Director

FROM: Anthony Hardie, WDVA Executive Assistant

SUBJECT: October 2007 Committee on Conference Budget Bill Summary

Today, the eight-member Legislative Committee on Conference voted 7-1 to recommend passage of the budget bill agreed upon by the Governor and legislative leaders late last Friday. The bill now goes to the Assembly for a vote. Should the bill pass by a majority vote in each house, the bill will then go to the Governor.

A summary of the bill's provisions of particular interest to WDVA and Wisconsin's veterans is below. Major items include:

- Preservation of the Wisconsin G.I. Bill tuition remission program under current law—new in the last biennium—including GPR funding at the Governor's requested level of \$11.6 million;
- Expansion of the Wisconsin Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit, also new in the last biennium, that removes the current age limit, reduces the residency requirement to five continuous years of state residency, and includes totally disabled veterans determined to be Individually Unemployable (IU);
- The requested expansion of the bonding authorization for the state veterans home loan program by \$85 million;
- Expansion of direct care staffing at the King home by 15.0 FTE.
- Reduction in administrative staffing (SEG-VTF) by 7.5 FTE.

Additional summary information is below. Full text is available by clicking on the hyperlinks to the individual Legislative Fiscal Bureau summary documents. Due to the multi-agency nature of the Wisconsin G.I. Bill tuition remission program, it is listed after all other agency summaries.

As always, please feel free to contact me with for additional information.

Administration: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/2007-09budget/Conference%20Committee/doa.pdf>

Information Technology

- Item #8: Transfer \$36,500 PR and 0.5 PR position annually from the telecommunications services to state agencies and veterans services appropriation.

Division of Gaming

- Item #3: Provide tribal gaming annual funding of \$56,000 for tribal veterans service office grants, and \$75,800 annually for the American Indian veterans benefits coordinator position.

Bonding Authorization <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/2007-09budget/Conference%20Committee/bonding.pdf>

- Increase WDVA bonding authority for state veterans home loans by \$85 million
- Increase WDVA bonding authority for self-amortizing facilities by \$3.1 million

Building Commission: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/2007-09budget/Conference%20Committee/building%20commission.pdf>

- Item #2: SWAPS authority for commercial paper granted to the State.
- Item #3: Grant DOA authority to sell property without agency approval, exempting: WDVA King Home lands; DOT lands adjacent to The Highground memorial; DHFS sale of NWC land.

Building Program: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/2007-09budget/Conference%20Committee/building%20program.pdf>

- Enumerate 45-bed Assisted Living facility for WVH-King (\$7.5 million: \$2.6m PRSB; \$4.9m FED)
- Self-Amortizing Facilities: \$3.1 million bonding authority

General Fund Taxes: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/2007-09budget/Conference%20Committee/gftax.pdf>**Individual and Corporate Income Taxes**

- Item #10: Expand Wisconsin Veterans & Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit (Assembly version), effective Jan. 1, 2009. Remove current age limit, include totally disabled veterans with I.U., reduce residency requirement to 5 continuous years.
- Item #24: Provide exemption from corporate income and franchise taxes for Congressionally chartered veterans service organizations, effective Jan. 1, 2008.

General Sales and Use Tax

- Item #2: Sales Tax exemption for state veterans homes.

Health & Family Services <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/2007-09budget/Conference%20Committee/dhfs.pdf>**Medical Assistance—General**

- Item #5: BadgerCare Plus. Create references to BadgerCare Plus and services provided under BadgerCare plus in statutory sections that currently reference MA and BadgerCare, including provisions that relate to: (1) eligibility for admission to skilled nursing facilities operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs; (2)....

Medical Assistance—Long-Term Care

- Item #5: Provide \$38,786,000 (\$16,268,800 GPR and \$22,517,200 FED) in 2008-09 to increase MA nursing home rates by approximately 5% in 2008-09. Further, modify current law to specify that all revenue from the nursing home bed assessment would be deposited to the MA trust fund, beginning in 2007-08, rather than a portion also being deposited into the general fund. No special provisions for the state veterans homes.
- Item #13: Delete \$43,700 SEG annually to transfer the source of funding for the WDVA nurse stipend program from SEG-VTF to a new program revenue appropriation supported by medical

assistance payments for institutional operations at the veterans homes. The expenditure increase is budgeted under WDVA. Repeal the DHFS appropriation that supports WDVA's nurse stipend program.

Transportation: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/2007-09budget/Conference%20Committee/dot.pdf>

Local Transportation Assistance

- Item #10: Earmark \$60,000 from Local Roads Improvement Program for the improvement of a road accessing the Northern Wisconsin State Veterans Cemetery at Spooner, Washburn County, Wis. The grant shall be made to the first applicant that is eligible for the aid under the local roads improvement program that applies for the grant; prior to any allocations to the components of the discretionary grant program and in addition to any other grants or entitlements that the recipient may receive under the program. Specify that the grant shall be made notwithstanding limitations on the amount and use of aid, or eligibility requirements for receiving aid, under the local roads improvement program.

WDVA: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/2007-09budget/Conference%20Committee/dva.pdf>.

WDVA—General Agency Provisions

- Item #1: Standard Budget Adjustments
- Item #2: Debt Service Re-estimates
- Item #3: \$85 million bonding aggregate increase for state veterans home loan program
- Item #4: Reallocation of positions requested by department
- Item #5: \$690,000 SEG for document imaging
- Item #6: Feasibility studies: a) \$35,000 for Outagamie County state veterans cemetery; b) \$65,000 for study of long-term health care needs in Douglas Co., including demand & feasibility of rehabilitative care, nursing home, assisted living, with scope and methodology determined by Legislative Audit Bureau; c) \$200,000 to initiate design planning for Chippewa Falls veterans home
- Item #7: \$150,000 GPR for new veterans museum exhibit on Iraq War
- Item #8: \$143,000 GPR for veterans museum audio/lighting upgrades
- Item #9: Authority to convert 1.0 FTE marketing to 1.0 FTE curator
- Item #10: Authority to expend \$25,000 FED for state veterans cemetery operations and equipment
- Item #11: Authority for \$14,000 PR for state veterans cemetery dependent burial fees
- Item #12: Eliminate 7.5 FTE administrative positions, and \$913,800 associated funding (\$212,200 PR; \$701,600 SEG)

WDVA—Aid to Veterans and Veterans Organizations

- Item #1: Reduce VetEd funding by \$3.8 million due to cost re-estimates related to reduced demand due to implementation of WisGIBill tuition remission
- Item #2: Expand Retraining Grant funding by \$36,000 SEG
- Item #3: Technical change to federal continuing appropriation
- Item #4: Authorize expenditure of \$291,400 FED for homeless veterans facility at Chippewa Falls
- Item #5: \$125,000 GPR (2007-08, \$75,000; 2008-09; \$50,000) for PTSD services and information. Earmark \$30,000 (\$15,000/year) to the Center for Veterans Issues for PTSD outreach in Milwaukee to homeless veterans.
- Item #6: Reduce VAP funding by \$450,000 due to cost re-estimates related to contracting of facilities at King and Union Grove.

- Item #7: Provide additional \$57,000 GPR for additional number of military funeral honors stipends to veterans service organization honors details.
- Item #8: Provide \$34,000 GPR (2005-07 was \$50,000) to continue “Mission: Welcome Home” outreach.
- Item #9: Provide \$56,000 SEG-Indian Gaming to expand tribal veterans service grants to 7 grants at \$8,000 each for total of \$56,000 SEG (Indian gaming) annually (from \$34,000 SEG-Indian Gaming).
- Item #10: Authorize additional expenditures of \$55,400 SEG-VTF for CVSO grants based on re-estimates due to county population increases.
- Item #11: Amend eligibility for burial in state veterans cemeteries from “under honorable conditions” to “other than dishonorable”.
- Item #12: Authorize additional expenditures of \$192,000 SEG-VTF for Aid to Needy Veterans grant program to: (a) increase the maximum amount that may be provided to an eligible veteran for subsistence aid grants from \$2,000 to \$3,000 within any 12-month period; (b) increase the lifetime maximum for assistance to needy veterans from \$5,000 to \$7,500; and (c) delete current statutory maximums for vision, dental and hearing care for health care aid grants.
- Item #13: Provide \$165,000 GPR matching grant for refurbishment/repairs at Korean War Memorial at Plover; sunsets June 30, 2008.
- Item #14: Specify that non-resident service members that are killed in action may be buried in a state veteran's cemetery. Specify that interment costs not covered by the federal government must be provided by the estate of the decedent. If the decedent's estate is insufficient, then the family member requesting the burial must pay all remaining costs.

WDVA—Homes and Facilities for Veterans

- Item #1: Authorize PR/SEG expenditures for energy cost increases
- Item #2: Authorize PR expenditures for overtime cost increases.
- Item #3: Authorize PR expenditures for night and weekend differential cost increases.
- Item #4: Authorize \$100,000 PR expenditures for marketing of King/Union Grove homes by a contracted nurse
- Item #5: Authorize PR expenditures for supplies and services costs and projected increases.
- Item #6: Authorize 15.0 direct care positions (11.0 FTE CNAs; 4.0 FTE RNs) and associated PR funding expenditures. Note: 15.0 positions for WVH-King, “GPR” appears to be a typo instead of “PR”, since p. 308 of the document shows a total of 0.0 GPR positions for the agency.
- Item #7: Authorize PR expenditures for LTE costs and projected increases.
- Item #8: Authorize PR expenditures of \$110,000 for one-time replacement of X-Ray film processor.
- Item #9: Authorize PR expenditure of \$50,000 (\$25,000/year) for newly hired nurse training program.
- Item #10: Provide \$313,000 GPR for aid to indigent veterans program at WVH-Union Grove. Expands funding by \$104,400 in 2008-09; shifts funding to GPR from current SEG-VTF funding.
- Item #11: Authorize PR expenditures to hire above the minimum at WVH-Union Grove.
- Item #12: Authorize transfer of up to \$7 million during the biennium from Homes appropriation to the VTF, subject to Joint Finance 14-day passive review.
- Item #13: Authorize PR expenditures for the nurse stipend program; shift funding to PR from SEG-VTF (\$87,400).

Wisconsin G.I. Bill Tuition Remission:

HEAB: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/2007-09budget/Conference%20Committee/heab.pdf>

- Fully fund the program at \$11.6 million. No change to current law for eligibility, with the UWS/WTCS exceptions noted below.

UWS: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/2007-09budget/Conference%20Committee/uw.pdf>

- #21 Children – reduce entry age from 18 to 17; allow part-time study.
- #22 Spouses – additional 10-year use period commencing with youngest child reaching (or would have reached) age 18.

WTCS: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/2007-09budget/Conference%20Committee/wtcs.pdf>

- #6 Children – reduce entry age from 18 to 17; allow part-time study.
- #7 Spouses – additional 10-year use period commencing with youngest child reaching (or would have reached) age 18.
