

WISCONSIN STATE
LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE HEARING
RECORDS

1999-00

(session year)

Assembly

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on
Veterans and
Military Affairs
(AC-VMA)

Sample:

Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt01a
- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt01b
- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt02

➤ Appointments ... Appt

➤ **

➤ Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule

➤ **

➤ Committee Hearings ... CH

➤ **

➤ Committee Reports ... CR

➤ **

➤ Executive Sessions ... ES

➤ **

➤ Hearing Records ... HR

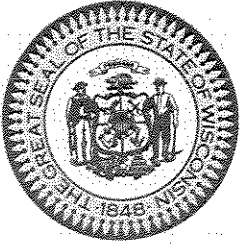
➤ **99hr_ab0582_AC-VMA_pt01**

➤ Miscellaneous ... Misc

➤ **

➤ Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

➤ **



DAVID BRANDEMUEHL

State Representative
49th Assembly District

TO: MG James Blaney, State Representative Terry Musser

FROM: State Representative David Brandemuehl *David*

DATE: March 31, 1999

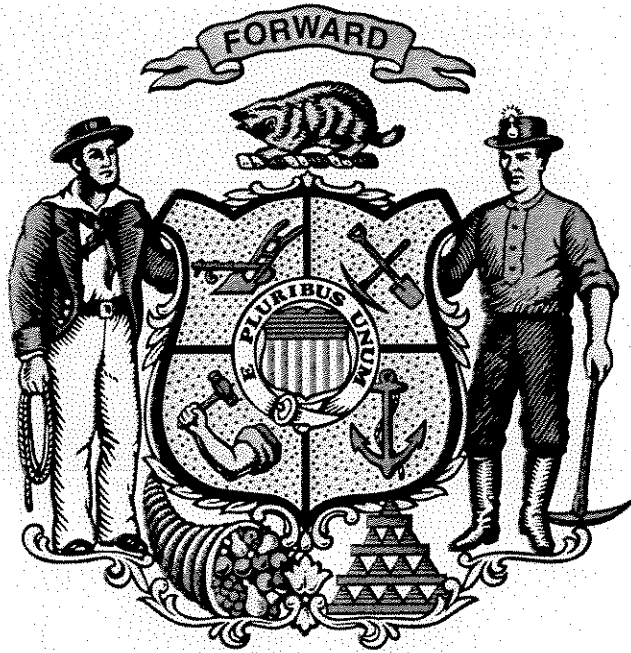
RE: Establishment of a Military Funeral Honors Program

I am exploring the feasibility of establishing a program that would provide Wisconsin veterans with military funeral honors at the time of their death.

Nationwide, an increasing number of retired military personnel and combat veterans are not afforded these honors due to the lack of manpower required to perform this function. Due to the declining number of American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars members who are able to support this activity, surviving family members are increasingly looking to National Guard and Reserve units to provide this service. Although these units do their best to fulfill these requests, they have a difficult time doing so because it is often difficult for service members to get the time off from work and because it detracts from training for their primary missions.

To address this problem, the State of Missouri last year established the Military Funeral Honors Program. Under this program, five full-time teams have been created and assigned geographic areas of responsibility statewide. It is estimated that these units will handle 3,500 funerals each year.

I feel that a similar program for Wisconsin is worthy of consideration. I would appreciate your input on this proposal. If it proves to be feasible, I will offer a budget amendment to seek the necessary funding. I look forward to discussing this issue with you in the near future.





U.S.S. Lagarto (SS-371)
(LOST) State Boat

REP. TERRY MUSSER
P. O. Box 8953
MADISON, WI
53708

Oct 25, 1999

DEAR TERRY

AS THE COMMANDER OF UNITED STATES SUBMARINE VETERANS WW11, I AM WRITING YOU ON BEHALF OF OUR MEMBERS TO ASK FOR YOUR SUPPORT FOR A BILL IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE THAT WOULD ESTABLISH A MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS PROGRAM.

IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS, THERE WILL BE APPROXIMATELY 12,000 VETERANS DEATHS ANNUALLY IN WISCONSIN. ALTHOUGH VETERANS HAVE EARNED A FINAL TRIBUTE AT THEIR FUNERALS, THE RESOURCES OF STATE VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS AND MILITARY UNITS IN WISCONSIN ARE NOT ABLE TO MEET THE INCREASED DEMAND FOR MILITARY BURIAL HONORS.

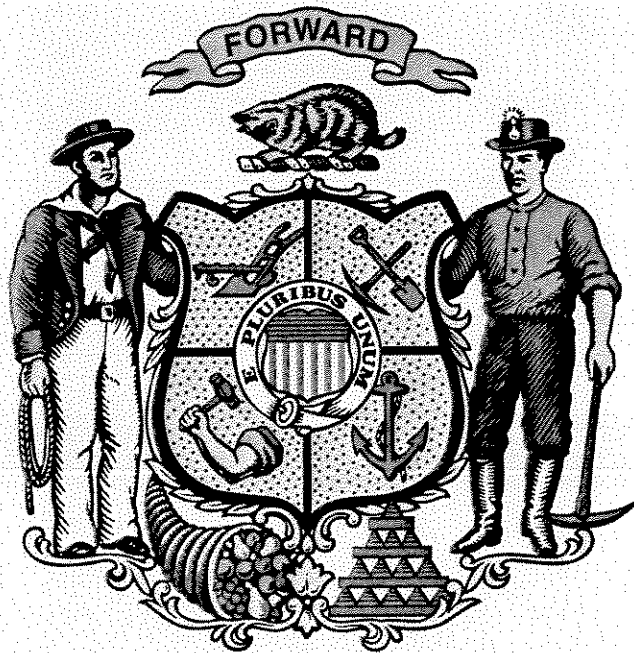
REP. DAVID BRANDEMUEHL HAS INTRODUCED LEGISLATION (LRB 3500/2) TO ESTABLISH A MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS PROGRAM, WHICH IS MODELED AFTER A VERY SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM IN MISSOURI. THE LEGISLATION WILL GIVE THE WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS THE AUTHORITY TO COORDINATE A PROGRAM THAT USES THE NATIONAL GUARD MEMBERS AND LOCAL UNITS OF STATE VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS TO PROVIDE MILITARY HONORS AT VETERANS FUNERALS. WITH THIS LEGISLATION, THE STATE ADJUTANT GENERAL WILL HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO ACTIVATE GUARD MEMBERS TO PROVIDE MILITARY HONORS AT FUNERALS, AND THE WDVA WILL BE ALLOWED TO REIMBURSE LOCAL VETERANS GROUPS UP TO \$75 PER FUNERAL.

TERRY, FOR ME, I THINK THIS IS A SMALL COST WHEN YOU THINK OF THE PRICE PAID.

I URGE YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES TO SUPPORT THIS IMPORTANT LEGISLATION FOR VETERANS. YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF VETERANS IS GREATLY APPRECIATED.

SINCERELY

ELMER J. MARX
WISCONSIN COMMANDER UNITED STATES SUBMARINE VETERANS WW11
1633 N. ULLMAN
APPLETON, WI 54911
PH 920-734-5288



»»»»»F»A»X»»»»»

DANE COUNTY
VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE
217 S. Hamilton St., Suite 401
Madison, Wisconsin 53703-3238

Telephone: 608-266-4158
FAX: 608-266-9117

DATE: Dec-1, 1999

TO: Marlene

FROM: Michael Jackson

MESSAGE:

NUMBER OF PAGES SENT, INCLUDING COVER SHEET: 5

IF ALL PAGES ARE NOT RECEIVED, CALL Vicki AT: 266-4158

Honoring Those Who Served
Information Sheet

Prepared by:
Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Personnel Support, Families and Education)

"It is our national obligation to demonstrate the country's gratitude to those who, in times of war and peace, have faithfully defended our country. The rendering of Military Funeral Honors for our nation's veterans is our final tribute to those who have made personal sacrifices in defense of our nation."

*Department of Defense Report to Congress on Military Funeral Honors for Veterans,
April 1999*

Honoring Those Who Served is the Department of Defense program for providing dignified Military Funeral Honors to veterans who have defended our Nation. While Military Funeral Honors is a long standing tradition within the Armed Forces, this program is in response to a new law governing funeral honors for eligible veterans. The Department of Defense has implemented changes to comply with the new law and has launched a series of efforts to enhance and improve the quality of Military Funeral Honors for veterans. Honoring Those Who Served represents an important step forward in honoring our Nation's veterans.

Background. Beginning in 1998, the Department of Defense has worked closely with the Veterans Service Organizations and Funeral Directors Associations to determine how best to deliver Military Funeral Honors to all eligible veterans whose families request them. This has been and will continue to be a challenging task given the significant military manpower and demographic changes that have occurred over the past decade. The end of the Cold War led to significant military force reductions. As of 1999, the active duty force level has dropped 33% -- from 2.1 million members to 1.4 million. The Nation also reduced the size of the Reserve force, from 1.2 million members to 900,000 - a 25% decrease. Today, Department of Defense deployments and commitments have created a higher operating tempo (level of activity) than before the end of the Cold War. As these force reductions were taking place, the number of veteran deaths was increasing dramatically. In 1989, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) counted 459,000 deaths. By the year 2008, the VA projects that number will increase to 620,000 annually, or an average of 1,700 funerals a day. This situation has led the Department of Defense to work with Veterans Service Organizations and Funeral Directors Associations to address the issue of Military Funeral Honors

Law. On October 5, 1999, President Clinton signed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 into law. Section 578 of the Act reflects the extensive

deliberations conducted on Military Funeral Honors over the past year. The law now includes the following:

- A basic Military Funeral Honors ceremony consisting of the folding and presentation of the flag and the playing of Taps for every eligible veteran upon request.
- A funeral honors detail to perform this ceremony shall consist of two or more uniformed members of the Armed Forces, with at least one member from the Service in which the deceased veteran served.
- Authority to reimburse members of Veterans Service Organizations and other authorized organizations for expenses when they participate with the military in the delivery of Military Funeral Honors. These individuals are covered for purposes of liability and workers compensation.
- Pays Reserve component members an allowance of \$50/day and provides retirement points, which are allowed to accrue above the annual 75 point cap, for performing honors details. Covers Reserve component members for liability and authorizes reimbursement for their travel over 50 miles.

The Department of Defense is committed to providing, upon request, a respectful, dignified Military Funeral Honors ceremony as is outlined in the law. The Military Services may provide additional elements in keeping with their military traditions.

In addition to complying with the requirements of the law, the Department of Defense has taken additional steps to further improve the delivery of Military Funeral Honors. In discussions with the Veterans Service and Funeral Directors Associations, there have been a number of suggestions on ways to improve the process of Military Funeral Honors for veterans. The Department of Defense has undertaken specific efforts to effect these improvements. The Veteran Service Organizations and Funeral Directors play an important role in this process.

Funeral Directors Kit. The Funeral Directors Associations, working with the Department of Defense, recommended the development of a kit to assist Funeral Directors in obtaining information on how to obtain Military Funeral Honors. The Department has developed such a kit and is sending it to all licensed Funeral Directors and to Veterans Service Organization headquarters. The kit contains:

- A Military Service Directory providing phone numbers for every state and county to arrange for Military Funeral Honors.
- A Military Funeral Honors Brochure which highlights the basic elements of the funeral honors ceremony, defines eligibility and contains other relevant information on Military Funeral Honors.
- A list of Frequently Asked Questions providing answers to questions families may ask Funeral Directors about Military Funeral Honors.

- An instructional brochure on how to fold the flag for families who just want a flag without the ceremonial folding and presentation.
- A Compact Disc of iTapsi for situations where the family only wants the playing of iTapsi at the burial without the funeral honors detail.

Toll Free Telephone Number. This effort focuses on making it easier to request Military Funeral Honors. The Department of Defense will establish a toll free line (1-877-MIL-HONR) for use by Funeral Directors to request honors. This system will be in operation by January 1, 2000. By using this number, Funeral Directors can reach the regional military offices to arrange for Military Funeral Honors ceremonies. The toll free line will provide Funeral Directors with a single point of contact to obtain the necessary information rather than calling various places. This will reduce the time spent by Funeral Directors to obtain the information they need to honor families' requests for Military Funeral Honors. At the recommendation of members of Veterans Service Organizations, the Department has designed the toll free number for Funeral Directors only. Family members should work with their Funeral Directors if they desire Military Funeral Honors.

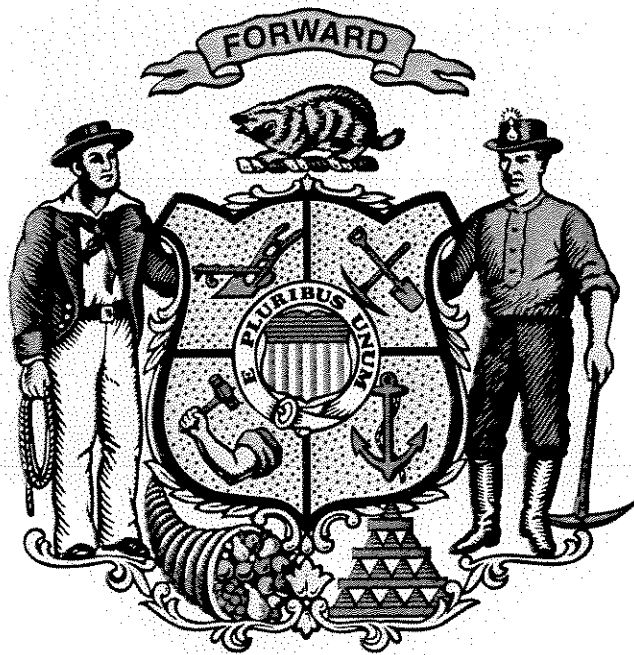
Military Funeral Honors Web Site. The final phase of the Department's improved outreach is the development of a web site. The Department of Defense web site, located at **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, will contain pertinent information for the general public and Funeral Directors about Military Funeral Honors, including a step-by-step procedure on the process to request honors. The web site will have links to other relevant web sites such as the Department of Veterans Affairs and links to current legislation on Military Funeral Honors.

Taps Compact Disc. Due to a limited number of buglers in the Military Services, a recorded version of Taps is often used. Based on feedback that some recorded versions of Taps are of poor quality, the Department of Defense arranged to record the playing of Taps at Arlington National Cemetery on Memorial Day 1999. This version of Taps will be transferred to a compact disc to ensure superior quality playback. There will be wide distribution of the Taps compact disc to include all military units, Funeral Directors and Veterans Service Organization headquarters from which their members may request copies.

Veterans Service Organization Participation. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 allows reimbursement of expenses for members of Veterans Service Organizations and other organizations who train with and participate in the delivery of Military Funeral Honors with the military. For example, an organization might augment the ceremony by providing a firing party. This voluntary assistance would be in addition to the services provided by the Military Funeral Honors detail. If there are members of an organization in the area who may have an interest in assisting in the Military Funeral Honors ceremony, they or their organization should contact their local military units.

Funeral Directors. The Funeral Directors are a key to the success of the Department's initiatives to improve the delivery of Military Funeral Honors for veterans. The Funeral Director's understanding of how to obtain the honors, use of the toll free phone system to obtain honors and awareness that only the Funeral Director should request honors, will significantly support the entire effort. The cooperation and support of the Nation's Funeral Directors in this process are essential for the successful delivery of Military Funeral Honors for those who have faithfully served their country.

The freedom this Nation cherishes is a credit to the men and women who have served in the Armed Forces. The Department's goal is to provide professional and meaningful Military Funeral Honors for every eligible veteran recognizing their contributions to this freedom and the sacrifices they and their families have made for this Nation.



DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES



Office of Tommy "T" Tradewell, State Commander
N58 W23367 Aster Dr. • Sussex, Wisconsin 53089
Phone: 262-246-4085

December 6, 1999

Dear Representative:

As the state commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I am writing you on behalf of our members to ask for your support for a bill in the State Legislature that would establish a Military Funeral Honors Program.

In the next 10 years, there will be approximately 12,000 veterans' deaths annually in Wisconsin. Although veterans have earned a final tribute at their funerals, the resources of state veterans' organizations and military units in Wisconsin are not able to meet the increased demand for military burial honors.

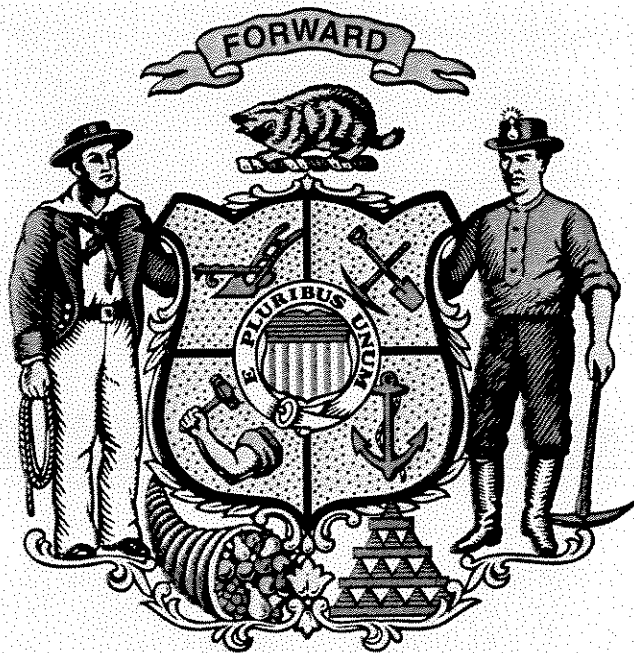
Legislative initiative (AB 582) would establish a Military Funeral Honors Program, which is modeled after a very successful program in Missouri. If enacted, then legislation will give the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs the authority to coordinate a program that uses National Guard members and local units of state veterans' organizations to provide military honors at veterans' funerals. The State Adjutant General will have the authority to activate Guard members to provide military honors at funerals, and the WDVA will reimburse the local veterans' groups up to \$50 per funeral.

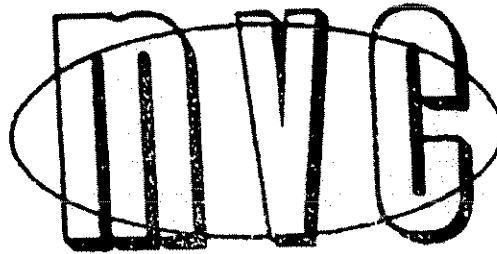
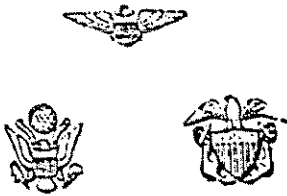
I urge you and your colleagues to support this important legislation for veterans. Your continued support of veterans is greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Tommy Tradewell".

Thomas Tradewell
State Commander
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Department of Wisconsin





Dec
1999 ?

MADISON VETERANS COUNCIL

Dear Legislator:

As President of the Madison Veterans Council, and active member of the Madison Veterans Firing Squad, I am writing on behalf of all Veterans to ask for your support for the Assembly Bill 582 (Burials Honors). The bill will establish Military Honors Program for our states Veterans.

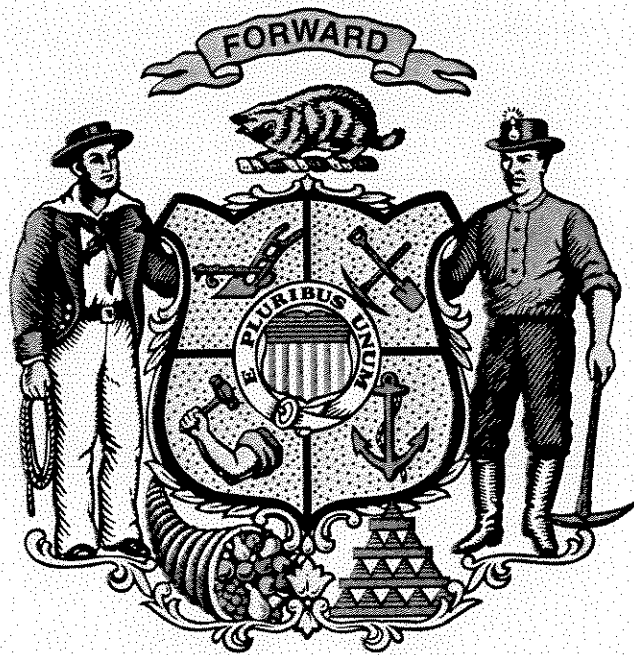
In 1999, we provided those honors for almost 300 Veterans, and as our Veterans continue to age, this number will increase. We provide this service here in Dane County and surrounding counties.

On occasion, the Firing Squad members are the only people to honor the Veteran. Our Veterans deserve that honor from their service to this Great Country.

I urge you to give support to Assembly Bill 582 to establish a Military Funeral Honors program.

Thank You


Lyla Drewes
President





Dec
2 1999

Dear Legislator:

As Legislative Director of the Disabled American Veterans, I am writing you on behalf of our members to ask for your support for a bill in the State Legislature that would establish a Military Funeral Honors Program.

KENNETH KUEHNL, JR.
LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
3326 GREEN MEADOWS LANE
RACINE, WI 53405-4707
(414) 554-0365
Fax (414) 554-0177
E-Mail: cadwell@execpc.com

In the next 10 years, there will be approximately 12,000 veterans' deaths annually in Wisconsin. Although veterans have earned a final tribute at their funerals, the resources of state veterans' organizations and military units in Wisconsin are not able to meet the increased demand for military burial honors.

AB 582

Rep. David Brandemuehl has introduced legislation (LRB 3500/3) to establish a Military Funeral Honors Program, which is modeled after a very successful program in Missouri. The legislation will give the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs the authority to coordinate a program that uses National Guard members and local units of state veterans' organizations to provide military honors at veterans' funerals. With this legislation, the State Adjutant General will have the authority to activate Guard members to provide military honors at funerals, and the WDVA will be allowed to reimburse local veterans' groups up to \$75 per funeral.

I urge you and your colleagues to support this important legislation for veterans. Your continued support of veterans is greatly appreciated.

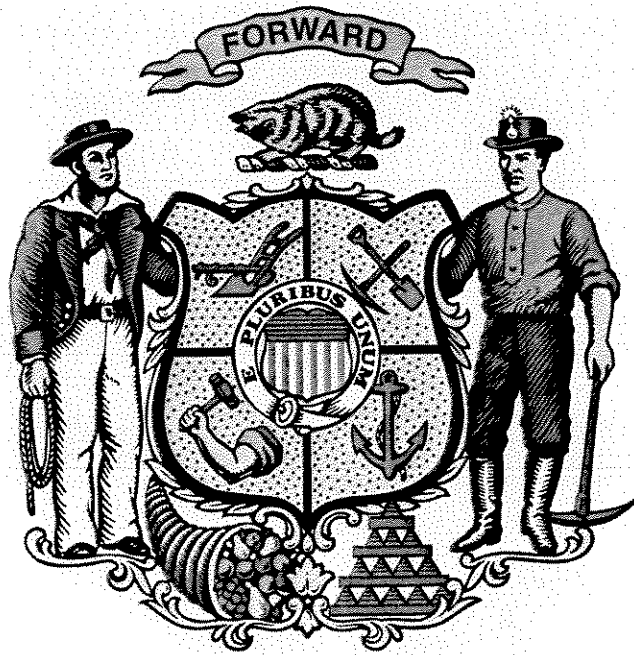
Sincerely,

Kenneth L. Kuehnl Jr.

cc: DAV - Department of Wisconsin



Chartered by an act
of Congress in 1932.
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
P.O. BOX 14301
CINCINNATI, OH 45260-0301
(606) 441-7300





KENNETH KUEHNL, JR.
LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
1326 GREEN MEADOWS LANE
RACINE, WI 53405-4707
(414) 554-0365
Fax (414) 554-0177
E-Mail: kadwell@execpc.com

January 24, 2000

Dear Veterans Affairs Committee Member:

The Disabled American Veterans Department of Wisconsin, would like to offer its strongest recommendation of support for Representative Brandemuehl's AB 582 and Senator Moen's SB 288 Military Federal Honors legislation currently under consideration by your committee.

We also support Amendment (LRB 1199) with reservation. The DAV will support the use of moneys from the Trust Fund for a one year period from May 2000 - May 2001. After these dates we feel that the funding should be done with GPR money.

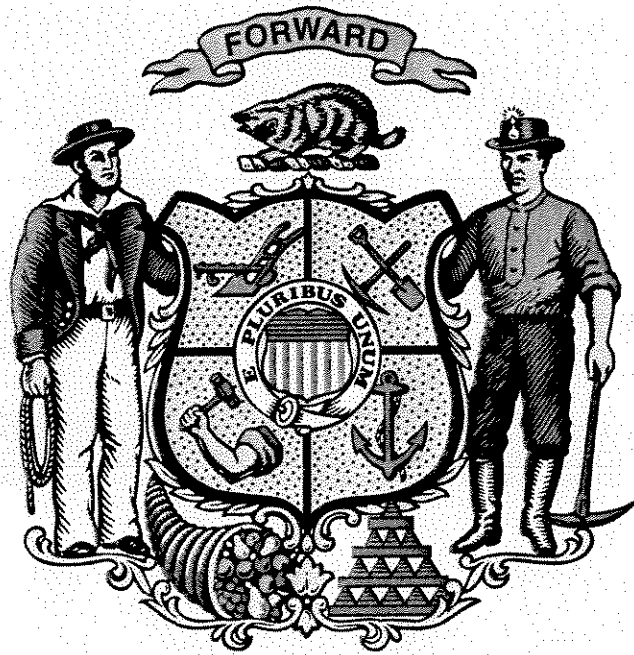
Sincerely,

Kenneth Kuehl Jr.
Legislative Director Disabled American Veterans Department of WI

cc: DAV Department of Wisconsin
Ray Boland WDVA



Chartered by an act
of Congress in 1932.
NATIONAL READING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 14301
CINCINNATI, OH 45250-0001
(502) 441-7000



DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES



Office of Tommy "T" Tradewell, State Commander
N58 W23367 Aster Dr. • Sussex, Wisconsin 53089
Phone: 262-246-4085

January 24, 2000

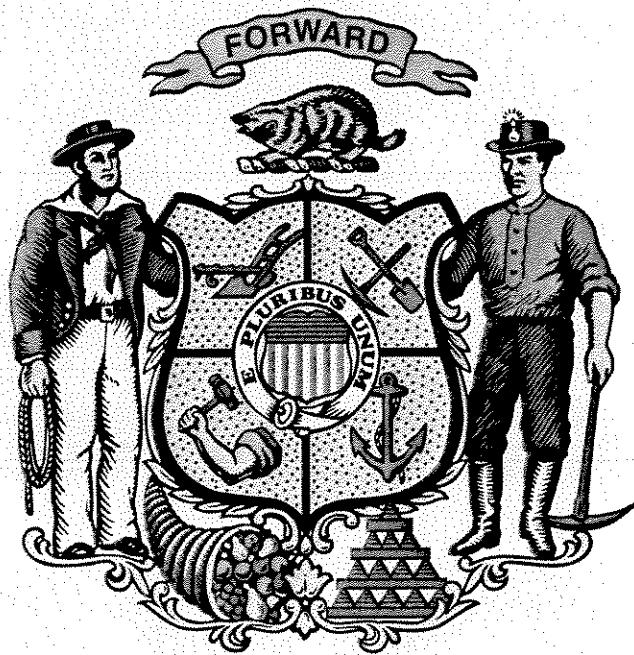
Dear Veterans Affairs Committee Members:

The State of Wisconsin Veterans of Foreign Wars would like to offer its strongest recommendation of support for Representative Brandemuehl's AB 582 and Senator Moen's SB 288 Military Funeral Honors legislation currently under consideration by your Committee. We also strongly support an Amendment (LRB 1199) by Representative Brandemuehl to form two seven member honor teams and use available funds of the Department of Veterans Affairs to support their activities.

Thank you for your support of this needed and key legislation for our veterans.

A cursive handwritten signature in dark ink.

Tommy "T" Tradewell, Commander
State of Wisconsin Veterans of Foreign Wars



DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES



Office of Lawrence K. Danielson, Adjutant/Quartermaster

P.O. Box 1623 • 214 North Hamilton Street • Madison, Wisconsin 53701-1623
Phone: 608-255-6655 • Fax: 608-255-0652 • E-mail: wivfw@madison.tds.net

January 24, 2000

Dear Veterans Affairs Committee Member,

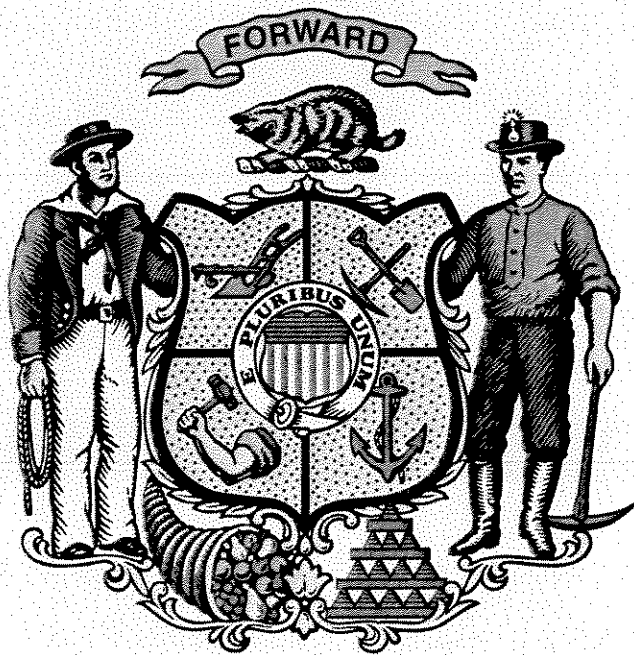
The State of Wisconsin Veterans of Foreign Wars would like to offer its strongest recommendation of support for Representative Brandemuehl's AB 582 and Senator Moen's SB 288 Military Funeral Honors legislation currently under consideration by your Committee. We also strongly support an Amendment (LRB 1199) by Representative Brandemuehl to form two seven member honor teams and use available funds of the Department of Veterans Affairs to support their activities.

Thank you for your support of this needed and key legislation for our veterans.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "L. Danielson".

Larry Danielson

Adjutant, State of Wisconsin Veterans of Foreign Wars





**Wisconsin
Funeral
Directors
Association**

A FOUNDATION OF SERVICE

January 24, 2000

Dear Veterans Affairs Committee Member,

The Wisconsin Funeral Directors Association would like to offer its strongest recommendation of support for Representative Brandemuehl's AB 582 and Senator Moen's SB 288 Military Funeral Honors legislation currently under consideration by your Committee. We also strongly support an Amendment (LRB 1199) by Representative Brandemuehl to form two seven member honor teams and use available funds of the Department of Veterans Affairs to support their activities.

Our state veterans deserve a proper final tribute to their lives of service and sacrifice. We know that this legislation will be appreciated by the veterans and their families.

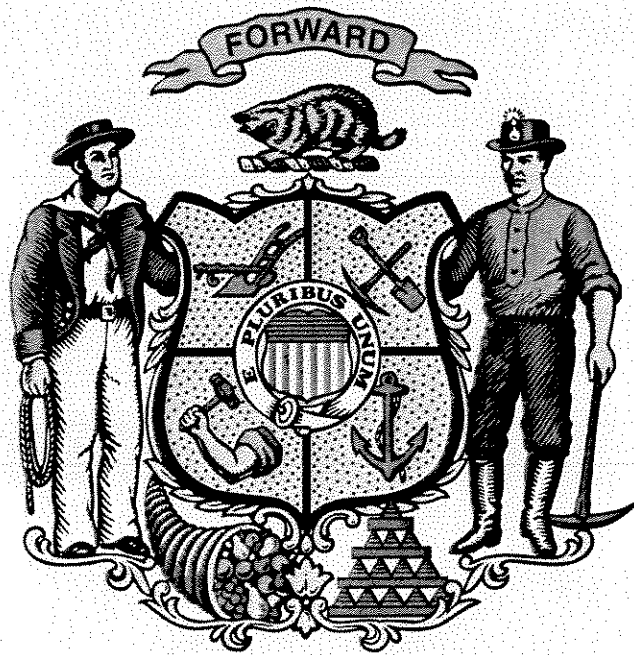
Thank you for your support for this needed and key legislation for our veterans.

Sincerely,

Mark S. Paget
Executive Director

2300 North Mayfair Road, Suite 595
Wauwatosa, WI 53226
(414) 453-3060 • FAX (414) 453-9860

One South Pinckney Street, Suite 725
Madison, WI 53703
(608) 256-1757 • FAX (608) 256-6222



WISCONSIN AMERICAN LEGION



OFFICE OF STATE ADJUTANT

STATE HEADQUARTERS
812 EAST STATE STREET (414) 271-1940
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN 53202

January 24, 2000

Dear Veterans Affairs Committee member:

The State of Wisconsin American Legion would like to offer its strongest recommendation of support for Representative Brandemuehl's AB 582 and Senator Moen's SB288 Military Funeral Honors legislation currently under consideration by your committee.

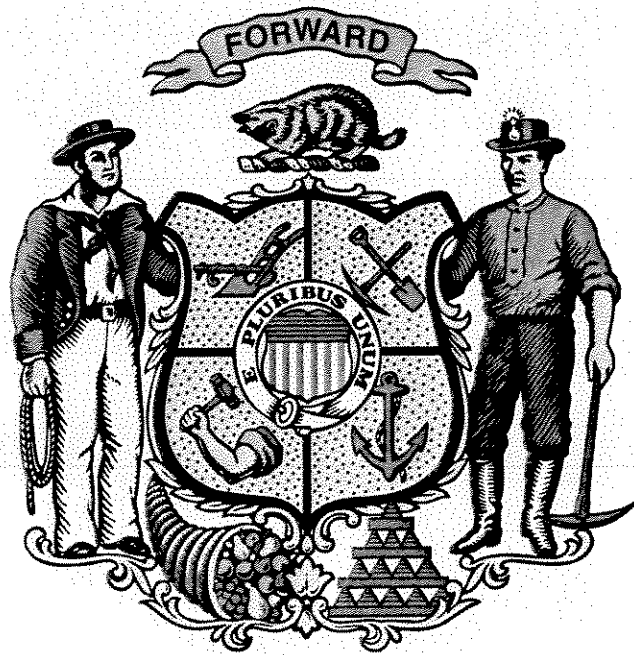
We also strongly support an Amendment (LRB 1199) by Representative Brandemuehl to form two seven member honor teams and use available funds of the Department of Veterans Affairs to support their activities.

Thank you for your support of this needed and key legislation for our veterans.

Sincerely,

ARTHUR HERBISON
State Commander

AH:bpp



*not sent
not introduced*

TO: Members, Assembly Veterans and Military Affairs Committee

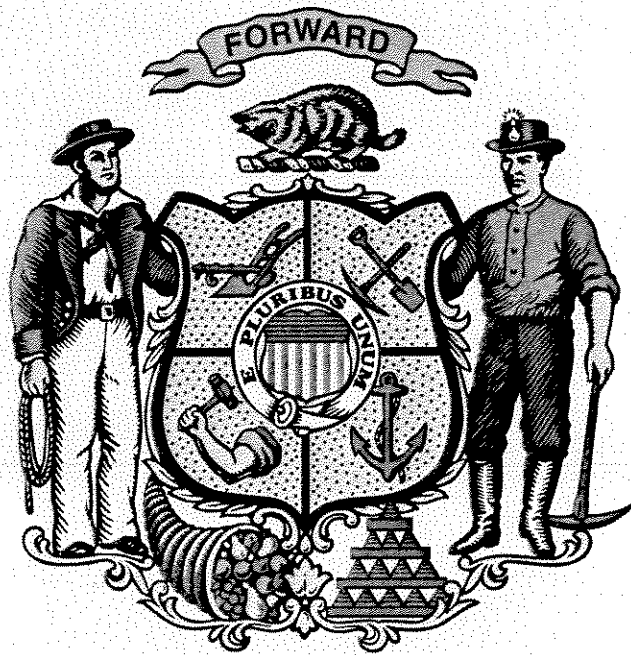
FROM: Terry Musser, Committee Chair

DATE: January 24, 2000

RE: Substitute Amendment to Assembly Bill 582
Military Honors Funerals

I am enclosing a copy of a Substitute Amendment to Assembly Bill 582, the military honors funeral legislation, which I am proposing.

The Substitute Amendment provides funding for one year using the Veterans Trust Fund. The funding is for two, seven member, teams and four staff positions in the department. It also requires the department to pay back the trust fund with interest, over a two-year period.





February . . . 2000

BACKGROUND

Currently, local veterans groups provide military honors funerals for deceased veterans on an ad hoc basis, using volunteers. Our veterans community is aging and they are the volunteers who have been providing the services for funerals. It is estimated that 42 Wisconsin veterans will die each day, 11,000 each year, over the next 15 years. It is expected that 60% of these families will be requesting military funeral honor. The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Military Affairs do not have the authority to provide military honors funerals for deceased veterans.

SUMMARY OF AB 582 (AS AMENDED BY COMMITTEE).

Assembly Bill 582 would give the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) the authority to create and coordinate a program that uses national guard members and local units of member organizations of the council on veterans programs to provide military honors funerals to deceased veterans. The Adjutant General will be given authority to activate national guard members to serve on honors details at military honors funerals for deceased veterans. The DVA will be allowed to reimburse the local units of veterans organizations for the costs, maximum of \$50 per funeral, of providing military honors funerals for deceased veterans.

AMENDMENTS

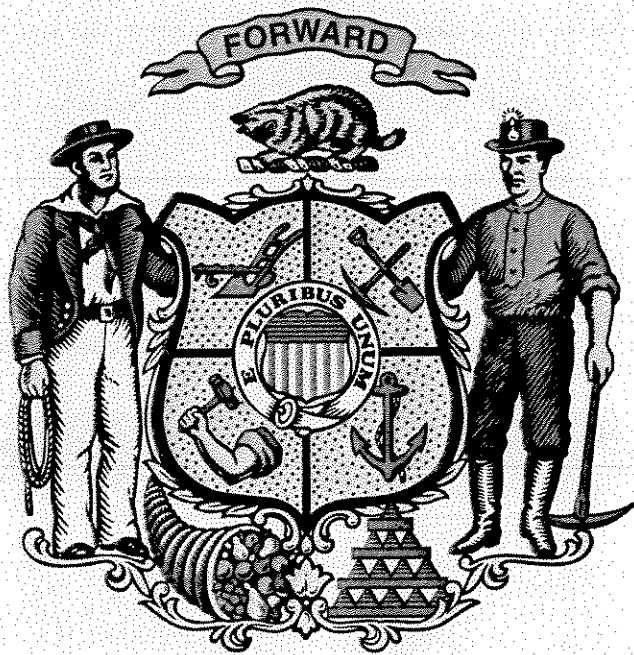
Assembly Amendment 1 to Assembly Bill 582 adopted 9-0-0 allows DVA to employ 18 full time staff. The staff will consist of two seven- member honor teams and four staff positions at the department.

FISCAL EFFECT

A fiscal estimate prepared by the Department of Veterans Affairs states that the department will be responsible for administering, coordinating, determining eligibility and conducting the military honors funerals programs to be funded by the Veterans Trust Fund. They estimate they will be responsible for 6,600 honors services annually. To implement the program and fund it for two months the estimated costs will be \$227,800. For one full year the program is estimated to cost \$633,500. The reimbursement to local veterans organizations is estimated to be \$50 for 1100 services or \$55,000.

PROS

1. The program will ensure our veterans get the proper burial honors and final tribute
2. Uses ~~fund~~ Veterans Trust Fund (SEB) and therefore
3. 15000 Cost to taxpayers



DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES



Office of Tommy "T" Tradewell, State Commander
N58 W23367 Aster Dr. • Sussex, Wisconsin 53089
Phone: 262-246-4085

February 2000

282
3692

Dear Members of the Assembly:

The Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of Wisconsin, strongly recommends that you support Assembly Bill 582, establishing a military funeral honors program in Wisconsin, offered by Representative Brandemuehl. We also support the amendment offered by the Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs to form two seven-member honor teams and use available funds from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

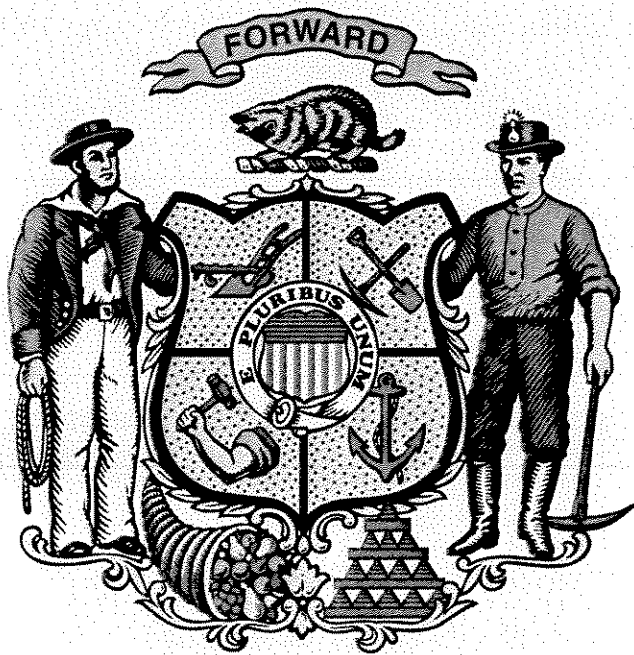
Assembly Bill 582 establishes a much-needed military funeral honors program. Over the next 15 years, Wisconsin will bury approximately 165,000 veterans, almost 42 each day. Unfortunately, due to the increasing number of veterans' deaths, many veterans' organizations simply cannot meet the growing demand for military funerals. This bill will ensure that veterans receive the final tribute they deserve.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of Wisconsin strongly urges you to pass Assembly Bill 582 as amended by committee.

Sincerely,

ITW
2
2000

Tommy "T" Tradewell, Commander
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Department of Wisconsin



February 2, 2000

*Send copy to my I
voted No*

The Honorable Terry Musser
Chair, Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Musser:

On behalf of 30,000 Wisconsin military retirees and their families as well as over 480,000 Wisconsin veterans, I urge your support in the passage of Assembly Bill 582/ Senate Bill 288 which gives the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs the authority to coordinate a program that uses national guard members, local units of member organizations of the state Council on Veterans Programs, and state employees to provide military honors at funerals of deceased veterans. The bill also allows WDVA to reimburse the local units of veterans organizations for the costs of providing military honors at funerals.

Military funeral honors became a federal statutory benefit to all veterans effective January 1, 2000 with the signing of the 2000 National Defense Authorization Act. It is projected that over the next 15 years, Wisconsin will honor 30% of its current veterans population. While this bill would assist current veterans service organizations in their efforts to honor our veterans, it also acknowledges that the members of those organizations require assistance from state assets as their age and the frequency of burial details cannot meet all the commitments which are anticipated.

Your support of AB582/SB288 will correct the inability of our nation and our state to recognize the contributions to our country's freedom of our fallen veterans.

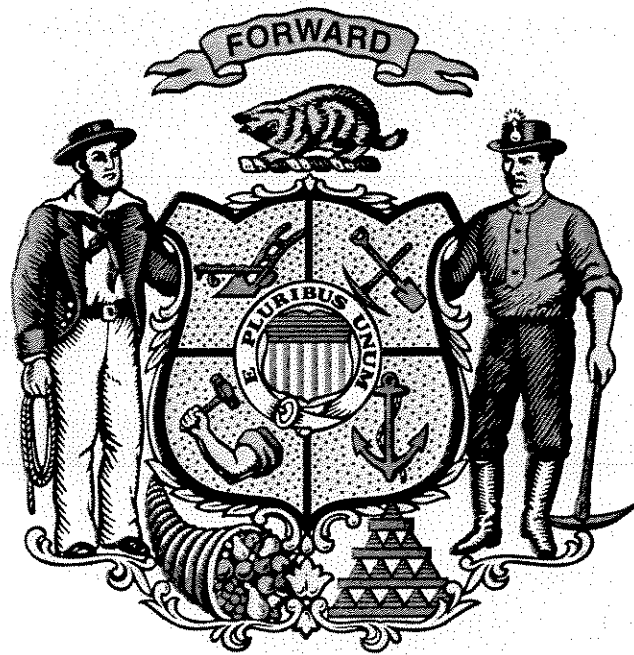
Sincerely,



Charles Markle
Major (USAF-Ret)
President
Southern Wisconsin Chapter
Retired Officers Association



SOUTHERN WISCONSIN CHAPTER
The Retired Officers Association
2130 Michigan Avenue
Sun Prairie, Wisconsin 53590-1608



State Representative

TERRY MUSSER

92nd Assembly District



Chair, Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs

February 3, 2000

Larry Danielson, Adjutant
WI VFW
214 North Hamilton Street
Madison WI 53701

Mark S. Paget, Executive Director
WI Funeral Directors Association
1 South Pinckney Street Suite 725
Madison WI 53703

Arthur Herbison, State Commander
WI American Legion
812 East State Street
Milwaukee WI 53202

Kenneth Kuehn, Jr. Legislative Director
WIDAV
1326 Green Meadows Lane
Racine WI 53405

Dear Gentlemen:

Thank you for your letter of support for Assembly Bill 582 and Senate Bill 288, the military funerals honors legislation.

As you know, the Assembly Veterans & Military Affairs Committee, of which I am the Chair, recommended Assembly Bill 582 as amended for passage on an 8 - 1 vote.

However, I voted in opposition to the bill when the committee voted. I fully support the final tribute to our veterans, but I cannot in good faith support the funding source. If this is our state's final tribute to the veteran, general tax dollars should be used - not veterans' money from the Veterans Trust Fund.

It took us many years to finally get the Veterans Museum to be funded by general tax dollars. I feel the use of Veterans Trust Fund dollars for the "Honors Program" is a step backward.

Next session, I will do all I can to get the proper funding for this great program - General Purpose Revenue (GPR) - not the Veterans Trust Fund.

Sincerely,

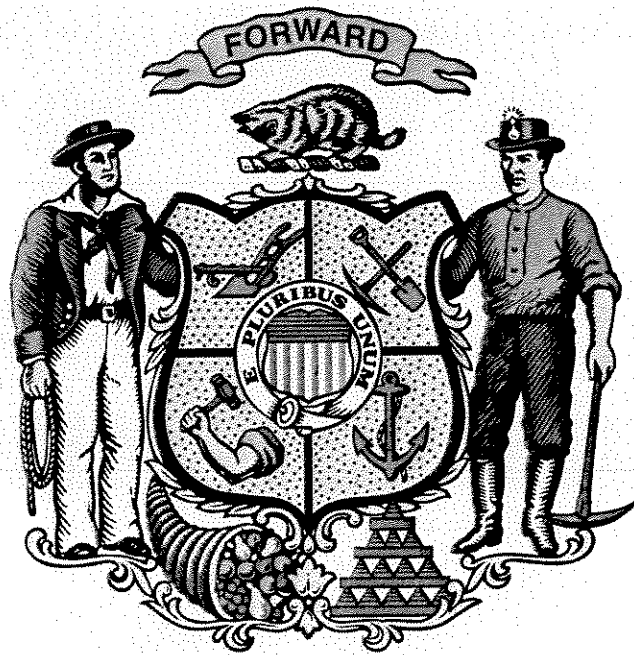
Terry Musser, Assembly Chair
Veterans & Military Affairs Committee

CC Secretary Ray Boland, Senator Rod Moen, Representatives Jensen, Foti, Freese,
Vrakas, Ladwig, M. Lehman & Grothman

Madison Office: PO Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708 608-266-7461 Toll Free: 1-888-534-0092
Fax: 608-282-3692 E-Mail: rep.musser@legis.state.wi.us

District Office: W13550 Murray Road, Black River Falls, WI 54615

608-488-2955





February 8, 2000

BACKGROUND

A ceremony of military honors, at the burial of eligible veterans who have served in war or peace, consist of a minimum of folding and presenting the American flag to the next of kin and the playing of Taps. Often a firing squad will perform a gun salute. Currently, local veterans groups provide these services for deceased veterans on an ad hoc basis, using volunteers. Our veterans community is aging, and they are the volunteers who have been providing the services at burials. It is estimated that 42 Wisconsin veterans will die each day, 11,000 each year, over the next 15 years. It is expected that 60% of these families will be requesting military funeral honors services. Currently, the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Military Affairs do not have the authority to provide military honors funerals for deceased veterans.

SUMMARY OF AB 582 (AS AMENDED BY COMMITTEE).

Assembly Bill 582 would give the WI Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) the authority to create and coordinate a program that uses National Guard members and local units of member organizations of the council on veterans programs to provide military honors funerals to deceased veterans. The Adjutant General, Department of Military Affairs, will be given authority to activate National Guard members to serve on honors details at military honors funerals for deceased veterans. The DVA will be allowed to reimburse the local units of veterans organizations for the costs, maximum of \$50 per funeral, of providing military honors funerals for deceased veterans.

AMENDMENT

Assembly Amendment 1 to Assembly Bill 582 adopted 9-0-0 allows DVA to employ 18 FTE staff. The staff will consist of two seven-member honor teams and four staff positions at the department.

FISCAL EFFECT

A fiscal estimate prepared by the Department of Veterans Affairs states that the department will be responsible for administering, coordinating, determining eligibility and conducting the military honors funerals programs. Administering the program will require 18 FTE staff. It will be funded, \$688,500, by the Veterans Trust Fund (SEG) which is veteran supported. They estimate they will be responsible for 6,600 honors services annually. To implement the program and fund it for two months the estimated costs will be \$227,800. For one full year the program is estimated to cost \$633,500. The reimbursement to local veterans organizations is estimated to be \$50 for 1100 services, or \$55,000.

PROS

1. The program will ensure our veterans get the proper final tribute and burial honors.
2. This will not cost the taxpayers as the funding source is the Veterans Trust Fund (SEG).

CONS

1. If the state is to pay final tribute to our veteran, GPR should be the funding source.
2. The program will have to be renewed by July 1, 2001.

SUPPORTERS

Rep. David Brandemuehl, author, Senator Rod Moen, co-author, Sec. Ray Boland, DVA, MG James Blaney, WDMA, Connie Ryan, WI Funeral Homes Directors Assoc., Arthur Herbison, WI American Legion Commander, Lyla Drewes, Madison Veterans Council, John Kusenberger, Rock Co. VSO, LTC (R) Tom Christianson, Harlan Grove, Am. Legion Post 333, David Deane, American Legion, John Scocos, Bill Byrne, Ron Weiss, Bonnie Moser, WING Enlisted Assoc., John Hahn, Patrick Fuller, Ken Grant, Army National Guard, LTC Terry McArdle, WI DMA, Bill Klostner, Deborah Rice, United Women Veterans, Ralph Shannon, Madison Veterans Firing Squad, Larry Danielson, WI VFW, Dale Hundt, VFW Member, Larry Olson, WDMA, Dan Schmitz, DAV and Gale Chase, American Legion.

OPPOSITION

None

HISTORY

Assembly Bill 582 was introduced on November 5, 1999 and referred to the Assembly Committee on Veterans & Military Affairs. A public hearing was held on December 8, 1999. On January 25, 2000, the Committee voted 8-1-0 [Rep. Terry Musser voting no] to recommend passage of AB 582 as amended.

CONTACT: Marlene Reineking, Office of Rep. Terry Musser