



JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senate Bill 544

February 12, 2014

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today on Senate Bill 544. I have authored this bill, along with Representative Kevin Petersen, at the request of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. I would like to thank Representative Petersen in particular for the research and work he has put into this bill to bring it to this point.

As many of you know, the Veterans Home at King is a state-operated facility for Wisconsin veterans and their spouses. From its original enrollment of 50 members in 1887, King has grown to a community of over 700 members. With four separately licensed nursing homes, it is one of the largest and most independent skilled long-term care facilities in the country. In addition, King has a chapel and an activity center that contains a post office, theater, bowling alley, museum, and library.

The bill before us today would accelerate the site preparation and construction of a new building, the John R. Moses Skilled Nursing Facility, at the Veterans Home at King. The project will authorize the replacement of 200 beds at King at a cost of \$80 million. Thirty-five percent of the cost, or \$28 million, will be financed by general fund supported bonding, with the remaining sixty-five percent, or \$52 million, matched by the federal government.

Two older buildings – Burns-Clemens Hall (built in 1959) and Ove Hall (1929) will be demolished, providing the area needed to build the new skilled nursing care facility. Both buildings have significant structural issues and/or water damage that would require extensive repair.

Once completed, residents of Stordock Hall (1968) will be relocated to the Moses facility. Because long-term care delivery and technology has changed greatly over the years, providing quality care is becoming more and more difficult to our members in the old, outdated facility. The new 200-bed replacement skilled nursing facility accords the state the means to fulfill its mission of caring for our veterans.

Of course, my testimony would not be complete without speaking briefly on John R. Moses himself. A combat veteran of World War II, Moses saw action in both the Pacific and European theaters before being severely wounded on the German front. He was hospitalized for 13 months before retiring from service as a first lieutenant in December 1945. After practicing law for a number of years, Moses was appointed by Governor Gaylord Nelson as director and then secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, serving from November 1961 to October 1982. During this time, he directed the conversion of the Wisconsin Veterans Home from an old soldiers' home to one of the largest skilled nursing care facilities for veterans in the nation. It is a fitting honor then to bestow John Moses' name on this facility for all he has done to benefit the Wisconsin Veterans Home.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

29TH SENATE DISTRICT



KEVIN PETERSEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Chairman Petrowski and honorable members of the Committee on Transportation, Public Safety, and Veterans and Military Affairs;

Thank you for holding a hearing today on Senate Bill 544 – relating to: an addition to the 2013-15 Authorized State Building Program.

As per the analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau; Senate Bill 544 amends the 2013–15 Authorized State Building Program to add one project for the Department of Veterans Affairs. The project involves the construction of the John R. Moses Skilled Nursing Facility at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King. The project is financed with \$52,000,000 in program revenue supported borrowing and \$28,000,000 in general fund supported borrowing.

As the following quotes demonstrate; Senate Bill 544 has bi-partisan support in both the Senate and the Assembly.

Rep. Petersen

"Veterans - we cannot; we will not, we must not forget who they are. For they reflect America. Whether we welcome them back to civilian life upon leaving the military or we ensure their comfort in their waning years, we have an obligation to those who have risked their all for all of us".

Rep. Hesselbein

"It is our obligation to treat our veterans in a manner that retains dignity, compassion and comfort when they most need this level of long-term care."

Sen. Petrowski

"Despite ongoing controversy at the federal level over military service members and veterans benefits, I am proud that Wisconsin has continually made veterans a priority. This bill reaffirms our commitment to our heroes who have sacrificed so much for the freedoms we enjoy today."

Sen. Carpenter

"We will continue to fight to improve the lives of those who are serving, and have served in our armed forces. They have served us, and we are honor-bound to work to acknowledge their sacrifice with our actions."

The Veterans Home at King is a state operated facility for Wisconsin veterans and their spouses. Building and maintenance for the campus is a 65% - 35% split between the federal and state government.

Every named hall at King honors a veteran with Wisconsin ties. Appointed by Governor Gaylord Nelson, John R. Moses served as Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veteran Affairs from 1962 until he retired in 1982. During his tenure, Secretary Moses led the revitalization of King.

From its original enrollment of 50 members in 1887, King has grown to a community of over 700 members. With four separately licensed nursing homes, it is one of the largest and most independent skilled long-term care facilities in the United States. King also has a chapel and an activity center that contains a post office, theatre, bowling alley, museum, and library.

Two older buildings – Burns-Clemens Hall (circa 1959) and Ove Hall (circa 1929) will be demolished, providing the area needed to build the new skilled nursing care facility. Both buildings have significant structural issues and/or water damage that would require extensive repair.

Once completed, residents of Stordock Hall (circa 1968) will be relocated to Moses Hall. Because long-term care delivery and technology has changed greatly over the years, providing quality care is becoming more and more difficult to our members in the older outdated facility. The new 200-bed replacement skilled nursing facility accords the state the means to fulfill its mission of caring for our veterans.

Moses Hall will adhere to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) parameters for new construction. According to the USDVA; residents should be housed in a home-like environment serving the long-term care needs of veterans and their eligible dependents.

By definition, a “homelike concept” means Moses Hall will consist of living arrangements with 8 – 12 members in small living units i.e. “households.” Each household will consist of personal living rooms and dining areas vs. an “institutional design” with massive dining rooms and long hallways.

Furthermore, Moses Hall will address life safety issues for members experiencing dementia. Currently, members with dementia are housed on Ainsworth Hall’s 2nd floor. An emergency requiring evacuation could render these members

vulnerable. Moses Hall would follow industry standards in housing dementia patients on the ground floor.

Generation after generation of veterans risked their lives, giving all of us the opportunity to live our lives as we choose. Moses Hall will continue King's exceptional tradition of ensuring our heroes live their final years protected in comfort and dignity.



Military Order of the Purple Heart
Department of Wisconsin



Fuzz Spangler
WI MOPH Department Commander
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February 12, 2014

**Honorable Senator Petrowski & Members of the Senate Committee on
Transportation, Public Safety, and Veterans and Military Affairs;**

I am unable to attend the public hearing you today on SB 544. I have thus asked our State Legislative Officer, Jason Johns, to read you the following statement from me:

Many of our members, who suffered injury at the hand of the enemy, unfortunately find themselves needing skilled nursing care sooner in their lives than their civilian counterparts, or even their fellow non-combat wounded veterans for that matter. We are very excited at the potential of the John R. Moses Skilled Nursing Facility being constructed to provide a place for our members to live at while receiving top -notch health care and a sense of community with their fellow veterans.

On behalf of the Military Order of the Purple Heart of Wisconsin I wish to express our gratitude on your hearing of this legislation today and thank Senator Petrowski for his authorship of the bill.

Best regards,

Fuzz



FULFILLING OUR PROMISES
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED

Department of Wisconsin

*STATEMENT OF
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DAV WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
ON BEHALF OF
SENATE BILL 544
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, PUBLIC SAFETY AND
VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
WISCONSIN STATE SENATE
FEBRUARY 12, 2014*

Chairman Petrowski, Ranking Member Carpenter, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Wisconsin DAV (Disabled American Veterans) and our 16,000 members, all of whom are wartime wounded and injured veterans, I am pleased to present our views on Senate Bill 544 (SB 544) which amends the 2013-2015 Authorized State Building Program for the construction of the John R. Moses Skilled Nursing Facility at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King.

The construction project will be financed by \$52 million in program revenue supported borrowing and \$28 million in general fund supported borrowing. Wisconsin DAV recognizes the total project cost of \$80 million is only a down payment towards the construction cost of the entire project.

Under Title 38, United States Code, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is authorized to make aid payments to States that maintain State Veterans Homes and to make grants to States for their construction and major improvements. It is our understanding, under Title 38, the State of Wisconsin will pay approximately 1/3rd of the entire construction cost and the federal government will pay the balance.

Wisconsin DAV recognizes the growing long-term health care needs for veterans. In our opinion, the John R. Moses Skilled Nursing Facility at the Wisconsin Veterans Homes at King will serve a vital purpose in meeting the health care needs of veterans.

SB 544 certainly supports the statements espoused by most in the legislature and many in the public. We do feel supporting veterans is more than a feel-good sentiment. As DAV State Commander Rodney Helgeson, Sr. so eloquently stated in his endorsement of SB 544:

“Historically, Wisconsin’s Veterans Homes have provided quality programs and services to deserving veterans. Since DAV has always been a strong proponent of sufficient funding for construction projects at the Wisconsin Veterans Homes which offer necessary services to these veterans, we strongly support SB 544 and urge swift passage.”

DAV appreciates the opportunity to submit our views on Senate Bill 544. This concludes my testimony, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to answer any questions related to my statement and the views I have expressed on behalf of DAV.

DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES



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February 12, 2014

**Chairman Petrowski & Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on
Transportation, Public Safety, and Veterans and Military Affairs;**

Due to a prior scheduling conflict I am unable to attend the hearing today but have asked our State Legislative Committee Chair Jason Johns to relay the following statement to you:

“SB 544 is common sense legislation that expedites the construction of the John R. Moses Skilled Nursing Facility for the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King. There is an overwhelming demand by our states’ veterans for additional skilled nursing care, often resulting in waiting lists at our veterans’ homes. SB 544 will help the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and the Veterans of Foreign Wars assure that our members have a place to go for quality care surrounded by the support and camaraderie of their brothers and sisters-in arms.”

The Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of Wisconsin asks for your support of SB 544 and looks forward to the groundbreaking of the John R. Moses Skilled Nursing Facility in the very near future.

Renee Simpson


Commander
Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of Wisconsin