

ANDRÉ JACQUE

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TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Military & Veterans Affairs

FROM: Rep. André Jacque

DATE: Nov. 16, 2017

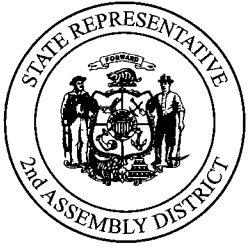
RE: Assembly Bill 436

Chairman Skowronski and Members of the Assembly Committee on Military & Veterans Affairs,

Thank you for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill 436, bi-partisan legislation which will expand eligibility for veterans with very significant, service connected disabilities and their unremarried surviving spouses to be able to claim the Wisconsin Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit. The concept here is simple. Currently, a veteran must have a service-connected disability rating of 100 percent. Under AB 436, a veteran or their unremarried surviving spouse may claim the credit if the veteran's service-connected disability rating is at least 70 percent. Under this legislation, the maximum credit that a claimant may claim is multiplied by the percentage of the claimant's service-connected disability rating (i.e. a veteran with a 70% service-connected disability rating may claim a 70% property tax credit).

The Wisconsin Disabled Veterans & Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit provides eligible veterans and unremarried, surviving spouses a refundable property tax credit for their primary, in-state residence and up to one acre of land. The veteran would have had to been a resident of Wisconsin at the time of death for an unremarried spouse to qualify for the benefit, and the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs verifies the veteran's eligibility for the program. The credit is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue through the state income tax return. Claimants who choose to receive the Disabled Veteran credit are unable to receive the WI Renters and Homeowners Property Tax Credit. These elements all remain unchanged under AB 436.

According to the Department of Revenue, this legislation would be expected to increase the number of claimants of the credit by approximately 3,300 disabled veterans. While it is true that under AB 436 there would be a not-insignificant reduction in the amount of taxes collected from Wisconsin's disabled veterans who have suffered very significant handicaps as a direct result of their service to our country, it is thoroughly appropriate, and in line with previous state commitments to care for our veterans, that our veterans with serious service-connected disabilities who may fall just short of a 100% rating should still qualify for significant property tax relief on at least a



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prorated basis and be able to stay in the homes and communities here in Wisconsin that they contribute and have contributed so much toward.

When they deployed, our veterans wrote out a blank check with their lives to defend our freedom, and we will never be able to fully repay them. Of course, many never came back and many more struggle with compromised health as a result of their service. We owe it to all of our veterans to continue to find ways to invest in helping those wounded dealing with bills on fixed incomes trying just to stay in stay in their homes, dealing with being underemployed or unemployable as a result of their disability, and frequently dealing with a loss of household income as well because of a disabled veteran's spouse leaving their job or reducing hours to care for their loved one.

This legislation is a common sense way to better meet our ongoing commitment to those who have sacrificed and suffered hardship for us. Thank you for your consideration of Assembly Bill 436.

Tax benefit for Wisconsin's disabled veterans could increase eligibility

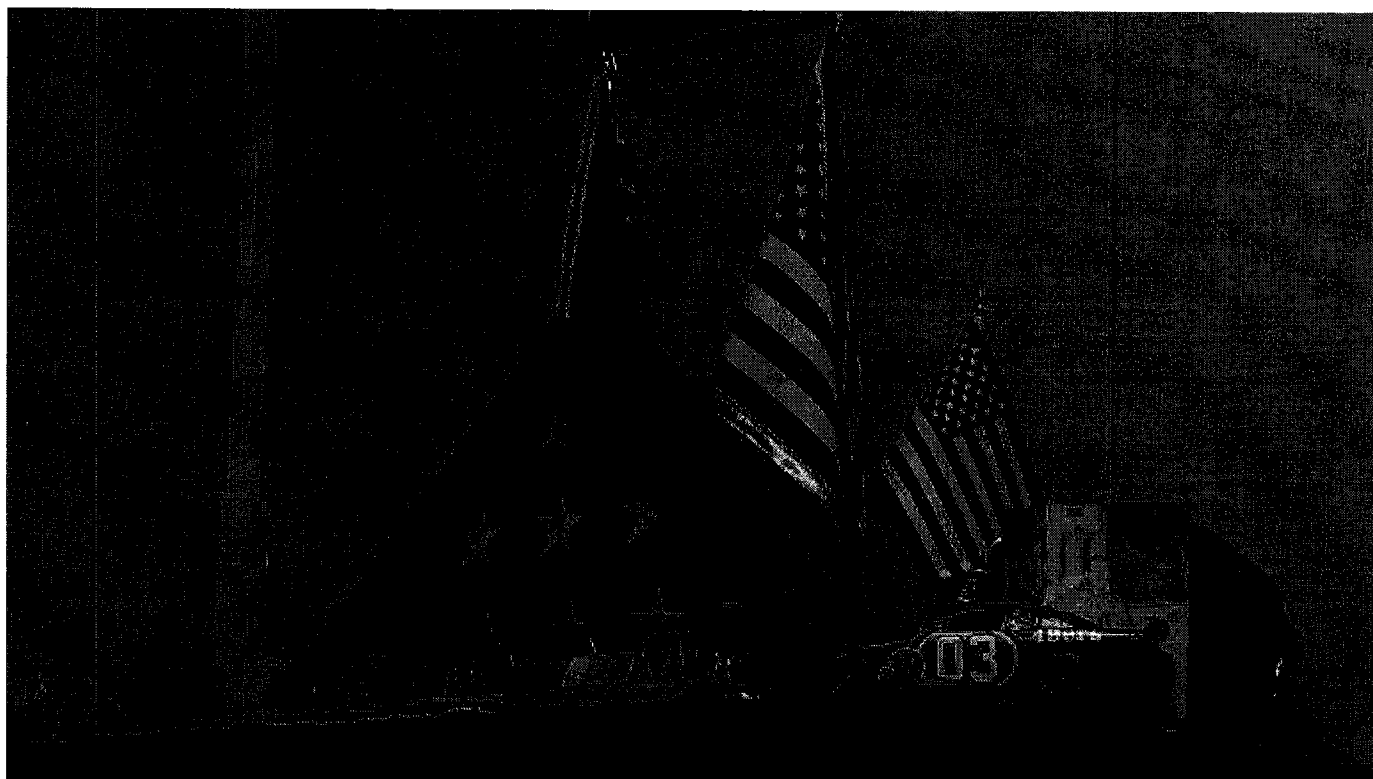
By Brooke Schwieters |

Posted: Mon 6:45 PM, Jun 12, 2017 |

Updated: Mon 7:55 PM, Jun 12, 2017



EAU CLAIRE, Wis. (WEAU) -- Wisconsin lawmakers are looking to heavily increase a tax credit that many disabled veterans benefit from each year.



Currently, only veterans who have 100 percent service-connected disabilities and their surviving spouses are eligible for this property tax benefit, but lawmakers are looking to change that.

The new legislative proposal would differ from the current program in that disabled veterans with a minimum of 70 percent service-connected disabilities would be included in the tax credit, saving more vets more money.

"It will definitely save veterans money. Property taxes are quite substantial in the state of Wisconsin, and with this new law coming out it will allow more veterans to use this benefit," says Beth Risen, Administrative Specialist for Eau Claire Veteran Services.

Lead author of the proposal, State Representative André Jacque says the idea came to him at an AMVET State Convention, talking to disabled veterans from around the state.

"Talking as well to county veteran service officers, they certainly see the need in terms of the veterans they are dealing with," Jacque says. "[There are] significant challenges they face in terms of being employed, maintaining care and staying in communities."

The proposed legislation would increase the number of disabled veterans receiving the property tax benefit; something that many community members are saying is well deserved.

"Veterans deserve any benefit available to them out there because they sacrifice so much for our country and they do have a lot of struggles when they return," Risen says. "This is just one way of helping them and thanking them for their service."

According to the Department of Revenue, this legislation would be expected to increase the number of claimants by 3,300, at a total cost of \$5.6 million.



MIKE KORGER - PRESIDENT
VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
CHAPTER #5
P.O. BOX 832
EAU CLAIRE, WI 54702-0832

November 1, 2017

Dear Governor Scott Walker, State Senators & Representatives:

Thank you for helping make Wisconsin an even better place to live for us & our children! We need your help for deserving Veterans & their loved ones.
please help pass assembly bill 436 into law as soon as possible. this bill would reimburse 70 to 90% service-connected Veterans with their property taxes.
It would be great if you can help provide inspiration & leadership into getting a committee hearing & passage for AB436 during this Veterans Day season! Since you are in session only Tuesday, October 31st & Tuesday, November 7- your input is needed now!

If there seems to be difficulty - perhaps a Senate Companion Bill could be introduced -? Please help make sure there is a AB 436 committee hearing soon, which we like to attend if possible.

Please respond to each of us. God Bless You, your Staff & family's.

Mike Korgor PRES

Roy Schutte

Member of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 5

Joe Neal

Ralph Othum
Beggy Othum

Bob Mc Robert

Sally Johnson

Eric Johnson

Mike Smith Mike Smith 1704 OMAHA ST / EAU CLAIRE WI 54703

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Kristina Yaffe MUVIA

Dick Quick

Nanda A. Hill

AUER

November 6, 2017

Curtis Ackley
Chairman
Veterans Empowerment Resource Command (VERC)
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Watchdogom60@yahoo.com

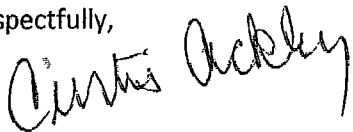
JoCasta Zamarripa
Assembly District 8
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear JoCasta Zamarripa:

Veterans are very thankful for all your hard work and dedication. Thank you for helping make Wisconsin an even better place to live for us and our children. We appreciate the recent efforts made to move AB 436 to a public hearing on November 16th at 9:30 am. We look forward to attending the hearing and giving testimony. This bill would provide much needed aid to disabled veterans by reducing the eligibility threshold to claim the "veterans and surviving spouse's property tax credit".

We respectfully request the Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs take an executive vote on the matter to vote it out of their committee immediately. We question the \$8 million Fiscal Note. The Legislative Fiscal Bureau should lower the estimated cost to only \$4 million because many of the 70% to 90% service-connected disabled veterans do not own their home but rent and therefore pay no property tax to take advantage of this credit.

Very Respectfully,



Curtis Ackley
Chairman Veterans Empowerment Resource Command (VERC)

Inspiring Veterans and their loved ones to,

"Discover Hidden Resources and Harness Unlimited Potential!"

"Giving 110%" to Empower 100% Service-connected disabled veterans"



Photography by William Boyea

November 7, 2017

Dear Wisconsin Lawmakers,

Thank you for your countless hours of sincere dedication to serve the citizens of Wisconsin. Your support and leadership is requested for these initiatives:

1) AB467 was previously introduced in the 2015-2016 Wis. Legislative Session. It named US Hwy 8, "The Mideast Conflict Highway", dedicated to all those who have, are or will serve there. This also recognizes the over 6,000 lives lost in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Global War on Terrorism. 2,9977 were murdered on 9/11/01. Also depicted in this Legislation was, "The Biker Appreciation Highway", US Hwy 45. We in Wisconsin have more amazing motorcycle related facts and feats than most other states combined. Most people, including bikers are unaware of these outstanding accomplishments. The Living Heritage Legacy Tribute depicts historic, cultural, ethnic and religious heritage with bikers as the common denominator. Planned are 50 4x8 ft. double-sided signs, of which 27 are complete. See Facebook.

2) Current AB-436, which reimburses real estate taxes for 70,80 and 90% Service-connected disabled Veterans needs your help. A Public Hearing has been scheduled for Thursday, November 16, 2017. Please consider adding your name as an author or sponsor of this important legislation.

3) Your input is needed during the 115th Anniversary in 2018 of the Harley-Davidson Motorcycle Company. Your positive feedback can help assure that major recognition is achieved for: ABATE of Wisconsin, the Wis. Harley-Davidson Dealers Assoc. and Wis Harley Owners Group.

They are being recommended for major motorcycle Museums & Hall of Fame status at the: American Motorcycle Association Museum/Pickering, Ohio; National Motorcycle Museum/Anamosa, Iowa; Sturgis Motorcycle Museum Hall of Fame/South Dakota and Wheels Thru Time/North Carolina.

Letters of support that depicts positive interaction or constructive feedback would be appreciated. Please feel free to forward to these four museums. Wheels of Liberty could also send the letters on as appropriate.

Wheels of Liberty gives free motorcycle rides. We allow individuals to drive our three-wheeled motorcycles in parking lots. "Anyone who can drive a lawnmower or car – can drive a three-wheeler!"

We provide complementary Apache Tears (obsidian) and Stones from the Crazy Horse Monument, Black Hills/South Dakota. This is an excellent opportunity for adventure and challenge for lawmakers, staff and your constituents.

Your response to these 3 topic areas would be greatly appreciated. Thanks again for all you do!
God Bless You!

Dave Zien
former State Senator

Million Mile Motorcycle Man

1716 63rd St., Eau Claire, WI 54703 715-829-9436 davezien@gmail.com



FULFILLING OUR PROMISES
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED

Department of Wisconsin

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
AL LABELLE
DAV WISCONSIN BENEFITS PROTECTION TEAM LEADER
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY
NOVEMBER 16, 2017**

Chairman Skowronski, Ranking Member Hesselbein and Members of the Committee:

Good morning! Thank you for allowing DAV (Disabled American Veterans) this opportunity to present our view on Assembly Bill 436 (AB 436) Relating to: *reducing the eligibility threshold to claim the veterans and surviving spouses property tax credit.*

As you may know, DAV is a non-profit veterans service organization (VSO) comprised of nearly 1.3 million wartime service-disabled veterans, nationwide. In Wisconsin, we have well over 15,000 members. DAV was founded in 1920 and congressionally chartered in 1932.

Each year, DAV helps more than 1 million veterans with Benefits, Transportation, Advocacy, Employment, and Volunteerism. Over Eighty percent (80%) of our total expenditures go to Service.

All our members were wounded, injured or became ill while in service to our nation, many of them severely. They have sacrificed much in defense of our country and state.

DAV Wisconsin has always been a strong supporter of the Wisconsin Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit and advocated for its passage and its various expansions.

Wisconsin has for years prided itself as being number #1 in the services and benefits it provides to its veterans. For the most part this is true, but not always.

In 2015, the Illinois legislature passed Senate Bill 107 (IL SB 107) unanimously, without a single dissenting vote, and the Governor signed it into law. The bill gave the following property tax exemptions to disabled veterans:

- A \$2,500 exemption to a veteran with a VA service-connected disability rating of at least 30% but less than 50%
- A \$5,000 exemption to a veteran with a VA service-connected disability rating of at least 50% but less than 70%
- Veterans with a VA service-connected disability rating of at least 70% are exempt from paying property taxes on their primary residence

At our 2015 State Convention, we passed a Resolution based on Illinois' SB 107 entitled *Support a Graduated Revision to the Wisconsin Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit*. This quickly became one of our legislative priorities. However, when we presented this priority to legislators, we noted the Resolution's model was only a blueprint, not chiseled in stone. We were flexible.

Thank you, Rep. Jacque and Sen. Wanggard for introducing AB 436. Thank you, Chairman Skrowonski for being a sponsor and holding this Hearing on the bill. We consider this a good first step.

DAV Wisconsin has been contacted by numerous members, supporters and veterans directly affected by AB 436. The following is one of the many comments we have received: "Currently, my husband is at 90%. He is 65 now and unemployable. It will be a godsend to my husband and me if AB 436 goes through, especially since our expenses are increasing dramatically like the cost of my medical insurance going up to \$1,200 per month."

Pursuant to our Resolution 2017-53, DAV Wisconsin strongly supports AB 436 and urges this Committee and the legislature to pass the bill, hopefully unanimously, in an expeditious manner.

This concludes my testimony, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you or other Committee Members may have.



THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, I am Paul Fisk, Chair of the Legislative Committee of the American Legion, Department of Wisconsin.

The American Legion was founded in 1919 by the Veterans of WWI. Our mission is to care for the Veterans of our country. We are a 501(c)(19) which permits us to advocate on issues that affect the Veteran Community.

AB-436 is a good bill for the Veteran Community and the State of Wisconsin. The estimated fiscal impact is seven million dollars. Yes, it appears to reduce state revenue, however, this money will remain in the local communities and circulate within the community, generating local income that taxes are paid in the form of increased sales and income taxes.

I am most familiar with Columbia County, located about 25 miles northeast of Madison. The population of Columbia County is about 56,000. There are 1133 disabled Veterans in the County, 54 of which their disability may not be service connected. Ninety are female and 1043 are male. Ninety two are currently 100% disabled. When this bill is signed into law it would permit another 192 households to take advantage of the tax credits that assumes all are residential property owners, which they are not.

As a general statement, those who will benefit from adoption of this bill will put the monies they receive in circulation and not leave them idle. This is good for Wisconsin communities and the State of Wisconsin.



DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN

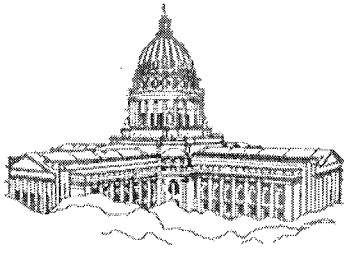
November 16, 2017

Chairman Skowroski, Vice-Chair VanderMeer and Members of the Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs:

The Veterans of Foreign Wars-Department of Wisconsin supports AB 436-reducing the eligibility threshold to claim the veterans and surviving spouses' property tax credit from 100 percent military service connected disability to 70 percent.

The United States has been at a state of war, non-stop, around the world, since September 11, 2001. From Afghanistan to Iraq, Libya to Syria, Yemen to Niger, Philippines to Indonesia and many other hot spots around the world where evil forces have revealed themselves. At no other time in our country's history have we seen such a constant state of military readiness and engagement. It only stands to reason that we have also seen the highest number of PTSD, TBI, Moral and other "unseen" injuries reach near record diagnosis and claims within our federal VA system. Many of these brave men and women are 70-90% service connected rated, but can still work, or are too proud to seek "unemployability" status from the VA. Make no mistake though, these veterans' ability to work, as well as in what careers, is severely diminished. This disadvantage is related to their selfless sacrifice for their country and communities therefore it is only fitting that we try to help them overcome this disadvantage in any way we can. AB 436 creates a mechanism for the state to not only help even the playing field a bit, it also tells these veterans "we recognize and appreciate the sacrifice you made for all of us, thank you."

The VFW-Department of Wisconsin is under no illusion as to the fiscal impact of this legislation to the state's budget. However, if one of these veterans were your husband or wife, your son or daughter, or grandchild, what is their ability to work to their full potential worth to you? More importantly, to their immediate families they financially support? In many ways, Wisconsin is hands down a leader in the country when it comes to taking care of our veterans but in regards to property tax assistance we are simply "most the same" as the majority of states. And in fact,



LENA C. TAYLOR

Wisconsin State Senator • 4th District

HERE TO SERVE YOU!

**Testimony of State Senator Lena C. Taylor
Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs
November 16, 2017
Assembly Bill 436**

Good morning, Chairman Skowronski and members of the committee. I want to thank the Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding Assembly Bill 436, which relates to reducing the eligibility threshold to claim the veterans and surviving spouses property tax credit.

It is fitting that the Committee is hearing Assembly Bill 436 shortly after we celebrated Veterans' Day. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, the United States has 1.3 million active duty troops deployed across the world. Our troops help monitor hotspots, assist in peacekeeping and rescue operations, and fight those who have expressed harm toward global peace and our national security interests.

Today, the nature of how conflicts are fought has changed. Technology, such as drones, has made it easier to engage in combat while decreasing the risk of harm to our troops. While we have taken great strides to protect our troops, the risk of harm – both physical and mental – and the possibility of death remains.

As a nation, we were shocked by the deaths of four Americans who were ambushed and killed in Niger the past October. Recent reports have found that one of these men, Sergeant La David Johnson, was found with his hands tied, and that three of the men were stripped of their uniforms. The sacrifices of these men, and the haunting thoughts that may run through the heads of their surviving family, are tremendous.

Assembly Bill 436 is a meaningful measure that shows our gratitude for the sacrifices made by veterans and their loved ones. While we can always do more for our veterans, such as expanding access to health services and fully funding and creating accountability for veterans' homes such as King, this bill will have significant impacts. According to the Department of Revenue, the bill would help around 3,300 veterans reduce their property tax liability. Additionally, it will recognize the sacrifices of partial service-related disabilities in addition to veterans who attained 100 percent disabilities from their service.

Chairman Skowronski, members of the committee, I ask for your support for Assembly Bill 436. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Senator Lena C. Taylor
4th Senate District