



# STATE SENATOR LaTonya Johnson

WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

6TH DISTRICT

**Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs  
Testimony on 2017 Assembly Bill 585  
November 16, 2017**

Chairman Skowronski and members of the committee, thank you for holding a hearing on AB 585.

Corey Adams lived in the 6th Senate District and his family, who are here today, brought this issue to our attention. We believe that this bill is a common-sense response to the tragic reality that we are losing veterans to suicide at a shocking rate.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), 20 veterans commit suicide each day. While veterans make up less than 9 percent of the U.S. population, they account for 19 percent of all suicides in America.

On March 20, 2017, Corey Adams went missing in Milwaukee after he missed an appointment with the VA. Corey was a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, having served four years on active duty and 18 years in the Air Force Reserves, including with the 440th Airlift Wing, based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Corey was diagnosed with PTSD and bipolar disorder in 2014 following his last tour in the Middle East.

When Corey went missing, his family knew that something was wrong—Corey had left his eyeglasses, phone, money, and medications at his parent's home, where he was last seen. Despite his family filing a missing person report within hours of his disappearance, it took eight days before he was determined to meet the critical missing criteria by Milwaukee police.

On April 7th, 18 days after his initial disappearance, Corey Adams' body was recovered from a pond in Dineen Park, just one mile from his mother's home. We believe that this outcome could have been avoided if the public had been enlisted in the search for Corey sooner.

If a soldier goes missing in the field, his or her unit will send out a search and rescue party. And so, when an at-risk veteran goes missing at home, it should be all of our jobs to assist with the search however we can.

We all share a duty to those who put their lives on the line to defend our country, and Green Alerts, like the current system of Amber and Silver Alerts, will help fulfill that duty by giving us, the public, the opportunity to be on the lookout and help bring our missing veterans home safely.

Once again, thank you for allowing me to testify today and for your consideration of this bipartisan, common-sense legislation. I would also like to thank Rep. Kleefisch and Sen. Testin for their work on this bill.



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# PATRICK TESTIN

## STATE SENATOR

**DATE:** November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
**RE:** **Testimony on 2017 Assembly Bill 585**  
**TO:** The Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs  
**FROM:** Senator Patrick Testin

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Thank you to Chairman Skowronski and members of the committee for accepting my written testimony on Assembly Bill 585, which creates an alert for missing veterans with a service-related health condition.

Serving in the military is a sacrifice that can lead to the development of a service-related health condition. Far too often, this has the potential to end in suicide. Though veterans account for only nine percent of the U.S. population, they make up nineteen percent of all suicides in the country.

Assembly Bill 585 would create a "Green Alert" through the integrated crime alert network for veterans considered to be at-risk due to a service-related health condition. This bill provides additional tools to law enforcement that will help them respond to an at-risk veteran's disappearance with a greater urgency and places emphasis on the risk of suicide for veterans with a service-related condition.

Senator Johnson brought this legislation to my attention following the tragic death of Milwaukee Air Force veteran, Corey Adams. Though Corey had been missing for days, the at-risk nature of his condition was not taken fully into account, and his disappearance was not seen as critical for eight days. His death was eventually discovered eighteen days after his initial disappearance.

Implementing a "Green Alert" is necessary to ensure that at-risk veteran disappearances are given high priority. Given the success of both the Amber and Silver Alert systems, expanding the program to include those who served and are at-risk, would be highly worthwhile.

Our veterans have continuously sacrificed in their service to our nation. Creating a "Green Alert" is a simple way to prevent more tragedies and get our veterans home safely.

Thank you for accepting my testimony and for your consideration of Assembly Bill 585.

**Fox6:** <http://fox6now.com/2017/03/29/its-just-really-difficult-search-for-corey-adams-veteran-suffering-from-ptsd-turns-critical/>

## **“It’s just really difficult:” Search for Corey Adams, veteran suffering from PTSD, turns critical**

Posted 5:08 pm, March 29, 2017, by [A.J. Bayatpour](#), Updated at 05:41PM, March 29, 2017

MILWAUKEE -- Police now say the case of a missing veteran is critical. His family hasn't seen or heard from him in nine days. The family has canvassed the area near their home around 54th and Capitol. It's where 45-year-old Corey Adams was last seen on Monday, March 20th at approximately 11 a.m.

In the Adams' living room Wednesday, March 29th, there was stress but also determination.

"It's just really difficult," said Carmen Adams, Corey's brother.

Their mission is to bring Corey home.

"All day long. Even yesterday, as we drive down the street, I'm looking and my daughter's like, 'Mama, that's not him,'" said Carmen.

Carmen hasn't seen her brother since March 20th -- none of her family has.

Loved ones worry because the 45-year-old has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), something they say overwhelms the man who used to be their problem solver.

"When you look in his eyes, it's like there's so much going on with him, that's he's thinking so deeply. He always was like that but this was different," said Gwendolyn Adams, Corey's mother.

When Adams left the house, he left behind his glasses, wallet, keys and his phone. He also doesn't have his medicine.

"Maybe he just left because he didn't want to burden anybody. He was always the one we all looked up to and aspired to be like and, in the last few years because of the things he's been going through, he hasn't been the Corey that I know, my brother," said Carmen.

Milwaukee police say they now consider the case critical. The family says there have been some tips, including a couple placing him on Miller Park Way in recent days -- once at the IHOP, then at the McDonald's.

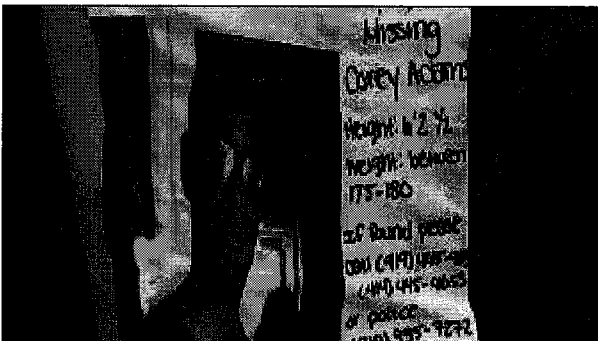
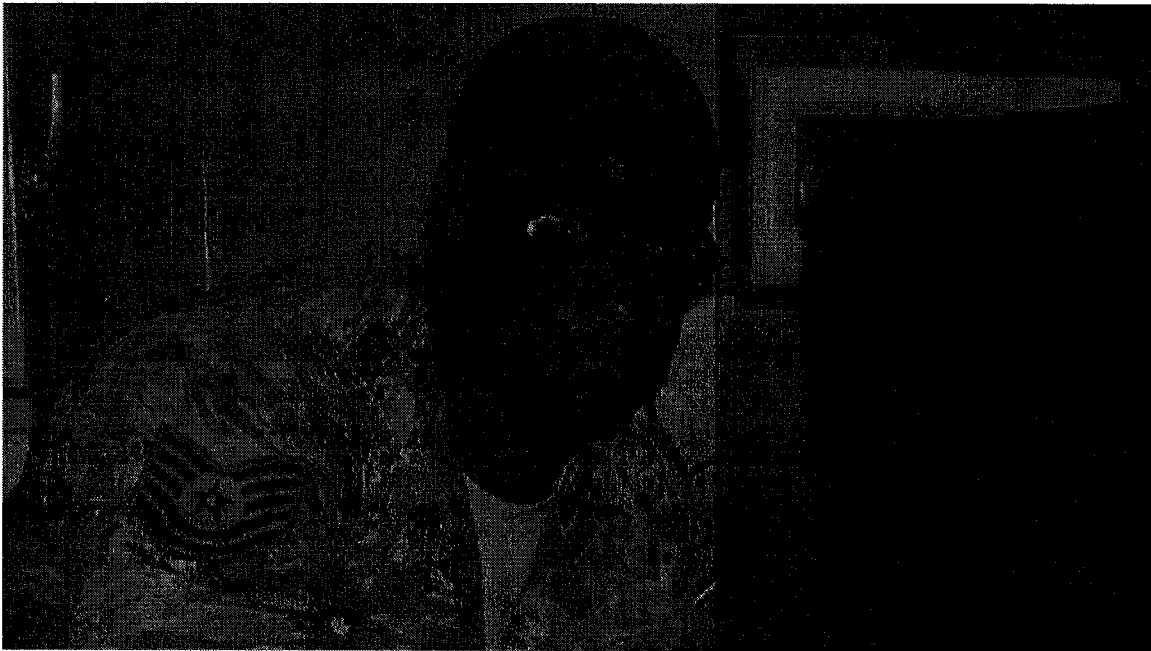
The Adams family said the tips, along with their faith, are providing the support they need.

"I'm very hopeful because if you don't have hope and faith in God, you really don't have anything to go on," said Gwendolyn Adams.

Adams is described as a black man, standing about 6'4" tall and weighing 180 to 200 pounds. He was last seen wearing a black jacket, black jeans and a grey T-shirt.

Due to the tips along Miller Park Way in recent days, the family says they'll be canvassing that area Friday evening starting around 5:30.

Anyone with information is asked to call MPD's Sensitive Crimes Division at 414-935-7405.



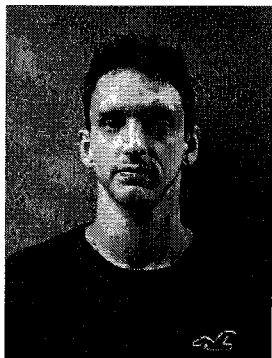
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# Body of missing Wausau veteran has been found

Arielle Hines, USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin Published 5:24 p.m. CT Sept. 8, 2016



(Photo: Wausau Police Department)

WAUSAU - The body of a Wausau veteran who had been missing since Sunday was found by a bird-watcher Thursday in Lake Wausau .

Brian Rossell, 29, was found near the Eagles Club boat landing on South Third Avenue, police said. The body was found 150 feet from shore and detectives were near the area with search dogs at the time, police said.

No foul play is suspected and investigators believe Rossell died by suicide, police said.

**RELATED:** [Search for missing Wausau man enters third day \(/story/news/2016/09/07/search-missing-wausau-man-enters-third-day/89949672/\)](#)

**RELATED:** [Police searching for man in Wisconsin River \(/story/news/2016/09/06/police-still-searching-missing-wausau-man/89904176/\)](#)

Rossell left his Wausau home with his service dog, but without his keys, wallet, ID and phone, at around 8:30 p.m. Sunday, police said. He was known to never leave home without the service dog he kept to ease his mental illnesses, but the dog was found without a leash or collar in the parking lot of his apartment complex Sunday around 11:30 p.m., police said.

Rossell suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, paranoia and schizoaffective disorder, according to police.

Search teams started looking for Rossell in the Wisconsin River because the service dog led Rossell's girlfriend to the water and started whimpering, said Wausau Police Lt. Andrew Hartwig.

An autopsy will be performed Friday to determine Rossell's cause of death, police said.

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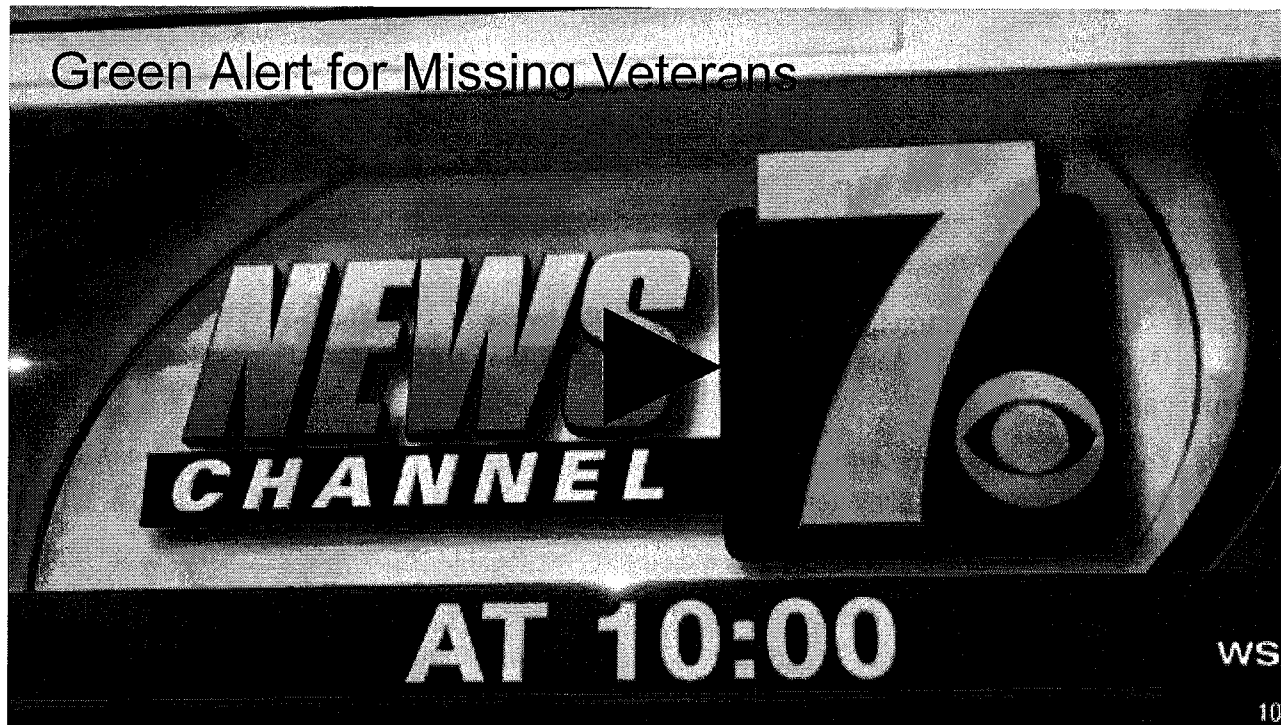
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## 3 legislators propose 'Green Alert' to aid in search for missing veterans



By Maria Szatkowski | Posted: Thu 8:44 PM, Oct 05, 2017 | Updated: Thu 11:42 PM, Oct 05, 2017

Three Wisconsin legislators have come together to propose a bill to create an alert system when veterans go missing.



The proposed Green Alert would be similar to the state's Silver Alert and Amber Alert.

"An alert for when a veteran goes missing in the state, that just like an Amber Alert or Silver Alert, a notice would go out so that way we can find these veterans who've gone missing and hopefully get them home safely, and get them any help or support that they might need," said Senator Patrick Testin.

Senator Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point), Representative Joel Kleefisch (R-Oconomowoc), and Senator LaTonya Johnson (D-Milwaukee) have authored the Corey Adams Searchlight Act – named for a Milwaukee Air Force Veteran who passed away earlier this year after going missing for 18 days.

"By creating the Green Alert, we are honoring Corey's memory and working to prevent other tragedies," stated Senator Johnson in a news release. "Our veterans have sacrificed so much, yet they don't always receive the support that they need to manage the challenges of service-related health conditions. This bill gives us the tools we need offer aid when a veteran goes missing."

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 20 veterans commit suicide each day. While veterans make up less than 9 percent of the U.S. population, they account for 19 percent of all suicides in America.

"We've seen the success of the Amber and Silver Alerts," added Sen. Testin. "This bill could help save lives, and I think we owe it to our veterans to pass this bill."

The family of Wausau veteran Brian Rossell said something like this could've helped when Brian first disappeared.

"I think that it would definitely give a little bit more piece of mind, a little bit more support when my brother went missing, that was the hardest thing was not knowing," said Christina Dryden, Rossell's sister.

Ron Worthey is a veteran who works with the Souls of Honor, a group that supports veterans who may be struggling with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or other issues.

He said the Green Alert could help save these veterans who don't know where else to turn.

"It's a good thing to have. Cause if it helped one person. it would be really worth it," said Worthey.

It's not only helpful for the veteran who's gone missing, but for loved ones who worry.

"Even though the person is missing, they know that, the they're also being looked for right away," said Worthey.

"Well you know we just, we miss him everyday and it does warm our hearts that others can be helped," said Dryden.

This bill is supported by the Military Order of the Purple Heart and the VFW.

It will circulate for co-sponsorship until Wednesday, Oct. 11 then be referred to committees in the Assembly and Senate.





**DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN**

**November 16, 2017**

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

The Veterans of Foreign Wars-Department of Wisconsin supports AB 585. This legislation that creates a "Green Alert" will no doubt save some lives and prevent possible further injury to our veterans who are struggling with a service-connected injury, whether physical or mental, that puts them at risk.

Another positive aspect of this bill that perhaps some have not considered, is that by informing the general -public of a missing at-risk veteran, law enforcement and other first responders are made aware of the veteran status of these individuals in real-time. This will prepare them to react to and deal with the veteran in a manner that is focused on the special circumstances surrounding the situation, which may not otherwise happen if coming across the veteran and not knowing their status. This lack of real-time knowledge has resulted in tragic incidents across the country. It is encouraging to think that future tragic incidents involving veterans and law enforcement may possibly be prevented by implementing a "Green Alert" system in the state of Wisconsin.

On behalf of Department Commander John Schultz and all members of the VFW-Department of Wisconsin, I wish to thank the bi-partisan co-authors of this bill, Representative Kleefisch and Representative Goyke, as well as other members of this very committee who signed on as co-sponsors: Representatives Petryk, Edming, Tittl, Milroy, Riemer and Sinicki. We look forward to the bill's passage.

With Gratitude,

**Jason E. Johns**

Legislative Committee Member, VFW-Department of Wisconsin