



JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senate Bill 755
UW System Resident Tuition for Veterans
February 6, 2018

Good morning, members of the committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Senate Bill 755, relating to: University of Wisconsin System resident tuition for certain veterans and their family members. I would like to thank the UW for bringing this bill to our attention and providing their support for this change.

In general, in order to be eligible for designation as a resident for tuition purposes, veterans, like all other students must meet the statutory requirement of living in Wisconsin for at least 12 months for reasons other than obtaining an education. The federal Veterans Choice Act, passed in 2014, provided a way for certain veterans and their family members to be granted in-state residency for those discharged within three years of enrollment. The University of Wisconsin Systems adopted these policies to grant undergraduate in-state residency for tuition through the Board of Regents, while 2015 SB 164 made a similar change for the Wisconsin Technical College System.

While this is beneficial for veterans in our state, it has created some unforeseen problems where veterans who take advantage of this new provision, and have been paying the in-state tuition rate for their undergraduate education, are now forced to pay non-resident tuition if they decide to pursue graduate-level programs. This bill would resolve this issue and ensure that these veterans would consistently receive the in-state resident tuition rate regardless of the level of their coursework.

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

Senate Committee on Transportation & Veterans Affairs – Senate Bill 755 (SUPPORT)
Testimony provided by
John Bechtol & Joe Rasmussen, Veterans Services & Military Assistance Center
University of Wisconsin-Madison
February 6, 2018

Chairman Petrowski and Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation & Veterans Affairs,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 755. We are John Bechtol and Joe Rasmussen from the Veterans Services & Military Assistance Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. We help veterans, service members and military dependents navigate federal and state educational benefits at UW-Madison.

John Bechtol has been an Assistant Dean of Students, Division of Student Life, since 2008. Prior to that he served on active duty in the U.S. Army for 21 years.

Joe Rasmussen has been the Certifying Official, Office of the Registrar, since 2012. Prior to that he earned his undergraduate degree at UW-Whitewater and graduate degree at UW-Madison, after serving four years active duty in the USMC.

In order to be eligible for designation as a resident for tuition purposes, veterans, like all other students must meet the statutory requirement of living in Wisconsin for at least 12 months for reasons other than obtaining an education. Many other states and schools used the Veterans Choice Act as a vehicle to grant in-state residency for their students. Wisconsin chose to grant the equivalent of in-state tuition to veterans using Board of Regents policy, referred to as the "702-tuition rate."

This policy has created a "gap" for veterans or dependents that come to Wisconsin for school and want to immediately continue onto graduate school. They are granted the 702-tuition rate for their undergraduate education, but upon receipt of their degree, would have to pay out-of-state tuition if they were to immediately continue onto a graduate program.

Senate Bill 755 would fix this problem by designating that those students who are recipients of federal veterans benefits would be considered "covered individuals" and would continue to pay in-state tuition if they wanted to pursue a graduate education without needing to take a one-year break from school to establish residency. This change would add Wisconsin to a long list of other states that have already made the change.

We would like to thank Senator Petrowski and Representative Murphy for introducing this legislation to help support student-veterans in the state of Wisconsin. We thank the committee for taking the time to consider this important bill and we would be happy to take questions at this time.