

CO-SPONSORSHIP MEMORANDUM

TO: All Legislators

FROM: Rep. Ken Skowronski, Sen. Van Wanggaard

DATE: January, 21th, 2016

RE: **Co-Sponsorship** LRB-4524/1- relating to:

Powers of officers and employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, powers of the **Board** of Veterans Affairs, employment of veteran's regional coordinators and claims officers, and making appropriations.

DEADLINE: January 26, 2015, NOON

LRB-4524 contains a number of technical provisions for the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. Current law provides certain state agencies the authority to solicit for funds, LRB-4524 would extend that authority to WDVA. This would enable the WDVA to harness additional funds for capital projects, thereby helping to reduce the burden on the Veterans Trust Fund created by bonding and the corresponding debt service.

LRB-4524 makes numerous changes to the WDVA's appropriations by renaming and renumbering the outdated appropriations to reflect the operations performed within them. The bill also consolidates all the County grant alpha-appropriations to Program 2, where all the WDVA grant programs are administered. Alpha-appropriations that are no longer used for their designated purpose are repealed.

In an attempt to meet legislative intent, LRB-4524 clarifies language from 2013 Act 20 which removed some residency criteria for admission to the WDVA Veterans Homes by creating an admission priority system wherein Wisconsin residents would be given first priority for admission to the homes and out-of-state veterans would be eligible as a third priority if room was available.

The bill gives DVA the option to allow county veteran service organizations the option to administer veteran benefits.

The bill also reorganizes and clarifies the subchapter related to operation of the Veterans Homes in order to ensure the provisions related to management of the homes are within that section of statutes.

To sign on as a supporter of this bill, please reply to this email or contact Justin in the office of Rep. Skowronski at 6-8590 or Scott in Senator Wanggaard's office at 6-1832 by **January 26 at NOON** Your name will be added to the Senate companion bill unless otherwise specified.

A copy of the bill draft is attached.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill makes various changes to the laws governing veterans affairs, including changes to the powers of certain state public officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs, changes to the powers of the Board of Veterans Affairs, and changes regarding the maintenance of veterans homes.

This bill allows a state public official who is an officer or employee of DVA to solicit, receive, and retain on behalf of the state anything of value for the purpose of supporting veterans homes and members and veterans programs, benefits, and services.

The bill transfers most of the powers of the Board of Veterans Affairs to DVA. Under current law, the board has various powers, including creating policies and making determinations relating to the disposition of moneys, the making of loans, and the acquisition and conveyance of buildings and real property.

The bill directs DVA to provide annually \$42,000 to the town of Dover to reimburse the town for the costs of municipal services provided to the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove. The bill also creates a full-time position within DVA to act as facilities manager at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove.

The bill also provides that DVA may approve a county veterans service consortium to administer veterans benefits and services and makes county veterans service officers optional for counties. Current law requires each county to elect or appoint a county veterans service officer.

Finally, the bill makes various technical changes to laws governing veterans affairs, including repealing obsolete or outdated appropriations.

For further information see the state and local fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.