

State Budget Update:

- Budget Introduction – On March 1, 2011, Governor Scott Walker introduced his [2011-2013 Biennial State Budget](#) to the State Legislature.
- Veterans Budget – See the [Governor's Veterans Budget](#) for detailed information from the Legislative Fiscal Bureau.
- Joint Finance Public Hearings – The Legislature's [Joint Finance Committee](#) has scheduled four public hearings on the Budget. This is an opportunity for veterans advocates to show support for veterans issues. The dates, times and location of the hearings are:
 - Friday, April 8 (10 am – 5 pm). UW-Superior (Wessman Arena) 2701 Catlin Avenue, Superior.
 - Monday, April 11 (10 am – 6 pm). State Fair Park, Expo Center Hall A, West Allis.
 - Wednesday, April 13. (10 am – 6 pm). Arcadia High School Auditorium, Arcadia.
- Written Testimony on Budget – Written testimony can be emailed to the Joint Finance Committee at budgetcomments@legis.wisconsin.gov or sent by US mail to Joe Malkasian, Room 305 East, State Capitol, Madison, WI 53703.

State Veterans Legislation:

- WDVA Secretary Appointed by Governor; WDVA Board Composition and Powers (LRB 1026-3) – Representative Kevin Petersen (R-Waupaca) recently distributed [LRB 1026-3](#) for co-sponsorship by other legislators. Under this proposal, the Governor would appoint the WDVA Secretary, not the WDVA Board. Before appointing the Secretary, the Governor must consult with the presiding officers of at least six Wisconsin veterans organizations. Also, this proposal expands the Board to nine members, one from each of Wisconsin's eight congressional districts and one serving at large. In addition, the proposal stipulates that all Board members must have served on active duty, but need not have served in any particular war or conflict. Finally, the proposal grants the WDVA Secretary the authority to promulgate administrative rules after consulting the Board – approval would no longer be required. Legislators have until April 14 to co-sponsor the proposal before introduction.
- Restoration of the Wisconsin GI Bill (Senate Bill 53) – Senator Julie Lassa (D-Stevens Point) recently introduced [Senate Bill 53](#) to fully restore access to the Wisconsin GI Bill after a veteran exhausts their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. This bill would create the same result for student veterans as the provision included in the Governor's budget proposal (see item #13 in the [UW System Budget](#) and item #8 in the [Tech College Budget](#)). SB 53 differs in that it modifies state appropriations to provide that universities and colleges are fully reimbursed for the cost of tuition and fee remissions. SB

53 has been referred to the [Senate Committee on Economic Development and Veterans & Military Affairs](#).

- **County Blanket Bonds (Assembly Bill 60)** – Representative Karl Van Roy (R-Green Bay) recently introduced [Assembly Bill 60](#) to expand county blanket bonds to veteran service officers and veterans service commissions. The legislation passed out of the Assembly Committee on Urban & Local Affairs on April 5, and now it's awaiting a referral to the full Assembly by the [Rules Committee](#).
- **Contact Your State Legislators** – [Contact your State Legislators](#)

Federal Veterans Legislation:

- **Implementation of Post-9/11 GI Bill Improvements Act (S. 3447)** – A section of the Post-9/11 GI Bill Improvements Act of 2010 ([S. 3447](#)) creates a direct conflict between the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Wisconsin GI Bill as to which program is the payer of last resort. As confirmed by staff attorneys at the Wisconsin Legislative Council, “Wisconsin may lose the ability to require veterans to use Post-9/11 benefits before accessing Wisconsin GI Bill benefits. Further, veterans may have benefits paid under the Wisconsin GI Bill offset by corresponding reductions in federal benefits.” See [Leg Council Memo](#) and [WDVA Letter to USDVA](#).

USDVA is in the process of establishing administrative rules to specify how these provisions will be implemented. If an adverse interpretation is codified in the administrative rules, Wisconsin veterans will lose access to a significant federal benefit simply because they hold entitlement to a state benefit. In addition, this interpretation would substantially increase the financial burden on Wisconsin universities.

WDVA partnered with the CVSO Association, the UW System, and Wisconsin Technical Colleges to send a [joint letter](#) to USDVA Secretary Shinseki. Since then, WDVA has been in direct contact with the USDVA Division of Intergovernmental Affairs, reiterating our belief that it was not the intention of Congress to penalize states like Wisconsin that have made a special commitment to help educate our veterans. The USDVA Division of Intergovernmental Affairs reports that the USDVA General Counsel is currently reviewing the issue.

- **Allow Veterans to Refinance Mortgages (H.R. 834)** – Representative Susan Davis (D-California) recently introduced [H.R. 834](#) to expand access to state veterans home loan programs and allow veterans to use the program for refinancing purposes. Wisconsin is one of five states authorized to issue federally tax-exempt Qualified Veterans Mortgage Bonds (QVMBs), but under current law, the QVMB program can only be used for the purchase of a primary residence, not to refinance. For more info, see [WDVA's Paper on Federal Legislation to Help Vets with Homeownership](#).

In March, WDVA leadership met with six members of Wisconsin's Congressional Delegation, including Senator Ron Johnson, Representative Paul Ryan, Representative Ron Kind, Representative James Sensenbrenner, Representative Sean Duffy, and Representative Reid Ribble, to focus their attention and advocate for their support on this legislation. WDVA also sent supporting materials to the additional members of Wisconsin's Congressional Delegation.

H.R. 834 is currently awaiting action in the [House Committee on Ways and Means](#). Accordingly, Representative Ron Kind sits on this committee, and WDVA is working with his office to identify steps to advance the proposal through the committee process.

- **Expand Eligibility to Veterans Home Loans by Removing the 25-Year Limit (In Drafting)** – Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-Oregon) is in the process of reintroducing legislation ([H.R. 2319](#) from the 111th Congress) to allow all veterans to receive state home loans regardless of when they separated from service. Under current law, veterans have 25 years after separating from military service to access a state home loan under the QVMB program. This provision excludes most veterans above the age of 45, including over 140,000 Vietnam War era veterans that reside in Wisconsin. Not only would this legislation ensure that all Wisconsin veterans have equal access to this important benefit, this legislation would revitalize the state's veterans mortgage program and help ensure that the program can operate in future years. Once introduced, this legislation is expected to be referred to the [House Committee on Ways and Means](#).
- **Contact Your Federal Legislators** – [Contact your Federal Lawmakers](#)

For additional updates and information on veterans legislation, visit www.WisVets.com/Legislation. Otherwise please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Thanks for your commitment to better serve our veterans,

Max Dulberger
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