

# County Veterans Service Officers Association of Wisconsin: Applauds Gov. Walker and the Wisconsin Legislative Joint Finance Committee

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Today, the Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Finance Committee (JFC) voted to approve Governor Walker's Department of Veterans Affairs budget, which included changes to the department's grants to counties and tribes for improvement of services. The JFC approved returning the grant to a block grant and removed barriers to use the grant dollars. The County Veterans Service Officers Association of Wisconsin applauds the Joint Finance Committee for listening to the concerns the association had and addressing them within the state's budget.

Changes to the grant during the 2015-2017 biennial budget made it a reimbursement program instead of a block grant and also included categories of eligible expenses. Two of the eligible expense categories were training and salary; however, training was strictly limited to training provided by state or federal VA and salary was limited to a certain percentage over the biennium and then discontinued. The requirements also made the grant process burdensome and prevented counties and tribes from maximizing the improvements sought by the grant itself.

The overall grant amount ranges are from \$500 for a part-time County Veterans Service Officer, \$8,000 to \$13,000 for full-time officers depending on total county population, and \$15,000 for Tribal Veterans Service Offices. These amounts

remained unchanged; however, the restrictions left many counties unable to fully expend the grant.

JFC actions today restores the program to a block grant while retaining accountability on the use of the funds. The JFC also removed the eligible expense categories providing County Veterans Service Officers and Tribal Veterans Service Officers with the flexibilities necessary to use the funds appropriately to assist veterans.

If you have any questions for the CVSO Association of Wisconsin, feel free to reach out to our President, Joe Aulik, [jaulik@co.winnebago.wi.us](mailto:jaulik@co.winnebago.wi.us), 920-236-4898, our Legislative Chairman, Rock Larson, [rlarson@co.wood.wi.us](mailto:rlarson@co.wood.wi.us), 715-421-8420 or any member of our Executive Committee. All contact information can be found on our webpage at [www.wicvso.org](http://www.wicvso.org).