

# U.S. Rep. Steil: Co-introduces the Veterans Cemetery Grants Improvement Act

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**UNION GROVE, WISCONSIN**—Today, following a press conference at American Legion Post 171 in Union Grove, Steil rolled out H.R. 5487, *the Veterans Cemetery Grants Improvement Act*. Steil co-introduced the legislation with Congressman Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan of the Northern Mariana Islands and member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

"The sacrifices our veterans and service members make can never be taken for granted. Federal grants under this bill can be used to expand operations and restore infrastructure at veteran cemeteries, like the Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Union Grove. Our bill increases access to grant dollars at veteran cemeteries to honor American heroes for generations to come," **said Congressman Steil.**

"Veterans have sacrificed so much to ensure that our country remains safe and free. We can never fully repay these men and women for their sacrifices. We can, however, ensure their final resting place, whether in the Marianas or Wisconsin, is operated and maintained with the high standards our veterans and their families deserve," **said Congressman Sablan.**

"Maintaining memorial ground that honors our service men and women is important. I fully support Congressman Steil's effort to pass the Veterans Cemetery Grants Improvement Act. As a tribute to those who've served, we should care for

the final resting place as a living remembrance to their service,” **said State Representative Wittke.**

“The Veterans Cemetery Grants Improvement Act is a good bill. Veteran cemeteries serve as a reminder that veterans and their families are still taken care of after they pass. This is an important way to honor our veterans,” **said State Representative Skowronski.**

On Background:

At today’s press conference, Steil joined State Representatives Ken Skowronski and Robert Wittke, former State Representative Tom Weatherston, Racine County Veteran Service Officer Zachary Zdroik, American Legion Post 171 Commander Frank Konieska, and local veterans to discuss the bill and issues impacting our veteran community.

Under current law, no more than \$5 million in VA Operations and Maintenance (O/M) grant applications can be awarded per fiscal year. O/M grant funding helps cover certain upkeep costs, headstone and marker alignment, and turf maintenance and appearance conditions for state-run veteran cemeteries. The Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Union Grove has a pending application for a VA O/M grant; the Union Grove cemetery is number 47 on the Fiscal Year 2020 priority list.

H.R. 5487 would increase the \$5 million cap to \$10 million, providing the VA additional flexibility when awarding grants. This also allows cemeteries like the Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Union Grove to have quicker access to federal funds.

The Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery is the fifth busiest state-run cemetery in the nation. The cemetery hosts nearly 1,000 ceremonies each year.

H.R. 5487 is supported by the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

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