

American Legion, DAV, VFW: Now is the time to lower the property tax burden on Wisconsin's severely disabled veterans

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Madison, WI- On Tuesday, the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau projected an unanticipated \$4.4 billion surplus in general tax revenue by mid-2023. The estimate does not include the \$2.5 billion in federal coronavirus relief money coming to the state for infrastructure projects and other uses.

Following the announcement, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos said he favored cutting taxes by up to \$4 billion. "My goal would be to figure out the largest possible tax cut [so] that we could return this record surplus back to the people who paid it." Nobody has paid a bigger price than the state's wartime severely disabled veterans.

On May 25th, leaders from the Big 3 veteran service organizations in Wisconsin, the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), testified before the Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Revenue expressing their united support for SB 243. The bipartisan "Disabled Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit Fairness Act" authored by Senators Andre Jacque (R)-De Pere and Lena Taylor (D)-Milwaukee would expand eligibility from the current 100% rating to 70% to claim the credit. It would be assessed on a pro-ration basis reflecting the veteran's disability rating as determined by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

SB 243 has been declared the #1 legislative priority by the American Legion, DAV, and VFW. Given the unexpected infusion of \$4.4 billion into the state coffers, we urge the Joint Committee on Finance to include SB 243 into the 2021-2023 State

Budget.

“We thank the legislature, especially the Joint Committee on Finance, for considering the inclusion of SB 243 into the state’s 2021-23 biennium budget,” says Matt Kampainen, DAV State Commander. “We can think of no better way to help the state’s wartime severely disabled veterans than by providing much needed property tax relief. Many are elderly living on limited income. Currently, unemployment for Post-911 veterans with a 60% rating and up is at 11.8% due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Inclusion will show them that the state truly does appreciate their sacrifice,” he further adds.

“With the ever-increasing property tax burden faced by homeowners in Wisconsin, many of our state’s severely injured veterans are unable to afford home ownership, or worse, face losing the one they have” says David Wischer, State Commander for the Wisconsin American Legion. “The Joint Committee on Finance has a unique opportunity to use this eye-popping increased revenue to make a real difference in the lives of these Veterans and their families and we are hopeful they will do so.”

“The Joint Committee on Finance promises to work to deliver meaningful tax relief where it counts most and we are confident that they will recognize the fantastic opportunity this unprecedented state revenue windfall presents to do just that” says Jason Johns, State Commander for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of Wisconsin.