

Gov. Evers: Announces \$10 million investment to support veteran employment, housing assistance, mental health services

Posted on Wednesday, Oct 5, 2022

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced a \$10 million investment in a variety of programs benefitting Wisconsin veterans. The investment comes on the heels of recommendations made by the governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity in their final report [released last month](#) and building on Gov. Evers' previous budget proposals.

Earlier this year, in his [2022 State of the State address](#), Gov. Evers announced he would [create a Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity](#) to develop comprehensive, long-term recommendations to help address challenges facing Wisconsin's more than 300,000 veterans. Shortly thereafter, Gov. Evers [signed Executive Order #157](#) to create the Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity. The Commission was charged with identifying gaps in existing services, areas in need of robust investment, and reducing barriers to economic security, including efforts to expand access to higher education and job training, address housing insecurity, and increase mental and behavioral health support and substance use disorder treatment.

"Our veterans have faced an especially challenging few years on top of the specific challenges folks face returning to civilian life, and this investment is a critical step to supporting Wisconsin's more than 300,000 veterans across our state," said Gov. Evers. "I'm grateful for the good work of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity to make recommendations that have informed these immediate efforts, and I look forward to ensuring these investments and recommendations receive

long-term, ongoing support in our next biennial budget.”

The Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity held seven meetings, including a public listening session, beginning in May of this year. Under [Executive Order #157](#), the Commission’s final report was presented to the governor last month for consideration and potential inclusion in the governor’s forthcoming 2023-25 biennial budget proposal.

Recommendations from the Commission included: Supporting and expanding access to veteran mental health services, including through veteran-to-veteran support and community-based programming;

Creating a rental assistance program designed to address veteran homelessness and provide housing assistance; Expanding the Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP), which provides personalized and strategic mental health supports for veterans, including suicide prevention efforts;

Providing additional resources to county veteran services offices (CVSOs) and tribal veterans service offices (TVSOs); and Increasing funding for the Hire Heroes Program at the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD).

“Gov. Evers continues to stand up for Wisconsinites when it matters,” said Department of Administration (DOA) Secretary-designee Kathy Blumenfeld, co-chair of the Commission. “The governor is a person of action and his investments today will help ensure our heroes have the services and opportunities to help them succeed in Wisconsin. I am also so proud that the work of the Governor’s Interagency Council on Homelessness is reflected in today’s announcement. The rental assistance for veterans was a recommendation from the Council and one we know will help transform lives.”

“Those who have served in our armed forces deserve our respect, and they deserve real support overcoming the struggles they may encounter at home,” said Wisconsin Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) Secretary Mary Kolar, co-chair of the Commission. “I’m grateful to Governor Evers for creating the Blue Ribbon Commission to draw on expertise across the state on how to best assist veterans in need, and I’m thrilled to see direct investments in programs that truly work.”

The Commission’s recommendations provided a blueprint to make immediate investments to support veterans in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, as well

as long-term, ongoing investments through the biennial budget. Gov. Evers' \$10 million investment announced today makes investments in key areas of the Commission's recommendations to support veteran housing, increase mental health supports, and expand access to skills and job training, including:

\$4.5 million to support veteran mental health initiatives, including supporting community-based programs, increasing access to emergency services, and investing in peer support programs.

\$2 million to create a rental assistance program for homeless veterans. This was also a recommendation from the Interagency Council on Homelessness' "[Welcoming Wisconsin Home](#)" report.

An additional \$1.5 million for VORP, which provides case management and support to veterans and connects veterans to community services, including substance use treatment, housing, education, and mental healthcare. This investment is intended to fund seven additional positions to serve veterans across the state.

An additional \$1.5 million for CVSOs and TVSOs, which help veterans connect to benefits, preventative programming, and family engagement activities. The funding will increase allocations to CVSOs and TVSOs by 100 percent, ensure TVSO payments are not being prorated, and increase payments to part-time CVSOs.

An additional \$500,000 for DWD's Hire Heroes Program, which provides services to veterans with high barriers to employment and reimburses employers for certain costs when hiring veteran employees.

The governor's investment announced today is funded through the American Rescue Plan Act. To view presentations, agendas, and recordings of the commission meetings, visit the Blue Ribbon Commission website [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).