

Sen. Wirch: Republicans once again turn their back on our veterans

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Kenosha-Senator Bob Wirch (D-Somers) is calling out Republicans in the State Legislature for breaking a promise they made to Wisconsin veterans and the families of service members. After removing a provision in Governor Evers' budget to fund the UW-Madison Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Program, or MIA Project, the Republican majority vowed to take up and pass the funding in standalone legislation. Last week, Republican leaders adjourned the 2021-2022 legislative session without a final vote on the bill.

"What the Republicans have done, or rather not done, is shameful. They don't want to give Governor Evers a 'win' in an election year, so they go back on their word and leave this important bill on the table. We have military families here in Wisconsin who have sacrificed so much and simply want to know what happened to their loved ones, but Republicans have instead prioritized politics," Wirch said.

Since 2015, UW-Madison has run the MIA Project, through which a team of faculty, staff and students from a number of different fields assist in the discovery, exhumation, identification and return of remains of missing-in-action American service members. The federal Department of Defense currently lists 81,600 American service members as still "missing in action". The MIA Project has brought closure to a number of families who have waited decades for answers on the fates of their loved ones. During the 2019-2020 legislative session, Wirch co-sponsored bipartisan legislation that would have provided \$180,000 per year for the Project; Republican leadership denied the bill a vote before the end of the session. Governor Evers included the funding in his 2021-2023 budget proposal before Republicans rejected it, saying they would pass standalone legislation. The bill,

which Wirch again co-sponsored, wasn't brought to a vote in the Senate before Republican leadership gaveled out the end of the 2021-2022 legislative session.