

Dept. of Veterans Affairs: Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity releases final report

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MADISON, Wis. — The Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity announced the release of the [commission's final report](#) prepared at the request of Gov. Tony Evers. The report includes 24 recommendations to address the needs and challenges of Wisconsin's veterans and their families concerning education access, housing security, veteran employment, mental health, long-term care, and other essential policy areas concerning the well-being of veterans.

"Wisconsin's veterans have given so much in service to our country, but they face unique barriers when returning to civilian life, and this has been especially true over the last few years," said Gov. Evers. "Creating the Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity was a critical part of ensuring our state is continuing to do everything we can to support our veterans today and for generations of veterans to come, whether it's accessing jobs and skills training to join our workforce, supporting our Veterans Homes, finding affordable housing, or making sure they can access the healthcare they need and deserve. I want to extend my deepest gratitude to the members of the Commission for their dedication to this important work and developing recommendations that I look forward to being the cornerstone of my next biennial budget."

After being [announced](#) in Gov. Evers' 2022 State of the State address, this commission held seven meetings, including a public listening session, starting in May this year. The commission worked together to identify gaps in existing services, opportunities for robust investment, and areas for additional collaboration with federal and private partners. Under [Executive Order #157](#), the final report is presented to the governor's office for potential inclusion in the governor's

forthcoming 2023-25 biennial budget proposal. To view presentations, agendas, and recordings of the commission meetings, [visit the Blue Ribbon Commission webpage](#) on the Department of Veterans Affairs website.

“Today’s report from the Blue Ribbon Commission is a culmination of experiences and expertise in the veteran community coming together to solve problems,” said Wisconsin Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) Secretary Mary Kolar, co-chair of the commission. “I was inspired by the passion and thoughtfulness present in the work of the commission. The recommendations put forth will make a real difference in the lives of Wisconsin veterans, and I’m grateful to Gov. Evers for making those who have served a priority.”

“Through diligent discussion and thoughtful analysis, this Commission produced a blueprint to support Wisconsin veterans and their families,” said DOA Secretary-designee Kathy Blumenfeld. “The recommendations developed by this Commission will help our heroes access the benefits, services, and opportunities they have rightfully earned. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve on this Commission, and I want to thank all of our Commissioners for their work in this endeavor.”

“It was truly an honor to serve on the Governor’s Blue Ribbon Commission as it brought together a diverse group of Veterans and Non-Veterans to gather information and discuss making changes to help our Veteran population in Wisconsin,” said Cory Geisler, former Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Department of Wisconsin. “Mental health and housing for our Veterans and their families has always been a priority. I am looking forward to seeing if the recommendations that were made by the commission can be put into action.”

“It was an honor to have been appointed to the Governor’s Blue Ribbon Commission as the Disabled American Veterans representative,” said Al Labelle, U.S. Navy, Wisconsin Legislative Director for Disabled American Veterans (DAV). “Having the opportunity to give our recommendations on key veteran issues, such as the shortage of health care providers in Long Term Care for veterans and the value of employers hiring and retaining veterans with disabilities, is greatly appreciated. Overall, we feel the final Commission recommendations will be beneficial to the veterans community.”

“It was an honor to serve on Governor Evers’ Blue Ribbon Commission,” said Gregg Duffek, Tribal Veteran Service Office for the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. “I

believe marketing WDVA services, helping businesses recruit veterans to better understand how to mentor and serve veterans through employment, waiving the \$150 fee for disabled veterans in business ownership certification, and increasing the funding to Tribal Veteran Service Grants and County Veteran Service Office Grants will better serve our Veterans and are all worthy actions. I also fully support a review of all WDVA Grants to realign them with veterans who need the help now. I am just one Tribal Veteran who believes in serving Wisconsin Veterans better than any other state, and these recommendations will help get us there.”