

Rep. Vos: Blocks UW MIA Recovery Project funding

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MADISON – On Wednesday, the Assembly Committee on Veteran and Military Affairs was scheduled to have an Executive Session on three bills, including Assembly Bill 641, which would provide funding for the UW MIA Recovery Project. The Chair skipped over the bill on the published agenda, presumably at the request of Speaker Vos' office.

For the fourth consecutive legislative session, Speaker Robin Vos has blocked bipartisan legislation that would help bring Wisconsin's Missing in Action service members home to their families. This legislation provides \$500,000 in both years of the biennium to cover operational expenses specifically for MIA Wisconsin cases.

Wisconsin still has more than 1,500 service members listed as MIA, dating back to World War II. Behind every one of those names is a family that has waited decades for answers and the chance for closure.

Since 2019, Democrats and Republicans have consistently come together to support funding for the University of Wisconsin MIA Recovery and Identification Program, which works to locate, recover, and identify the remains of our fallen heroes. Every session, the proposal has received unanimous, bipartisan support in committee.

And every session, Speaker Vos has refused to allow the bill to reach the Governor's desk.

Following a very positive public hearing last week, Chair William Penterman scheduled an executive session on the bill. At the last minute, it seems he received orders to pull the bill, once again preventing a vote.

This should not be political. Honoring our fallen and giving families closure should be something we can all agree on.

Why does Speaker Vos want to prevent funding for this program? He believes it gives a win to the University of Wisconsin – Madison. The money does not even touch the hands of UW-Madison and the win is solely to the families who have been grieving their loved ones for decades with no answers.

It's time for Speaker Vos to set aside his personal issues with this bill and allow this bipartisan legislation to move forward. Wisconsin's military families deserve better. They deserve answers. They deserve to bring their loved ones home.

Ranking Committee Democrat and lead author, Rep. Christine Sinicki, stated: "I've introduced this bill four times now, three times with Republican coauthors, and it has always gained almost full bipartisan support, including a promise from the Governor to sign it as is. The Speaker has let MIA families down again by blocking this bill."

Rep. Brienne Brown stated: "Leave No One Behind" isn't a slogan to our veterans, it's a promise. Veterans have a clear message: Bringing home the missing in action matters. They deserve answers and closure. The Speaker's decision to kill this popular bill in committee dishonors that obligation."

Rep. Maureen McCarville stated: "The MIA bill is a top priority for Wisconsin's American Legion, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and the VFW. I understand the importance myself of this bill; my uncle was Missing in Action since WW II and not returned to us until 7 decades later."

Rep. Angelito Tenorio stated: "AB 641 has bipartisan support and is the top priority of our veteran community. Nothing justifies it being pulled from the committee agenda at the eleventh hour. We need to pass this bill and bring our Wisconsin heroes home."