



# THE AMERICAN LEGION

## DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN

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### WISCONSIN AMERICAN LEGION ANNOUNCES NEW STATE COMMANDER *Commander Laurel Clewell and Legion Focus on the Loss of Federal Funding for State Homeless Veterans Program*

(Portage, Wis.) – Delegates to the 99<sup>th</sup> annual Wisconsin American Legion convention elected Mrs. Laurel Clewell of Appleton as state Commander over the weekend. Commander Clewell, a retired Army Command Sergeant Major, is only the second woman in the organization’s 100-year history to assume the role.

Her attention was immediately directed toward the plight of homeless veterans in Wisconsin as a letter was issued from the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) last Friday announcing that the agency has immediately stopped accepting homeless veterans at their facilities in King and Union Grove.

“It is troubling to think that homeless veterans will be turned away at the time of their greatest need,” said Clewell. “Our organization endorsed the restoration project at the Historic Soldier’s Home District in Milwaukee for homeless veterans on Thursday, only to receive the news about King and Union Grove the following day. It looks like one step forward and two steps back.”

Commander Clewell is a member of the Johnston-Blessman Post No. 38 in Appleton and most recently has been serving as a state Vice Commander for the Wisconsin American Legion.

The letter from WDVA stated:

*“As part of an ongoing evolution of Federal housing programs, Federal funding has been eliminated for our Veteran Housing and Recovery Programs (VHRPs) at King and Union Grove. Federal authorities have conditionally funded our Chippewa Falls program and it will remain open assuming final funding approval. Current King and Union Grove funding ends in September 2017.”*

The elimination of funding will impact 47 homeless veterans currently at the two facilities with an unclear future for those at the Chippewa Falls facility if funding for that program was also cut.

Clewell responded, “This is an extreme honor to be able to represent this noble veterans organization at this critical time. We will begin immediately to work with the state on addressing this devastating loss of funding and care for our homeless veterans.”

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*The Wisconsin American Legion is the state’s largest veterans’ service organization with over 60,000 members and 507 posts in communities across Wisconsin serving troops, veterans and youth since 1919. For more information on the Legion’s programs and membership, please visit [www.wilegion.org](http://www.wilegion.org).*

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*The mission of The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin is to provide service to veterans, their families and their communities.*