



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P. O. Box 7882 Madison, WI 53707-7882

VIA EMAIL

October 31, 2022

Governor Tony Evers
115 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Governor Evers,

It has been nearly six months since you, and you alone, rescinded the Wisconsin National Guard (WNG) mission at the Veterans Home at Union Grove (Union Grove). At the time, we expressed our concern that our veterans would suffer because of your decision, as WNG was performing vital, if temporary, staffing duties at Union Grove.

Unfortunately, our fears have been confirmed. In August, Union Grove received several federal citations related to the health and care of our veterans. These citations ranged from not investigating or reporting alleged abuse, to not following fall protocols, and failures in training and drug regiment reviews.

The staffing need at Union Grove has only increased this year. Despite having almost half as many residents as in previous years, adjusted staffing levels are even lower than before the WNG was deployed. The direct care registered nurse and licensed practical nurse vacancy rate skyrocketed from near-capacity to almost 14% in just one year. Volunteer participation at the home has plummeted. In short, the medical and social needs are not being met.

A recent report from the MacIver Institute highlights the poor fiscal decisions made by you and the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA). WDVA is paying outside staffing agencies 2-3 times the cost of hiring a new employee. Your administration is using American Rescue Plan Act funds to tear down buildings rather than improving the lives and care of veterans. It is unclear whether WDVA applied for a federal grant this fall to improve recruitment and retention of nurses. It appears that your financial decisions related to Union Grove are counter-productive and shortsighted.

As we did six months ago, we again ask you for your plan to improve conditions at Union Grove. Federal citations concerning the care of our heroes continue. Staffing, resident, and volunteer levels have plummeted. Money is being spent at Union Grove with little to no impact on improving the lives of veterans in our care. Re-deploy the WNG to Union Grove, if you are able. Use ARPA funds to pay for WNG and/or new staff. But you must do something.

Our veterans and their families are suffering because of your poor decisions at Union Grove. What is your game plan? This isn't political, people's lives are at stake.

Sincerely,

Van Wanggaard
State Senator – 21s District

Robin Vos
State Representative – 63rd District