



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

DATE: October 3, 2019
RE: **Testimony on 2019 Assembly Bill 75**
TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs
FROM: Representative Rob Stafsholt and Senator David Craig

Good morning and thank you for taking the time to hear this very important bill on military rifle salutes.

To ensure our fallen military service members are guaranteed their well-deserved honor of a ceremonial rifle salute, we have introduced Assembly Bill 75. Rifle salutes are a long-held military tradition for honoring fallen service members at their funerals, recognizing the sacrifice of past generations at cemeteries on Memorial Day and Veterans Day, and dedicating veteran war memorials. The bill before you today also ensures that law enforcement officers and fire fighters are also properly recognized for the roles they play in protecting Wisconsin families in their times of need.

You might ask why this is needed. Well, under current law, local units of government are prohibited from enforcing firearm regulations relating to the sale, purchase, transfer, ownership, use, keeping, possession, bearing, transportation, licensing, permitting, registration, or taxation. However, local municipalities can ban the discharge of firearms, even with the use of blank ammunition, and that ban extends to funerals and ceremonies.

To list just one example, Madison currently prohibits the discharge of any firearm within the city, unless the Chief of Police waives the prohibition. In an NBC 15 story from earlier this year, after granting permission to discharge a firearm at a funeral for a local veteran, Madison Police Chief Mike Koval stated he “would welcome some state pre-emption on this.” We echo his statement and hope to see this bill move forward by removing red tape, and allowing these celebrations of life and selfless service to continue, without unnecessary government intervention. We must eliminate this approval process and eliminate any potential holdups that could arise at future ceremonies and funerals.

Assembly Bill 75 states that a municipal restriction on the discharge of a firearm may not be enforced if the discharge uses blank rounds and is used to provide military, firefighter, or law enforcement honors at:

- A funeral
- A cemetery on Memorial Day
- A cemetery on Veteran’s Day
- A veteran’s war memorial

We’d like to add that permissions often turn into permits, and permits often end up with a fee associated with them. I cannot think of a more absurd idea than the possibility of requiring permits or charging a fee for one of America’s most patriotic traditions.

Thank you for allowing us to testify today. We encourage you all to join us in supporting this important piece of legislation.