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# JESSE KREMER

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 59<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

*Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Veterans & Military Affairs  
State Representative Jesse Kremer  
November 16, 2017*

Good morning Chairman Skowronski and fellow committee members. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify on Assembly Bill 520, a bill that was introduced at the request of a veteran and a constituent.

This bill serves a two-fold purpose. First, it expands upon the Purple Heart reduced rate conservation license law that is currently in-place. While the Purple Heart medal is a high honor, there are other service awards higher in order of precedence than a Purple Heart. AB520 allows veterans with awards above that of a Purple Heart to also receive the reduced rate conservation license.

Secondly, this bill streamlines the veteran's conservation license process. Rather than requiring a veteran to locate a DNR Service Center to verify their eligibility, a local County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) can determine if the veteran is eligible.

AB 520 provides the opportunity to fully carry out the spirit of the Legislatures intent by recognize the service and sacrifice of more Wisconsin veterans while also creating a more accessible avenue for veterans to participate in our state's rich hunting, trapping, and fishing tradition. I thank you for this opportunity testify before the committee today and urge your support for the "Saluting Our Veterans Act".



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November 16, 2017

The County Veterans Service Officer Association of Wisconsin supports the passage of AB520.

In discussion our executive committee centered around the different types of Medals which have a precedent higher than the Purple Heart. We wanted to ensure that this committee understands these very different awards like comparing apples and oranges.

There are 20 different medals with a higher precedent than the Purple Heart. The Purple Heart is awarded to service members who are wounded while participating in direct or indirect combat operations.

**Of the twenty medals of higher precedence than the Purple Heart:**

- **six require gallantry/valor in combat:**
  - **Medal of Honor**
  - **Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Air Force Cross, Coast Guard Cross**
  - **Silver Star**
- **five require bravery but not in combat:**
  - **Soldiers Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Medal, Airman's Medal, Coast Guard Medal**
  - **Gold Lifesaving Medal (Coast Guard)**
- **Two are due to meritorious service, achievement or valor (V device) in a war theatre**
  - **Distinguished Flying Cross**
  - **Bronze Star**
- **And seven do not occur in a war zone and are most often awarded to senior personnel (officers, warrants and enlisted) for service.**
  - **Defense Distinguished Service Medal**
  - **Distinguished Service Medal, Navy Distinguished Medal, Air Force Distinguished Service Medal, Coast Guard Distinguished Service Medal**
  - **Defenses Superior Service Medal**
  - **Legion of Merit.**

When looking to create or expand benefits we want our legislators to be aware of the eligibility fine points.

In this legislation the expansion of a benefit from solely those veterans injured in combat to include many who have been recognized for their bravery but also those who did their job or excelled at their job (service and achievement).

Many of those awarded for merit or achievement (at this level of precedent) are senior career personnel. For many, this expansion may diminish the prestige of this Wisconsin benefit as it lumps awards for service & achievement with those of bravery and combat injury.

Another reason the prestige of this Wisconsin benefit may appear diminished is the number of veterans impacted. During the Gulf war and Global War on Terror, the Army alone awarded 204,598 Bronze star medals for achievement or service and only 5,521 for valor (indicated with the V device) or 2.7%.

In summary our association supports this bill as it stands. Also we are always available for a discussion on potential military eligibility requirements for proposed legislation.

Submitted by,

Rock A. Larson  
Legislative Committee Chairman



**DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN**

**November 16, 2017**

**Chairman Skowronski, Vice-Chair VanderMeer and Members of the Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs:**

The Veterans of Foreign Wars-Department of Wisconsin supports AB 520-which creates the "Armed Forces Medal". Wisconsin citizens have a long and storied tradition of utilizing and enjoying the wonders of our great outdoors, and many of those citizens are veterans of military service. This legislation expands upon the current Purple Heart Conservation Patron license by adding recipients of medals of merit equal to or greater than the Purple Heart, such as the Bronze Star, Silver Star, Distinguished Service Cross and Medal of Honor, which makes total sense.

For any outdoorsmen and women on this committee, you are well -aware of the peace and serenity experienced when sitting in a tree stand, a duck blind, walking through a field of tall prairie grass, or casting from the bow of a boat while trolling one of our thousands of beautiful lakes. When you are a veteran who has earned one of the above medals the "hard" way, usually in combat, the effects of enjoying our great outdoors is exponentially more impactful on your mental health and well- being. AB 520 will encourage more deserving veterans to purchase the conservation license, who otherwise may not have, and get them outdoors.

On behalf of Commander John Schultz, and all members of the VFW-Department of Wisconsin, I wish to thank the authors of this bill, Representative Kremer and Senator Strobel, as well as members of this very committee who signed on as co-sponsors: Representatives Skowronski, Petryk, Edming, Allen, Ott, Tittl, and Milroy.

With Gratitude,

**Jason E. Johns**

Legislative Committee Member, VFW-Department of Wisconsin