

BOB KULP

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 69TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

May 7th, 2019
Assembly Committee on Local Government

Testimony from Rep. Bob Kulp in favor of passage

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the committee for holding a hearing on Assembly Bill 150.

Several of our constituents reached out to our office voicing concerns about the upkeep of local veteran's graves. Local governments have a hard time finding the funds to maintain the graves of veterans under current Wisconsin Statute 45.85. This bill aims to fix the statute to help local governments.

After discussion with Senator Nass's office we put together this substitute amendment that injects many good ideas into this bill. This bill clarifies what the maintenance of a grave would look like. "Care of graves" means that headstones are free of mildew, clean, upright and level, with the grass mowed below the engravings. Each cemetery can attest in writing stating that the veteran's graves for which they're requesting funds are maintained. Veteran groups would also be allowed to take care of the graves.

This new bill creates a way for local governments and municipalities to receive their extra funding up to \$5 per grave. Funding is capped at \$10,000 per county or \$720,000 statewide in each fiscal year. This funding would come from the Department of Veterans Affairs should the local governments max out. The county's current responsibility for graves would remain the same.

This common sense legislation will help ensure that the memory of those who served will not gradually vanish from our cemeteries. Many lawmakers and groups have contributed to the drafting of this bill. We urge passage of AB 150. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S 69TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Stephen L. Nass

Wisconsin State Senator

AB 150 Increased Funding for the Care of Veterans' Graves

Testimony of Senator Steve Nass

Assembly Committee on Local Government

May 7, 2019 • 400 Northeast, State Capitol

Thank you Chairman Novak for holding a public hearing and allowing me to provide written testimony in support of AB 150. This bill, as amended by ASA1, will increase the amount of dollars available through the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) to reimburse municipalities for the care of veteran's graves. It provides \$720,000 GPR funding in each year of the 2019-21 biennium, for a total cost of \$1.44 million.

It is crucial that we keep our commitment to those who answered the call of duty and served our country by maintaining and honoring their gravesites in the manner they deserve. I have heard concerns raised about the graves of our veterans being neglected in some places, as local governments struggle to find the funds to keep up with their care. This legislation will help ensure that the memory of those who bravely defended our country will not gradually vanish from our cemeteries.

The bill will increase funding for cities, villages, and towns for costs incurred in the care of veterans' graves by \$5 per grave, per year. All municipalities located in the same county may not receive more than a total of \$10,000 per year under the bill. This amount is in addition to funds already required to be provided by counties for care of veterans' graves under current law.

AB 150, as amended by ASA1, contains language to ensure that all additional state funds go directly toward the care and upkeep of our veteran's graves. It defines "care of graves" to mean that headstones are free of mildew, clean, upright, and level, with grass mowed below the engravings. Each municipality would attest in writing that the veterans' graves for which they're requesting funds are maintained as provided in the definition. Finally, veteran groups that would like to volunteer to assist in the care of these graves are allowed to do so.

I realize that this bill and the funds it appropriates will not completely resolve the problem of ensuring every veteran's grave in Wisconsin receives the care it deserves. However, it is a positive step in the right direction by partnering with local governments to help provide the proper care to honor the memory of our fallen heroes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of AB 150. Please contact me or Rep. Bob Kulp if committee members have further questions on this legislation.

"In God We Trust"

11th Senate District

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