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*Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs
State Senator André Jacque
January 16, 2020*

Chairman Skowronski and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill 664, relating to grants to counties for veterans services and making an appropriation.

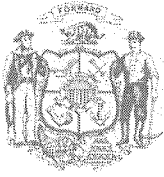
Wisconsin's County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs) perform a vital function in providing outstanding advocacy, support and service at the local level, filling the gaps between other veterans programs.

In 2018, the Wisconsin Association of CVSOs and the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs worked together on reforms to the way the state funds its county veteran service offices.

In 1973, the Wisconsin legislature passed legislation authorizing a grant to counties meeting minimum budget and operating standards to provide for increased levels of service to the veterans of those counties. The grant is entirely voluntary and leaves full operating control to the CVSO office with the county board. The scale of grants available were originally divided into three categories based originally on the equalized assessed property values of the counties. Today it consists of four categories determined by the aggregate general population of each county.

Most counties now use the Wisconsin CVSO Grant in order to fund operations and programs in their CVSO offices, and with increasingly more and more constraints on counties, the smallest counties have seen their ability to fund their departments threatened while facing dramatic losses in property values and losses in revenue. As a result, the current structure of the CVSO grant has left the smallest counties still struggling to meet the financial needs of providing adequate services to their veterans with little additional assistance from the CVSO Grant. The largest counties with the greatest number of taxpayers, greatest and regularly increasing property values, as well as a diverse and growing revenue base, are annually receiving the largest category of CVSO Grant, while the smallest counties in Wisconsin have the greatest ratio of veteran population to total general population; in some instances nearly double the ratio of the largest counties. This means that those smallest counties' available (and shrinking) revenue base is actually working harder, against all other statutory restrictions, to fund their CVSO offices.

Assembly Bill 664 changes the way grant funding is awarded by awarding grants using a formula that first ranks counties based on equalized assessed property values, veteran population density, and veteran population percentage, and then combines the results of those calculations to determine a grant award amount. The bill as submitted for drafting and under Assembly Amendment 1 also increases the CVSO grant to a total of \$2 Million annually which would also ensure that no county would be getting less than what they currently receive.



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This proposal is supported by the Wisconsin County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs), American Legion, VFW – Department of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans.

Thank you for your consideration of Assembly Bill 664.



JAMES W. EDMING

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 87TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 664
Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs
January 16, 2020

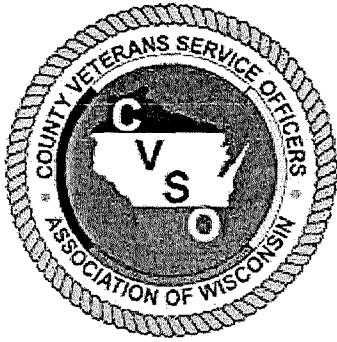
Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for holding this public hearing today and giving me the opportunity to speak to you in support of Assembly Bill (AB) 664. I would like to thank Senator Jacque for working with me on this important legislation.

The idea for this legislation came from the County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) Association of Wisconsin after their discussions with the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) under the previous administration. DVA currently administers a grant program known as the CVSO grant. Funding from this program is awarded to counties to assist in providing services for veterans. Counties use this grant funding to help pay for services and operations in their veteran service offices. Currently, awards under the CVSO grant are based only on county population totals and other factors, such as the number of veterans served and county property values, are not considered.

AB 664 reforms the CVSO grant program by creating a formula for grant distributions. This formula ranks counties by equalized property values, veteran population density, and veteran population percentage to calculate the grant amount. This change will help get more funding to counties in need. I have spoken with a number of CVSO officers in my area who have told me about the positive impact this will have on their counties.

We have introduced an amendment to correct an error that occurred during the drafting process. This amendment increases the appropriation for the CVSO grant to a total of \$2 million. This appropriation was mistakenly left out during the drafting process. This increased funding will help ensure that, under the new grant formula created by this bill, no county would receive less than the amount they are receiving now.

Mr. Chairman and members, I ask for your support of AB 664 and thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today.



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January 15, 2019

Chairman Skowronski and Committee Members, thank you for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill 664, relating to grants to counties and tribes for veterans services and making an appropriation.

The current dollar amounts for the grants to counties and tribes for improvement of [veterans] services was established in 1997. The current grant award amounts are based on aggregate general population of each county. The largest counties with the greatest number of taxpayers, greatest and regularly increasing property values, as well as a diverse and growing revenue base, are annually receiving the largest category of CVSO Grant, \$13,000. The smallest counties in Wisconsin have the greatest ratio of veteran population to total general population; in some instances nearly double the ratio of the largest counties while only receiving \$8500. This means that those smallest counties' that need the greatest amount of external resources to help their Veterans are getting the least help. This leaves Veterans and their family members of Wisconsin's smaller counties at a disadvantage in receiving the services their sacrifices for this nation have earned. Though larger counties also require increased resources to meet the needs of their larger Veteran populations, a more equitable method of distributing grant money is required.

Last year, the CVSO Association of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs worked together to reform the way the state helps to fund its county veteran service offices. Assembly Bill 664 is the result of that work. It changes the way grant funding is awarded by awarding grants using a formula that first ranks counties based on equalized assessed property values, veteran population density, and veteran population percentage, and then combines the results of those calculations to determine a grant award amount. The bill also increases the CVSO grant to a total of \$2 Million annually, and no county would be getting less than what they currently receive.

Thank you for your consideration of Assembly Bill 664.

Nathan M. Bond
Legislative Committee Chair
CVSO Association of Wisconsin



Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs

Tony Evers, Governor | Mary M. Kolar, Secretary

To: Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs
From: Kathy Still, Assistant Deputy Secretary
Date: January 16, 2020
Re: Assembly Bill 664

County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers are crucial partners in the network that works to deliver services, programs, and benefits to the nearly 345,000 veterans of Wisconsin.

Through the annual County Veteran Service Grant, the Department supplements required county funding of these offices. The annual appropriation of \$761,000 has remained unchanged since 1997. An inflationary increase would be just over \$1.2 million. Assembly Bill 664 does not affect the funding level or the method of distribution related to the similar grant that supports tribal veteran services.

Grant funds are distributed to counties based on each county's overall population.

<u>Population</u>	<u>Grant Level</u>
Less than 20,000	\$8,500
20,000 to 45,499	\$10,000
45,500 to 74,999	\$11,500
75,000 or more	\$13,000

In assessing the formula proposed by AB 664, the Department has determined the changes proposed in the bill may have a disproportionate affect. For example, the counties with the highest populations of veterans, Milwaukee and Dane, would see minimal increases while the grant to Ashland County would significantly increase.

<u>County</u>	<u>Veteran Population</u>	<u>Current Grant Level</u>	<u>AB 664 Grant Level</u>
Milwaukee	42,477	\$13,000	\$14,650
Dane	22,679	\$13,000	\$13,889
Ashland	1,239	\$8,500	\$34,247

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for Veterans Analysis (NCVAS) and Statistics provides annual official estimates of the veteran population in every county in the nation. The committee may want to consider amending the bill to explicitly identify the NCVAS as the source for veteran population data.

COUNTY BASE DATA				EVALUATION CRITERIA (Rank of 72 is more favorable than rank of 1)							CUMULATIVE RANKINGS		E TOTAL GRANT A	
County	Area (sq mi)	Population	Veteran Population (2017 est) (Fed VA)	Veterans as % of Population (= D / C)	Rank	Veteran Pop Density (= D / B)	Rank	Equalized Assessed Property Values (Percent to Total of All Property)	Rank	Weighted Rank (Equalized Assessed Value Is Twice as Important) (= J x 2)	Cumulative Rank	Percent of Cumulative Rank	\$2M	Current Grant Amount
				(Higher = More Need)	(Higher = More Need)	(Lower = More Need)		(= F + H + K)	(= L / 10512)					
DANE	1,197.24	488,073	23,983	4.91	2	20.03	65	11.56	2	4	71	0.007	\$13,521	\$13,000
MILWAUKEE	241.4	947,735	45,832	4.84	1	189.86	72	11.68	1	2	75	0.007	\$14,283	\$13,000
WAUKESHA	549.57	389,891	21,306	5.46	3	38.77	71	10.3	3	6	80	0.008	\$15,235	\$13,000
WALWORTH	555.13	102,228	6,425	6.28	13	11.57	59	2.69	9	18	90	0.009	\$17,140	\$13,000
OZAUKEE	233.08	86,395	4,797	5.55	4	20.58	66	2.23	11	22	92	0.009	\$17,520	\$13,000
BROWN	529.71	248,007	15,959	6.43	19	30.13	68	3.97	4	8	95	0.009	\$18,092	\$13,000
KENOSHA	271.99	166,426	10,308	6.19	12	37.90	70	2.79	7	14	96	0.009	\$18,282	\$13,000
WASHINGTON	430.7	131,887	8,382	6.36	16	19.46	64	2.78	8	16	96	0.009	\$18,282	\$13,000
RACINE	332.5	195,408	12,452	6.37	18	37.45	69	2.79	6	12	99	0.009	\$18,854	\$13,000
OUTAGAMIE	637.52	176,695	11,711	6.63	27	18.37	63	2.83	5	10	100	0.010	\$19,044	\$13,000
SHEBOYGAN	511.27	115,507	6,949	6.02	10	13.59	60	1.76	15	30	100	0.010	\$19,044	\$13,000
ST CROIX	722.33	84,345	5,361	6.36	17	7.42	52	1.75	16	32	101	0.010	\$19,234	\$13,000
MARATHON	1,544.98	134,063	9,339	6.97	33	6.04	50	2.01	13	26	109	0.010	\$20,758	\$13,000
GRANT	1,146.85	51,208	3,034	5.93	8	2.65	24	0.61	40	80	112	0.011	\$21,329	\$11,500
LA CROSSE	451.69	114,638	7,486	6.53	23	16.57	62	1.83	14	28	113	0.011	\$21,520	\$13,000
FOND DU LAC	719.55	101,633	6,675	6.57	24	9.28	55	1.41	18	36	115	0.011	\$21,901	\$13,000
ROCK	718.14	160,331	11,893	7.29	30	16.28	61	2.07	12	24	115	0.011	\$21,901	\$13,000
EAU CLAIRE	637.98	98,736	6,522	6.61	26	10.22	57	1.58	17	34	117	0.011	\$22,281	\$13,000
DODGE	875.63	88,759	5,749	6.48	21	6.56	51	1.21	24	48	120	0.011	\$22,853	\$13,000
SAUK	830.9	61,976	4,453	7.19	37	5.36	45	1.35	19	38	120	0.011	\$22,853	\$11,500
PORTAGE	800.68	70,019	4,614	6.59	25	5.76	47	1.09	25	50	122	0.012	\$23,234	\$11,500
CLARK	1,209.82	34,690	1,954	5.63	6	1.61	13	0.4	53	106	125	0.012	\$23,805	\$10,000
WINNEBAGO	434.49	166,994	12,161	7.28	38	27.99	67	2.45	10	20	125	0.012	\$23,805	\$13,000
CALUMET	318.24	48,971	2,794	5.70	7	8.78	54	0.76	33	66	127	0.012	\$24,186	\$11,500
PIERCE	573.75	41,019	2,441	5.95	9	4.25	42	0.62	39	78	129	0.012	\$24,567	\$10,000
DOOR	481.98	27,785	2,260	8.13	50	4.69	43	1.35	20	40	133	0.013	\$25,329	\$10,000
JEFFERSON	556.47	83,686	5,873	7.02	34	10.55	58	1.32	21	42	134	0.013	\$25,519	\$13,000
GREEN	583.96	36,842	2,220	6.03	11	3.80	39	0.56	43	86	136	0.013	\$25,900	\$10,000
DUNN	850.11	43,857	2,826	6.44	20	3.32	33	0.58	42	84	137	0.013	\$26,090	\$10,000
ONEIDA	1,112.97	35,998	3,526	9.80	63	3.17	31	1.31	22	44	138	0.013	\$26,281	\$10,000
VILAS	856.6	21,430	2,278	10.63	67	2.66	25	1.3	23	46	138	0.013	\$26,281	\$10,000
COLUMBIA	765.53	56,833	4,185	7.36	41	5.47	46	1.02	26	52	139	0.013	\$26,471	\$11,500
IOWA	762.58	23,687	1,502	6.34	15	1.97	16	0.38	54	108	139	0.013	\$26,471	\$10,000
SAWYER	1,257.31	16,557	1,594	9.63	60	1.27	8	0.67	36	72	140	0.013	\$26,662	\$8,500
CHIPPEWA	1,008.37	62,415	4,769	7.64	44	4.73	44	1.01	27	54	142	0.014	\$27,042	\$11,500
POLK	913.96	44,205	3,479	7.87	46	3.81	40	0.86	30	60	146	0.014	\$27,804	\$10,000
TREMPEALEAU	732.97	28,816	1,867	6.48	22	2.55	22	0.42	51	102	146	0.014	\$27,804	\$10,000
MANITOWOC	589.08	81,442	5,731	7.04	35	9.73	56	1.01	28	56	147	0.014	\$27,995	\$13,000
LAFAYETTE	633.59	16,836	939	5.58	5	1.48	12	0.22	66	132	149	0.014	\$28,376	\$8,500
BARRON	862.71	45,870	3,575	7.79	45	4.14	41	0.78	32	64	150	0.014	\$28,566	\$11,500
OCONTO	997.99	37,660	3,070	8.15	51	3.08	29	0.72	35	70	150	0.014	\$28,566	\$10,000

DOUGLAS	1,304.14	44,159	3,725	8.44	55	2.86	27	0.65	37	74	156	0.015	\$29,709	\$10,000
WOOD	793.12	74,749	5,918	7.92	47	7.46	53	0.95	29	58	158	0.015	\$30,090	\$11,500
TAYLOR	974.88	20,689	1,400	6.77	28	1.44	11	0.28	60	120	159	0.015	\$30,280	\$10,000
BAYFIELD	1,477.86	15,014	1,512	10.07	65	1.02	5	0.49	45	90	160	0.015	\$30,470	\$8,500
SHAWANO	893.06	41,949	3,154	7.52	43	3.53	36	0.59	41	82	161	0.015	\$30,661	\$10,000
MARINETTE	1,399.35	41,749	4,341	10.40	66	3.10	30	0.73	34	68	164	0.016	\$31,232	\$10,000
WAUPACA	747.71	52,410	4,385	8.37	53	5.87	49	0.79	31	62	164	0.016	\$31,232	\$11,500
VERNON	791.58	29,773	2,056	6.90	32	2.60	23	0.37	55	110	165	0.016	\$31,423	\$10,000
KEWAUNEE	342.52	20,574	1,291	6.28	14	3.77	38	0.32	57	114	166	0.016	\$31,613	\$10,000
GREEN LAKE	349.44	19,051	1,309	6.87	30	3.75	37	0.43	50	100	167	0.016	\$31,803	\$8,500
LANGLADE	870.64	19,977	1,590	7.96	48	1.83	15	0.32	56	112	175	0.017	\$33,327	\$8,500
BUFFALO	671.64	13,587	957	7.05	36	1.43	10	0.22	65	130	176	0.017	\$33,517	\$8,500
MENOMINEE	357.61	4,232	291	6.88	31	0.81	1	0.06	72	144	176	0.017	\$33,517	\$8,500
BURNETT	821.85	15,457	1,746	11.30	70	2.13	19	0.5	44	88	177	0.017	\$33,708	\$8,500
WASHBURN	797.11	15,911	1,600	10.06	64	2.01	17	0.47	48	96	177	0.017	\$33,708	\$8,500
LINCOLN	878.97	28,743	2,421	8.42	54	2.75	26	0.45	49	98	178	0.017	\$33,898	\$10,000
RICHLAND	586.15	18,021	1,226	6.80	29	2.09	18	0.22	67	134	181	0.017	\$34,470	\$8,500
ASHLAND	1,045.04	16,157	1,313	8.12	49	1.26	7	0.23	63	126	182	0.017	\$34,660	\$8,500
JACKSON	987.72	20,449	1,691	8.27	52	1.71	14	0.31	58	116	182	0.017	\$34,660	\$10,000
WAUSHARA	626.15	24,496	2,139	8.73	57	3.42	34	0.48	46	92	183	0.017	\$34,851	\$10,000
PRICE	1,254.38	14,159	1,261	8.91	59	1.01	4	0.26	61	122	185	0.018	\$35,231	\$8,500
RUSK	913.59	14,755	1,282	8.69	56	1.40	9	0.23	62	124	189	0.018	\$35,993	\$8,500
CRAWFORD	570.66	16,644	1,226	7.36	42	2.15	20	0.23	64	128	190	0.018	\$36,184	\$8,500
JUNEAU	766.93	26,664	2,363	8.86	58	3.08	28	0.4	52	104	190	0.018	\$36,184	\$10,000
MONROE	900.78	44,673	5,199	11.64	71	5.77	48	0.63	38	76	195	0.019	\$37,136	\$10,000
ADAMS	645.65	20,875	2,259	10.82	68	3.50	35	0.48	47	94	197	0.019	\$37,517	\$10,000
FOREST	1,014.07	9,304	905	9.73	61	0.89	3	0.21	68	136	200	0.019	\$38,088	\$8,500
PEPIN	231.98	7,469	546	7.32	40	2.36	21	0.12	71	142	203	0.019	\$38,659	\$8,500
IRON	758.17	5,916	655	11.07	69	0.86	2	0.18	69	138	209	0.020	\$39,802	\$8,500
MARQUETTE	455.6	15,404	1,508	9.79	62	3.31	32	0.3	59	118	212	0.020	\$40,373	\$8,500
FLORENCE	488.2	4,423	553	12.50	71	1.13	6	0.12	70	140	217	0.021	\$41,325	\$8,500

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