



JAMES W. EDMING

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 87TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 38
Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities
March 4, 2021

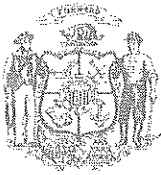
Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for holding this public hearing today and giving me the opportunity to speak to you in support of Assembly Bill (AB) 38. I would like to thank Senator Jacque for working with me on this important legislation.

As our men and women in the armed forces transition from the military back in to civilian life, many look at continuing their education at one of our state's outstanding public universities or technical colleges. AB 38 helps reduce the financial burden on these folks by waving the application fee charged when applying at these institutions. While the cost of a college application fee may not seem like a big deal, for a veteran struggling financially it could be the difference that keeps them from applying for college in the first place or to the educational institution that they really want to attend.

Currently application fees are being waived at many institutions due to COVID-19. However, once this waiver period ends the application fee at most UW System institutions will be \$25. If a veteran wishes to apply at five of our state's four-year campuses this would cost them \$125 just to apply with no guarantee of admission. If a veteran really wants to attend UW-Madison where admission is more difficult but can only afford the application fees to apply at a couple of campuses, they may decide to apply elsewhere where it is more likely for them to be admitted. When someone who has served our country is looking at continuing their education, they should be able to apply to any school that they wish to attend, regardless of their financial situation.

AB 38 says thank you to those who have served our nation by allowing our veterans and service members to apply to any of our state's public colleges and universities without having to worry about paying the application fee. Also, by encouraging our veterans to attend college in Wisconsin it increases the likelihood that they stay in our state and become part of our workforce after they complete their education.

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



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Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities

Senator André Jacque

March 4, 2021

Chairman Murphy and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill 38, relating exempting veterans and members of the armed forces from admissions application fees at University of Wisconsin System schools and technical colleges.

This proposal waives application fees for veterans and members of the U.S. armed forces applying for admission to University of Wisconsin System schools or technical colleges, as they have often been found to become a barrier to a veteran even pursuing education at a higher level. While many believe that veterans must have the financial means to apply since they have many educational benefits available to them that is frequently not the case.

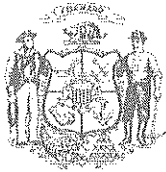
This proposal would apply to the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and UW System schools for all Veterans and Service Members who apply to any Associate or Bachelor Degree program, certificate or technical diploma. In addition to being a sign of gratitude for their service, waiving the application fee for Veterans and Service Members may bolster college recruitment of potential full-time Student Veterans.

When speaking with the office of Veterans Affairs at Eastern Kentucky University, a campus that waives the application fees for Veterans, the staff mentioned that not only are potential Student Veterans appreciative of the fee waiver, but it also removes the initial financial burden that sometimes keeps Veterans from applying to college in the first place.

Jackie Helgeson, Veteran Services Manager at Western Technical College, also stated that “Western waives application fees for Active Duty service members and their family members and Low income adults.” A Veteran Advisor at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC), SFC Jeremy Galica, has found that in several cases Veterans are requesting application fee waivers because of either a low annual household income or because the Veteran’s family receives some other form of public assistance.

Based on the number of new certifications to the Department of Veterans Affairs for the purposes of paying federal educational benefits during the 2013 academic year, there were 114 new Student Veterans enrolled at NWTC who started using VA benefits. If each of them applied to an Associate’s degree, the college would be waiving only \$3,420.

Under the bill, as with existing Wisconsin higher education statutes, a Veteran or Service Member “means a person who has served or is serving on active duty under honorable conditions in the U.S. armed forces, in forces incorporated as a part of the U.S. armed forces, in the National Guard, or in a reserve component of the U.S. armed forces.”



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

Thank you for your consideration of Assembly Bill 38.