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Testimony before the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Veteran and Military Affairs

Senator André Jacque

Senate Bill 175

April 15, 2025

Colleagues on the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Veteran and Military Affairs:

Our veterans defended our freedom by putting their lives on the line, and many come home wounded, suffering permanent physical and mental disabilities that they must endure for the rest of their lives.

Often, these veterans require specific modifications to their homes so that they can live as safely, comfortably, and independently as possible.

This legislation would make it easier for a disabled veteran and their caregiver to retrofit their residence by reducing the building permit fee charged by a political subdivision by 75 percent or \$500 (whichever reduction is less) for improvements to a residence of a disabled veteran, if the improvements are necessary to accommodate their disability. Easing the costs of accommodating a veteran's disability is the least we can do in return for their service.

This legislation is a common-sense way to better meet our ongoing commitment to those who have sacrificed and suffered so much for us. Extremely similar legislation was enacted last year in Illinois after passing both the Illinois General Assembly and Senate on unanimous roll call votes, and I appreciate Paul Fisk from the Wisconsin Department of the American Legion for bringing it to my attention and the bi-partisan co-sponsorship this legislation has received.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 175. I'm happy to answer any questions committee members may have.



PATRICK SNYDER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 85th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 175

Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Veteran and Military Affairs

April 15th, 2025

Chairman Jacque and members of the Committee:

Thank you for taking the time to allow me to testify on Senate Bill 175. This bill is important because many of our disabled veterans need modifications to their homes to accommodate their disabilities. Such improvements help these veterans live safely, comfortably, and independently. This legislation eases the financial burden of making these accessibility modifications.

Senate Bill 175 helps veterans by reducing the fee a political subdivision charges to a disabled veteran by 75% or \$500 (whichever is less). This reduction would be restricted to improvements necessary because of disability to the veteran's or their caretaker's primary residence.

Our veterans risk their lives and put their bodies on the line in service of our country. This bill is way to show our support and gratitude for those whose service and sacrifice has resulted in a disability. It is the least we can do for our veterans.

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Founded on four pillars:
• Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
• National Security
• Americanism
• Children & Youth

The mission of The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin is to provide service to veterans, their families and their communities.

April 15, 2025

Chairman Jacque and members of the Natural Resources, veterans, and Military Affairs Labor Committee. I am Paul Fisk Legislative Chair of The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin. The American Legion is the largest Veterans Service Organization in the Nation. In Wisconsin, we have over 50,000 members. We have just over a century of advocating for veterans and service members.

I would like to thank Senator Jacque and Representative Synder for their work on advancing this bill. I also want to say thank you to the League of Wisconsin Municipalities for their input on the proposal. It is better because of the input they provided.

SB-175 is more restrictive than the Illinois law that took effect last January. Illinois does not limit the benefit. We are limiting the benefit to lessor of 75% of the building permit free or \$500.00. Like Illinois this only applies to disabled veterans and the project must be to accommodate the veterans disability. Additionally the veteran or the caretaker must own the home.

According to the USDVA in FY 2022-2023 there were 87,105 veterans receiving disability payments and residing in WI. 46,680 or 56% had disability ratings of 50 % or greater. In this proposal we are limiting the benefit to those who have a disability that requires accommodation.

Late last year the Congressional Budget Office released a report titled Income of Working Age Veterans receiving Disability Compensation. Their findings were the higher the disability rating the greater the difference between disabled veteran income and non disabled veterans. The study did not consider non veterans.

There is no fiscal impact on state finances, the impact on local government finances will vary from place to place. The critical factors being the fees charged for building permits and the number of disabled veterans requiring accommodation.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Fisk".

Paul Fisk
Legislative Chair
The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin

Public Act 103-0621

SB2751 Enrolled

LRB103 36152 AWJ 66244 b

AN ACT concerning local government.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 5. The Counties Code is amended by adding Section 5-12022 as follows:

(55 ILCS 5/5-12022 new)

Sec. 5-12022. Building permit fee for veterans with a disability.

(a) A veteran with a disability or the veteran's caregiver shall not be charged any building permit fee for improvements to the residence of the veteran with a disability if the improvements are required to accommodate a disability of the veteran. Nothing in this subsection changes the obligation of any person to submit to the county applications, forms, or other paperwork to obtain a building permit. A veteran or caregiver must provide proof of veteran status and attest to the fact that the improvements to the residence are required to accommodate the veteran's disability. Proof of veteran status is to be construed liberally, and veteran status shall include service in the Armed Forces of the United States, National Guard, or the reserves of the Armed Forces of the United States.

(b) What constitutes proof of veteran status shall be

determined by the county. The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs may not adjudicate any dispute arising under paragraph (a).

(c) A home rule county may not regulate building permit fees in a manner inconsistent with this Section. This Section is a limitation under subsection (i) of Section 6 of Article VII of the Illinois Constitution on the concurrent exercise by home rule units of powers and functions exercised by the State.

Section 10. The Township Code is amended by adding Section 110-17 as follows:

(60 ILCS 1/110-17 new)

Sec. 110-17. Building permit fee for veterans with a disability. A veteran with a disability or the veteran's caregiver shall not be charged any building permit fee for improvements to the residence of the veteran with a disability if the improvements are required to accommodate a disability of the veteran. Nothing in this Section changes the obligation of any person to submit to the township applications, forms, or other paperwork to obtain a building permit. A veteran or caregiver must provide proof of veteran status and attest to the fact that the improvements to the residence are required to accommodate the veteran's disability. Proof of veteran status is to be construed liberally, and veteran status shall

include service in the Armed Forces of the United States, National Guard, or the reserves of the Armed Forces of the United States. What constitutes proof of veteran status shall be determined by the township. The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs may not adjudicate any dispute arising under this paragraph.

Section 15. The Illinois Municipal Code is amended by adding Section 11-13-28 as follows:

(65 ILCS 5/11-13-28 new)

Sec. 11-13-28. Building permit fee for veterans with a disability.

(a) A veteran with a disability or the veteran's caregiver shall not be charged any building permit fee for improvements to the residence of the veteran with a disability if the improvements are required to accommodate a disability of the veteran. Nothing in this subsection changes the obligation of any person to submit to the municipality applications, forms, or other paperwork to obtain a building permit. A veteran or caregiver must provide proof of veteran status and attest to the fact that the improvements to the residence are required to accommodate the veteran's disability. Proof of veteran status is to be construed liberally, and veteran status shall include service in the Armed Forces of the United States, National Guard, or the reserves of the Armed Forces of the

United States.

(b) What constitutes proof of veteran status shall be determined by the municipality. The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs may not adjudicate any dispute arising under paragraph (a).

(c) A home rule municipality may not regulate building permit fees in a manner inconsistent with this Section. This Section is a limitation under subsection (i) of Section 6 of Article VII of the Illinois Constitution on the concurrent exercise by home rule units of powers and functions exercised by the State.