January 28, 2025

Chair Jacque and members of Senate Natural Resources, Veterans, & Military Affairs Committee.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the authors of SB-2 Senator Jacque (R- De Pere) and Representative Murphy (R- Appleton) and their staffs bringing this bill back this session.

The American Legion is the largest Veterans Service Organization in the Nation. In Wisconsin, we have over 45,000 members. You will find American Legion Posts in all 72 counties of the. state We were chartered by Congress in 1919 and have been advocating for veterans, their families and serving their communities ever since.

SB-2 expands a limited number of Wisconsin Veteran Benefits to those who served in Laos in support of the United States during the Viet Nam War. These benefits recognize these brothers in arms for their service. If this becomes law they will be entitled to:

1. Use the Veteran owned Business Logo,

2. Fee remission at both the Technical School System and the University System,

3. Resident tuition status in the University of Wisconsin System.

This expansion of benefits only applies to those who were naturalized pursuant to the Hmong Naturalization Act of 2000. This act provided an exemption from the English language requirement for naturalization if specific standards were met:

A. The refugee was admitted into the country from Laos pursuant to section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act

B. Served with a special guerrilla Unit or irregular forces operating from a base in Laos in support of the United States Military at any time during a period beginning February 28, 1961 and ending September 18, 1978.

C. Be the spouse of someone who meets sec the criteria found in A and B

The total number of exemptions granted was limited to no more than 45,000.

The reasoning behind the exemption contained in the Hmong Veterans’ Act of 2000 is set forth in the Report from the Committee on the Judiciary to the House of Representatives (Attached). The English language requirements were waived because the applicants did not have a written language at the time, and they were at the age where they would have been in school if they were not in combat. This bill is recognition of the service rendered by these youth to the United States.