

The American Legion,
Department of Wisconsin
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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.

Mr. Chair and members of the Committee,

Thank you for holding this hearing on AB-245. I want to thank the authors and their staffs for the work they have put into this proposal.

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.

"to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan"

A Lincoln
March 4, 1865

These words from the closing of President Lincoln's 2nd Inaugural Address continue to challenge us as both a state and nation. The American Legion accepted this challenge over a century. One of our four founding pillars is Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation. This includes their families.

It is from this foundation that we come before you today in support of AB-245. This proposal reduces the threshold for claiming the disabled veteran and surviving spouse property tax credit from a 100% disability rating to 70%. I have included for you information on similar programs from our neighboring states. Each state provides a different benefit. Wisconsin would not be the first or only state in the region to have a threshold below 100%.

A similar bill was heard in the last legislature. A question was raised by committee members in the Assembly concerning means testing. This is not only unacceptable, it does not comply with the uniformity clause of the Wisconsin Constitution. Some of our neighbors do have limits; however, they do not have our constitution.

A member of Post 216 in Lodi is a Viet Nam era veteran. He served in country in the mid to late 60's. Norm supported his family as a custodian in the local school system. His wife cared for children. He has diabetes, an agent orange presumptive disease. He also has stage four lung cancer. He was finally given a disability rating of 100%. This property tax credit would have made a difference earlier than it did if this was enacted previously. The Lodi School District is a property rich lower income district. This affected his property tax bill each year.

The veterans affected by this proposal reside in every legislative district in the state. The data is in your folder for FY 2019.

These individuals answered the call of the nation. They were willing to make the sacrifices asked of them and go where the nation sent them. It is now our responsibility to care for them. The state has many benefits to assist returning veterans rejoin society. Many of these are related to job skills and education. However, this is our opportunity to assist individuals survive. According to federal data, veterans earn less than non-veterans. Where does this leave our disabled veterans and female veterans who sacrificed so much?