

Disabled American Veterans Department of Wisconsin

Program Improvement and Cost Savings: A Model for Wis. Veterans

Key Points

- Expansion of Wisconsin G.I. Bill tuition remission; elimination of duplicative areas of VTF-funded VetEd/Retraining Grant.
 - Shift eligibility determination for state veterans' programs and services to CVSOs for eligibility determination for all state programs, localizing it at the county level and eliminating state backlogs.
 - Expansion of Museum funding and activities.
 - Enhancement of Division of Veterans Homes as called for in Pathways study.
 - Pay for these positive changes through consolidation of non-program, non-service related administrative functions to DOA.
 - Shift revenue-generating loan programs to WHEDA for greater efficiency, with all "profits" returned to Veterans Trust Fund.
 - Shift Military Funeral Honors to the Wis. National Guard, replacing VTF-paid funeral honors teams with uniformed National Guard personnel.
 - Elevate roles of Secretary, Board, Council on Veterans Programs.
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Plan Components

WDVA Wisconsin Veterans Museum: Fully fund with GPR, PR.

- Create a separate appropriations funding line item for the Wisconsin Veterans Museum.
- Fully fund WVM with GPR and PR.
- Add one fundraising staff position.
- Initiate a planning task force to consider replicating successful fiscal initiatives of the Milwaukee Public Museum, other models. Consider partial privatization, consider fee generation, etc.

WDVA Division of Veterans' Reintegration and Advancement (DVRA): Consolidate to create this new division, strengthen existing programs, create efficiencies, and eliminate duplication.

- **Consolidate the existing, inefficient two divisions into one.** Consolidate the existing Division of Veterans Benefits and Division of Veterans Services (DOVS) into a new, stronger, more efficient administrative unit. The consolidation would formalize what has been the practice at WDVA

since at least 2005. Savings: Eliminate one administrative assistant position; Eliminate one division administrator position [classified versus unclassified].

- **Eliminate duplicative Employment and Training functions.** These functions are already being effectively performed by veterans employment service staff (DVOPs/LVERs) at DWD. Savings: x positions.
- **Create new Bureau of Reintegration & Outreach Services (ROS).** Include regional coordinators, tribal coordinator, Mission Welcome Home, I Owe You staff, Women veterans coordinator. Add public affairs position(s), events management staff. Require personnel to be veterans, preferably disabled veterans.
- **DD-214 Database Creation:** Initiate new effort to create relational database of all veterans DD-214s, starting at the most recently received and working backwards, that can be used for semi-automated eligibility determination and direct mail outreach.
- **WisGIBill.** Expand to 10 year residency. Roll most of VetEd program into it, retaining the non-duplicative portions of VetEd and the Retraining Grant. Eligibility determined by CVSO on approved WDVA form.
- **Add Bureau of Veterans Claims.** Shift this administrative unit to this new division. Require claims assistants to be service-disabled veterans.

WDVA Division of Veterans Homes (DVH): Strengthen, consolidate, make efficiencies

- **Strengthen division leadership.** Create a three-person Division administration team, led by a Wisconsin-licensed nursing home administrator as recommended by the Pathways report.
- **Create efficiencies.** Consolidate procurement, HR, fiscal, other administrative services. Elevate them to be Division staff. Keep them located at the Homes.
- **Capital Projects.** Add capital projects staff (Position #xxxx) to DVH

WDVA Division of Administration: Eliminate the division; consolidate functions to the Wisconsin Department of Administration.

- Consolidate nearly all administrative functions to DOA, saving \$xxx in VTF, MLRF, and HOMES funds. Provide services from DOA to WDVA at no cost to WDVA.
- Purchasing services. Consolidate/transfer to DOA.
- Fiscal Services. Consolidate/transfer to DOA.
- Payroll. Consolidate/transfer to DOA.
- Human Resources. Consolidate with DOA.
- Information services. Transfer to DVH
- Eligibility: Transfer to CVSOs. Develop form for eligibility determination. Develop regular or online training course on eligibility using existing WDVA eligibility determination staff before eliminating their positions. Statutorily authorize veterans to go to any CVSO office they choose. Require CVSO tracking on approved tracking form/format of county of residence of completed eligibility determinations.

WDVA Office of Policy, Planning, Budget (OPPB): Eliminate, consolidate with DOA and DVH.

- Transfer capital projects staff position #xxxx to DVH.
- Consolidate the rest to DOA.

WDVA Office of Legal Services. Eliminate, consolidate with DOA.

- Eliminate WDVA's office of legal services. Savings: 2 attorney positions, xxx administrative positions.
- Create shared legal services office within DOA to provide no-cost legal counsel to WDVA.

Board of Veterans Affairs.

- Elevate Board's role to advising the Governor and agency heads of all agencies that administer veterans' programs and services.
- Expand Board from seven to nine members and make the Board regionally oriented with one member per Wisconsin Congressional district (with one at large member), fulfilling a campaign promise of Gov. Walker.
- Require Board members to meet federal Title 38 U.S.C. definition of veteran.
- Statutorily remove Board's regulatory, policymaking authorities.

WDVA Secretary.

- Statutorily require Secretary to meet federal Title 38 U.S.C. definition of veteran, and preferably a service-disabled veteran.
- Statutorily require Deputy Secretary to meet federal Title 38 U.S.C. definition of veteran, and preferably a service-disabled veteran.
- Statutorily require Executive Assistant to meet federal Title 38 U.S.C. definition of veteran, and preferably a service-disabled veteran.
- Elevate WDVA Secretary to a statutorily permanent position in the Governor's cabinet.
- Make appointment of the Secretary an executive appointment of the Governor, with public confirmation by the Senate. Prior to any Senate confirmation hearings, require Secretary candidate(s) to appear before the statutory Council on Veterans Programs for a public interview.

Council on Veterans Programs.

- Elevate Council's role to advising the Governor and agency heads of all agencies that administer veterans' programs and services.
- Require prospective organizational additions to Council's membership to appear before the Council on Veterans Programs for a public interview. Require the COVP to prepare and submit a report regarding the prospective organization to the Legislature.

OTHER AGENCY SUMMARY

- **Eligibility Determination:** transfer to CVSOs. Develop form for eligibility determination. Develop regular or online training course on eligibility using existing WDVA eligibility determination staff before eliminating their positions.
- **Veterans' Park Passes:** DNR/CSVSOs. Continue CSVSO eligibility determination for DNR park passes.
- **Wisconsin G.I. Bill Tuition Remission:** UWS/WTCS/HEAB. Implement CSVSO eligibility determination/certification.
- **Wisconsin Property Tax Credit:** Institute veterans lottery to help pay costs of this GPR-funded property tax relief program. Consider expanding it to 70 percent or greater service-disabled veterans.
- **Veterans License Plates: DOT/DMV.** New: Certificate of eligibility provided by WDVA approved CSVSO eligibility determination, thereby eliminating need for DD-214 discharge papers, which contain Social Security Numbers, from being obtained, analyzed, or retained by the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV). License plates, including disabled plates, continue to be issued by DMV, with new WDVA eligibility certification.
- **Veterans Employment Services: DWD.** DWD continues to effectively administer veterans employment and training services. DWD absorbs WDVA's employment & training staff. Mandate federal/state benefits/programs/services training for all DVOPs/LVERs. [*Consider transferring this DWD division to WDVA*].
- **Loan Programs: WHEDA.** Transfer all WDVA revenue-generating loan programs [Primary Mortgage Loan Program (PML), Home Improvement Loan (HILP), to be administered by the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA), where they will be managed with greater effectiveness and efficiencies with all excess revenues (i.e. "profits") transferred to the Veterans Trust Fund. Rename veterans loan program, "WisVet" home loan. Savings: xxx positions.
- **Funeral Honors: DMA/WING.** Transfer Military Funeral Honors Program (MFHP) to the Department of Military Affairs/Wis. National Guard. Retain program administrative staff with the program. Eliminate all paid MFHP burial honors functions staff positions; fill staffing with Wis. National Guard uniformed personnel. Institute accountability by serial number for post/chapter-held MFH weapons; Create a new weapons turn-in program for old, unused weapons. Savings: xxx positions.
- **Grants administration: DOA.** Transfer grants to DOA, including CSVSO grants, transportation grants to counties and DAV van program, etc. Institute reporting standards for CSVSO grants. Awards made by the Governor.
- **State Approving Agency (SAA): HEAB.** Transfer to the Higher Education Aids Board (HEAB), Dept.of Regulation & Licensing, or other administrative agency.
- **Educational Approving Agency (EAA): HEAB.** Transfer to the Higher Education Aids Board (HEAB), Dept.of Regulation & Licensing, or other administrative agency.
- **Administrative services, budget, legal functions: DOA.** Consolidate most current WDVA administrative functions to DOA, with services provided to WDVA at no charge.