



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: 608-266-0517

WDVAMedia@dva.wi.gov

Veterans Trust Fund Provides Critical Programs, Services to Veterans

MADISON – The Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) has been the main source of revenue for providing essential veterans benefits in Wisconsin since 1961. Administered by the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), the VTF provides access to Wisconsin’s over 400,000 veterans and their family members access to programs, benefits and services.

“Wisconsin is a leader in the country when it comes to investing in veterans and Governor Walker has made the care of veterans as a top priority,” WDVA Secretary John A. Scocos said. “We excel in providing modern tools to our nation’s heroes so that veterans are able to reintegrate into civilian society with housing, education, health care and meaningful jobs.”

The Veterans Trust Fund is not and cannot be in deficit by state law.

Since its inception in 1961, the VTF has relied on revenue generators like special taxes such as liquor and tobacco taxes and, more recently, interest payments from loan programs administered by the WDVA. Seeing a decline in revenues being generated, Governor Walker and the legislature made the largest investment of state dollars into the Veterans Trust Fund since 1972. Governor Walker has provided the VTF with more than \$10.3 million since 2012, the first general fund appropriation that the VTF received since 1988.

In addition to the general fund appropriations, the Legislature - with input by state veterans service organizations and a recommendation from a veterans task force –in a bipartisan vote gave the WDVA the ability to transfer funds to the VTF from the WDVA’s main source of income, the Wisconsin Veterans Homes. Funding at the Wisconsin Veterans Homes is generated primarily from federal resources such as payments based on daily census at the Homes. The transfers from the nursing home surplus to the trust fund have been approved by members of both parties.

The Wisconsin Veterans Homes are thriving and the state has authorized over \$150 million into the veterans homes since 2011, including a new nursing facility at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King .

- At King, there are three buildings that are rated 5-stars and one that is rated 4-stars. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has not cited a single health care deficiency during the 2015 or 2016 survey at King.
- The Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove did not receive any healthcare citations of deficiency during its last survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in July 2016.
- Wisconsin Veterans Homes are in the top 20 percent best in the country –with four and five star quality of care ratings on a five star scale - per the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

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- Currently, the national average star rating for the 15,661 nursing homes across the country is 3.2-stars, and the average star rating for all 386 licensed nursing homes in the state of Wisconsin is currently at 3.5-stars.

Maintaining a healthy trust fund is critical to WDVA's service mission. The Veterans Trust Fund provides a variety of benefits and services to Wisconsin veterans and their families such as:

- Tuition and Fee Reimbursement Grants
- Part-Time Study Grants
- Retraining Grants
- Employment Grants
- Entrepreneurship Grants
- Subsistence Aid Grants
- Health Care Aid Grants
- Grants to nonprofit organizations that provide direct services to veterans
- Grants to counties for the operation of county veterans service offices
- Grants to tribes for the operation of tribal veterans service offices
- Grants to municipalities for providing services to our Wisconsin Veterans Homes
- Grants to veterans organizations that offer specialized services, such as assistance in filing claims with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and transportation to VA medical facilities
- Transportation Grants for those who transport veterans to medical appointments
- Personal Loan Program, Consumer Loan Program, Economic Assistance Loans
- Homeless veterans programming
- Incarcerated veterans programming
- State veterans cemeteries
- Burial Honors program

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