

Wisconsin's Veterans 2009 Legislative Goals

Fund the Wisconsin Veterans Museum with GPR. Currently, this state treasure is funded almost entirely by veterans.

The current budget proposal does not include the Agency requested \$1.7 million annual shift in funding of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum from the Veterans Trust Fund to the General Fund. Veterans alone should not have to pay to preserve Wisconsin's proud military history. The Veterans Trust Fund has not received any major GPR support since the mid 1980's, this is not a new problem. The lack of GPR support for Wisconsin's veterans programs in general and the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in particular, combined with the more recent economic decline and lack of a reliable revenue source have weakened the solvency of the Veterans Trust Fund. Delaying support of the Veterans Trust Fund will both speed its insolvency and make solutions ultimately all the more difficult.

Reverse the proposed 1% "lapse" of our veterans' funds to the General Fund to help balance the state budget.

The proposed 1% "lapse" takes cash from the Veterans Trust Fund, the Mortgage Loan Repayment Fund and the Homes Fund to fill holes in the state budget. The lapse will take money used to purchase medications, food, and pay for contracted medical services for the residents of the Homes. It would also take cash from donations made to our Homes. Veterans programs and services to include grants to veterans in need, CVSO Grants and County Transportation Grants will be impacted providing less support to our veterans. This lapse could prevent the Department from having the resources to meet federal requirements and could cause the loss of key federal revenues. As the stewards of the Veterans Trust Fund, we are especially concerned about the potential for a lapse or transfer of funds that would hasten insolvency of the Veterans Trust Fund. Under the proposed budget insolvency is projected to accelerate to 2012, two years earlier than under the agency budget submitted.

Exempt the Wisconsin Veterans Home from the Bed Tax increase.

In most private care settings, the proposed bed tax increase could be offset by a similar increase in Medicaid reimbursement. However, an increased bed tax on the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King would be different. The Home is already at the Medicaid upper limit and not eligible for increased payments. The bed tax increase proposal at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King would pull an additional \$1.5 million over the biennium from the revenues of the Home, with no additional Medicaid Offset. This is in addition to the proposed lapse of an additional \$1.5 million discussed above. Instead, the Home will have to make ends meet by increasing private pay rates or by decreasing services provided while our money goes to fill holes in the state budget.