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Attention Newsroom—News Release

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Legislature proposed Veterans Relief Package, Wisconsin G.I. Bill

(MADISON) – New state legislation authored by the Chair of the Assembly Veterans Committee, Representative Gabe Loeffelholz (R-Platteville) and announced yesterday by the Speaker of the Assembly, Representative John Gard (R-Peshtigo) will provide significant new benefits to Wisconsin's veterans, dependents of disabled veterans, and the surviving spouses and children of military service members who die in the line of duty.

"Our veterans were willing to put their lives in harm's way on our behalf, and the state ought to do what it can to support these men and women who served," said Rep. Gard regarding the Veterans Relief Package.

"Too often we fail to recognize the sacrifices of time and income that come along with serving in the armed forces," said Rep. Loeffelholz. "These proposals we are introducing today give veterans some help in meeting the economic challenges they face after they leave the military."

The three bills that make up the Veterans Relief Package include:

- An income tax credit of up to 100% of the local property tax bill for any veteran, age 65 or older who has a federal VA service-connected disability rating of 100%. An unremarried surviving spouse of a qualified veteran or of a military service member who dies in the line of duty, including the Reserve or National Guard, is also eligible for the credit. The tax credit would offset taxable income on the state income tax return, up to the full amount of the property tax paid by the veteran or surviving spouse.
- A 100% tuition waiver at any UW or Technical College System school for the dependent children or spouse of a veteran with a 30% or greater service-connected disability. The tuition waiver would also be available for the unremarried surviving spouse and children under the age of 26 of a military service member who dies in the line of duty, including the Reserve or National Guard. For the spouse of a veteran, the benefit must be used within 10 years of the date of the qualifying event, while a dependent child would have to use the benefit by age 26. The bill provides for up to four years of education – the greater of eight full-time semesters or 128 credits.
- A Wisconsin G.I. Bill that would provide a waiver of 50% of tuition and fees at any UW or Technical College System school for state veterans. To qualify, state law generally requires two years of federal active duty or 90 days of federal active duty during a statutorily designated wartime period. The benefit would provide up to the greater of 128 credits or eight full-time semesters.

(more)

Governor Jim Doyle called the proposed measures, “a good step forward.”

“The Governor and the Legislature have been very good to veterans,” said WDVA Secretary John A. Scocos, “and we greatly appreciate their support.”

“These bills will help those who need it most,” said Scocos.

“Disabled veterans may have disabling conditions that are visible, that you can touch or feel, or they may not be visible, but are still very much disabling,” said Maurice Jackson, state Adjutant for the Disabled American Veterans, who attended the announcement. “As one example,” Jackson said, “a Vietnam veteran exposed to Agent Orange may have prostate cancer that has metastasized and spread to his bones.”

“These bills are a win-win for everybody,” he said.

The bills are being introduced at the request of the Disabled American Veterans, American Ex-Prisoners of War, AMVETS, American Legion, Gold Star Wives, Jewish War Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Heart, U.S. Submarine Veterans of WWII, United Women Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans of America, and Wisconsin Paralyzed Veterans of American.

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