



STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

BIENNIAL REPORT

2005–2007





LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL



STATE OF WISCONSIN, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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Jim Doyle, Governor
John A. Scocos, Secretary

Jim Doyle
Governor of Wisconsin
115 E State Capitol
Madison, WI 53703

October 15, 2007



Dear Governor Doyle,

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs presents our biennial report for 2005–2007. As in the past, we continue to honor our commitment to assist veterans in recognition of their sacrifice and service. Through encouraged stakeholder involvement with key providers, advocates, and veterans, and by building strong legislative partnerships in a non-partisan manner, we will continue to ensure the critical needs of Wisconsin’s veterans and their dependents are met now and in future years.

A significant achievement for veterans during the 2005–2007 biennium was the signing into law of 2005 Wisconsin Act 468, expanding the Wisconsin G.I. Bill to provide 100% remission for state veterans with qualifying military service and eligible spouses and dependents of those eligible veterans killed in action or more than 30% disabled. The department also created the Veterans’ Educational Reimbursement Grant Program (VetEd), providing full reimbursement of tuition and fees for Wisconsin veterans with one year of state residency, and for up to 10 years following their service.

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs enacted the 10-year Solvency Plan for the Veterans Trust Fund—which was formulated during the 2005–2007 biennium—to stabilize the fund and rebuild it for the future. The department balances meeting the needs of nearly a half-million Wisconsin veterans while preserving the Veterans Trust Fund and Mortgage Loan Repayment Fund.

During the 2005–2007 biennium, the department worked closely with Congress and other participating states to remove the sunset clause and exact federal legislation to increase the volume cap to \$100 million for the tax-exempt Qualified Veteran Mortgage Bond (QVMB) program. The department approved 325 Primary Mortgage Loans totaling close to \$53 million and 155 Home Improvement Loans for over \$3,800,000.

The “Mission: Welcome Home” program, begun in September 2004, has continued to create a community of caring for our returning service members, to help new veterans reintegrate into society. The department’s “I Owe You” program continued to inform and assist veterans in obtaining state and federal benefits. This initiative has helped reverse the trend of stagnating or declining federal dollars coming to the state’s veterans. Over 25,000 veterans and their families have been helped through the “I Owe You” program.

Looking ahead to the new biennium of 2007–2009, the department has hopes for a Preservation Center in 2008, for storage of Wisconsin Veterans Museum artifacts, and for continued expansion of our veterans homes, including a future Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls.

It is the vision for the department that our newest veterans of the 21st Century continue receiving the finest veterans benefits and services Wisconsin can provide. That vision is achieved through the support of our stakeholders, the Governor’s Office and the state legislature. These programs and services will help meet the critical needs of veterans and their families as we carry on strengthening the services and programs for future veterans.

Sincerely,

Secretary

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW	1
ADMINISTRATION	2
LOANS, GRANTS AND OTHER DIRECT SERVICES	3
OTHER SERVICES FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES	7
HISTORY OF THE VETERANS TRUST FUND	8
WISCONSIN VETERANS HOMES	12
WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM	14
RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR WISCONSIN VETERANS	18
MAJOR BUDGET INITIATIVES APPROVED IN THE 2007–2009 BIENNIAL BUDGET	20
SUMMARY OF WDVA BENEFITS DISBURSED	22
AGENCY COMPLIANCE WITH DEVELOPING FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES	24



The State of Wisconsin has a long history of providing generous benefits, programs and services to state residents who entered “active duty” from Wisconsin and continue to reside in the state. Following the First World War, the State of Wisconsin provided a limited cash bonus to returning Wisconsin veterans. However, lessons learned from the limited individual benefit and high aggregate cost of these small cash bonuses led the State of Wisconsin to adopt a highly progressive approach to rewarding later state veterans in more lasting ways, while, simultaneously, encouraging them to return to and remain in the state.

In 1943 the State of Wisconsin collected a special income surtax in order to create the foundations of what eventually became the Wisconsin Veterans Trust Fund. Today, the Veterans Trust Fund provides a comprehensive array of state veterans’ benefits, programs, and services that are the envy of most other states in the Union.

These and other benefits, programs, and services are provided by the State of Wisconsin in order to supplement and complement those provided to veterans by the federal government. State benefits, programs, and services currently assist Wisconsin veterans in enhancing their education and employment, purchasing or remodeling a home in Wisconsin, traveling to federal VA medical appointments, obtaining needed health care services not provided by federal VA health care, overcoming barriers to employment, and obtaining needed subsistence assistance in emergency situations, assistance in discharge upgrades, obtaining medals that were not issued or lost, among many others.

Wisconsin operates several state programs that were traditionally in the domain of the federal government, including veterans’ homes, which provide skilled nursing and assisted living, and veterans cemeteries. Other state programs include a homeless transitional assistance program and a comprehensive, statewide military funeral honors program that includes training, coordination, and services.



A primary focus of state government activities is to assist Wisconsin veterans in obtaining all federal benefits that they may have earned. Through the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) “Mission: Welcome Home” and “I Owe You” outreach campaigns, which include *Supermarkets of Veterans Benefits* held throughout the state, Wisconsin works actively to inform veterans about and accessing federal and state benefits, programs, and services. “Mission: Welcome Home” provides leadership and coordination for community–based efforts in providing support, while aiding newly returned veterans to become fully integrated into their communities upon returning from active service. County Veterans Service Officers, Veterans

Organization Service Officers, and WDVA’s claims staff complement these outreach efforts and provide thousands of veterans a year with direct assistance, including representation in the federal VA claims process. In the first four years of the program, Wisconsin has seen over \$250 million in additional federal veterans’ funding coming into the state, most notably for additional compensation for disabled veterans. In addition, there has been a 30% increase in the number of Wisconsin Veterans who now use the federal VA Health Care System. These veterans, who were mostly uninsured, now have access to medical care and prescription drug options to meet their long–term medical needs.

WDVA is governed by a seven-member board, which appoints the department's secretary. The Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, appoints the board members, all of whom are veterans, to six-year terms. Members of the board during the 2005–2007 biennium were:

- Peter J. Moran of Superior (Chair)
- Marvin J. Freedman of Middleton (Vice-Chair)
- Rodney C. Moen of Whitehall (Board Secretary)
- William Andersen of Onalaska
- Jacqueline A. Guthrie of Sun Prairie
- Walter Stenavich of Racine
- Mack Hughes of Milwaukee

The Board receives recommendations from its committees:

- The Legislative and Program Review Committee (composed of state veterans)
- The Long-Term Care Committee (composed of state veterans)
- The Financial Committee (composed of state veterans)

The Board also receives recommendations from two statutory councils:

- The CVSO Advisory Council (composed of county veterans service officers)
- The Council on Veterans Programs (composed of representatives from veterans' organizations specified in state statutes)



The Wisconsin Board of Veterans Affairs. Not pictured are Mack Hughes and Walter Stenavich.



LOANS, GRANTS AND OTHER DIRECT SERVICES TO VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES



The WDVA's loan and grant programs are financed through two sources—the **Veterans Trust Fund** (see History of the Veterans Trust Fund on page 8) and the **Veterans Mortgage Loan Repayment Fund**.

The **Veterans Trust Fund** financed the following programs during the 2005–2007 biennium.

Veterans Trust Fund Programs

Veterans Education Reimbursement Grant (VetEd) These grants reimbursed tuition and eligible fees for veterans enrolled at most Wisconsin academic institutions. The VetEd grant provides eight semesters or 120 credits towards a bachelors degree, depending on length of active duty service. The program, new in 2005, combined two former education grants to simplify veterans' use of WDVA education grants. WDVA issued 5,939 grants totaling \$7,230,081. To qualify, combined annual income can not exceed \$50,000, plus \$1,000 for each dependent in excess of two.

Retraining Grants These grants provided up to \$3,000 to recently unemployed or under-employed veterans who demonstrated financial need while enrolled in a training program expected to lead to employment. WDVA provided 87 Retraining Grants totaling \$224,659.

Assistance to Needy Veterans Grant Program This program provides assistance for veterans who need vision, dental or hearing care, three areas not normally covered by the Federal VA for all veterans. This grant also provides temporary emergency financial aid to veterans and their dependents in the event of an illness, disability or death. A total of 1,005 grants were provided in the biennium for a total of \$1,418,833. This program was begun this biennium by combining what used to be the Subsistence Aid Grant and the Health Care Aid Grant under one heading.

Personal Loan Program The Personal Loan Program provided loans of up to \$25,000 at interest rates as low as 6.25%. The loans could be used for any purpose. Loans are secured by a mortgage (home equity loan) or a guarantor (cosigner). Interest "earnings" help to replenish the Veterans Trust Fund. During 2005–2007 WDVA approved 739 Personal Loans totaling \$10,395,980.

Veterans Assistance Program This program helps homeless veterans and those at-risk of becoming homeless receive the services they need to obtain steady employment and affordable housing. Current homeless programs are located at Fort McCoy, Union Grove and King, WI. This program also provides assistance in the areas of discharge upgrades, services to incarcerated veterans, connections to military records, military awards and decorations (medals), and locating military records. During the biennium, 4,803 veterans were assisted by the Veterans Assistance Program.



Military Funeral Honors Program The program coordinates and provides military funeral honors for the interment of eligible Wisconsin veterans. This program also provides a stipend of up to \$50 to eligible Veterans Service Organizations who perform Military Funeral Honors. During this biennium, over 50 Veterans Service Organizations either received or recertified their organizations for training under the Military Funeral Honors Program. In addition, WDVA assisted in the coordination of 11,159 funerals and paid \$344,150 in stipends to Veterans Service Organizations.

Dislocated Veterans Worker Program This program provides transitional assistance to veterans and spouses who have experienced plant closings or employee downsizing efforts. WDVA worked in conjunction with DWD, local Workforce Development Boards, and local County Veterans Service Officers to provide 99 briefings to 839 veterans and their families.

WDVA Claims Bureau The Claims Bureau assists state veterans and their dependents with federal claims for VA compensation, pension, education, medical care, and death benefits. The bureau is located at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Office in Milwaukee. During the biennium, WDVA accepted 11,009 new or reopened claims.

State Veterans Cemeteries Our State Veterans Cemeteries provide interments for veterans and eligible family members at the Southern Wisconsin Veterans Cemetery near Union Grove, the Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery near Spooner, and at the Central Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery at King.

During this biennium, the cemeteries conducted a total of 2,180 interments for veterans and spouses. The Veterans Cemetery at Union Grove is considered the 7th busiest State Veterans Cemetery in the nation based on its number of interments. During this biennium, a federally funded project of \$622,580 was approved for the Veterans Cemetery at Spooner. This expansion included additional columbarium space, a storage building and burial gardens for caskets and cremations. An additional expansion is currently in the planning stages for the upcoming biennium for the Veterans Cemetery at Union Grove.



Home Loan Program

The **Veterans Mortgage Loan Repayment Fund**, created in 1975, is the funding authority for the Home Loan Program. It derives funding from the sale of taxable and tax-exempt general obligation bonds, repayment of existing loans and interest on investments. The Home Loan Program is completely self-supporting and requires no general purpose revenue (tax dollars).

Federal tax laws sharply limited the number of veterans who may receive home mortgage loans funded through the sale of federally tax-exempt general obligation bonds. Beginning in October 1997, WDVA began selling general obligation bonds not exempt from federal taxes, and therefore not constrained by federal tax laws. Proceeds from the sales of “taxable” bonds provided funding for home mortgage loans to many veterans who otherwise could not receive this benefit. Proceeds from the sale of taxable bonds was used during the biennium to fund the Home Improvement Loan Program.

During the course of the 2005–2007 biennium, the department worked closely with Congress and other participating states on successful efforts to remove the sunset clause and a new initiative to enact federal legislation to increase the volume cap to 100 million for the tax–exempt Qualified Veteran Mortgage Bond (QVMB) Program. Existing caps for CY06 and CY07 were \$5 million and \$10 million respectively.

The **Veterans' Mortgage Loan Repayment Fund** provided the source of funding for the following programs during the 2005–2007 biennium.

WDVA Home Loans

Primary Mortgage Home Loans These loans provide 30–year, fixed–rate mortgages for the purchase or construction of a veteran’s principal residence. The interest rates are often lower than prevailing market rates. WDVA pays the origination fee for veterans who have a combined service–connected disability rating of 30% or higher from the federal VA. During the biennium, WDVA approved 325 Primary Mortgage Loans totaling \$52,905,788.

Home Improvement Loan Program The loan provides low–interest rate loans for repairs, alterations, construction, and renovation of a veteran’s principal residence. The average loan amount during the 2005–2007 biennium was \$25,000, with up to 15 years to repay. WDVA approved 155 Home Improvement Loans for \$3,808,777.

County Veterans Service Office grants These grants supplement the operations of County Veterans Service Offices. The grants for counties with a full-time CVSO are based on population:

- \$8,500 for a county with a population of less than 20,000;
- \$10,000 for a county with a population of 20,000 to 45,499;
- \$11,500 for a county with a population of 45,500 to 74,999;
- and \$13,000 for a county with a population of 75,000 or more.
- Counties with a part-time CVSO may receive a \$500 grant.

Tribal Veterans Service Office grants These grants help support the operation of Tribal Veterans Service Offices.

- During the 2005–2007 biennium, this amount was \$8,500.

Grants to Veterans' Service Organizations These grants provide financial assistance of up to \$30,000 to each veterans organization representing veterans who are filing claims for benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Transportation Grants These grants assist veterans who need transportation to federal VA-approved medical appointments by providing grants to transportation providers. Grants are given to the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) to provide scheduled service in a county, and directly to county governments with veterans transportation programs not served by the DAV. WDVA provided \$400,000 in Transportation Grants during 2005–2007.

State Approving Agency (SAA) The federally funded SAA approves education and training programs taught at Wisconsin colleges, universities and vocational training institutions. Eligible veterans then use the federal Montgomery G.I. Bill while studying at these institutions and preparing for civilian employment.

Troops to Teachers This federally funded program provides counseling and financial assistance to veterans interested in a second career in public education. The program assists veterans in obtaining a teacher's license through alternative or traditional teacher preparation programs. Following licensure, participants may receive assistance in pursuing employment in Wisconsin's classrooms.

“I Owe You” Since 2000, the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs has been hosting veterans outreach events called *Supermarkets of Veterans Benefits* in various locations across the state, to bring federal, state, and local agencies together in one convenient location to assist veterans and their families in learning about and applying for the benefits and services that they have earned. The department has held close to 30 such events and has assisted over 25,000 veterans in Wisconsin.

“Mission: Welcome Home” An outreach initiative was begun in September 2004 to help service members returning from Iraq, Afghanistan, and other service assignments, to reintegrate back home to their communities. Aimed at recently separated veterans, the program informs them of earned and available benefits, programs, and services. The program also provides leadership and coordination for community-based efforts in providing support, while helping new veterans to become fully integrated into their communities upon returning from active service.





HISTORY OF THE VETERANS TRUST FUND



The Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) provides funding for a variety of benefits to Wisconsin veterans and their families. To finance these benefits, including a significant portion of the administrative expenses, the VTF relies on repayment of veterans' loans and interest on investments.

Origins of the Veterans Trust Fund

Soldiers Created in 1919 to provide World War I veterans with either:

Rehabilitation

Fund

A one-time cash bonus of \$10 for every month of service (minimum bonus of \$50), **OR**

An education bonus of \$30 for every month of service (maximum bonus of \$1,080).

Post-War Created in 1943 to meet the medical, educational, and economic

Rehabilitation

Fund

needs of World War II veterans. This fund derived its revenue from a surtax on personal income taxes in 1942. Administration of the fund became the responsibility of the Veterans Recognition Board formed in 1943 (renamed the Board of Veterans Affairs in 1945) and the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (created in 1945).

Veterans Housing Created in 1949 to make second mortgage loans to qualified veterans for home purchases, construction, and improvements.

Trust Fund

Initially, the revenue source for the fund was a tax on liquor. Subsequently, all repayments of principal and interest on second mortgage loans were deposited in this fund.

Veterans Created in 1961 by consolidating the three funds outlined above.

Trust Fund

From 1961 until the creation of the Veterans Mortgage Loan Repayment Fund in 1975, the VTF was the only segregated fund for receipt of loan repayments and the disbursement of grants, loans, and administrative expenses.

Past sources of revenue

Over the years, the asset base of the Veterans Trust Fund was built through a combination of special taxes and General Purpose Revenue (GPR) from the state's general fund.

<i>Source & Date</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Pre-World War II balance	\$32,900
Surtaxes on income in 1943	\$7,636,400
Liquor tax from 1947-1951	\$18,190,100
General Fund Appropriation 1947	\$5,000,000
General Fund Appropriation 1951	\$4,000,000
General Fund Appropriation 1971	\$6,000,000
General Fund Appropriation 1972	\$5,900,000
General Fund Appropriation 1973	\$667,000
General Fund Appropriation 1974	\$1,033,000
General Fund Appropriation 1985	\$1,000,000
General Fund Appropriation 1986	\$400,000
General Fund Appropriation 1987	\$942,000
General Fund Appropriation 1988	\$261,900
General Fund Appropriation 1989 to the present	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$51,063,300</i>

In the past, the State of Wisconsin also has provided loans to the Veterans Trust Fund from either the State Investment Board or the general fund. Each of these loans was repaid in full.

<i>Source of Loan & Date</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Investment Board Loan 1969	\$6,500,000
General Fund Loan 1973	\$13,500,000
Investment Board Loan 1974	\$6,000,000
General Fund Loan 1974	\$5,300,000
Investment Board Loan 1975	\$6,000,000
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$37,300,000</i>

Stabilization

By 1993, Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) annual expenditures were exceeding revenues by about \$3 million annually, which drastically eroded the asset base and long-term viability of the VTF. An increase in demand for benefits and other factors caused this “drain” on the VTF.

To stabilize the VTF, \$20 million of surplus reserves in the WDVA Home Loan Program was transferred to the VTF in 1993 to establish the Consumer Loan Program. The initial allotment was disbursed in loans to veterans within a few months. In May 1994, WDVA sold a portfolio of its home loan mortgages for approximately \$15 million to restart the Consumer Loan Program. The repayment of principal and interest on \$35 million of consumer loans stabilized the asset base of the VTF.

In 1998, WDVA established a Personal Loan Program with legislative approval to generate revenue for the VTF. Like the Consumer Loan Program, the repayment of personal loans strengthened the VTF.

By 2003, signs of significant future VTF cash flow difficulties began to emerge. In response, Department Secretary John A. Scocos directed that a 10-year Solvency Plan for the VTF be developed. Working with staff and stakeholders, a consensus-based plan was developed and presented to the Board of Veterans Affairs in June 2004. The plan projected VTF solvency until fiscal year 2014. Provisions of the plan were incorporated into the department’s 2005–07 Biennial Budget and, with minor amendments, was enacted into law as part of 2005 Wisconsin Act 25.

At the end of the 2005–07 biennium, the VTF cash balance was consistent with that projected in the 10-year solvency plan. WDVA will seek GPR funding for VTF programs and administrative costs in order to extend solvency beyond 2014, as well as insure that all VTF programs are managed efficiently and cost-effectively.

King



The Wisconsin Veterans Home at King was founded in 1887 by the Grand Army of the Republic, a Civil War Veterans organization. The Home is the largest nursing home in the state which, in combination with other categories of care, serves up to 749 members. Eligible Wisconsin veterans and the spouse or surviving spouse may become members of the Home.

The Home's picturesque campus, located on the shores of Rainbow Lake near Waupaca, includes four

licensed nursing care buildings, cottages for married couples able to care for themselves, chapels, a bowling alley, post office, theater, museum, and library.

Members of the Home receive complete nursing home care and therapeutic services along with social and recreational activities. The Home offers dental care, and physical, occupational, and respiratory therapy. It also has a laboratory, a pharmacy, and x-ray and outpatient departments where various medical specialists conveniently offer appropriate care and services.

Ainsworth Hall, the newest of the four licensed buildings, includes a special ground floor living area that allows members with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia to move freely in a secure, safe environment, including an outdoor patio and garden area.

Many members participate in work therapy programs, so they can earn extra money while providing valuable services to their fellow members.

In addition, nearly 300 volunteers, including staff and members of the Home, contribute almost 60,000 hours of service annually that enriches the lives of the members. Veterans and other civic organizations sponsor trips for members to sites in the area and around the state.

During the biennium, several construction projects were undertaken at King. A project is in design to replace all potable water piping in Olson Hall. Also under construction was a project to replace aging underground steam and condensate lines serving the southern part of the campus.

A large project to improve member care at King is being designed for installation in 2008. Safe Resident Handling and Transfer System composed of ceiling and wall mounted tracks and the appropriate lifts and slings to safely handle and transfer residents. Tracks will be installed in member rooms, toilet rooms, tub rooms, lobbies, as well as the outpatient clinic, dental clinic, radiology, and physical therapy. The system will allow staff to lift and transfer residents from bed to chair/toilet via the track system, substantially increasing the comfort of residents and reducing the risk of injury to staff and residents, commonly associated with assisting residents manually or with floor lifts.

Last year the first of two high-capacity wells was completed and put into operation, and the second well will become operational in mid-2008. At that time we will have a redundancy of fresh water supply to meet all contingencies at King.

Several projects have been completed this last biennium; advanced meal preparation, camp-wide nurse call system including upgrading the Home's pager system, underground steam and condensate

lines serving Stordock and Ainsworth Halls, and a picnic shelter at Stordock Hall. Most of these projects were completed with the assistance of grants from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs funding up to 65% of the total cost.

During the year the King Home had an average daily census of 707 members.

Union Grove

WDVA opened a new veterans home on the campus of the Southern Wisconsin Center in Union Grove in August 2001. The Home provides affordable, quality care for Wisconsin veterans and spouses who require assisted living services.

The campus includes three colocated assisted living facilities. Shemanske Hall and Fairchild Hall are licensed Community Based Residential Facilities (CBRF) and Gates Hall, which opened in 2004, is a licensed Residential Care Apartment Complex (RCAC). In June 2005, Fairchild Hall was converted to a specialty Memory Care Unit for veterans and their spouses with Alzheimer's disease and other related dementia.

The staff of professional health care providers offer an array of services including health monitoring; assistance with medications; personal care services; shopping; transportation to medical appointments; social services; physical, occupational and speech therapy; recreational activities; three meals and snacks; nutritional monitoring; weekly housekeeping; religious services; and hospice services.

The Home at Union Grove provides the same basic services as our other Veterans Home at King.

Enhancement of services is a continuing effort during the biennium. New buses were purchased from donated funds to help transport members and improve recreational opportunities.

A major project to replace the windows and make all rooms ADA compliant in Shemanske and Fairchild Halls was planned and is scheduled to begin early in FY08.

As an added convenience, the campus includes a nearby U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Community Based Outpatient Clinic. The clinic provides primary medical care and makes referrals for specialty care to the Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee.

In cooperation with the nearby Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery, members of the Home participate in Memorial Day and Veterans Day observances and other activities of the veterans' community.

The campus continues to improve and expand. In an effort to provide a continuum of care for members, a new 120-bed Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) and a new recreational center opened in the fall of 2006. In addition, a new cook-chill food production kitchen will receive food from the Veterans Home at King. This new food service operation was completed in early 2007.





The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs operates three professionally accredited museums. Its main facility, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum–Madison (WVM), is located on the Capitol Square; the Wisconsin National Guard Memorial Museum (WNGM) at Volk Field; and the Wisconsin Veterans Museum–King, on the grounds of the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King. The Madison and King facilities have received national awards.

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum–Madison employs instructive exhibits and other educational programs to tell the story of the role played by state citizens in America’s military past. The museum commemorates, acknowledges, and affirms the service of the men and women of Wisconsin from the Civil War to the present. The museum features lifelike dioramas, large–scale artifacts including aircraft, a functioning periscope that protrudes through the roof of the building to provide a unique view of downtown Madison, and an interactive computer containing the military records of the 91,379 Wisconsinites who served in the Civil War. WVM–Madison has been voted by readers of *Madison Magazine* as the “Best Museum or Historical Attraction to Visit” in 2006–2007.

WVM–Madison staff and WDVA officials met with architects, museum planners, DOA and the Wisconsin Historical Society staff during the past two years to develop building plans for a shared storage facility called “The Preservation Center.” The \$25 million capital budget project will be located near Mendota Hospital when it is approved. When the budget is passed, the Preservation Center is scheduled to be built in the 2008–09 biennium.



The holdings of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Research Center grew considerably in the past biennium. More than 1,100 manuscript collections have been added including many with national significance.

The oral history collection grew by 161 interviews, bringing the total number of interviews to 1,195. The collection now includes user copies of Wisconsin Public Television’s interviews for “Wisconsin World War II Stories” and “Wisconsin Korean War Stories.” The library collection added 2,700 new books and periodicals and began adding local holding records to its holdings, becoming one of the only libraries in the country to identify its materials this way. This project was featured by the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) in 2006 as a national library success story.

Manuscript exhibits on the soldier as tourist, the Iraq War, women in the military, art in regimental histories, the museum's conservation lab, and military cookbooks allowed staff to highlight unique materials. These exhibits are very popular with the museum collection donors. In several instances veterans and their families have traveled distances to see the material they donated on display. Staff also began two new database projects: a photograph database that describes individual images and a World War I database that includes all the Wisconsin men and women who served in the war.

The research center also expanded its public programming. Experiential visit worksheets and activities were developed for students and teachers. Lesson plans for the Civil War, World War II, and the Iraq War were also created. Several "behind the scenes" tours were given to legislators and veterans organizations, and research center staff spoke at several statewide veteran events and to numerous community groups.

The museum produced a variety of exhibits as well as a series of programs about the Vietnam War during 2006–2007. The Wisconsin Veterans Museum–Madison opened two new Vietnam-related exhibits on July 11, 2005. "Long Shadow: Memories of Vietnam," by David Giffey, 1st Infantry Division; and "Flashback: The Vietnam Photography of Dick Swanson," a war correspondent for *Life* magazine. A powerful exhibit loaned by the National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum of Chicago entitled "The Art of War: Trauma, Healing and the Vietnam Veteran," was on display from April 10 to July 10, 2006. This exhibit was cited as the Best Visual Art Show of 2006 by the *Capital Times*.

On September 23, 2006, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum–Madison marked the grand opening of a new Vietnam exhibit "In the Belly of the Dragon: Life and Death in I Corps."

The response for the exhibit has been overwhelmingly positive. Off-site exhibits relating to past WDVA Secretary John Maurer and Raymond Boland were installed at the Wisconsin Veterans Home–Union Grove.

"The Wings of Freedom," a photographic exhibit, was installed at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum–King in late FY07. The exhibition development committee is currently planning an Iraq display to be installed at both

WVM–Madison and Wisconsin National Guard Memorial Museum in FY09.



Museum educators worked with over two dozen partners to bring about public programs and exhibitions. Partnerships were established with UW Department of History, Center for World Affairs and Global Economy (WAGE), Chazen Museum of Art, National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum of Chicago, and Jewish Social Services, including a variety of presentations and activities for adults and children. Authors of new books came in to speak about their work. Hugh Lunghi, a World War II veteran and a British diplomat, delivered the 2006 Wimmer–Churchill Lecture "With Churchill and Stalin at Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam: A Recollection" in November to a packed Education Center.

The museum organized a wide array of public educational programs and special events during the past biennium. Increasing numbers of students and the public attended museum programs each year during 2006–2007. The museum’s nationally recognized annual Forest Hills Cemetery Tour was awarded a grant during 2006 and 2007 by the Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission. Civil War topics in both years fit into teacher’s curriculums.

Many of the 2006–2007 public programs focused on Vietnam in recognition of the 30th anniversary of its conclusion. Nine presentations on the war were made. Expanded distinguished lecture series in 2007 allowed nearly 1,000 patrons to attend 15 educational programs. Behind the scenes tours for legislators, WDVA staff, and the public provide insight into daily museum operations and collections stewardship.



The Wisconsin Veterans Museum cares for more than 20,000 objects dating from the Civil War to the present. The museum was accredited by the American Association of Museums (AAM) in 1974. Of the 9,000 museums nationwide, only 700 have earned AAM accreditation. In 2005, the Wisconsin Veterans Museums were inspected by U.S. Dept. of the Army (DOA) officials, and given Army certification to receive, display, and store U.S. Army property.

The Veterans Museum object collection continued to grow through the addition of significant donations relating to the service of Wisconsin veterans. During the biennium, there were 224 donations consisting of over 1,400

objects. The object collections department is placing a special emphasis on obtaining OIF/OEF related materials as well as objects from the 1st Gulf War and Vietnam.

The object collections area also made important technological advances in the last biennium. Nearly all objects in the collection were given a record in the electronic collections database, with over 99% having a verified storage location. Collections records were migrated into a new database in 2005, offering expanded options and multi-media capability. Collections staff also began implementation of a bar coding system in 2007, which further simplifies and crosschecks inventory procedures. Preliminary steps were taken to make the collections records available online and to expand the website, allowing greater access to those citizens who may not be able to make the trip to Madison.

The Veterans Museum acquired the Wisconsin National Guard Museum at Camp Douglas during 1999. The installation of collection storage equipment occurred shortly thereafter. In addition, the National Guard Museum underwent a handicap access project that significantly improved the look of the historic 1896 log building as well as upgrading the ease of entry in 2002. In 2003, the central reception area received an information booth, a computerized sales network hook up, and concluded

a plan for the redevelopment of exhibits. The central area exhibit development concluded in January 2005. The Wisconsin National Guard Museum acquired the old shower building for non-collections storage purposes in early 2006. Projects during the last biennium included: addition of shelving and electricity to the storage building, new blinds to cut down glare in the new reception area and in the new central exhibition area, new ceiling fans to improve air circulation, removal of unneeded exterior door office area, upgraded environmental monitoring devices, computer services, and digital television/VCR acquired to play educational programs. Attendance is up significantly from past years due to higher civilian and military visitation.

The WDVA and the museum entered into a partnership with the State Historical Society and WHA-TV during 2002 to produce a documentary series about Wisconsin citizens who served in the Second World War entitled "Wisconsin World War II Stories." The first episode aired statewide on public TV during the spring of 2003, the next episode appeared in the fall, and two others debuted in May 2004. The final episode appeared during the summer of 2005. During 2006, the same partners completed the "Wisconsin Korean War Stories." They are now partnering on a multi part "Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories" series.

The museum's newsletter, *The Bugle*, continues to be a popular, upscale full color publication and is now available on both the WDVA and Museum Foundation websites. The newsletter has become extremely appealing and represents the museum's growing sophistication with media. Electronic media representatives, particularly television, covered numerous events, programs, and activities at the Veterans Museum during the past biennium. The WVM Foundation aired its new website in March, 2007.

School tour visitation rose during the 2006-2007 period, as it has since 2002. School tour visitation amounted to 29,906 during 2006 and 30,758 in 2007. Combined attendance figures from all museum activities, outreach, and programs amounted to 98,477 during 2006 and 100,271 in 2007. Careful scheduling and a strong commitment to providing educational services to the school children resulted in near record levels. Educational travel trunks containing artifacts and curriculum materials were developed for circulation on the subject of World War I and World War II during the previous biennium. A Korean War travel trunk became available for use in schools in September 2004, and a Vietnam War travel trunk became available in 2006.

The museum's sales program generated \$192,063 during the biennium ending June 30, 2007.



RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR WISCONSIN VETERANS



Major recent accomplishments for Wisconsin veterans include:

- Created and expanded the Wisconsin G.I. Bill veterans' education lifetime (up to 128 credits or 8 full-time semesters) full tuition remission at any University of Wisconsin or Wisconsin Technical College school for qualifying Wisconsin veterans and the eligible spouses and children of veterans killed in action or substantially disabled (VA rated at 30% or greater) by their military service. Study may be technical, undergraduate, graduate, or professional.
- Created the Veterans' Educational Reimbursement Grant Program (VetEd), providing full 100% reimbursement of tuition and fees (up to the full-time rate at UW-Madison) for Wisconsin veterans with as little as 12 months of state residency, with full-time study authorized up to 10 years following service, and up to 60 credits of part-time study thereafter. Study may be up to a bachelor's degree.
- Created the Wisconsin Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit, which provides a full reimbursement of property taxes paid on a primary Wisconsin residence for qualifying totally disabled, elderly Wisconsin veterans and their surviving spouses, where the veteran is age 65 or older, or for an eligible veteran's surviving spouse (the veteran must have been a Wisconsin resident at the time of entry onto active duty).
- Enacted the 10-Year Solvency Plan for the Veterans Trust Fund, helping to stabilize the fund; began work on efforts to rebuild the fund to prepare for the future, including initial GPR funds to WDVA's Wisconsin Veterans Museum.
- Created the new Aid to Needy Veterans grant program to help fund health care not provided by the federal VA (eye care, dental care, hearing care) and to provide emergency cash grant substance aid to qualifying, eligible low-income veterans.
- Opening and dedication of a 120-bed Skilled Nursing Facility—Boland Hall—on the campus of the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove.
- Dedications of the Edo Maccari Administration Building at the Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Union Grove, the Italo Bensoni Administration Building at the Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Spooner, the John J. Maurer Administration Building at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove, and the John R. Moses Central Services Building at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King.
- Completion of many modernization projects at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King.
- Funded new direct care nursing staff and major improvements to the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King.
- Authorized a new veteran's campus at Chippewa Falls, including a future Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls and other related facilities. Opening of a Veterans Assistance Program (VAP) in the fall of 2007 at the Northern Center, Chippewa Falls.
- Veterans cemeteries interred nearly 2,200 veterans and spouses.

- Distributed stipends to over 50 veterans service organizations for performing Military Funeral Honors.
- Collections in the Wisconsin Veterans Museum grew considerably in the past biennium, with more than 1,100 manuscript collections, 161 oral histories, and 2,700 new library books added.
- In partnership with Wisconsin Public Television, the final episode of the “Wisconsin World War II Stories” series was presented; the “Wisconsin Korean War Stories” series was completed; and, the “Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories” series was begun.
- Designated that special plate registration fees from veterans’ license plates be a charitable contribution to the Veterans Trust Fund. Created a new designated donation line on state income tax forms to benefit the Veterans Trust Fund.
- Created a new Gold Star families license plate and directed the redesign of the state’s outdated Medal of Honor license plates.
- Surpassed 25,000 as the number of veterans and family members who have attended the department’s successful “I Owe You” campaign of partnered outreach, *Supermarkets of Veterans Benefits*.
- Held the first ever Gulf War Illnesses conference in conjunction with the statutory Gulf War Illnesses Recognition Day, and a Women Veterans conference.
- Revamped the department newsletter from the *WDVA Update* to *Forward VETERANS*.
- Recodified the entire chapter of the Wisconsin State Statutes related to Veterans Affairs, chapter 45.





MAJOR BUDGET INITIATIVES IN THE 2007–2009 BIENNIAL BUDGET



The 2007–09 Biennial Budget, at the time of writing, contained the following program change proposals and new initiatives:

- Eliminating the Aid to Needy Veterans grant program sub caps.
- Authorizing one–time funding of \$48,000 in FY08 to cover improvements at the Northern and Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemeteries.
- Authorizing \$390,000 in FY08 and \$300,000 in FY09 to electronically image veterans’ base files to increase efficiency and access.
- Authorizing an increase in overall Direct Care staffing for the Wisconsin Veterans Home–King.
- Planning funds for a state veterans cemetery in the Fox River Valley.
- Funding a feasibility study for a veterans home in Superior.
- Funding to initiate the architecture and engineering of the previously approved veterans home at Chippewa Falls.
- Expanding the Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit to additional service–connected disabled veterans, elimination of the current age requirement of 65 years old, and reduction of the state residency requirement to 5 continuous years of state residency.
- Exempting Congressionally Chartered veterans service organizations from post/chapter sales taxes.
- Exempting the Exchanges at the Wisconsin Veterans Homes from sales tax.
- Providing increased funding for Aid–to–Indigent Veterans.
- Continuation of funding for “Mission: Welcome Home” outreach to newly returned Veterans.
- Reducing VetEd program funding due to program re–estimate of reduced demand due to the state–level Wisconsin G.I. Bill tuition remission program.
- One–time funding for the Wisconsin Veterans Museum for a new exhibit.
- Funding for the Wisconsin Veterans Museum to upgrade audio and lighting systems.
- Establishment of a Veterans Registry, a voluntary system to collect and provide information on veterans post deployment issues.
- Requesting statutory language to permit Interest Exchange Agreements (SWAPS) for the state veterans home loan program.

- Requesting an increase in the Statutory Bonding cap for the state veterans home loan program.
- Requesting a statutory language change and eliminate the full-time student status requirement for eligible veteran dependent children to the state-level Wisconsin G.I. Bill tuition remission to reduce the child age requirement to 17 (currently 18).
- Requesting a statutory language change to the eligibility requirement to be buried in the State Veterans Cemeteries to include troops killed in action.
- Requesting GPR funding for a state-level PTSD initiative.
- Request enumeration of a new 45-bed Domiciliary at the Wisconsin Veterans Home in King, Wisconsin.

The following items were requested by the department but not included in the budget, as of the time of publication of this report:

- Shifting administrative costs for select programs to GPR, from the Veterans Trust Fund.
- Expansion of the Wisconsin Veterans and surviving spouses property tax credit to veterans with at least a 30% service-connected disability rating.
- A property tax exemption for congressionally chartered veterans service organizations.
- Expansion of creditable military service under the Wisconsin Retirement System to include all state veterans.
- Expanding staffing by 1.0 FTE and funding for a two year Director of Development project position, to implement a fundraising program.
- Requesting authority to purchase the Wisconsin Veterans Museum and WDVA Headquarters building, which are currently leased with Veterans Trust Fund money.

Note: At the statutorily required time of submission of this Biennial Report, the State of Wisconsin had yet to pass a completed budget.

SUMMARY OF WDVA BENEFITS DISBURSED

Total Veterans Trust Fund Benefits Approved From 1974 to June 30, 2007

	Number	Dollars
Economic Assistance Loan	93,949	\$160,420,709
Veterans Business Loan	10	87,875
Consumer Loan	2,634	35,478,640
Personal Loan	9,200	95,181,293
Second Mortgage Loan	53,505	181,951,604
Retraining Grant	1,428	3,804,554
Health Care Aid Grant ¹	25,642	17,856,710
Subsistence Aid Grant ¹	31,790	9,111,369
Assistance to Needy Veterans Program	989	1,410,968
VetEd	5,939	7,230,081
Tuition and Fee Reimbursement Grant ²	15,850	17,167,329
Part-Time and Correspondence Study Grant ²	250,593	29,831,729
Full-Time Study Grant ²	93,446	11,314,877
Veterans Assistance Program, Military Funeral Honors, Transportation Grant and other programs and grants	NA	27,909,979
TOTAL	584,975	\$598,759,717

WDVA Home Loans From 1974 through June 30, 2007

	Number	Dollars
Primary Mortgage Home Loan	54,190	\$2,570,957,437
Home Improvement Loan	2,288	30,490,749
TOTAL	56,478	\$2,601,448,186

¹ Health Care Aid Grants and Subsistence Aid Grants were combined into one program, Assistance to Needy Veterans, under the 2005–2007 Biennial Budget.

² Part-Time Study Grants and Tuition and Fee Reimbursement Grants were combined into one program, Veterans Education (VetEd), under the 2005–07 Biennial Budget.

***Total Veterans Trust Fund Benefits Approved
From July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2007***

	Number	Dollars
Economic Assistance Loan	0	\$ 0
Veterans Business Loan	0	0
Consumer Loan	0	0
Personal Loan ¹	739	10,395,980
Second Mortgage Loan	0	0
Retraining Grant ¹	87	224,659
Subsistence Aid Grant ¹	16	7,865
Aid to Needy Veterans (ANV) ¹	989	1,410,968
VetEd ¹	5,939	7,230,081
Veterans Assistance Program, Military Funeral Honors, Transportation Grant and other programs, and other grants ²	NA	1,675,332
TOTAL	7,770	\$20,944,885

***WDVA Home Loans
From July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2007***

	Number	Dollars
Primary Mortgage Home Loan ²	325	\$52,905,788
Home Improvement Loan ²	155	3,808,777
TOTAL	480	\$56,714,565

¹ Based on Vbats (veterans benefits application tracking system) data, date determined.

² Based on Wismart data.

Note: Beginning with the 2005–2007 Biennium, Part–Time Study and Tuition and Fee Reimbursement Grants were combined into VetED. The Health Care Aid Grant and Subsistence Aid Grant were combined into Assistance to Needy Veterans (ANV).



AGENCY COMPLIANCE WITH DEVELOPING FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES [SECTION 230.215(4)]



It is the policy of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) to support the use of alternative work patterns in order to maximize the employment options available to existing and potential employees. This is WDVA policy PP-9.