

# The Veteran *ADVOCATE*

Spring 2014

Serving Wisconsin Veterans

[www.WisVets.com](http://www.WisVets.com)



## Gov. Signs Vets Bills at King

The 2013-2014 Wisconsin State legislative session has come to a close and the WDVA has been given many tools and resources for our state's military heroes.

On Friday, April 4, 2014, Governor Walker signed several veteran-specific laws into effect at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King, including legislation that would move forward construction of a new 200-bed skilled nursing facility on campus to be named John R. Moses Hall. Other bills signed include giving the WDVA the authority to give grants to non-profits that assist veterans and encouraging state government agencies to contract with disabled veteran-owned businesses for state procurement, among others.

Earlier this legislative session, laws passed giving veterans priority course registration at UW System and Wisconsin technical colleges, as well as permitting the WDVA via the DMV to offer veterans a veteran identifier on their driver licenses or ID cards, giving veterans access to certain programs and services, such as special offers and discounts.

In addition to various new bills signed into law during the legislative session, veterans employment, education, long-term care, and outdoor recreational activities, were all enhanced in the 2013-2015 biennial budget, representing a very successful session for Wisconsin's veterans.

# Secretary Scocos Column

## *Building on recent success, WDVA looks to future*

Nearly three years ago, the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs charted a new course for the agency and how we help veterans while keeping an eye towards the future of veterans in this state.

We set new priorities to reflect modern day realities and meet the needs of all generations of veterans. Today, we remain steadfast in our focus on those priorities: improving our veterans homes, improving outreach to veterans, and breaking down barriers for veterans seeking employment.

In this newsletter, you will see an article that will show you that we have worked hard to improve the financial situation at the veterans homes, all while maintaining the highest quality of care in the safest of environments for our nation's heroes.

We have been hearing good things from veterans about the WDVA's new and improved methods to reach out to veterans. In 2012, we created the Veterans Benefits Resource Center to improve public access to information about the department's programs, benefits and services via phone, online chat, walk in and email communications.

The goal of the VBRC is to ensure every veteran who contacts the WDVA during business hours will be able to immediately speak to center support staff. Over the past four months, VBRC staff has handled nearly 18,000 inquiries. Prior to the inception of the VBRC, the WDVA staff only had the capacity to answer about 1,000 calls per month.

We've all heard the employment statistics and that is why



Secretary John A. Scocos  
Wisconsin Department of  
Veterans Affairs



making sure we help those veterans seeking employment has been a top priority. That's why the WDVA has partnered with various public and private agencies and organizations to host 67 veteran career fairs statewide over the past four years, serving nearly 14,000 veterans. Last year alone, over 4,000 veterans and spouses attended these career fairs with about 55 percent of those attending receiving a job offer or a follow-up job interview.

This year, we are introducing **VetCon: A Veteran Employment and Services Conference**. On May 10th, the

WDVA along with the Department of Workforce Development, Department of Military Affairs, and Hiring our Heroes will host this conference that will include a career fair, a benefits expo, work-

shops such as financial planning and resume writing, as well as provide access to educational and other resources. We are expecting this to be a very valuable conference that will meet the needs of many veterans. More information about **VetCon** can be found in this newsletter. Hope to see you there.

### Recent Highlights

- Veteran Employment Initiatives
- Improving Veteran Outreach
- Building on Veterans Home Success



Governor  
Scott Walker

Secretary  
John A. Scocos

### About the WDVA

Our mission is to work on behalf of Wisconsin's veterans community — veterans, their families and their survivors — in recognition of their service and sacrifice to our state and nation.

# Vets Homes Projects

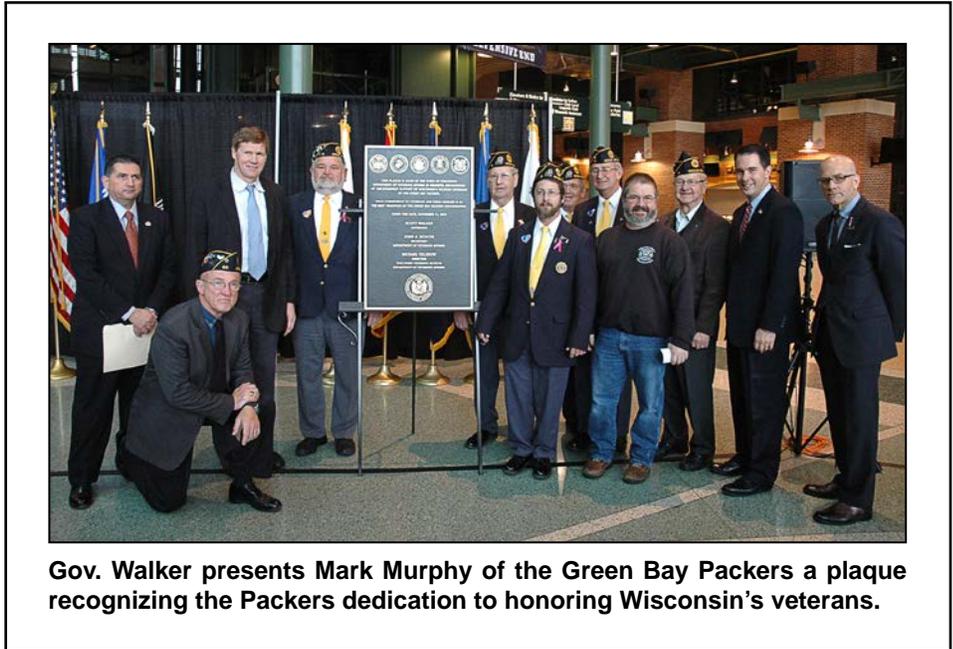
John Townsend  
Chair, Board of Veterans Affairs

As Chair of the Board of Veterans Affairs, it is my pleasure to work on behalf of Wisconsin veterans and their families. Wisconsin has some of the best veterans benefits of any state in our nation to serve our more than 400,000 former servicemembers. Whether it is education, employment, or healthcare, Wisconsin is looking toward the future in the way it cares for its military veterans.

Some of the department's biggest and best recent changes have come in the area of our veterans homes. The WDVA is proud to operate three veterans homes, including the Wisconsin Veterans Homes at King, Union Grove, and Chippewa Falls (which we opened in February 2013) serving nearly 1,000 veterans and their spouses. In an effort to serve more veterans closer to their homes, the department is looking to build facilities like the one in Chippewa Falls in other areas of the state – possible areas are Milwaukee, Madison and Green Bay.

Creating new veterans homes allows veterans to get the care they are looking for, but remain close to their loved ones in areas many spent most of their lives. Veterans not only seek out the camaraderie of fellow veterans, they also express a desire to remain close to home. As with the Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls, new facilities will be built on the neighborhood model – single rooms for veterans and shared, community living spaces, making veterans feel as “at home” and comfortable as possible while still receiving state-of-the-art nursing care.

We have been very successful with the homes we currently operate. Our homes are highly rated and maintain very high levels of occupancy. Our three current facilities are some of the best in the state and country – I am sure any facilities we add will be equally up to the task of caring for our state's veterans.



Gov. Walker presents Mark Murphy of the Green Bay Packers a plaque recognizing the Packers dedication to honoring Wisconsin's veterans.

## Join Us for Memorial Day

Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemeteries at:  
King  
Union Grove  
Spooner

Times, locations and more available at [www.WisVets.com](http://www.WisVets.com)



## Veteran Identifier

The WDVA via the DMV is now offering eligible veterans a veteran identifier on their Wisconsin driver licenses or ID cards. At a veteran's request, the word “VETERAN,” marked in red, appears on the front of a driver license or ID card; it gives veterans access to some programs and services for which certain veterans are eligible.



### STEP ONE

To verify eligibility, veterans should call 1-800-WIS-VETS (947-8387). Veterans must verify eligibility **BEFORE** they go to the DMV or apply for a license or ID renewal online.

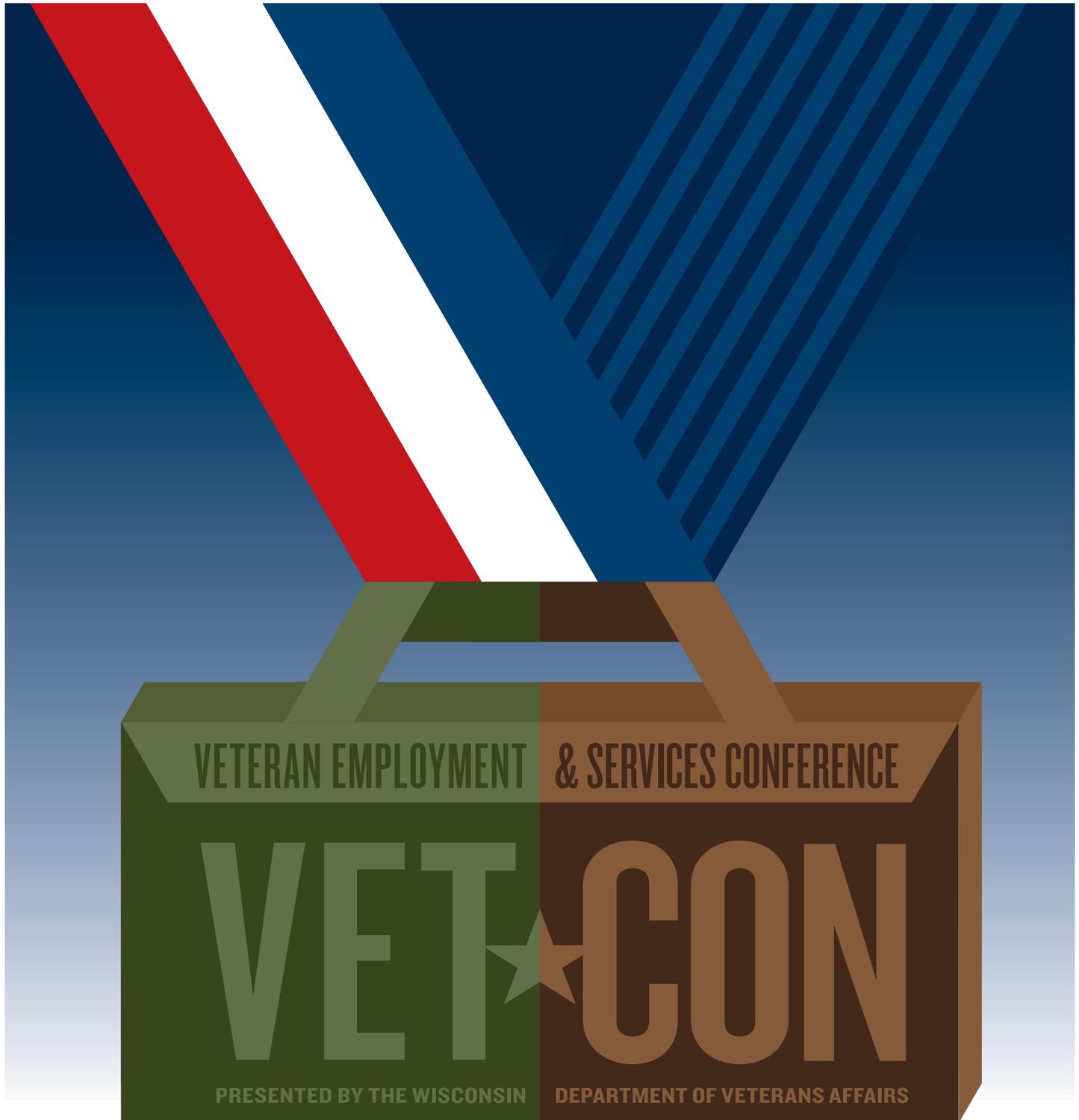
### STEP TWO

Veterans who have not yet been identified by the WDVA as a Wisconsin veteran may apply for certification using an expedited online form at

[www.WisVets.com](http://www.WisVets.com) or they may download the form and mail it to the WDVA with the appropriate documentation.

Veterans who have verified with the WDVA that they meet the criteria for the definition of Wisconsin veteran may proceed to the DMV or go online and apply for a new driver license or ID card.

Since November 2013, the WDVA has processed about 5,000 applications for veterans seeking the identifier.



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**PROVIDING ACCESS TO EMPLOYERS & RESOURCES**

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**MAY 10, 2014** **THE WISCONSIN CENTER**  
**MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN**

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## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

**7:30am – 9:15am**

*Registration*

**8:00am – 9:45am**

*Welcome Breakfast*

**10:00am – 4:00pm**

*Veterans Resources*

- Higher Education Resources
- Veterans Service Organization Resources
- Wisconsin Veteran Historical Exhibit and Photo Station

**4:00pm – 5:00pm**

*Special Presentation and Book Signing*

- Luis Carlos Montalván, NY Times bestselling author of "Until Tuesday: A Wounded Warrior and the Golden Retriever Who Saved Him"

**5:00pm – 7:00pm**

*Networking / Social*

## SERVICES & BENEFITS

**10:00am – 4:00pm**

*Veterans Benefits Expo*

- Federal / State / Local Veteran Agencies
- Education / Healthcare / Claims

**10:00am / 12:00pm / 2:00pm**

*Education Panel*

- UW Systems, Certifying Officials, VA Reps, Military Education Reps to discuss education options available for veterans and their family members.
- Maximizing your Education Benefits

**11:00am / 1:00pm / 3:00pm**

*Veteran Workshops*

- Financial Planning
- Intros to Veteran Service Organizations
- Veteran Entrepreneurial (start your own business)

## EMPLOYMENT

**10:00am – 3:00pm**

*Employment Job Fair*

- Job Fair Kick-off
- Employers connecting with Veterans

**10:00am / 12:00pm / 2:00pm**

*Employment Workshops*

- Resume Writing
- Interviewing Techniques
- Social Media and Employment

**11:00am / 1:00pm / 3:00pm**

*Employer Panel*

- Individuals on this panel would be CEOs, COOs, Presidents, and VP's of organizations—what they look for in hiring veterans, their best practices, and efforts to recruit veterans.

To register visit

**WWW.WISVETS.COM**

Or contact Brian Jones at

**608-267-1797**

All sponsorship funds are intended for the purpose of Veteran Employment & Services initiatives.

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# Veterans Day 2013: Operation Dustoff

Hundreds of veterans, their families and friends attended the 2013 Veterans Day celebration at the State Capitol in Madison. The theme was *Operation Dustoff: Vietnam Remembered*, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War.

President Barack Obama has proclaimed May 28, 2012 through November 11, 2025 as the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War to honor Vietnam veterans, the fallen, the wounded, those unaccounted for, former prisoners of war, their families and all who served.

The WDVA has joined the Vietnam War Commemoration as a commemorative chair. WDVA Secretary John A. Scocos has appointed Medal of Honor recipient Gary Wetzels and former WDVA Secretary Ray Boland as Co-Chairs of Wisconsin's Vietnam War Commemoration Committee.



**Clockwise from Above:**

**Sec. Scocos delivers his remarks at Operation Dustoff at the State Capitol November 8.**

**Medal of Honor recipient Gary Wetzels and Gov. Scott Walker view a recently enveiled Vietnam Veterans memorial plaque.**

**Hundreds of veterans and spectators fill the Capitol rotunda to view the WDVA's 2013 Veterans Day ceremony.**

# Wisconsin Veterans Museum

## Medal of Honor Exhibit

The WDVA oversees one of our country's best tourist destinations, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. We are proud of the exhibits that tell the stories and share the artifacts of Wisconsin veterans and their families. Located at 30 W. Mifflin St., across the street from the Wisconsin State Capitol, there is always something new to see and do at our Museum.

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum recently opened *The Last Full Measure: Wisconsin in the Civil War, 1863 – 1865*. An exhibit to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War, *The Last Full Measure* will display never before seen Civil War artifacts from the Museum's collection. *The Last Full Measure* focuses on Wisconsin's role in the last two years (1863-65) of the Civil War.

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum also unveiled the "Congressional Medal of Honor" display, which showcases four medals given to Wisconsin veterans from WWII and the Korean War. The Medal of Honor is the greatest honor a military service man or woman can earn and is given to those who showcase personal acts of valor above and beyond the call of duty. The men who were awarded these medals are born and raised Wisconsinites.

- Staff Sergeant Gerald Endl was born and raised in Fort Atkinson and later moved to Janesville before he entered the Army in 1941. He served in New Guinea as a staff sergeant in the 32nd Infantry Division.
- Technical Sergeant Beauford T. Anderson was born in Eagle and later moved to Soldiers Grove. He enlisted in the Army in 1942 and received his medal for a coura-



**Paula Wagner, whose late husband was a cousin of Army Staff Sergeant Gerald Endl, views Endl's Medal of Honor at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum.**

geous display during the Battle of Okinawa in Japan. He served in the military until 1952.

- Second Lieutenant Jerome Sudut, born and raised in Wausau, lied about his age to join the Army in 1946 at just 16-years-old. He received a battlefield commission in 1951 during the Korean War.
- Corporal Mitchell Red Cloud, Jr. was born in Hatfield and was a Marine Corps veteran of World War II and Army veteran of Korea. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for combat action in Korea. He was also a member of the Ho-Chunk Nation.

## Wisconsin Veterans Homes: Growing and Succeeding

The WDVA is proud to operate three veterans homes, including the Wisconsin Veterans Homes at Chippewa Falls, King, and Union Grove, serving nearly 1,000 veterans and their spouses. Providing the best possible care to our veterans at these homes is a mission we take very seriously.

The Veterans Homes are very popular among Wisconsin's veterans, evidenced by the occupancy levels and waiting lists associated with each home, and our staff retention rate exceeds that of comparable facilities across the state.

Over the past three years, deliberate steps have been taken to improve the financial condition of the homes, in turn improving the quality of life for

the members of our homes. In 2011, the Department faced a \$12.9 million deficit related to operations of our homes. Today, the Department's homes are operating at the highest positive income level in history.

In February, we celebrated the one year anniversary of opening our newest Veterans Home in Chippewa Falls. Our five-year business plan projected it would take three years to overcome the start-up expenses and begin operating with a net positive income. We have achieved that in less than one year. As of November 30th, this year's operating income is \$671,737, with an occupancy rate of 99 percent.

At Union Grove Gates Hall has been repurposed from assisted living to skilled nursing, consequently

increasing the occupancy rate from 10 to 99 percent since its re-opening in June. The change enabled us to realize positive operating income at Union Grove for the first time in its 12-year history and has boosted the overall occupancy rate at Union Grove to 97 percent.

Occupancy at King remains consistently strong at 98-99 percent. The 2013 State Budget provided additional nursing positions, thereby reducing overtime and contract nursing expenses.

We have made many improvements at our homes and look forward to continuing that trend and delivering high-quality services to our veterans.



Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs  
201 West Washington Avenue  
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

**Ask us about the programs, benefits  
and services available to you.**

**Veterans Benefit Resource Center**

Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs

**[WisVets@dva.wisconsin.gov](mailto:WisVets@dva.wisconsin.gov)**

**1-800-WIS-VETS**

**[www.WisVets.com](http://www.WisVets.com)**

**We're here to help.**

