

Scott Walker, Governor

Donna Williams, Acting Secretary



**STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

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April 27, 2011

WDVA Bulletin No. 957

**TO: County Veterans Service Offices
Veterans Service Organizations**

SUBJECT: Military Funeral Honors Program (MFHP) Projected Stipend Outage

The purpose of this bulletin is to announce that funding for the funeral honors reimbursement requests for FY 11 will be exhausted by approximately May 15, 2011.

Veterans service organizations should continue to forward reimbursement requests to the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) until the Department provides notification that sufficient reimbursement requests have been received to fully exhaust the program's funding. Reimbursement requests will be processed for payments based on the date they are received. Once funds are exhausted all outstanding requests will be returned without payment back to the veterans service organizations.

On March 11, 2011, and April 21, 2011, the Department sent correspondence to the Joint Committee on Finance alerting them of the situation and requesting additional funding to forestall the outage. As of April 26, 2011, the Department has not received a response. Accordingly, it is anticipated that budgetary authority for the program will become available at the start of the next fiscal year on July 1, 2011.

WDVA is seeking CVSO assistance in expanding the volunteer base for the MFHP. WDVA will continue to work with all parties to ensure that the desires of the family are met. Our commitment of service will continue through the coordination of assets and training offered to veterans service organizations. We ask that Veterans service organizations and the funeral directors continue to use and support the Military Funeral Honors Program and continue the coordination process by calling 1-877-944-6667. We will still provide, free of charge, all the other services that have worked so well in the past. Please continue to help us ensure that every veteran in Wisconsin receives his or her well-deserved final tribute.

Please check our website at www.WisVets.com/FuneralHonors#Stipend for future program updates. For more information on WDVA funeral honors program please call 1-800-WIS-VETS (947-8387) and ask to speak with someone in the Military Funeral Honors Section.

Scott Walker, Governor

Kenneth B. Black, Secretary



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March 11, 2011

The Honorable Alberta Darling
Senate Co-Chairperson
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 317 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

The Honorable Robin Vos
Assembly Co-Chairperson
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 309 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Senator Darling and Representative Vos:

Request

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (Department) is requesting increased budget authority in the amount of \$68,900 for the Military Funeral Honors appropriation 20.485 (2) (dm) under s.13.101, Wis. Stats. The increased budget authority is being requested so the Department has sufficient funding through the 2009-11 biennium to reimburse all local Veteran Service Organizations who apply for the stipend for providing military funeral honors for deceased veterans.

Background

Military Funeral Honors became a statutory benefit to all veterans on January 1, 2000, as a result of the National Defense Authorization Act for Federal Fiscal Year 2000. The law requires that, upon the family's request, every eligible veteran is entitled to receive a military funeral honors ceremony to include folding, presentation of the United States burial flag and the sounding of taps, at no cost to the family. The State of Wisconsin's Military Funeral Honors Program (MFHP) was created by 1999 Wisconsin Act 136 in response thereto and is authorized under s.45.60, Wis. Stats.

Under the provisions of s. 45.60, the Department is required to administer a program to coordinate the provision of military funeral honors to deceased veterans and to deceased persons who have served under honorable conditions in any national guard or in a reserve component of the U.S. armed forces. Military funeral honors may be provided by local units of member organizations of the council on veterans programs, by local units of veterans organizations certified by the department to provide military funeral honors, by members of the Wisconsin National Guard activated under s. 321.04 (2) (e), or by staff of the Department. The Department is required to reimburse a local veterans service organization (VSO) an amount not to exceed \$50 for every funeral for which they provide the military funeral honors. VA 17.05 (2), Wis. Adm. Code, further specifies that reimbursement to a VSO for basic honors is \$25, while reimbursement for full honors is \$50.

For the 2009-11 biennium, the Department requested budget authority of \$508,500 for payments to VSOs for military funeral honors: \$251,400 in 2009-10 and \$257,100 in 2010-11, which represented an increase of \$100,500 over the 2007-09 biennium. The increase was based on a projected increase in demand for the program to include \$12,000 in each year related to a decrease in the amount of \$50 stipends available from the Wisconsin

Army Guard for its Army honors program. The Department's 2009-11 request was reduced by \$21,000 to \$487,500 as a result of the Joint Committee on Finance's 5.135% agency across-the-board reductions.

In 2009-10, the Department expended \$240,900, including \$15,000 of payments for honors provided in 2008-09, and through February 28, 2011, the Department had expended \$182,800, including \$23,700 for 2009-10 honors. The Department estimates that cost of providing military honors for 2010-11 will be \$291,800. Together with the \$240,900 expended in 2009-10 and \$23,700 expended in the current fiscal year for honors provided in the prior year, \$556,400 is the estimated budget authority needed for military honors for the biennium and \$68,900 the total projected shortfall in budget authority for the period.

The projected shortfall of \$68,900 in the 2009-11 biennium was unanticipated and is based on several factors. As previously noted, the Department's 2009-11 biennial budget request contemplated an annual increase of 240 military honors or \$12,000 due to the expected decrease in payments to VSOs by the Wisconsin Army Guard. In 2009-10, the Wisconsin Army Guard reduced from 600 to 100 the number of stipends it paid and it has not paid any stipends in 2010-11. As a result, the Department anticipates that it will pay \$36,000 more in stipends in 2009-11 than requested in the biennial budget. In addition, the Department did not anticipate an additional \$15,000 of payments for honors provided in 2008-09 would need to be paid in 2009-11, nor that a 5.135% across-the-board reduction would be introduced by the Joint Committee on Finance, resulting in a reduction in budget authority of \$21,000 over the 2009-11 biennium.

Compliance with s. 13.101 (3), Wis. Stats

Under s. 13.101 (3), Wis. Stats., the Joint Committee on Finance has the authority to supplement appropriations if the purpose for which the supplement appropriation is requested is directed by the Legislature, an emergency exists and no funds are available for such purposes. The department is therefore requesting that the Joint Committee on Finance approve a supplement of \$68,900 of budget authority for appropriation 20.485 (2) (dm) to cover the projected biennial funding shortfall for the Military Funeral Honors Program for 2009-11.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Max Dulberger at (608) 267-0784.

Sincerely,

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



KENNETH B. BLACK

Secretary

Cc: Robert Lang, Legislative Fiscal Bureau
Brian Hayes, State Budget Office
Board of Veterans Affairs
Max Dulberger
Jimmy Stewart
James Bond
Colleen Holtan

Scott Walker, Governor

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April 21, 2011

The Honorable Alberta Darling
Senate Co-Chairperson
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 317 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

The Honorable Robin Vos
Assembly Co-Chairperson
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 309 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Senator Darling and Representative Vos:

I am writing to restate that the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (Department) is requesting increased budget authority in the amount of \$68,900 for the Military Funeral Honors appropriation 20.485 (2) (dm) under s.13.101, Wis. Stats.

The Department submitted the initial request in the enclosed letter dated March 11, 2011, and it is incumbent on me to reiterate that the increased budget authority is necessary so the Department has sufficient funding through the 2009-11 biennium to reimburse all local Veterans Service Organizations who apply for the stipend for providing military funeral honors for deceased veterans.

Background

The Military Funeral Honors Program (MFHP) in Wisconsin provides a final tribute to the men and women who served our state and nation honorably as members of the U.S. armed forces. It allows a grateful state and nation to pay its last respects in a dignified and solemn ceremony.

As outlined in the initial request, under the provisions of s. 45.60, Wis. Stats., the Department is required to administer a program to coordinate the provision of military funeral honors to eligible persons. Military funeral honors include the folding and presentation of the United States burial flag and the sounding of taps, at no cost to the family.

Military funeral honors may be provided by local units of member organizations of the Council on Veterans Programs, by local units of veterans organizations certified by the Department to provide military funeral honors, by members of the Wisconsin National Guard activated under s. 321.04 (2) (e), or by staff of the Department. Accordingly, the Department is required to reimburse a local veterans service organization (VSO) an amount not to exceed \$50 for every funeral for which they provide the military funeral honors. VA 17.05 (2), Wis. Adm. Code, further specifies that reimbursement to a VSO for basic honors is \$25, while reimbursement for full honors is \$50.

Projected Budget Shortfall

For the 2009-11 biennium, the Department requested budget authority of \$508,500 for reimbursements to VSOs for military funeral honors: \$251,400 in 2009-10 and \$257,100 in 2010-11, which represented an increase of \$100,500 over the 2007-09 biennium. The increase was based on a projected increase in demand for the program to include \$12,000 in each year related to a decrease in the amount of \$50 stipends available from the Wisconsin Army Guard for its Army honors program. The Department's 2009-11 request was reduced by \$21,000 to \$487,500 as a result of the Joint Committee on Finance's 5.135% agency across-the-board reductions.

In 2009-10, the Department expended \$240,900, including \$15,000 of payments for honors provided in 2008-09, and through February 28, 2011, the Department had expended \$182,800, including \$23,700 for 2009-10 honors. The Department estimates that cost of providing military honors for 2010-11 will be \$291,800. Together with the \$240,900 expended in 2009-10 and \$23,700 expended in the current fiscal year for honors provided in the prior year, \$556,400 is the estimated budget authority needed for military honors for the biennium and \$68,900 the total projected shortfall in budget authority for the period.

The projected shortfall of \$68,900 in the 2009-11 biennium was unanticipated and is based on several factors. As previously noted, the Department's 2009-11 biennial budget request contemplated an annual increase of 240 military honors or \$12,000 due to the expected decrease in payments to VSOs by the Wisconsin Army Guard. In 2009-10, the Wisconsin Army Guard reduced from 600 to 100 the number of stipends it paid and it has not paid any stipends in 2010-11. As a result, the Department anticipates that it will pay \$36,000 more in stipends in 2009-11 than requested in the biennial budget. In addition, the Department did not anticipate an additional \$15,000 of payments for honors provided in 2008-09 would need to be paid in 2009-11, nor that a 5.135% across-the-board reduction would be introduced by the Joint Committee on Finance, resulting in a reduction in budget authority of \$21,000 over the 2009-11 biennium.

Compliance with s. 13.101 (3), Wis. Stats

Under s. 13.101 (3), Wis. Stats., the Joint Committee on Finance has the authority to supplement appropriations if the purpose for which the supplement appropriation is requested is directed by the Legislature, an emergency exists and no funds are available for such purposes.

The reimbursement of VSOs for the provision of military funeral honors is a purpose directed to the Legislature for which insufficient funds remain. No funds other than those under 20.485 (2) (dm) are appropriated for this purpose. Further, the Department anticipates no excess general purpose revenue (GPR) expenditure authority will remain in its other non-sum sufficient GPR appropriations, listed below, that the Legislature could redirect for the purpose of paying stipends:

20.485 (1) (a), Aid to indigent veterans	\$198,000
20.485 (1) (d), Cemetery maintenance and beautification	\$23,600
20.485 (1) (c), Operation of Wisconsin Veterans Museum	\$276,900

The outage is projected to occur on approximately May 15, and the Department believes that the inability to reimburse VSOs for providing as many as 1,378 military funeral honors for deceased veterans during the remainder of the 2009-11 biennium constitutes an emergency.

The Department is therefore requesting that the Joint Committee on Finance approve a supplement of \$68,900 of budget authority for appropriation 20.485 (2) (dm) to cover the projected biennial funding shortfall for the Military Funeral Honors Program for 2009-11.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Max Dulberger at (608) 267-0784.

Sincerely,

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



Donna Williams
Acting Secretary

Enclosure

Cc: Robert Lang, Legislative Fiscal Bureau
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