



March 25, 2024

WDVA Bulletin

TO: County/Tribal Veterans Service Offices and Veteran Service Organizations

SUBJECT: Changes to Chapter 45 of the Wisconsin Statutes in the 2023-2024 Session

On March 22, 2024, Governor Evers signed the following bills regarding Veterans Affairs into law:

- 1) SB 416 (removing the requirement that CVSOs pass a civil service exam in order to receive the WDVA CVSO Grant);
- 2) SB 546 (enabling admission of spouses to the WDVA Homes prior to the admission of the eligible veteran);
- 3) AB 385 (enabling Hmong soldiers who supported U.S. forces in Laos to indicate their veteran status on a Wisconsin operator's license or identification card); and
- 4) AB 1079 (removing the residency requirement for interment in Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemeteries to comport with the requirements of the National Cemetery Administration).

The following changes will take effect on Monday, March 25, 2024, upon publication by the Legislative Reference Bureau. This bulletin outlines the changes relevant to CVSO/TVSOs and Veteran Service Organizations serving within Wisconsin.

1) Removal of Civil Service Exam Requirements for CVSO Grants

Pursuant to Wisconsin Statutes Section 45.82, the WDVA annually awards grants to CVSOs meeting the criteria established within the statutes. Previously, if the CVSO were chosen after April 15, 2015, CVSOs were required to demonstrate successful completion of a Civil Service Examination administered by the Bureau of Merit Recruitment in the Department of Administration or have been appointed under a civil service competitive examination in order for a County to be eligible for the grants. As of March 25, 2024, this is no longer required. The WDVA will not consider this as a criteria for grant eligibility. Supporting documentation of successful completion of a Civil Service Examination is no longer required for future grant applications.

For inquiries related to this change, please contact the WDVA Grants Team at: 1-800-WIS-VETS (947-8387) or WisVets@dva.wisconsin.gov

2) Admission of Spouses to WDVA Homes Prior to Veteran Admission

Pursuant to Wisconsin Statutes Section 45.51, the WDVA operates veterans homes serving eligible veterans and their spouses. Previously, the veteran was required to be admitted to the home prior to their spouse's admission. As of March 25, 2024, spouses may now be admitted to the homes prior to the admission of the eligible veteran, as long as the spouse lived with the eligible veteran for not less than 6 months immediately prior to the application for membership in the home. The spouse of the veteran still must meet all other eligibility requirements, including that he or she 1) is permanently incapacitated due

to physical disability or age from any substantially gainful occupation; 2) has not been convicted of certain crimes; 3) provides a financial statement to the Department of Veterans Affairs; and 4) has care needs that the veterans home is able to provide. The amended statute further provides that an interruption of cohabitation caused by reason of employment, hospitalization, or because of physical or mental disability of either spouse does not constitute an interruption of the 6-month cohabitation requirement.

For inquiries related to this change, please contact Molly Stashek, WDVA Veterans Homes at: 1-715-256-3594 or Molly.Stashek@dva.wisconsin.gov

3) Veteran Status Identifiers for Hmong Soldiers Supporting U.S. Forces

Pursuant to Chapter 343 of the Wisconsin Statutes, the Department of Transportation provides operator licenses and identification cards including a “Veteran” identifier for eligible veterans. The WDVA supports this program by verifying the eligibility of veterans meeting the criteria established in Wisconsin Statutes Section 45.01(12). Previously, this benefit did not include Hmong soldiers supporting US forces from February 28, 1961 – September 18, 1978 as identified by 8 USC 1157 (Hmong Veterans’ Naturalization Act).

Beginning March 25, 2024, Hmong soldiers meeting the criteria established by 8 USC 1157 are eligible to receive the “Veteran” identifier on operator license and identification cards provided by the Department of Transportation. The amended statutes enable applicants to demonstrate eligibility by providing WDVA with any one of the following documents:

- a) Original documents demonstrating service during the applicable time period in guerilla or irregular forces based in Laos;
- b) An affidavit of the serving person’s superior officer;
- c) Two affidavits from other individuals who also were serving with a special guerrilla unit or irregular forces and who personally knew of the person’s service; or
- d) Other appropriate proof.

Eligible applicants may verify their eligibility by submitting Form WDVA 2241 to the WDVA, or by calling 1-800-WIS-VETS (947-8387) prior to visiting the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Please be aware that this change to Chapter 45 of the Wisconsin Statutes only confers eligibility for the “Veteran” identifier, and does not otherwise change the eligibility criteria for other veteran programs, benefits, and services.

For inquiries related to this change, please contact the Veterans Benefits Resource Center at: 1-800-WIS-VETS (947-8387) or WisVets@dva.wisconsin.gov

4) Removal of Residency Requirement for Interment in Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemeteries

Pursuant to changes to Chapter 45 of the Wisconsin Statutes, the Wisconsin residency requirement for eligibility to be interred in a Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery no longer applies as of March 25, 2024. The expansion of eligibility includes veterans, spouses, and qualifying dependents.

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) within the US Department of Veterans Affairs establishes the criteria for the Veteran Cemetery Grants Program for all participating state-run veterans cemeteries. State-run veteran cemeteries must demonstrate compliance with NCA guidelines in order to receive the “plot allowance” funds for veteran internments. The NCA policy requires all grant recipients, which includes the three Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemeteries at King, Union Grove, and Spooner, to eliminate state residency requirements by January 1, 2025 as a prerequisite to receiving future grant funding.

For any questions, please contact the Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemeteries at the following:

Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery
N4063 Veterans Way
Spooner, WI 54801
Phone: (715) 635-5360
nwvmc@dva.wisconsin.gov

Central Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery
N2666 County Road QQ
King, WI 54946
Phone: (715) 256-5000
cwvmc@dva.wisconsin.gov

Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery
21731 Spring Street
Union Grove, WI 53182
Phone: (262) 878-5660
swvmc@dva.wisconsin.gov