



DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS

Wisconsin State Agency 101

A SERIES
PREPARED BY



INSTITUTE FOR
REFORMING GOVERNMENT

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STATE AGENCY FAST FACTS

AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Wisconsin Department of Veteran Affairs is a cabinet level agency that - according to its mission - works "alongside veteran communities in recognition of their service and sacrifice to our state and nation".

DVA was created in 1945 by consolidating many veteran programs into one state agency. Today, the Department oversees the administration of veteran benefits, three veteran memorial cemeteries, and the operation of three veteran nursing homes. The agency receives advice from the Board of Veterans Affairs, a nine-member board appointed by the Governor. In recent years, DVA has come under scrutiny for the appalling conditions at the Veterans Home at Union Grove.

The Department of Veterans Affairs budget is **\$290,175,700** for the 2021-2023 biennium. DVA employs **1,242 employees** and offers services to Wisconsin's **350,000 veterans** and their families.

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the ways we honor the sacrifices of Wisconsin's veterans is with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. The museum is located Madison off the Capitol square and hosts more than 26,000 artifacts from the Civil War to the present day. This ensures that veterans' stories are preserved for future generations.

The Department of Veterans Affairs also operates three memorial cemeteries: Northern, Southern, and Central Wisconsin Memorial Cemeteries. These cemeteries are maintained by DVA to ensure that veterans are properly honored for their service. The Department provides military honor services including the folding and presentation of the US flag and the sounding of taps.

TAXPAYER ALERT!

In DVA's 2023-2025 budget request, the agency requested a **\$25 million** increase from the current budget. However, missing from the budget request was a detailed plan on how to handle the gross neglect of the residents at the Veterans Home at Union Grove.

This is just one of many state agencies asking for a huge increase in state funding while the level of service is in question.

**\$290 MILLION
BUDGET**

**1,200+ EMPLOYEES
SERVING MORE THAN
350,000 VETERANS &
FAMILIES**

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REFORM HISTORY

Wisconsin is a national leader for Veterans benefits. The Wisconsin G.I. Bill, separate from the federal G.I. Bill, offers veterans full tuition and fees to any public 4-year or 2-year institution, and as of 2020, private universities. Wisconsin offers a refundable property tax credit to veterans or a surviving spouse and military retirement benefits are tax exempt. Through DVA, veterans are provided job training and assistance to make them an active part of the Wisconsin workforce.

The Wisconsin Veterans Housing and Recovery Program targets homeless veterans and veterans suffering from substance abuse to get them back on their feet. All of these benefits are topped with ten grants that are available to veterans and their families through DVA.



**WISCONSIN IS A
NATIONAL LEADER IN
BENEFITS OFFERED TO
VETERANS AND THEIR
FAMILIES**

KEEP AN EYE ON...

The Veterans Trust Fund is the main source of revenue for many of the critical services that Wisconsin Veterans depend on. In recent budgets, the legislature has needed to add state tax dollars to keep the trust fund strong. Lawmakers must continue to ensure that Wisconsin can provide the services and programs for current and future generations of veterans.

ABOUT IRG



INSTITUTE FOR
REFORMING GOVERNMENT

The Institute for Reforming Government (IRG) is a 501 (c) 3 and Wisconsin-based think tank established to help remove the onerous barriers and red tape separating the individual from an efficient and functioning government.

Find out more about IRG and view additional state agency briefing materials by visiting ReformingGovernment.org

DEPARTMENT LEADERSHIP



Mary M. Kolar
Secretary



James Bond
Deputy Secretary



Kathy Still
Assistant Deputy Secretary

ONGOING CONCERNS...

The Veterans Home at Union Grove has been under investigations during the past few years because of the awful conditions that have been brought to light by residents and their families. Based on reporting, residents have had to endure poor medical care, dehydration, and unexplained injuries. Earlier this year, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported that the Home had **62 operating violations** in the last 5 years.

IRG WANTS TO KNOW...

If you were in charge for a day, what reforms would you make to the Department? Email Alex Ignatowski, IRG's Director of State Budget and Government Reform, at ai@reforminggovernment.org.