

RESOLUTION NO. 2016-014

SYNOPSIS: The Wisconsin State Legislature resolved in 1973 to create a State grant system through which the Counties of Wisconsin could seek fiscal support in providing suitable salary supplements in order to attract and retain sufficient talent as full-time County Veterans Service Officers (CVSO) to operate County Veterans Service Offices within their local county government construct. The CVSO Grant payment structure was originally conceived as a block-grant structure and was based upon: employment of a full-time County Veterans Service Officer; the aggregate general population in each county; and divided into four categories: <20k pop. = \$8.5 grant; 20k – 45.499k pop. = \$10k grant; 45.5k -74.99k pop. = \$11.5k grant; and, >75 pop. = \$13k grant. Counties that employed only a part-time CVSO were only allowed a \$500 grant. This payment structure stayed constant and unchanged from its 1973 inception until 2015. Over time, it was allowed by the State for counties to use this grant money for costs other than strictly to supplement CVSO salary, so long as those costs were strictly associated with improving veterans' services. Although there were no specific standards ever established by the State to prescribe authorized uses for the grant monies (or to proscribe unauthorized 12 uses), there was never any reported or published incident of any abuse of the grant money by any CVSO or any county. In the 2015 State Biennium Budget process, language was inserted which reconfigured the CVSO Grant to a reimbursement only payment structure. This new structure has become fraught with difficulties and, worst of all, it is causing the smallest and poorest of Wisconsin's counties to have the greatest difficulty in obtaining these much needed grant monies to fund their CVSO offices. This has also raised awareness amongst the smallest and poorest Wisconsin counties that the original block-grant payment structure had always advantaged the largest and richest Wisconsin counties over the smallest and poorest Wisconsin counties (while the smallest and poorest Wisconsin counties actually have nearly double the percentage of veteran concentrations in their populations), and the new reimbursement only payment structure still retained the same imbalance. To prevent and preclude the current dire situation for the smallest and poorest Wisconsin counties, the original CVSO Grant payment structure should instead have been examined for reconfiguration to better suit the county veteran concentrations and county economic needs in light of current and past economic difficulties amongst Wisconsin's smallest and poorest counties. This resolution addresses the inequities of the original CVSO Grant payment structure and the need to return to a block-grant payment structure and allow grant payments to only be utilized for CVSO salary supplements; as a result, this resolution also better addresses the true fiscal needs of the smallest and poorest Wisconsin counties and intends to provide necessary and proportional assistance to guarantee veterans services to the substantially higher percentages of veteran concentrations in the county populations of Wisconsin's smallest and poorest counties.

INTRODUCED BY: Sawyer County Administrative Committee

To the Honorable Board of Supervisors of Sawyer County:

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin County Veterans Service Office has operated as a block-grant for CVSO salary supplement since legislative inception in 1973, to attract and retain CVSO talent, and as a means to fund improvements to CVSO veterans services in the county; and

WHEREAS, the 2015 Wisconsin Biennium Budget restructured this long-standing CVSO Grant block grant payment structure to a reimbursement only payment structure, and has resulted in a very cumbersome program that no longer allows salary supplementation, and contains complicated rules of eligible reimbursable costs, which together now create very troubling fiscal constraints on the poorest of Wisconsin counties that benefitted fiscally from the previous block grant payment structure; and,

WHEREAS, the previous block grant payment structure of the CVSO Grant was weighted unfavorably against the smallest and poorest Wisconsin counties and weighted more favorably towards the most populous and affluent Wisconsin counties; and,

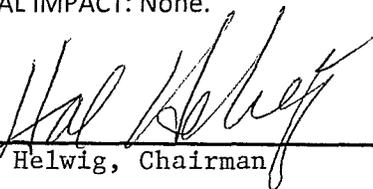
WHEREAS, the smallest and poorest of Wisconsin counties statistically have a significantly higher percentage of veterans in their aggregate general population; indicating the available county revenue is at a significant fiscal disadvantage to the larger more affluent Wisconsin counties in supporting their veteran population with veterans services.

NOW, THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the County of Sawyer joins other counties in the State of Wisconsin, to express their desire to the Wisconsin State Legislature to have the County Veterans Service Office Grant returned to the original 1973 intent to be used strictly for supplementing the salary of County Veterans Service Officers in order to attract and retain talented personnel in those positions, and to restructure the payment structure in order to better advantage the poorest Wisconsin counties with higher veteran population concentrations in attracting and retaining talented personnel in these positions; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be sent to all of Sawyer County's State Senators and Assembly Representatives, to the Wisconsin Counties Association, and to the President of the Wisconsin County Veterans Service Officer Association.

FISCAL NOTE: None.

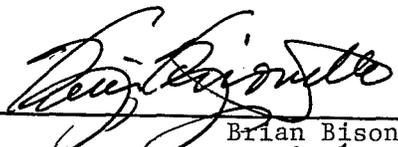
FISCAL IMPACT: None.



Hal Helwig, Chairman



Dale Schleeeter



Brian Bisonette



James Bassett



Ron Kinsley