

All Democratic motions in the state budget committee to improve veteran's services in Wisconsin were voted down along party lines.

MADISON - State Senator Jon Erpenbach and his Democratic Colleagues on the state budget committee offered motions today in the committee to fully fund the Veterans Trust Fund for the future, make permanent facility and staffing improvements at veterans nursing homes, increase access to mental health treatment for veterans, and provide local grants to prevent veteran homelessness.



"A state that supports their veteran community does not divert funds from our nursing homes when there are facility and staffing needs for our aging and ailing veterans. A long term solution for the viability of the Veterans Trust Fund is long overdue and JFC Democrats know that now is the time to increase state support for veterans. For years, Republicans ignored warning signs at King, rejected project improvements and dismissed facility safety issues as they continued to raid millions of dollars," said **Senator Jon Erpenbach**.

The Governor's budget moves $26 million from the veteran's nursing homes, including King, to make the Veterans Trust Fund solvent. Instead Democrats proposed state tax dollar support for the Veterans Trust Fund. Democrats also proposed expanding the Needy Veterans Program to include a mental health services component. CVSO's could provide a credit or voucher to veterans for local mental health services when they need it.

"Every day 20 veterans in this country fall victim to suicide. We should be doing all we can as a Legislature to support veterans when they ask for mental health and substance abuse care. While the USVA has made strides in improving access to services, there are still long wait times for appointments. Our plan allows veterans to be seen in their community nearly immediately while using an existing program and existing money," Erpenbach said.

Since 2011, $23 million in requested facility maintenance and upgrade projects at the King Veteran Home were denied, delayed or deferred as Republicans transferred funding away from nursing home care to backfill Gov. Walker's budget deficits in the Trust Fund. Over that time, veterans and family members who reside at King raised concerns about staff shortages, outdated medical equipment, tainted drinking water and urine-soaked carpeting. The King Veteran Home was assessed a fine and had its quality rating downgraded in November 2016 after a series of inspections and poor care contributed to the death of a resident.

All Democratic motions to improve veteran's services in Wisconsin were voted down along party lines.