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Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 116

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions

Thursday, October 10, 2019

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for holding this public hearing today and giving me the opportunity to speak to you in support of Senate Bill (SB) 116. I would like to thank Senator Jacque and Senator Taylor for working with me on this important legislation.

For many years Wisconsin has been a leader in providing benefits and services to our veterans. This legislation builds upon that by increasing the number of veterans that qualify for the Disabled Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit. Currently, in order to qualify for this property tax credit, a veteran's service-connected disability rating must be 100%. SB 116 lowers the threshold to claim the credit to 70%. Under this bill, the maximum credit that an eligible person could claim is multiplied by the percentage of that person's service connected-disability rating. For example, if an eligible veteran has a service-connected disability rating of 70%, they may claim a 70% property tax credit.

I am sure many of you have seen news stories of deserving wounded combat veterans receiving support from the community and non-profits to either build or renovate a home to accommodate their disability. However, oftentimes these improvements increase the property value and the amount of property tax owed. Due to their injuries, a number of these veterans are living on fixed incomes and struggle to pay their property taxes. Because of the way the tax credit is structured now, a veteran who has a service-connected disability ranking of 80% or even 90% and faces significant barriers to paying their property taxes does not qualify for property tax relief under the Disabled Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit. By expanding the eligibility for this tax credit we are providing needed property tax relief that will allow more of our disabled veterans to stay in their homes.

Mr. Chairman and members, I ask for your support of SB 116 and thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today.