



WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Dianne Hesselbein

79TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

FOR RELEASE: May 24, 2016

CONTACT: Rep. Dianne Hesselbein, 608-266-5340

HELSELBEIN QUESTIONS DVA HASSLING OF COUNTY VETERANS OFFICES

Rep. Dianne Hesselbein (D-Middleton) today challenged the state Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) to defend its recent rejections of financial requests submitted by County Veterans Service Officers.

The Capital Times reported today that several counties have had their veterans' office grant reimbursements rejected, while others submitting similar expenses had their requests approved. CVSO payments from the state were changed in the last budget from an outright grant, ranging from \$8,500 to \$13,000 per year, to a system requiring CVSOs to seek reimbursement for expenses, including salaries. The DVA was directed to promulgate rules and criteria, but it has not.

"The department appears to be harassing our CVSOs, approving some counties' requests but rejecting others, without ever having given them rules to follow, as the department was told to do," Hesselbein said in a statement. She is the ranking Democrat on the Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee.

County Veterans Service Officers are the front-line personnel in each Wisconsin county who give returning Wisconsin service-members advice and information about the benefit programs for which they qualify, and provide an important local contact.

The DVA last year attempted to dismantle the CVSO structure by backing a bill to make the county officers offices optional rather than mandatory in every county. Veterans from around the state packed a hearing in the Capitol to protest the plan. It was taken off the table.

"I am afraid that this disruption of the CVSO's means that the department is preparing to fight this fight again," Hesselbein said. "I would like to see a hearing called at which the DVA and CVSOs can come to the Capitol and brief the Veterans Committee on their issues. Our veterans need service, not political power plays."

#