



Minnesota Association of County Veterans Service Officers

**Testimony on HF 4335
Veterans service organization grant
program established and funding
provided, and money appropriated.
Greg Peterson, New Ulm**

I again thank the Legislature for creating the County Veterans Service Officer Program in 1945.

One Hundred Three (103) years ago, on March 15-17, 1919 (four months after the Armistice), The American Legion was created in Paris.

Our nation was poorly prepared to assist the wave of disabled and unemployed Veterans who faced uncertain futures in their Minnesota communities. The American Legion and other VSOs Chartered by Congress formed a network of Service Officers to blanket all Minnesota communities and aided them in obtaining their rightful benefits. Their collective momentum brought forth ideas that would eventually create our CVSOS laws.

Today CVSOS and VSOs work together closely on claims for Federal benefits to ensure that our Veterans and their dependents receive their rightful benefits. I want you to know that as a CVSOS, I depend on each VSO's unique mission they perform in Minnesota. The American Legion's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee, led by Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller, ensures that Minnesota's Veterans receive timely access to quality health care and benefits. CVSOS make up 3/5ths of Jeremy's Committee, which evaluates four Regional VA Medical Centers and their Clinics to ensure our Minnesota Veterans' well-being receives top priority.

The DAV of MN Transportation Program provides free transportation to Veterans in Minnesota to attend their VA medical appointments. The program has 34 vehicles stationed in 20 communities around the state. I have a DAV-provided van, which has cut my \$16,000 transportation budget in half.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart's First Responders Program pays respect to the bravery and sacrifice of Minnesota's Law Enforcement Officers and Fire Fighters killed or wounded on duty. They recently thanked and recognized Waseca Police Officer Arik Matson, who was shot in the head by a wanted suspect for Matson's faithful service and sacrifice in the line of duty.

The VFW promotes patriotism and investing in our future generation through two youth scholarships targeted at high school and middle school students. Their Voice of Democracy program gives high school students a unique opportunity to express themselves regarding a democratic and patriotic-themed recorded essay. Middle School students enter the Patriot's Pen youth essay, which encourages young minds to examine America's history and their own experiences in modern American society by drafting a 300- to 400-word essay, expressing their views based on a patriotic theme.

I have mentioned a single program in only half of our State's VSOs. Together they have dozens of programs to support the needs of Minnesotans who have borne the battle, their widow, and their orphans. I encourage your passage of this bill.

Greg Peterson