



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BILL RECOGNIZING HMONG VETERANS CLEARS ASSEMBLY

Legislation expands eligibility for Wisconsin Veterans Status on driver's license or identification card

MADISON, WI...The State Assembly honored the sacrifices and service of Wisconsin's Hmong and Laotian soldiers last week by including them in legislation expanding eligibility for the Wisconsin Veterans Status on a driver's license or identification card.

State Rep. Shae Sortwell (R-Gibson) and State Sen. André Jacque (R-De Pere), co-authors of the measure, said it is extremely fitting that the state recognize the Hmong in this manner as veterans under Wisconsin law.

Rep Sortwell, a veteran himself, said "These brave soldiers, fought for America in Vietnam and are some of the most patriotic people I know. They love everything our great nation stands for, and even lost their homeland in support of our cause. In my mind, they have earned the right to be called American veterans."

Sen. Jacque, who has also introduced legislation ([Senate Bill 23](#)) designating Hmong soldiers who have served our country as veterans under state law, said the veterans' driver's license identifier has generated confusion over what types of military service were eligible.

"Over the years, a number of veterans from my district have contacted my office to express their frustrations with the lack of clarity on who currently qualifies under the law and why their service prevented them from displaying their veteran status on their ID," Sen. Jacque said. "For example, with limited exceptions neither national guard duty nor service in a reserve unit qualifies for being able to include the veteran identifier on a Wisconsin driver's license."

Along with including the Hmong veterans, the Sortwell-Jacque legislation would expand eligibility for the veterans identifier to include any former member of the U.S. armed forces, a reserve unit of the U.S. armed forces, or the national guard who received a discharge under honorable conditions.

"All 50 states now offer a military veteran designation that can be printed on state-issued driver's licenses or IDs, with Wisconsin's first implemented seven years ago, at no cost to veterans," Rep. Sortwell said. "It's an easy way for veterans to demonstrate proof of their military service without having to carry around other forms."

"We can't control the qualifications for federal veteran programs," Sen. Jacque said. "But we do control Wisconsin standards for state veteran program eligibility, including professional and occupational licensure fee waivers, veterans' employment assistance, as well as the veteran identifier on Wisconsin driver's licenses."

The legislation ([Assembly Bill 203](#)) now moves to the State Senate and must be signed by the Governor to become law.

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