

Politicians Blocking \$18.5 Million for King Veteran Home Upgrades

Written by Democratic Party of Wisconsin, Sam Erickson
Saturday, 10 September 2016 15:03

<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/veterans-012015-s5.jpg>



Facility upgrades are needed to protect veterans and improve care.

WAUPACA, WI – While politicians continue to bicker about conditions at the King Veteran Home amid ongoing reports of understaffing and neglect, Waupaca Mayor and State Senate candidate **Brian Smith** is pushing for action. Smith noted that the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) requested an \$18 million campus-wide upgrade project at King in 2015, but lawmakers refused to provide funding for the facility upgrades and maintenance requests, instead opting to raid \$18 million from the nursing homes to backfill a budget shortfall elsewhere.



“Rather than raiding \$18 million from our veteran nursing homes like politicians have proposed, we should use those dollars to protect our veterans and improve their care,” **said Smith**. “Here we are with \$18 million worth of shovel-ready upgrade projects at King. It’s time to put the partisan bickering aside, roll up our sleeves, and get to work protecting our veterans.”

In the 2015-17 Capital Budget request, the DVA requested \$18,469,000 in maintenance projects at King to upgrade the fire alarm system, food service system, lighting and electrical systems. The project would also replace ceiling tiles, install new flooring, and renovate several rooms in the skilled nursing buildings. Lawmakers rejected the request and provided no state funding for the upgrade and maintenance projects.

“The problem with politicians in Madison is that they care more about looking good than doing the right thing,” added Smith. “I want to move past the partisan politics and do right by the men and women who rely on our veteran nursing homes. We need to approve the Department’s building request to improve conditions at King, create new jobs and give our veterans the care and services they’ve earned.”

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According to the DVA request:

- "Several buildings at King are not equipped with an intelligent fire alarm panel, which makes it difficult to determine the location of a fire."
- "Almost all existing cooking equipment is nearing or past its useful life and requires frequent maintenance."
- "King is currently deficient as it relates to proper lighting at building exits."
- "The existing generators at Ainsworth and MacArthur Halls are old and currently located in the basement, not outside the building, which is the current standard for nursing care facilities."
- "Over the years, the ceiling tiles have become stained with curling and broken pieces. Stained ceiling tiles also raise infection control issues."
- "The medication rooms and the MacArthur nurses' stations are in need of repairs and upgrades."

The full DVA project request can be viewed at <http://doa.wi.gov/Documents/2015-17%20Capital%20Budget%20SBC%20Recommendations.pdf>