



# Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

## TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 192

Thank you Mr. Chairman and committee members, for this hearing on Senate Bill 192. This is a bi-partisan bill that will provide health insurance protection for the immediate family of police officers killed in the line of duty. The bill is modeled on a similar bill for the immediate family of firefighters, which passed the Senate and Assembly on a voice vote during the 2009-11 session.

Police officers are the first line of defense in Wisconsin. They work tirelessly to ensure the safety of Wisconsin citizens. They risk their lives every day. They are expected to be pillars of our community, and they deserve to be treated as such.

We are fortunate in this state that we have had few police officers killed in the line of duty in the last several years. Every day, most of us walk past the Police Memorial outside the North Wing. Next year, unfortunately, one name will be added to that memorial. These men and women who give their lives are heroes, and they deserve our recognition, our thanks and our support.

I was a former Racine police officer for almost thirty years and I know firsthand the dangers that many officers face. When an officer enters a situation, they have many thoughts going through their mind. Evaluating the tactical situation, considering public safety, and negotiation strategies are all of critical importance. The last thing an officer needs to be worrying about is whether or not their family will be protected by health insurance coverage if something bad should happen to them.

When I first introduced this bill in 2011, the bill simply required local communities to provide health insurance to a fallen officer's family going forward until the spouse remarries, and/or children are grown. Some people were skeptical of this plan, as it could devastate local governments budgets, only addressed one issue, health insurance, and not others. Thanks to the efforts of others, including Senator Frank Lasee, the bill before you today is frankly a much better bill than was introduced 4 years ago.

The core of the bill remains the same – to provide ongoing health insurance to the family members of police officers that die in the line of duty. Coverage would continue for the officer's family until the spouse reaches age 65, or remarries. If children were covered at the time of death, they would continue to be covered until they "age out" of coverage.

Serving Racine County - Senate District 21

To prevent the continuing coverage from burdening just one local community, the bill is funded through a first draw on shared revenue. This is appropriate because when one community loses an officer, it is a loss felt by the entire state not just the community the officer served. For state law enforcement officers, a new appropriation in Chapter 20 is created. Although there is no fiscal effect for this bill, estimates in 2011 put the costs between five hundred thousand to one million dollars statewide over 15 years.

Another aspect of the bill addresses what occurs when the officer dies. Because the officer ceases to be an employee upon his or her death, they no longer receive a paycheck. Too often, salary and vacation payments will be exhausted before life insurance benefits are received. This concern is addressed by a new state loan program. State loans will be available to survivors equal to salary that would have been paid and will be secured by the life insurance policy. This will help families bridge any financial gap that may occur after the tragic event.

Finally, the bill includes firefighters and EMTs. For firefighters, this simply updates their existing protection law into this new framework. EMTs were included because they also put their lives on the line to protect others.

Senate Bill 192 gives us a great opportunity to give back to the families of those who serve. I am grateful that very few Wisconsinites have had their lives taken in the line of duty. For those who give the ultimate sacrifice, the least we can do is to help ensure their surviving family members are taken care of. I ask for your support in passing this bill to protect the families of the heroes who give everything so that others may live. Thank you.

# WISCONSIN PROFESSIONAL POLICE ASSOCIATION

---

## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Members of the Senate Committee on Elections & Local Government

FROM: Jim Palmer, Executive Director  
Wisconsin Professional Police Association

DATE: September 23, 2015

RE: **2015 Senate Bill 192**; *Relating to requiring the payment of health insurance premiums, and establishing a loan program, for survivors of a law enforcement officer, emergency medical technician, or fire fighter who dies, or has died, in the line of duty and making appropriations.*

---

With nearly 10,000 members, the Wisconsin Professional Police Association (WPPA) is the state's largest law enforcement group. Our mission is to protect and promote public safety, as well as the interests of the dedicated men and women who serve to provide it. The WPPA genuinely appreciates this opportunity to offer our ardent **SUPPORT** to **2015 Senate Bill 192**, which would provide for the payment of the health insurance premiums for the spouses and dependents of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty.

Though infrequent, some officers make the ultimate sacrifice in their efforts to keep Wisconsin safe. In the wake of a tragedy like this, a family can be left to grieve and to fend for themselves with respect to their health insurance needs that are no longer provided to them. Senate Bill 192 would cover these rare and tragic circumstances, and recognizes that, ***while an officer wears a badge; their service to Wisconsin is not a solitary endeavor.*** Indeed, the law enforcement profession is one that requires the extraordinary support of loved ones who share a dedication and commitment to our common security.

We as a society should do everything we can to care for those that have lost the support of a loved one who died while working to keep our neighborhoods, communities, and roadways safe. Senate Bill 192 would not only give officers some measure of peace in knowing that their loved ones will have health insurance, but it recognizes that the safety of our communities not only requires dedicated men and women in uniform, but also the families who watch them depart each day to fulfill their duty.

For these simple reasons, the WPPA respectfully requests that this committee approve this measure as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration.



# FALLEN OFFICERS

Filter Alphabetically by Last Name: 

<u>Name</u>	<u>Bio</u>	<u>End of Watch</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Length of Service</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Location on Memorial</u>
Seversen, Michael	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	4/14/2014	Polk County Sheriff's Office	27 years	Polk	IV
Bishop, Donald E.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	4/13/2013	Town of Brookfield Police Department	1 years 8 months	Waukesha	I
Sebena, Jennifer L.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	12/24/2012	Wauwatosa Police Department	2 years	Milwaukee	III
Aleman, Sergio	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	7/31/2012	Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office	18 years	Milwaukee	III
Birkholz, Craig Allen	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	3/20/2011	Fond du Lac Police Department	2 years	Fond du Lac	I
Dahlvig, Kory E.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	4/25/2010	Vilas County Sheriff's Office	6 years	Vilas	III
Dimas, Jorge R.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	6/14/2009	Wisconsin State Patrol	11 months	Polk	V
Zunker, Jason S.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	1/5/2008	Chippewa County Sheriff's Office	4 years	Chippewa	IV
Fabiano, Frank	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	5/17/2007	Kenosha County Sheriff's Office	18 years	Kenosha	IV
Ryden, Jackie D.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	9/2/2006	Prescott Police Department	33 years	Pierce	IV
Hahn, Stephen J.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	2/16/2006	Eau Claire County Sheriff's Office		Eau Claire	II
Balchunas, Jay P.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	11/5/2004	WI DOJ - Division of Criminal Investigation	14 years	Milwaukee	I
Nennig Jr., Le Roy H.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	8/15/2004	Sheboygan County Sheriff's Office	30 years	Sheboygan	IV
Meyer, Richard A.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	11/13/2003	Winnebago County Sheriff's Office	3 years 6 months	Winnebago	III
Williams, Bruce A.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	10/19/2003	Green Lake County Sheriff's Office	14 years	Green Lake	II
Shannon, Michael E	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	3/7/2003	Adams County Sheriff's Office	7 years 6 months	Adams	I
Etter Jr, Robert G.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	7/22/2002	Hobart-Lawrence Police Department	33 years	Brown	V
Markins, Stephanie R.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	7/22/2002	Hobart-Lawrence Police Department	3 years 6 months	Brown	V
Bang, Sung Hui	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	8/17/2000	Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office	3 years	Milwaukee	I
Zylka, Ralph E.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	8/17/2000	Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office	24 years	Milwaukee	I
Stamper, Todd J.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	7/15/2000	Crandon Police Department	13 years	Forrest	I
Hoffmann, Edward R.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	5/26/2000	Marinette County Sheriff's Department	18 years	Marinette	I
Larsen, Peter A.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	11/15/1998	Beloit Police Department	16 years	Rock	II
Ten Haken, Dale R.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	9/24/1998	Manitowoc Police Department	5 years	Manitowoc	III
Schmitt, John M.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	9/7/1998	Washington County Sheriff's Office	8 years 6 months	Washington	IV
Villiard, Michael S.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	7/9/1998	Sawyer County Sheriff's Department	15 years	Sawyer	III
Weinke, Richard A.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	4/5/1998	Sauk County Sheriff's Office	4 years	Sauk	V
Demos, David M.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	1/25/1997	Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office	15 years	Milwaukee	V
Parquette, Richard G.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	9/10/1996	Bayfield County Sheriff's Office	28 years	Bayfield	I
Tanner, Wendolyn O.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	9/7/1996	Milwaukee Police Department	4 years	Milwaukee	II
Baribeau, Michael R.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	12/19/1995	Rice Lake Police Department	14 years	Barron	V
Niehoff, Michael A.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	11/30/1994	Milwaukee Police Department	3 years	Milwaukee	III
Hedbany, Ronald E.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	10/28/1994	Glendale Police Department	13 years	Milwaukee	II
Robertson, William A.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	9/7/1994	Milwaukee Police Department	1 years	Milwaukee	IV
Sheets, Jeffrey N.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	5/21/1994	Marathon County Sheriff's Office	9 years	Marathon	V
Williams, Jeffrey J.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	6/9/1993	Calumet County Sheriff's Office	15 years	Calumet	I
Schoenberger, William	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	4/22/1993	Wisconsin State Patrol	9 years	Eau Claire	IV
Skenandore, Jeffrey Scott	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	3/30/1993	Oneida Tribal Police	2 years	Brown	V
Gusinda, Jeffrey J.	<a href="#">Read Bio</a>	3/30/1993	Brookfield Police Department	8 years	Waukesha	I

[Gusinda, Jeffrey J.](#)  
[Login](#) : [Privacy Statement](#)

Copyright 2015 by Wisconsin Law Enforcement Memorial ; Website Designed and Developed By: Foremost Media

Date: September 23, 2015

From: Robert Wierenga, Executive Director of the County Law Enforcement Professionals of Wisconsin

To: Chairman LeMahieu and members of the Senate Committee on Elections and Local Government

REF: Support of 2015 Senate Bill 192

---

Good morning and thank you for giving me a few moments to speak in support of SB 192.

My name is Robert Wierenga and I am a 42 year veteran in the Law Enforcement community. I am currently a 38 year member of the Walworth County Sheriff's Office where I continue to work the midnight shift as a canine handler. I am also the Executive Director of the County Law Enforcement Professionals of Wisconsin. We represent 3600 members who are employed in Sheriff's Offices across the state.

I experienced my first "line of duty" death in 1973 when I lost my best friend, Jimmy Boyd, who was shot and killed in response to an armed robbery. One year later I lost a friend, Joel Dansby, who was killed in a squad crash when he was broadsided by a vehicle that had failed to yield to an emergency vehicle. As Executive Director of the County Law Enforcement Professionals of Wisconsin I personally present "line of duty" and "memorial" death benefit checks to the survivors of fallen deputies across the state.

Since 2003 I have presented seven such checks to the families and departments of Michael Shannon, Bruce Williams, Richard Meyer, LeRoy Nennig, Frank Fabiano, Scott Zunker, and Kory Dahlvig. I have seen firsthand the trauma and devastation a line of duty death has on departments and families.

Survivors can better share with you about the fears and stress they have faced as they have tried to move forward. They struggle to answer the difficult questions of: How will I care for my family? Am I going to lose everything? How will I make it in the future? All this why dealing with the biggest question of why did this senseless tragedy even happen.

One of the most devastating blows to survivors is the, almost, immediate loss of health insurance benefits. Even today, years after constantly talking to departments and officers about being prepared, there are still many incidents where survivors lose their health insurance benefits within days of a tragic line of duty death. And in some cases notification of their benefit loss comes in the mail while they are still dealing with the loss of a loved one.

SB192 addresses one of the many issues facing a family who has suddenly and tragically lost a loved one who was serving their community. Your support of this bill will go a long way in helping survivors "get better and not bitter".