



# JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

## *Senate Bill 178* **Purple Heart DNR Licenses** June 6, 2013

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Senate Bill 178. Before we begin, I would like to thank my Assembly colleagues, Representatives Petryk and Mursau, the Military Order of the Purple Heart and the Wounded Warriors in Action Foundation (WWIAF) for their help in bringing this bill together.

This bill seeks to provide therapy and healing opportunities for Purple Heart veterans by encouraging their involvement in the great outdoors. To do this, the bill would reduce the fees for a number of hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses from the Department of Natural Resources for these combat wounded veterans. Approximately 1900 Wisconsin residents are Purple Heart recipients.

This bill would provide a conservation patron license, which grants a number of hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses, for a reduced cost of \$10 per year for Wisconsin recipients of the Purple Heart medal. The current cost of that license is \$165 for Wisconsin residents. In general, fees for residents are lower than those issued to nonresidents. This bill would allow nonresident recipients of the Purple Heart medal to receive various hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses at the lower, standard resident rates. I would like to note that we've worked with the DNR in crafting this bill and have their full support.

This bill would supplement the efforts of veterans organizations like the Wounded Warriors in Action Foundation who serve to assist and provide recreational and healing opportunities to our military heroes. The Wounded Warriors in Action Foundation currently operates a 410-acre retreat outside Phillips named "Camp Hackett" where these veterans can relax, hunt, and fish. The Foundation already expends great financial resources that it raises on travel and lodging for its guests, and this bill makes significant strides in lowering the individual cost to attend and participate in camp. This bill also provides an important incentive in attracting Purple Heart recipients from other states to boost tourism in the area and promote the great natural resources that Wisconsin offers.

In the fiscal estimate, DNR has indicated there is a one-time cost of \$20,000 to \$45,000 to make changes to its automated license system, but the department is able to absorb this cost within its budget.

Once again, thank you for being here, and if you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them now.

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### 29TH SENATE DISTRICT



# *Military Order of the Purple Heart*

*Department of Wisconsin*



**To:** Senate Committee on Transportation, Public Safety, and Veterans and Military Affairs

**From:** Jason E. Johns, Legislative Officer, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Department of Wisconsin

**Re:** Support for SB 178

**Date:** June 6, 2013

**Chairman Petrowski & Members of the Committee;**

On October 26, 2003, while proudly serving with the Wisconsin Army National Guard 229<sup>th</sup> Combat Engineers /4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, I was wounded in combat by an anti-tank landmine planted by the enemy under the cover of darkness at a roadside checkpoint outside of Samarra, Iraq.

Upon my return to our great country I had a lot of things going through my head. After experiencing the rigors of combat I don't think it is any secret that a soldier's life changes. It was a difficult transition, not just for months, but also for years. One of my saving graces was to retreat to the woods, fields, lakes and rivers of beautiful Wisconsin. It was one of the few places I could truly be at peace (other than the back of my Harley cruising down the road). The only thing was that the feelings I was having could not be truly appreciated by my friends in my hunting party. You see, for me, the therapy sessions that I would have with Mother Nature were a catalyst to want to talk about my time in Iraq with those who had similar experiences. For years, this was not the case.

In summer of last year, while attending a wounded warrior golf outing here in Wisconsin, I was invited by a fellow warrior to join him and others from WWIA at Camp Hackett, a 410 acre wooded paradise outside of Phillips. I eagerly accepted and traveled to the Camp in November. I spent 4 days with five other combat wounded veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. We slept in a bunkhouse; bow hunted for deer, grouse hunted, and went Musky fishing on the Chippewa River. And in the evenings we shared some stories, shared a lot of barracks humor and good natured ribbing, and most importantly told each other that "it was what it was and we did what he had to do and all will be good". Exactly what I have been looking for to complement my healing process as a sportsman.

While up at Camp in November I had the privilege to meet and get to know John McDaniel, Lieutenant Colonel, USA (Retired), the founder of the Wounded Warriors In Action Foundation. During one of our conversations I told him “How great would it be to encourage more Purple Heart veterans to get outdoors by providing free licenses”? He said that would be a great thing and that some other states he does events in have done so in some fashion or another. He also informed me that his biggest expense every year in Wisconsin is the payment of non-resident license fees for those heroes he brings in from out of state. I smiled and said, “Well, I just happen to know some people in the state legislature, DNR and the Governor’s office”.

In January I met with Senator Petrowski and Representative Petryk and they were excited to be the authors of the legislation before you today. Our next meeting of course was with the DNR. They too were very excited to help us create the “Purple Heart Conservation Patron License”. I am proud to say that SB 178 is the culmination of our joint efforts.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart, Department of Wisconsin and the Wounded Warriors In Action Foundation (of which I am now a major volunteer and Associate with) wishes to thank the following for their support of SB 178: The Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of Wisconsin, The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin, The National Rifle Association, The United Sportsmen of Wisconsin, and of course the authors of SB 178, Senator Jerry Petrowski, Representative Warren Petryk, and the 21 other legislators who have co-sponsored this legislation including members of this committee, Senators Hansen and Carpenter.

Before I end I have been asked to read to you a letter from the founder of the WWIA.

Thank you for having me today to talk about SB 178 and at this time I am happy to answer any questions.

Jason E. Johns

Legislative Officer  
Military Order of the Purple Heart  
Associate-Wounded Warriors In Action Foundation

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6 June 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR CHAIRPERSON PETROWSKI & MEMBERS OF THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND  
VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS, WISCONSIN

SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR SB 178

Dear Committee Members,

I respectfully urge you to look favorably upon any initiative which aims to reduce price barriers associated with resident and nonresident licensing fees for our nation's combat wounded Purple Heart recipients. By doing so, you will join the ranks of a few elite states within the Republic who've made similar and powerful expressions, honoring the brave men and woman who've bled for our county.

The Wounded Warriors in Action Foundation, a national 501c3 charity which provides hunting and fishing opportunities all across the great state of Wisconsin and the nation at large. We do so as a means of honoring and empowering our heroes, supporting their reintegration efforts, and paying tribute to the great sacrifices they've made. In addition to honoring these heroes, we provide the best therapy and healing power to assist them, the great outdoors.

We presently serve approximately sixty Purple Heart heroes per year in Wisconsin and have established a 410 acre camp in the Northwoods outside of Phillips. I am proud to say that I am a Wisconsin born and raised boy, graduating from Oshkosh North High and the University of Wisconsin in 1986. Our program is working and growing. With your support we will send a clear WISCONSIN signal to all - we honor, serve, and respect what these great veterans have done for our country.

Sincerely and respectfully yours,

John J McDaniel  
Lieutenant Colonel (Retired), USA  
Founder  
Wounded Warriors in Action Foundation