



# MILESTONES

As of December 2024

COUNTY AND TRIBAL VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS

ASSOCIATION OF WISCONSIN

MILESTONES

**1935:** An informal informational meeting was held in Fond du Lac; all CVSOs were invited to attend

**1936:** Motion to organize a state association to be known as the "County Veterans Service Officers Association of Wisconsin"

**1937:** Original by-laws drafted and adopted

**1938:** Motion to have VA doctors desist from expressing their opinions as to the rating the veteran might expect to receive

**1940:** Seven county board chairmen attended the fall conference

**1941:** Before leaving for home, we enjoyed a nice steak dinner for 40 cents served by the Beaver Dam American Legion

**1942:** Income limit for pension – \$1,000 single; \$2,500 with dependents

**1943:** Motion to request the legislature to change chapter 59/08 so the first word is "Shall" instead of "May". This is regarding county's obligation of naming a CVSO

**1944:** 65 of 71 counties now have full or part-time CVSOs

**1945:** State rehabilitation loans are now available; up to \$750 at 2% interest

**1946:** Members were informed the Veterans Service Officers are no longer optional but mandatory. The interim committee of the state legislature rejected the proposal that the Veterans Service Office be consolidated with the public welfare department. Wes Schwoegler, Dane and Jack Luban, Milwaukee; became the first WWII CVSOs although there were several assistants prior.

**1947:** Change in the by-laws to establish mandatory \$5.00 dues

**1948:** There was much discussion on forming a National Association of County Veterans Service Officers

**1949:** The by-laws were changed to have the Secretary-Treasurer position appointed by the President-elect

**1950:** First CVSO Advisory Council named in March. Members were E.O. Anderson, Wood; Jack Luban, Milwaukee; L.C. McEnroe, Fond du Lac; George Nitz, Brown; and Lon Tubs, Trempealeau

**1951:** The Secretary of the Minnesota CVSO Association attended the fall conference

**1952:** Some legislative proposals – 1. That advisory Committee has their expenses paid by the department. 2. Construction of a new hospital at King with 250 beds. 3. Pay part-time study after completion of the course. Only 11% of enrollees completed the course.

**1953:** All CVSOs received a plaque from the Disabled American Veterans for outstanding service for the DAV

**1954:** Herman Owen, Barron, spoke on the matter of all counties appointing a full-time CVSO and establishing minimum salary scale by state legislation

**1955:** Discussion on WDVA not approving housing construction loan if the plans included a garage even though attached to the house

**1956:** Recommended that CVSO tenure be changed from “two years” to “indefinite”

**1957:** Motion to give 5, 10, 15, & 20-years continuous service certificates

**1958:** Resolution that the state provides “Disabled Veteran” license plates

**1959:** First Korean Conflict veteran, Donald Lipke, named Crawford County CVSO

**1960:** Resolution to increase cost of home limit to \$16,000 from \$15,000 and permit construction of a garage

**1961:** Oscar N. Markus, Taylor, resigned as Secretary-Treasurer after 17 years in that position (Except for 1947–48 when he served one year as President). Vincent Resheske, Wood, assumed job

**1962:** General discussion centered on a uniform minimum pay scale and qualifications standard for CVSOs resulted in a motion to that effect. Thirty resolutions were introduced at the fall conference. A few were – 1. Increase housing loan to \$4,000 from \$3,500. 2. Increase cost of home to \$17,500. 3. Reduce residency to five years, from 10. 4. Reduce age to enter King to 45, from 50. 5. To permit dependent fathers, as well as mothers, to be eligible for admissions to King.

**1963:** Two automobile window decals were distributed to each CVSO. Motion to increase Association dues to \$10.00 and \$5.00 for assistants.

**1964:** Motion to allow \$10.00 annually to each Executive Committeeman who attends executive meetings. Jack Luban reported the CVSO Advisory Committee had expanded to seven members. A motion changed “CVSO Convention” to “CVSO Association Fall Conference and Service-School”.

**1965:** Motion to issue a key 5 and 10 year continuous service membership.

**1966:** Motion to order CVSO lapel pins at a cost not to exceed \$150.00. Resolution opposing any amalgamation or subordination of the WDVA with any other agency of government as recommended by the commission of Executive Branch Reorganization (The Department has been challenged also). Motion that the Association sponsors an annual merit award to some state citizen active in veterans' affairs. First recipients are Major general John F. Mullin and John S. Drayna.

**1967:** Motion to re-introduce SB-521, CVSO Grant Bill. Approval was given for the revised Association By-Laws. Resolution to increase Economic Assistance Loan interest rate to 3% to offset losses because of mandatory debt cancellation due to death of veterans.

**1968:** Motion to recommend eligibility for state benefits for all Vietnam veterans who served on active duty from August 5, 1964 to a date to be set by Congress. Resolution approved naming first vice-president to also assume the duties of Chaplain of the Association.

**1969:** "Liaison Committee" name changed to "Council on Veterans Programs." Vincent Resheske, Wood, stepped down as Secretary-Treasurer after 8 years in the position.

**1970:** Resolution to 1. Include all Vietnam veterans for state benefits. 2. Raise loan limits on EAL to \$3,000; secondary housing to \$5,000. 3. Reintroduce CVSO Grant Bill.

**1971:** Motion to increase Secretary-Treasurer salary to \$300 annually from \$180.

**1972:** Total cost for Spring Institute at W.S.U. Superior. Three nights lodging-\$9.00; three breakfasts/lunches and Tuesday evening dinner-\$9.25; Banquet-\$5.00, including tax and tip; registration-\$7.00; for a total cost of \$32.25. President Moede, Manitowoc, introduces Teddy L. Duckworth, Juneau, first Vietnam service CVSO. Robert Blair, Pepin, gave a report on a meeting in Minneapolis attempting to formulate a National CVSO Association. All attempts to organize have been dropped.

**1973:** By order of the Executive Committee, a \$.50 fine shall be assessed for failure to wear your name tag.

**1975:** First Spring Institute held at other than a State University. After 6 years as Secretary-Treasurer, Francis Everson, Door, stepped down to accept the 2<sup>nd</sup> VP office. Roy Cropp, Dunn, was named his successor by President-elect Walter Kalmes, Buffalo.

**1977:** Motion to raise CVSO dues to \$15.00, assistants pay \$5.00. Robert Stone - second Vietnam Era veteran and youngest veteran (at the time) reported for duty as Rusk County CVSO.

**1978:** Speaker at the fall banquet was Lee Dreyfus, Republican candidate for governor.

**1979:** Motion to present CVSOs with a plaque when they retire because of age or disability. After a four year tenure as Secretary–Treasurer, Roy Cropp, Dunn, was elected President. He appointed Robert Blair, Pepin, to the position.

**1980:** Resolution to increase the CVSO Grant to counties to \$5,000.

**1984:** Motion to Raise CVSO Association dues to \$20.00, assistants to \$10.00 effective 1986–87.

**1985:** John Maurer, Kenosha, named to become John B. Ellery’s successor as Secretary of the WDVA effective May 1, 1985. Most department heads, including CVSOs, who are appointed by a county executive or administrator will now serve at the pleasure of the executive or administrator, effective July 1985.

**1987:** Professional Standards Committee stabled to aid CVSOs in improving quality and range of services.

**1988:** Professional Standards Committee changed from ad–hoc to standing committee.

**1989:** Discussion of possible consideration of National Association of CVSOs discussed and received with favorable consideration by CVSOs. Income limits increase on Primary Mortgage to \$36,000 for FY 1990. EAL loan income limits increased to \$28,000 and \$30,000 for FY 1990. A new home improvement loan introduced for FY 1989–90.

**1990:** Expanded use of the Health Care Aid Grant for dentures was revised due to excessive use. The revision is reconsidered with more stringent guidelines in the future. Dave Thomas attended the 1<sup>st</sup> National Convention of CVSOs and will report to the 1990 Fall Conference for consideration by the membership of possible Wisconsin participation. New Retraining Grant Program allowing unemployed veterans to apply for a grant up to \$3,000 per year for a maximum of 2 years.

**1991:** Criteria for continuing education were approved by the Association. This certification process was established to recognize the professionalism of members. Teddy Duckworth, Juneau, was appointed by Governor Thompson to the Board of Veterans Affairs. An income limit of \$31,000 was imposed on the Part–Time Study Grant, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mortgage Loan Program was eliminated with the 1991–1993 Biennial Budget Bill.

**1992:** Raymond G. Boland, (former Commander of Fort McCoy and retired career Army Colonel), appointed Secretary of WDVA on Feb. 21, 1992. The CVSO Association created the position of Historian, Jim Riesenberger, Sheboygan, was appointed. Legislative Council Special Committee on the Veterans Trust Fund was created, and public hearings were held. This was prompted by the \$4.2 million loan taken from the VTF by the legislature. The Council on Veterans Affairs Programs began to explore the need for a second state veteran’s cemetery. Wood VA Cemetery is predicted to close

for casket burials in 1995. Dave Thomas, Taylor, serves as National CVSO President. John Schnabel initiates computerization of association secretary position and the officer's handbook. Outagamie CVSO Francis "Stack" Hesakker retired after 46 years as CVSO and 10 as deputy.

**1993:** Dedication of the WDVA Veterans Museum in Madison attended by Jesse Brown, Secretary, USDVA. Duane Bauer, Dunn, appointed WI CVSOA delegate to National CVSO Association. National Veterans Legal Service Program (NVLSP) puts on extensive training program for CVSOs.

**1994:** Commencement of the WDVA sponsored Veterans Assistance Program to alleviate the suffering of homeless veterans. Governor signs AB 619 with extensive changes in benefits for Wisconsin Veterans.

**1995:** WDVA Cemetery in SE Wisconsin is in implementation stages. Lorin Sather, St. Croix, appointed WI CVSOA delegate to National CVSO Association. CVSOA Advocacy Award initiated and given posthumously to Wayne D. Horner, former Dane County Asst. CVSO.

**1996:** Association flag designed. Association purchased flag pole at Wisconsin Veterans Tribute, Cadott, WI. CVSO Marita Smith receives 25 year of service certificate. Association committee works to update procedures and increase the CVSO Grant.

**1997:** WDVA eliminates the Economic Assistance Loan (EAL) Program and Part-time Study Grant (PTSG) is reduced to 50% from 100%. Personal Loan Program (PLP) initiated as an on-line application. CVSO Fran Everson receives 30 year of service certificate. Advocacy Awards to Jerry Cornelius and Tom Wynn. Tom Taber ends five-year stint as Secretary. WDVA provides computers to 40 CVSOs.

**1998:** Fran Everson retires after 31 years of service; advocacy award to Edo Maccari; NW Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery is dedicated; USDVA regionalizes insurance operation in Philadelphia, and home loan guaranty in Minneapolis.

**1999:** A three-year training plan for the CVSOA of WI was proposed (USDVA a major portion of each conference and WDVA programs handled at the Regional Association level or be WDVA sponsored training). A CVSOA of WI website and online forum discussed.

**2000:** The CVSOA of WI supported a new WDVA Funeral Honors Bill; a Strategic Plan was accepted by the Association members; the Training and Certification Committee was formed.

**2001:** Training by Ron Abrams, of NVLSP; WDVA Transportation Grant initiated; regionalization of CVSOs by WDVA was discussed; a new Secretary of DVA, Anthony Principi was nominated. The Association took membership in the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups (GWAG).

**2002:** The CVSOA of WI “Company Store” was introduced and all members received a free CVSOA shirt. A sound system for the Association’s meetings was approved. Membership in the CVSOA of WI was expanded to include Tribal VSOs. TVSO’s were voted into the CVSOAWI.

**2003:** A POW flag was donated to the CVSOA. A NACVSO representative attended our conference. The CVSOA began contributing articles to the Counties Association magazine. SB 170 (Omnibus State Veterans Benefits Bill) had numerous revisions due to the CVSOA of WI actions. The CVSOA supported Senator Feingold’s Veterans Outreach Initiatives. The CVSOA will take control of the CVSO pictures directory and the CVSO manual. The CVSOA will support hosting the National CVSOA conference in June 2007, Milwaukee.

**2004:** Bi-annual budget bill approves most of the proposals and benefit changes to implement WDVAs solvency plan for the Veterans Trust Fund (VTF). Mark Baldwin, Washington, appointed Secretary-Treasurer of the Association. During his five-year tenure he helped the organization to become computer based. He was instrumental in building the computer data base that will enable us to be efficient in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**2005:** Planning intensifies, and commitments made to host the 2007 NACVSO conference in Milwaukee, June 2007. Jim Young, Vernon, heads up this effort.

**2007:** Association by-laws changed to allow electronic meetings under President Michael Jackson. Hosted the NACVSO conference in Milwaukee. It was at this conference that the idea was conceived of a “Welcome Home” for our Vietnam Veterans in a meeting with Carol Larson – Vietnam War Stories.

**2008:** Position paper on behalf of CVSOA to Veterans Board to request a fiscal audit of the WDVA. President Jon LiDonne presented the CVSO Advocacy Award to Governor Doyle and Representative Musser.

**2009:** The federal VA implemented the Post 9/11 GI Bill. Chris Johnson, Bayfield, appointed Secretary-Treasurer. President Chrzas testifies on behalf of veterans for the Property Tax Credit revisions (to remove age, IU eligibility, and established WI residency after service).

**2010:** WDVA in partnership with the Wisconsin Historical Society and Wisconsin Public Television hosted “LZ Lambeau” – a huge celebration to welcome home the Vietnam Veterans at Lambeau Field, Green Bay, WI the week of the CVSOA spring conference. Kenneth Black appointed WDVA Secretary by Governor Jim Doyle. James Young, Vernon, elected President of the NACVSO Association in June at the NACVSO conference held in Minneapolis, MN.

**2011:** WDVA placed a moratorium on Primary Mortgage Loan, Home Improvement, and Personal Loan Programs effective Dec. 1, 2011. Wisconsin Act 36 changed the Composition of WDVA Board and Appointment of Secretary. Chris Johnson, Bayfield County Veteran Service Officer and CVSOA Secretary–Treasurer unexpectedly passed away on Apr. 16, 2011. Mark Baldwin, Washington, selflessly filled in as Secretary–Treasurer until Sandra Kramer, Richland, was appointed by newly elected President Mike Haley, Chippewa.

**2012:** Jon LiDonne, Outagamie County Veteran Service Officer and State Delegate to NACVSO presented a bid at the NACVSO Conference in Atlantic City, NJ to host 2015 NACVSO Conference in Appleton, WI – approved by the body.

**2013:** Wisconsin Act 17 includes a provision that allows veterans to request through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV), a veteran identifier on their Wisconsin driver's license or state issued identification card. Laura Moore, Crawford, was appointed as Secretary–Treasurer by newly elected President, Vern Lovely, Juneau.

**2014:** The untimely death of Waupaca County Veteran Service Officer Wayne Knutson 6/29/14. Ground Breaking began for the Fisher House at the VA Medical Center, Milwaukee.

**2014:** Tammy Javenkowski was unjustly accused of misconduct in office and was the first CVSO to receive a board dismal hearing. She was forced to obtain private legal counsel at her own cost. She was exonerated of all charges except a swearing in the parking lot charge. She had the full support of the veteran community during this false action and resumed her duties as the Oneida County CVSO and continued to serve admirably.

**2015:** National CVSO Association conference held in Appleton, WI. Robert Stone retires from Winnebago County as CVSO after 38 years of service. CVSO Block Grant change to a reimbursement Grant Structure in the 2015 Wisconsin Biennium Budget. WDVA proposed legislation that would have made CVSO's "optional", stating that because of the declining veteran's population, Regionalized benefits outreach centers, managed by the Department, would be more economical and efficient. Additionally, citing privacy concerns, the CVSO access to VBATs (The WDVA Data System) was curtailed. A Memorandum of Understanding, which was a collaboration between the CVSO Association and the Department, ultimately restored access to this data system, and the Association leadership, using a collaborative approach rather than an adversarial one, in conjunction with grassroots, Veteran–led effort, defeated the proposed regionalization legislation.

**2016:** CVSO leadership meeting with Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) and WDVA to return CVSO Grant to block grant format and CVSO push back on Regionalization. On June 2, 2016, Vice President Joe Aulik and Legislative Chair, Rock Larsen, attended meeting in Governor's Conference



Room concerning counties not receiving grant reimbursements. In attendance, leadership from WDVA, WI Counties Executives and Administrators Assoc., WCA, and Governor's Chief of Staff. It was revealed at that meeting that WDVA was refusing to meet with CVSOs. Shortly after that meeting President Rosenau and Vice President Aulik were invited to meet WDVA Secretary, John Scocos, to develop a path forward to restore communication. Secretary Scocos retired in November 2016. At the same time, CVSO leadership fought back Regionalization legislation of CVSOs, and that idea was tabled.

**2017:** New WDVA Secretary, Daniel Zimmerman, hired after meetings with the Governor and CVSO leadership, President Joe Aulik, Vice President Tammy Walters-Javenkoski, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Dan Connery at the Governor's mansion to discuss the top ten character traits needed in a new Secretary. A new spirit of collaboration ensues with WDVA after the new Secretary was hired. CVSO Block Grant was restored due to CVSO leadership involvement and many restrictive rules and laws imposed by the former WDVA Secretary were reversed.

2017: CVSOAWI logo was changed to incorporate the colors of the Native American medicine wheel to improve the recognition of the TVSOs in the CVSOAWI. Tribal Liaison Officer Shaun Stoeger coined the term "83 Strong" to signify the 72 CVSOs and 11 TVSOs in the CVSOAWI.



Old Logo and New Logo

**2018:** CVSO leadership proposes to have the CVSO Grant increased collaborating with the WDVA Secretary to devise a new formula for the distribution of the grant.

**2019:** New logo unveiled for CVSO Association incorporating the Native American Medicine Color Wheel to enhance the recognition of the 11 TVSOs, a new term coined "83 Strong" derived from the 72 counties and 11 Tribes. Jerry Pollus retires from Brown County after 28 years of service. Joe Aulik, former Winnebago, and Kewaunee CVSO hired as his replacement and making history as the only CVSO to serve in three Counties in the CVSOAWI.

**2020:** Brought the pandemic with the cancellation of CVSOAWI in May 2020 and the NACVSO conference slated to be held in Madison in June 2020. The NACVSO conference has been rescheduled for 2023 in Madison. The Fall CVSOAWI Conference was held in WI Dells.

**2021:** On 10/13/21 the first TVSO/CVSO Bruce A. Wilber, Jr., who serves as the TVSO for Menominee Nation and as the CVSO for Menominee County was elected as the first TVSO/CVSO to the Second Vice President position in the history of the CVSOAWI at the Retlaw Hotel in Fond du Lac WI. It should be noted that this conference was the 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the CVSOAWI. Eighty-five years ago in 1936 the CVSOAWI started at this same location. Historically these positions move up to the position of President, if that takes place Bruce Wilber, Jr., will be the first TVSO/CVSO to lead the CVSOAWI. This recollects us back to the historical vote in September 2002, in Manitowoc to accept TVSOs as members of the CVSOAWI. As the longest serving CVSO, Joe Aulik assumed the role of CVSOAWI Historian to maintain the CVSOAWI corporate knowledge.

**2022:** While there has not been new legislation that has passed at the time of this paper, veterans are still benefiting from the legislation pieces of 2022, that has continued improving veterans' services and benefits. One notable law is the Veterans Mental Health and Well-being Act, which allocates additional funding for mental health services specific to veterans. While this legislation was passed in mid-2022, its impact will be being felt immediately. This legislation has bolstered mental health resources, expanded counseling programs, and increased accessibility to quality care for veterans throughout the state <https://www.congress.gov/bills/117/congress/house-bills/7666> .

Another crucial development has been the Wisconsin Veterans Housing Initiative, a comprehensive program that addresses the housing needs of veterans. This initiative provides financial assistance, supportive services, and affordable housing options to veterans experiencing homelessness or housing instability. By working closely with local housing authorities, the CVSOs have played a pivotal role in implementing this initiative and ensuring veterans have safe and stable housing.

**2023:** On 10/11/23 Bruce A. Wilber, Jr., was voted as the first TVSO as President of the CVSOAWI and the first TVSO to lead a CVSO State Association in the United States. Due to unforeseen circumstances Ali Nelson resigned as CVSOAWI President in July 2023. Bruce Wilber filled that position as Acting President until the fall election.

**2024:** The County Veterans Service Officer Association of Wisconsin was renamed the County and Tribal Veterans Service Officer Association of Wisconsin and the CTVSOAWI Logo incorporated the Tribal CVSOs into the logo. Both resolutions were initiated by Joe Aulik, Brown CVSO.



**2025:** On January 2, 2025, President Biden signed the Elizabeth Dole 21<sup>st</sup> Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act, and federal funding for new CVSO/TVSO, training, and office operations became a reality. Included in the Elizabeth Dole Act is a provision providing \$10 million for the next two years to fund this initiative. The idea was born from the Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach (CVSO) Act that previously failed to pass in other legislative sessions. The CVSO Act was initiated by Senator Tammy Baldwin after meeting with Joe Aulik, then Winnebago CVSO, at her Washington D.C. office in December 2017 and encouraging her to write legislation for federal funding for CVSO and TVSOs. This is the first ever legislation of its kind