



Office of
Jason Crowell State Senator
The Crowell Connection

Senator Jason Crowell – Serving Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry, and Scott Counties.

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Helping Veteran's Obtain the Benefits They Deserve

This week my bill to increase funding for the Veterans Service Officer (VSO) Grant Program was heard by the Veteran's Affairs Committee. VSOs help veterans obtain their rightful federal benefits. The most recent statistics show that \$664 million was injected into Missouri's economy last year by veterans receiving their benefits and with the increase of \$250,000 in funding Missouri could gain more than an additional \$4.5 million in general revenue. This represents a handsome return on our investment and would be a very sound decision. The Veterans Association estimates that 10,000 to 15,000 veterans now living in the state are eligible for but not receiving veterans' benefits. Those who receive veterans' benefits do not have to depend on Medicaid and this saves Missouri money.

A young veteran of the Iraq Conflict named Jason Blakemore testified on behalf of this bill. He was honorably discharged from the military in 2003 after serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Mr. Blakemore is now a VSO for the Veteran's of Foreign Wars (VFW). He explained that his job entails helping veterans fill out paperwork as well as tracking down those who are unaware of the benefits to which they are entitled. He said one such method of outreach is hosting fairs to raise awareness.

Recently the VFW post in St. Martins held a benefits fair. Veterans from the community were invited to come and apply for benefits. Vets from conflicts as far back as Korea and World War II were in attendance. Many had injuries they've been dealing with

for up to 70 years and had never received veterans benefits afforded to them. One story came from a veteran who had fought in the Battle of the Bulge. He had chronic hearing loss and visible cold injuries on his hands. He had never asked for any sort of help, but at 93 years old he had come to the fair to collect what was rightfully his. After listening to Jason Blakemore, it really hit home that veterans are out there who need our help and they have no idea that help is available.

This is why I am sponsoring this legislation to increase from \$750,000 to \$1 million the cap on the amount of money that goes toward enabling VSOs to help process veterans' claims. As Jason Blakemore pointed out, with SB 287, we CAN change our veteran's lives for the better.

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: jcrowell@senate.mo.gov or visit me on the web at <http://www.jasoncrowell.com>.

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