



**Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Veteran & Military
Affairs**

2025 Senate Bill 411

*University of Wisconsin Missing-In-Action Recovery
and Identification Program*

September 18, 2025

Chairman Jacque and members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Veteran & Military Affairs:

My name is Charles Konsitzke, and I am the associate director of the University of Wisconsin Biotechnology Center, and founder and team lead of the University of Wisconsin Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project. I would like to begin by thanking you all for the opportunity submit testimony and express the UW Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project's appreciation for the recognition of our program in Senate Bill 411, which would require \$180,000 annually be provided to our team for recovery attempt missions of missing in action service members from our state.

Of the over 82,000 American service members from around the country that remain unaccounted for from conflicts spanning from December 7th, 1941 at the outset of America's involvement in the Second World War, to the present, over 1,500 are from Wisconsin. Every corner of the state is still missing at least one servicemember.

These missing include those of a group of young Wisconsin men who fought and were trapped in the Philippines in spring of 1942, captured by the Imperial Japanese Army, and endured the Bataan Death March. Over three years of harsh imprisonment they faced disease, malnutrition, negligence, and brutality, and collectively came to be known as "the Janesville 99."

Missing servicemembers also include Wisconsin soldiers whose remains are somewhere in the jungles of New Guinea, Wisconsin Coast Guardsmen who went down in the icy North Atlantic on the USS Escanaba in 1943, Wisconsin airmen whose remains are below the surfaces of the fields of Northern France, Wisconsin soldiers whose remains are still buried somewhere on a Belgian hillside after their loss

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during the initial stages of the Battle of the Bulge, and Wisconsin soldiers, airmen, and Marines at or above the 38th Parallel on the Korean Peninsula, to name only a few.

This team has been the most dynamic collaboration of fellow students (including other student veterans), staff, faculty, and alumni that I've witnessed across UW-System institution campuses, consisting of individuals from a host of interdisciplinary backgrounds that include history, forensic anthropology, archaeology, biology, and genetics.

With the state's support, our team will be enabled to focus on these 1,500 missing Wisconsinites. It will allow the team to begin to locate and identify as many of these individuals as possible and bring them home while also continuing our partnership with the federal Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency. However, unlike previous sessions, Senate Bill 411 does not include any state funding for this initiative. Under the current funding structure, the campus provides in-kind support and much of the initiative is funded by private donations. Additionally, almost, if not all, of the new funding provided to the Universities of Wisconsin in the 2025-27 state budget has been directly linked to faculty recruitment and retention and employee pay plan, leaving no flexibility to use new state funding for this initiative.

Again, we would like to express our appreciation to Senator Jacque and Representative Franklin, along with the bill's co-authors for the recognition of our program.

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