Letter to the Editor – Absentee Ballot Changes Negatively Impact Veterans

Recent changes proposed by the Wisconsin Legislature related to obtaining and returning absentee ballots will have a profound impact on the Veterans in the State. Of the 350,000 Veterans residing in the State, 192,000 are age 60 and older and of that group, 71,000 are disabled. Older adults are the most consistent and engaged voting members of the community and Veterans are no exception. However, for many their desire to vote is already hampered by existing barriers such as health conditions, disabilities, lack of transportation, limited broadband service and basic literacy skills. Voting via absentee ballot is their only viable option. The bills recently passed by the Legislature will limit options to obtain and return absentee ballots by requiring voters to apply for absentee ballot for every election instead of once a year, limit who can return completed ballots, and provides severe penalties for those who help their friend or neighbor by returning their ballot. Veterans should have the freedom to choose a person they trust to return their absentee ballot, not have it dictated by government. Many older Veterans do not have access to the internet, have a computer or have a basic knowledge on how to navigate a government website, making it very difficult for them to request a ballot. Lawmakers should remove the voting barriers that already exist, not make it even harder for Veterans to vote. It’s the least this State can do for those who willingly and honorably served this Country making it possible for **everyone** to vote.