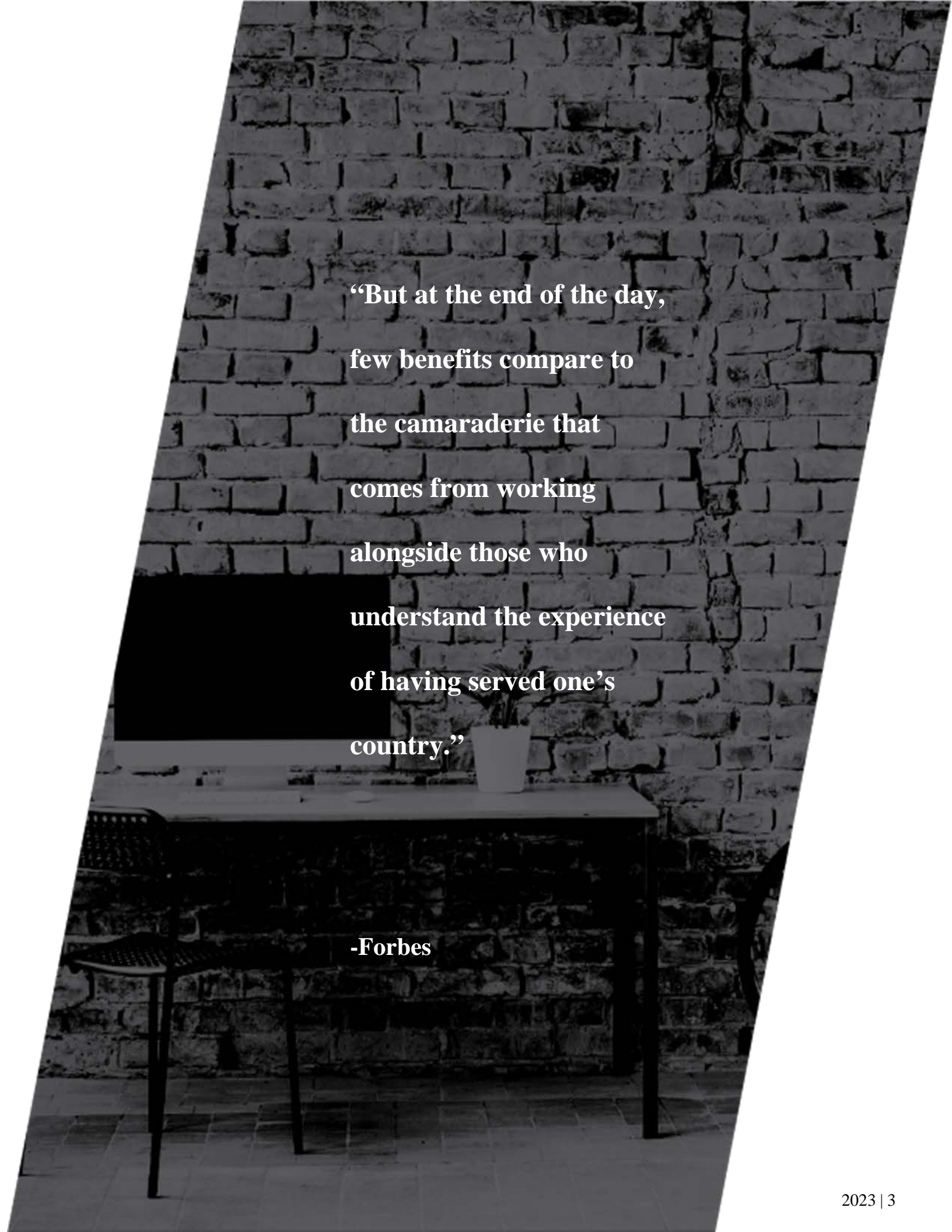


GAC-VS

GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL
ON VETERANS SERVICES

10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY REPORT

A dark, monochromatic photograph of an outdoor cafe area. In the background, there is a wall made of rough-hewn stone blocks. In the foreground, a dark metal table is visible, with a small potted plant on it. To the left, a dark metal chair is partially visible. The entire scene is dimly lit, creating a moody atmosphere.

**“But at the end of the day,
few benefits compare to
the camaraderie that
comes from working
alongside those who
understand the experience
of having served one’s
country.”**

-Forbes

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OVERVIEW

The Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services (GAC-VS) celebrated its 10th anniversary on Veterans Day 2023. Over the years, this council blossomed into a large group of dedicated professionals exhibiting a passion for helping service members, veterans, and their families, advocates, and caregivers.



The GAC-VS offers a platform for commonwealth agencies and other stakeholders to convene, discuss existing programs, and build relationships with individuals and organizations wishing to serve those who have served. Leveraging these relationships allows agencies and community partners to work efficiently, leading to resourceful connections and collaborative efforts.

Pennsylvania distinguishes itself as a commonwealth committed to working for its veterans. As one of a few states with a similar council, Pennsylvania benefits from cross-agency collaboration and transparency when discussing veteran needs.

Each year new relationships develop, and new partners join our efforts for a common purpose. Advocates willingly share their perspectives and knowledge to assist where able, in addition to their primary jobs. The veterans' community and all its supporters deserve the very best, and we work tirelessly on their behalf throughout the year.

INTRODUCTION

“The willingness
of America’s
veterans to
sacrifice for our
country has
earned them our
lasting
gratitude.”

-Jeff Miller

COUNCIL

Amended in 2019, the GAC-VS Executive Order established a 24-member seat council featuring 18 commonwealth agencies and commissions, three Members at Large, a representative of the PA War Veterans Council, and the Chairman of the State Veterans Commission. By position, the Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs (DAG-VA) for the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) sits as the Chairperson of the council and conducts quarterly meetings.



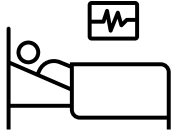
GAC-VS Members and Designees, November 2, 2022

COMMITTEES

Six committees focus outward to the over 700,000 commonwealth veterans through a different themed lens. One committee focuses inward on the nearly 14,000 commonwealth employees with prior military service or those still serving. Committees hold monthly meetings and act as think tanks when evaluating the Pennsylvania veteran experience. Educational exchanges allow for program evaluation and initiative discussions.



GAC-VS Committee Chairs with MG Mark Schindler, TAGPA, (back center) and Council Chairwoman Maureen Weigl (back right) November 1, 2023



AGING

GOALS

Committee goals have focused on two primary areas:

1. Increase awareness of services and supports for aging veterans and their families/caregivers among professionals within Pennsylvania's aging and veteran services networks.
2. Safeguard Pennsylvania's aging veterans from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and self-harm.

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

- The Pension Poaching Awareness Campaign launched in June 2021, and involves sharing a bilingual (English & Spanish) electronic toolkit. Each year the committee aims to grow the partner sharing list.
- DMVA and the PA Council on the Arts have teamed up to reinstate the Arts in Residency programs at the commonwealth veterans' homes. Five of six long-term care homes have reinstated the curriculum, impacting about 100 of our veteran home residents. The effort will continue for the last home in 2024.
- The Center for Combating Elder Financial Abuse connected with West Chester University to establish a summer internship program. Criminal Justice students work with the Center, study predators, identify how veterans and loved ones are targeted for scams, and present findings to the Office of Veterans Affairs leadership to assist in our continued work.

UPDATES

The committee met with local law enforcement regarding handling cases of financial exploitation of elderly veterans. Social workers do not always hear the resolution to an investigation, but officers share ways to take an issue further to safeguard individuals, especially in long-term care facilities.

Working with the Center for Combating Elder Financial Abuse, a non-profit organization studying financial predators, the committee learned about local scams on older individuals and how predators choose victims. This information is valuable to share so individuals can protect themselves, rendering predators unsuccessful. Additionally, this non-profit may assist the committee in suggesting updates to the annual Pension Poaching Awareness Campaign messaging and toolkit to ensure readers understand how to best safeguard their loved ones and clients.

CHALLENGES

Communicating with an aging veteran population can be difficult. Members discussed ways of targeting younger people, as older veterans may not typically use technology or social media as much as younger generations. By considering how to reach a younger audience, the commonwealth can try to educate individuals of all ages on how to support veterans, as everyone knows someone who has served in one capacity or another.

Establishing communication channels where none previously existed will continue as a topic of conversation.



EEWD

(Education, Employment, Workforce Development)

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

- Pennsylvania is currently ranked 6th in the U.S. for the number of recognized veteran employers under the HIRE Vets Medallion Program. The committee continues to discuss how Pennsylvania can move up this list through strategic efforts between agencies and other partners.
- Veterans are underrepresented in apprenticeships and training. The Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO) works to target veterans, assisting them with GI Bill benefits. The office seeks to clarify the misinformation and share how Registered Apprenticeships can be customized and tailored to fit veteran and workplace needs.

GOALS

With many programs represented within this committee, presentations are broken into four main topics that discuss veterans who want:

1. A new job (employment)
2. To go to school (education)
3. A new career (retraining)
4. To start a new business (self-employment)

This committee has established a recurring rhythm of presenting one of the four abovementioned segments at each quarterly meeting. Members and connections use this programmatic understanding and share it further.

UPDATES

Information shared throughout the year touches on the following programs:

- PA CareerLink
- Veteran's Hiring/Veteran's Preference
- HIRE Vets Medallion Program
- GI Bill
- Education Assistance Program
- Military Family Educational Program
- PA State Grant Program
- PA Targeted Industry Program
- Registered Apprenticeships
- Troops to Teachers
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- PA Business One-Stop Shop
- Boots-to-Business/Reboot
- Homegrown by Heroes
- PA Military Finance Alliance

CHALLENGES

Challenges occur when programs sunset or when requirements change. One example from the Department of Education (DOE) revealed that some higher education institutions have denied offering the GI Bill connection as the federal process became too cumbersome for the number of students affected.



HEALTH PROMOTIONS

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

- HEAL PA is a coalition developed and promoted by the PA Governor's Office of Advocacy and Reform (OAR), focusing on implementing the trauma-informed PA plan. DMVA became a sharing partner for the 2023 HEAL PA campaign along with other commonwealth agencies, helping to promote the free trainings and events available throughout May.
- The caring message campaign provides a way to reach out and check on those nearby to ensure they have necessary social support. Caring messages have been an instrumental method to connect with people in the veteran community and beyond, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when social isolation was heightened.
- Educational campaign messages shared through social media highlighted the veteran population regarding social wellness, suicide prevention, women's health issues, substance use and others.

GOALS

Focusing on whole health regarding veterans or servicemembers in need, this committee promotes evidence-based training and stays in touch with those trying to open additional Veteran-Centric Fairweather Lodges. These lodges offer an environment of routine, autonomy, peer support, and shared living, mimicking military culture. With many aspects under this umbrella, members aim to share information with industry professionals covering various resources and backgrounds.

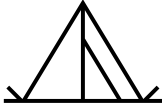
UPDATES

Encouraging all agencies and organizations to share the updated Veterans Crisis Line will remain ongoing. Connection with the Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinators (CEPC) is vital as the CEPCs build Veteran Suicide Prevention Coalitions in their communities. Additionally, information from representatives involved with VA/SAMHSA, the connection with the Federal Veterans Administration and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, through the Governor's challenge to prevent suicide among servicemembers, veterans, and their families, remains valuable input to pass on throughout commonwealth channels. In response to the pandemic, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN 4 for PA) rapidly expanded the use of VA Video Connect (VVC) to assist those needing mental health assistance, and these resources are shared regularly for awareness.

Members are working on an infographic about veteran resources for healthcare providers throughout the commonwealth. Unfortunately, high-stress levels and burnout rates cause consistent turnover in healthcare fields. Partners could share this resource regularly with those unfamiliar with additional support geared towards veterans or those who serve them.

CHALLENGES

Healthcare workers, social workers, and clinical professionals are scattered across the commonwealth, making coordinated communication difficult in many cases. Considering veterans at Veteran-Centric Fairweather Lodges receive necessary treatment in a place they may permanently call home, it is vital to find a suitable location that has access to wrap around services/resources which can be challenging.



HOMELESS

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

- Members worked with the PA Bar Association's Military and Veterans Affairs committee to develop legal assistance workshops for individuals assisting homeless veterans.
- PennDOT assisted with a mailing reaching homeless individuals who requested the veteran's designation on a free ID. These letters offer information to veterans regarding benefits and services and reached them at a County Assistance Office or homeless shelter.
- Members engage with the Aging, Women Veterans, and Judiciary Committees to assist with crossover issues. Veterans who are aging, women, and/or justice-involved may have additional challenges regarding housing needs.

GOALS

Veteran homelessness has been and will remain a top priority. Building on collaborative intergovernmental and community-based relationships, this committee identifies and promotes awareness of the resources that could help veterans experiencing or at risk for housing instability. The committee chairs also wish to continue interacting with veterans with "lived experience" to ensure all viewpoints are represented for strategic collaboration.

UPDATES

Early identification of veterans remains a constant push in the circles of homeless work. Simply asking the question "Have you ever served" allowed individuals needing assistance to get connected to all their entitled benefits. Members share information on fair housing, resources, legal services, details of eviction processes/protections, the need for more non-congregate shelter housing, and the current homeless/veteran homeless numbers for Pennsylvania. Available housing vouchers are discussed through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH).

Other presentations highlighting programs covered under the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) have included the Neighborhood Assistance Program, the Emergency Solutions Grant, and the Community Services Block Grant. The Home American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP) Program falls under HUD and assists people without housing, at risk of homelessness, and other vulnerable populations. The Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) is a competitive grant from the U.S. Department of Labor which currently serves 40 counties in Pennsylvania.

CHALLENGES

"Hard-to-Place" veterans (i.e., those exiting incarceration with certain offenses) will encounter additional housing challenges. Help from committee members and workgroups assist with each case as they arise.

Lack of shelter beds, non-congregate housing, affordable housing, and landlords willing to rent to veterans through the HUD-VASH program remain areas of discussion.



JUDICIARY

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

- Working with the Administrative Office of PA Courts (AOPC), a poster campaign highlighted the importance of knowing which justice-involved individuals have served in the military. This knowledge can assist service members, especially when first becoming justice involved. These posters were distributed to the Magisterial District Judges' offices, county courthouses, and county offices, among other places, totaling more than 500 locations around the commonwealth.
- The DOC began hosting Veteran Symposiums roughly twice a year at different SCI locations. These symposiums include veteran resources provided by individuals involved on various GAC-VS committees, among other supports. The events are aimed at veteran employees within the DOC and PA Board of Probation and Parole but may benefit other agencies' veterans moving forward.

GOALS

The early identification of veterans continues to be a topic of conversation when discussing justice-involved individuals who have had prior military service. Additionally, filling Veteran Service Unit (VSU) beds at State Correctional Institution (SCI) locations is a goal many advocates are working on within the Department of Corrections (DOC).

Expanding Veteran Treatment Courts or Veterans Tracks remains a priority as this could assist with getting veterans the assistance and treatment programs they need to stay out of incarceration and reduce recidivism.

UPDATES

A new classification tool the DOC created identifies inmates with military service during the intake process. Veteran Coordinators can screen these individuals for possible placement into a VSU immediately without the hassle of transferring individuals later.

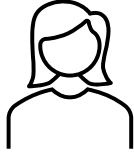
The DOC created five new Veteran Coordinator positions. These professionals assist many veteran inmates and staff members, promoting camaraderie, access to resources, and a sense of inclusion. These coordinators engage with DMVA staff to discuss veteran resources and effective reentry programs and strategies that will significantly assist veterans leaving state incarceration.

In 2022, the first American Legion post within a Pennsylvania SCI was established, bridging the gap between employees and inmates. Also in 2022, the committee began looking for members and guest speakers with "lived experience" to add to their conversations.

CHALLENGES

The COVID-19 pandemic increased worker shortages in many agencies, especially the DOC. Increased job fairs and additional promotion of opportunities to criminal justice career students and transitioning service members will hopefully help fill gaps.

Sharing veteran cultural competency information and resources with police officers is another challenge due to the number of department locations fragmented across the commonwealth.



WOMEN VETERANS

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

- The non-profit organization Women Veterans Alliance (WVA) will put together a Pennsylvania edition of a women veterans' magazine. This publication will be a toolkit filled with federal, state, and local resources, articles, and information. Committee members are promoting the project to partners and possible sponsors for the WVA to publish in 2024.
- For the 75th anniversary of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, the PA Military Museum in Boalsburg connected with committee members regarding events planned around the legacy of women in the military. Beyond this anniversary, there is room to partner with the PA Military Museum on future women's veteran events.
- The Governor's Advisory Commission on Women annually honored a new group of women veterans during Women's History Month each March. Committee members attend the ceremonies and share veteran resources for these events.

GOALS

Members aim to have women veterans represented at any table regarding veterans' issues. Women veterans have different perspectives and experiences due to their service, which may require specific, or complex supports, needs, and resources that necessitate discussion.

UPDATES

The need for women veteran-centric peer support groups is an ever-increasing need. After connecting with the Women Veterans Network (WoVeN), a few committee members took the Peer Support training to become leaders and mentors who can hold support group meetings in local communities.

The committee continually seeks women veteran-specific resources, training, and information to share through their networks. In many cases, women veterans only feel safe with other women veterans. Sharing this information is valuable to ensure those in need get all the support they require.

In recent years, more federal studies and surveys have been conducted that highlight information about women veterans, their unique challenges, improvements in VA healthcare to meet individual needs, and areas for continued growth. Committee members share these resources as available and attend conferences to network among all sizeable women veteran gatherings.

CHALLENGES

There are nearly 70,000 women veterans in Pennsylvania. Many women veterans, especially the older population, downplay their service or tend to promote the service of a spouse before their own. Also, in this tech-heavy age, many older women veterans may not utilize email to receive critical information or make connections to build camaraderie in a supportive environment. Therefore, it can be challenging to reach this population, engage them in their communities, and provide necessary information and materials on benefits they may be entitled to receive.

As the fastest-growing demographic of the military, women veterans will need more support moving forward and more research studies regarding various longitudinal health concerns.



CAMPAIGN JOURNEY

- Nearly 18,000 commonwealth employees with military experience were recognized since the program’s inception in 2019.
- Employees receive a recognition pin once during their commonwealth career, but many are involved with agency ceremonies and events.
- Military birthday messages are sent to those who have identified their service branch, evoking pride as they reminisce.

“How important it is for us to recognize and celebrate our heroes and she-roes!”

-Maya Angelou

VIPS

(Veterans in Public Service)

GOALS

Through Executive Order 2019-03, the Pennsylvania State Employee Military Service Recognition Campaign was established to identify and recognize commonwealth employees for their dual public service. A representative from the Governor’s Office of Administration (OA) and the DMVA work on the annual campaign to engage agencies, providing them with necessary data and tools to recognize veterans in a way that promotes esprit de corps within their own agency culture.

UPDATES

Agencies honor new veteran employees with a custom pin and Governor's message card. Each year more agencies go above and beyond to ensure their veterans are engaged, connected, appreciated, and honored throughout the year in some cases. One agency created a challenge coin, and another purchased patriotic lanyards for veterans to display their employee ID.

CHALLENGES

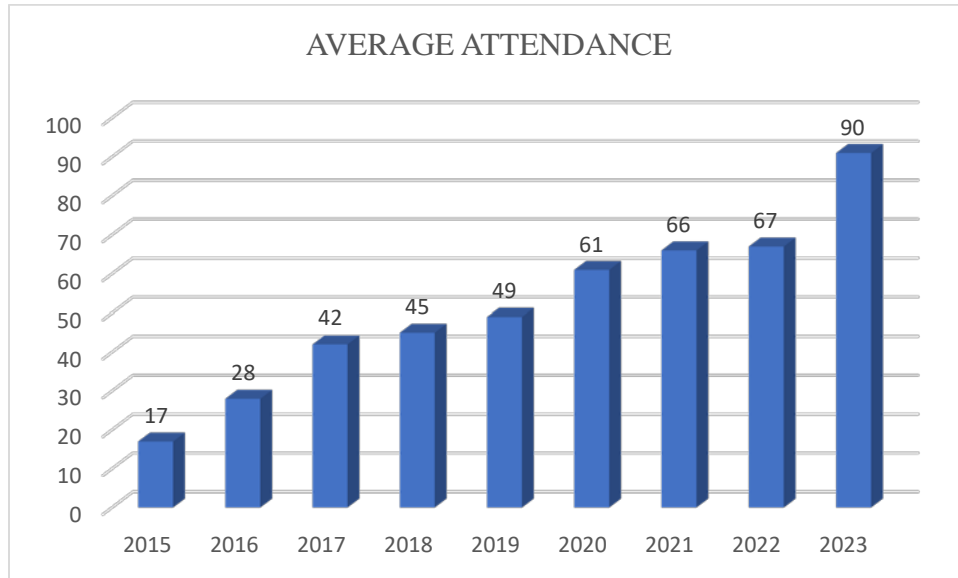
Each participating agency has its own culture and environment. The committee representatives work with points of contact (POC) from 35 agencies and understand that "employee engagement" will look and function differently across that spectrum. Agency POC turnover creates challenges when explaining the importance of this recognition. Agency representatives (along with leadership members) should come to appreciate the value of their veteran employees and show appreciation for them throughout the year as they have answered the call to serve in dual realms.

Pennsylvania currently has the fourth-largest veteran population in the United States. Following national trends and the forecasts from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs models, Pennsylvania’s veteran population is anticipated to keep declining, with large numbers aging out of the workforce. Currently 75% of commonwealth veterans are over age 55, so as this population ages out of the workforce, it will be vital to ensure they feel appreciated and engaged moving forward.

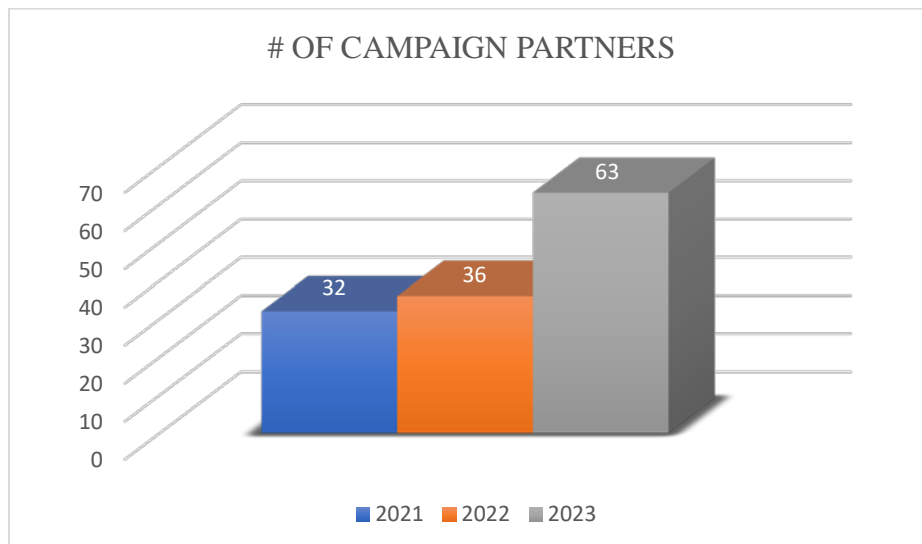


METRICS

Significant increases in meeting participation have occurred since the inception of the GAC-VS ten years ago. Work accomplished and information shared through the GAC-VS have ripple effects throughout the commonwealth, inspiring others to join its cause. Its impact and initiatives have drawn the attention of new partners and connections each year who want to participate in this thriving and inspiring pursuit.

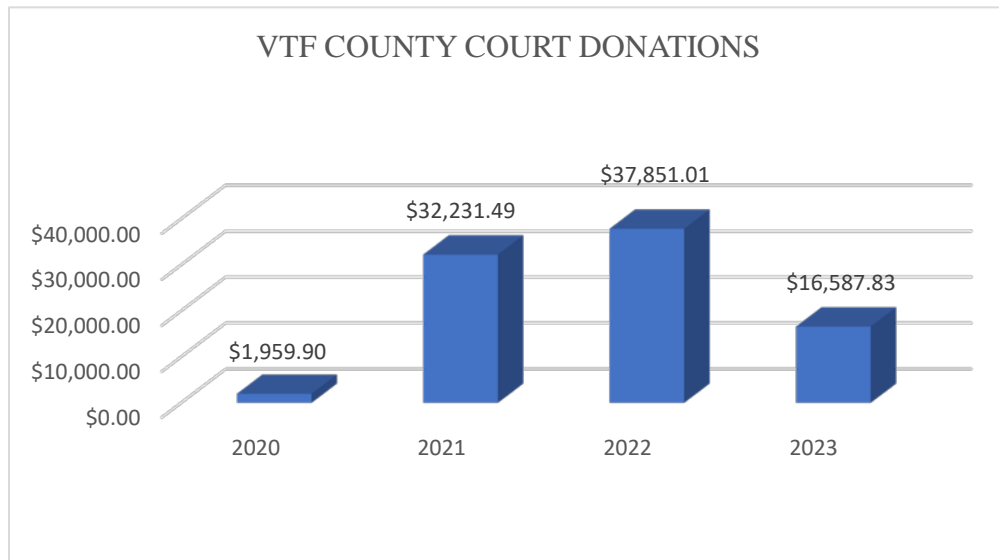


The annual Pension Poaching Awareness Campaign began in June of 2021. The Aging Committee created a message explaining how veterans are targeted for scams and how to safeguard this population. Partners sharing this information are asked to send the packaged message through their channels to veterans or advocates they communicate with via listservs, newsletters, or group contacts. Additionally, the infographics in the toolkit (written in English and Spanish) can be printed and posted in high-traffic areas.

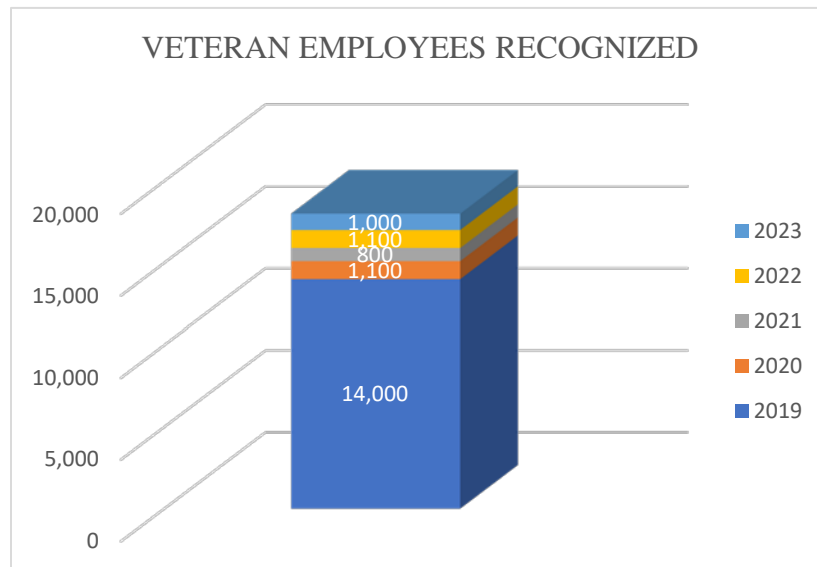


METRICS

GAC-VS connections and quarterly council meetings have shared information regarding the Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) for awareness. One way this fund assists veterans is by offering direct payments of up to \$1,600 once per 12 months to veterans and their surviving spouses in dire need through the Veterans Temporary Assistance (VTA) Program. After providing information to the District Court Administrators, six counties have listed the VTF as a donation option for jurors. To date, the following counties have participated: Cambria, Dauphin, Erie, Fayette, Westmoreland, and York. Since the inception of the jury donation options in late 2020, these efforts have raised more than \$88,000, which is enough funding to assist at least 55 veterans with life changing VTA payments.



Since 2019, the Pennsylvania State Employee Military Service Recognition Campaign has recognized commonwealth employees who currently serve, or have served, in the U.S. Armed Forces, including the Reserve and National Guard components. These employees who have had dual military and commonwealth service are thanked for their efforts, showing how the commonwealth, as an employer, values their commitment to serve others.



VALUE ADDED

"The natural tendency is always thinking you are not doing enough to support a program or clientele. But with genuine participation in the GAC-VS, you quickly realize what other entities are doing, and you can understand, advocate for, partner with, and not wastefully duplicate other's efforts."

-Kory Auch
Governor's Office of Administration,
Designee

"The value of bringing people together with a shared mission and goal to enhance services for veterans in PA is immeasurable."

-Denise Verchimak
Dept. of Education,
Designee

"The GAC-VS has served as a gateway to priceless partnerships, collaborations, and networking opportunities, directly leading to the improved well-being of our staff and enhanced reentry success of our incarcerated veteran population."

-Michael Carrington
Dept. of Corrections
Judiciary Committee Chair

"The GAC-VS is a diverse group of advocates who keep the veteran at the center of everything. Just as they focused on protecting the country, the GAC-VS focuses on enhancing the veteran experience."

-Margo Coleman
Dept. of Military & Veteran Affairs
Aging Committee Chair

GAC-VS members change over time as they transition out of top leadership positions making room for new members to whom they will pass a torch. Reflecting on past experiences and embracing new perspectives are essential to improve communication, collaboration, and impact.

Major General (R) Eric Weller, a former DMVA Deputy Adjutant General of Veterans Affairs and, GAC-VS Chairman, reflected on his years working with the council. He had many examples of participants putting egos aside to collaborate and share information efficiently. Maj Gen (R) Weller stated, "the GAC-VS offers a platform for organized collaboration and creative ideas that reach beyond the veteran population, assisting Pennsylvanians from all walks of life. Each year more dedicated advocates become involved because they see many efforts leading to results." This reminds us that veterans' issues are community issues that affect us all.



Governor's Residence, November 1, 2023

Meg Snead, former Secretary of the Governor's Policy Office, and the Department of Human Services, also shared her perspective as a former council member. "The GAC-VS created a place where people really came together to discuss pressing issues, shared ideas for best practices, and created a sense of community in an environment that could be challenging to bridge among generations of veterans." Ms. Snead also stated she "was proud to participate and appreciated the continued emphasis on prioritizing the needs of veterans, particularly those most vulnerable."

Toshua Jarrett of the Veterans Leadership Program in Western PA commented on the past four years of being a member-at-large. "The value of the council is enormous. The GAC-VS committee members work tirelessly and display passion and dedication to collaborate with advocates and work holistically to address veteran challenges and issues."



GUEST SPEAKERS

- Guest speakers have been an essential component of the GAC-VS for years. Subject matter experts offer valuable knowledge on various topics, programs, and research to inform advocates on how best to assist veterans.
- Speakers have been involved with quarterly GAC-VS council meetings and monthly committee meetings.
- Depending on the topic, speakers are researched and requested, or they are suggested by a committee or council member. At times, a subject matter expert will offer to speak due to their desire to assist veterans, advocates, and caregivers.

Quarterly speakers have included:

PA Insurance Department:

- Behavioral Health Commercial Insurance Coverage in PA

Center for Combating Elder Financial Abuse:

- Scams affecting older veterans

Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service:

- Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP)

PA Council on the Arts and Media in Neighborhoods Group (MING):

- *Music Vets*, film and musical healing forums

Penn State University:

- Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness

PA Historical and Museum Commission:

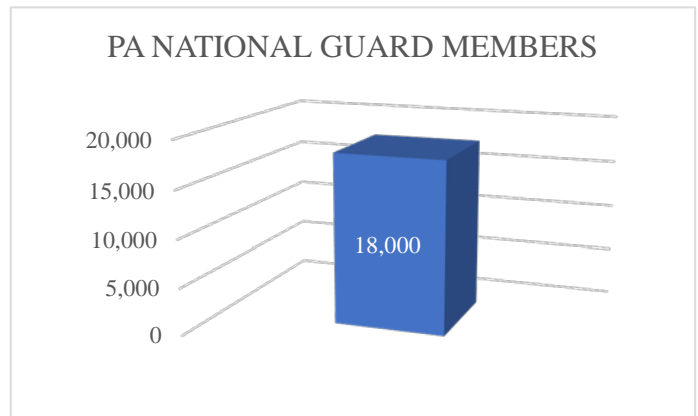
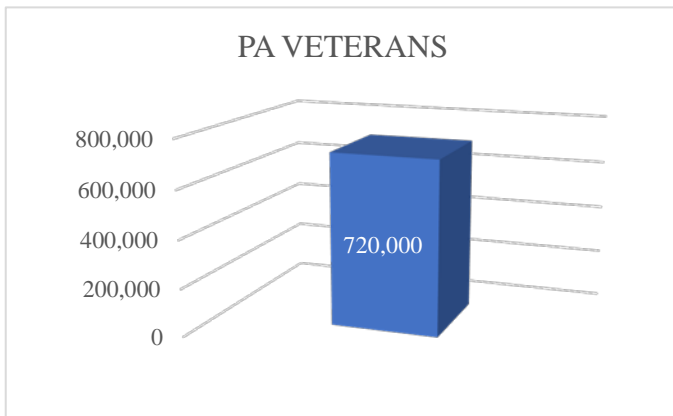
- Pennsylvania Military Museum

Monthly committee speakers have included:

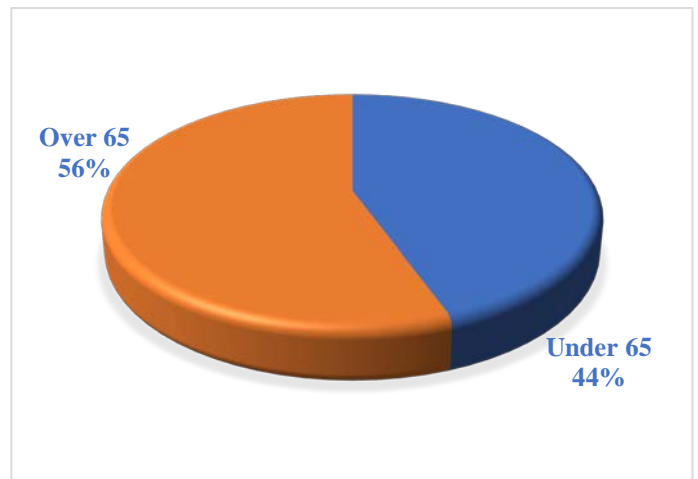
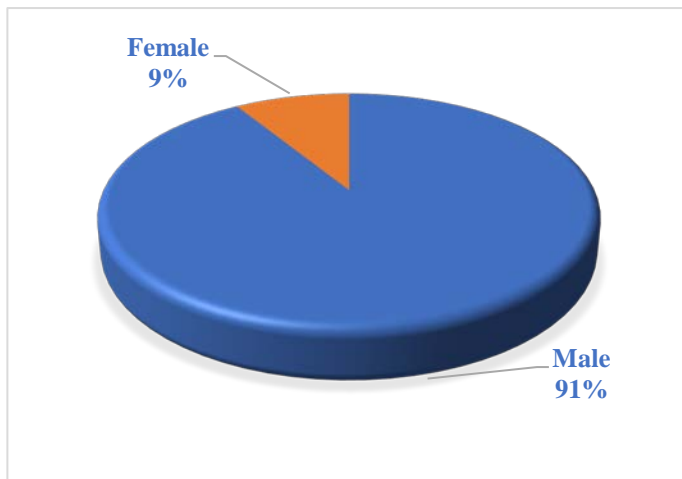
- Veterans Fairweather Lodge
- Pennsylvania SHARE Program
- Department of Aging's Bureau of Protective Services
- PAPA PALS
- Geisinger Health Systems program for supporting veterans
- Veteran Treatment Court participant
- Women Veterans Empowered and Thriving
- Women Veterans Alliance
- Robin's Home
- Department of State's Military Occupational Crosswalk
- Veteran Medical Foster Care Program

DEMOGRAPHICS

Pennsylvania has the fourth largest veteran, and the third largest National Guard, population in the country.



It is also home to a growing number of women veterans and contains a significant percentage of veterans over age 65.



Caring for an older population, especially those in rural areas, brings challenges related to transportation, access to technology, higher medical costs, and increased risk of scams. These statistics show the need for resources and programs to care for these individuals and how many commonwealth residents have a direct or indirect connection to a service member of the armed forces. Veterans' issues are commonwealth, community, and family issues that touch many Pennsylvania residents.

Source: www.va.gov/vetdata/Veteran_Population.asp



ONGOING CHALLENGES

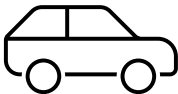
COMPLEX NEEDS

Several issues will remain high-priority areas requiring assistance beyond the boundaries of the GAC-VS due to their complexity and persistence. Consistent efforts from all levels of government are necessary for the following topic areas:



HOUSING

Life circumstances and comorbid issues can change suddenly, contributing to homelessness every day. Affordable housing, landlord engagement, and various social supports can help reduce housing insecurity, homelessness, and the risk of returning to homelessness.



TRANSPORTATION

Pennsylvania has an older veteran population, including many veterans who live in rural areas. This combination presents challenges for social isolation, health care, and overall wellness. Unfortunately, bus lines, volunteer drivers, and rideshare programs do not reach all in need.



EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment and underemployment are two areas requiring monitoring. Our veterans deserve quality jobs upon separation, utilizing skills they have learned through service. Sharing resources with employers across the commonwealth will assist companies in attracting quality candidates to their ranks. Reaching more transitioning service members and drawing them to Pennsylvania after their service term will strengthen our local economy.



LOOKING AHEAD

I thank each member of our committees for their service to veterans and veteran initiatives. These members work on the GAC-VS committees as an additional duty and bring a wealth of knowledge to any table, meaning their time and energy is often stretched thin.

As we closed out 2023, Governor Shapiro addressed our team and outlined three priority areas. Along with mental health and criminal justice programs like problem-solving courts, he focused on homelessness and housing concerns for our veteran population.

“We make a

living by what

we get, but we

make a life by

what we give.”

Homelessness crosses multiple committees as a complex challenge. Some examples of veterans experiencing housing insecurity include:

- Hard-to-place aging veterans with behavioral health issues that need safe and permanent housing;
- veterans that have left a state correctional institution or are currently enrolled in a veteran treatment court and have trouble securing jobs offering livable wages that allow them to pay their bills; and,
- veterans that are struggling to work, care for children, and afford independent living due to lack of resources and a single or low income.

Moving forward, we will look at homelessness, housing insecurity/affordable housing, and food insecurity across all committees and identify areas for further collaboration. We will discuss challenges, share information, and work to make progress in these areas. As Governor Shapiro expresses, “Pennsylvania can do big things”, and we will work together to “get stuff done”.

While committees have their own goals and initiatives, we will ask all to consider how their subject matter experts can help solve aspects of veteran homelessness. Housing security is often the first step in an approach to meet people where they are, address other underlining issues, and connect them to resources that will keep them on a path to health and stability.

I look forward to finding solutions to help our veterans.

-Maureen H. Weigl
Brigadier General (PA)
Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs
GAC-VS Chairwoman

-Winston Churchill



Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

Created by Janette Krolczyk, GAC-VS Coordinator, jkrolczyk@pa.gov