

# Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission

## Meeting Agenda

June 03, 2022, at 1000 AM

Location: Arrowheads Community Club

1000 Call to Order

Moment of Silence

Pledge of Allegiance

Introduction of Commission Members

Chairman's Opening Remarks

TAG's Opening Remarks and Comments

Approval of 08 April 2022 Meeting Minutes

Reading of Official and Other Communications

DAG-VA Opening Remarks and Report

- PPL, BVH, PIRO
- Programs Report

VISN 4

Committee Reports

- VSO Grant
- RETX
- Legislative
- Pensions/Relief/Grave Markings
- Women Veterans
- Veterans' Health
- Governance Committee

Unfinished Business

- PWVC transportation letter
- Attend Keystone Challenge ribbon cutting
- Committee cross discussion

New Business

- Hall of Fame/SWVC: Bernard Zurawski

Good of the Order

Agenda Items for Next Meeting

Closing Remarks

Next Meeting

September 09, 2022, at 10 AM

Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville

Retiring of the Colors

Adjournment

Chairman Nicholas Taylor

Chairman Nathaniel Smith

Chairman Nicholas Taylor

Chairman Nicholas Taylor

Chairman Nicholas Taylor

MG Mark Schindler

Requires Vote

Chairman Nicholas Taylor

BG (PA) Maureen Weigl

**Requires Vote**

Mr. Timothy Liezert

Mr. Bruce Foster

Mr. Justin Slep

Mr. Charles Jackson

Mr. Larry Googins

Ms. Lisa Kaye

Mr. Mark Baylis

Mr. Michael Brooker

Chairman Nicholas Taylor

Chairman Nicholas Taylor

**Requires Vote**

SVC Commissioners

SVC Commissioners

Chairman Nicholas Taylor

Chairman Nicholas Taylor

Chairman Nicholas Taylor



**STATE VETERANS COMMISSION MEETING**  
**JUNE 3, 2022**



# DMVA MILITARY UPDATE



# CURRENT MOBILIZATIONS & TOTAL DEPLOYMENTS



PAARNG Current Deployments						
MDATE	MSAD	UNIT	OPN	PAX	MISSION	Projected Return Date
13 JUN 21	15 JUN 21	1-104 CAV	MFO-21-23	1	T10, 12304B	29 APR 22
31 AUG 21	03 OCT 21	1069 MP	GTMO	109	T10, 12302	04 OCT 22
09 OCT 21	12 OCT 21	228 EN	OSS	142	T10, 12302	12 NOV 22
27 NOV 21	30 NOV 21	1067 TC	OSS	263	T10, 12302	29 SEP 22
04 DEC 21	07 DEC 21	107 FA	AFRICOM	7	T10, 12304B	03 OCT 22
28 FEB 22	03 MAR 22	109 IN	MFO-22-24	193	T10, 12304B	08 JAN 23
ARNG Soldiers at MOB/DEMOB Sites				9	Various Missions	Various based on tour
Various Individual MOB Soldiers				2	Various Missions	Various based on tour
Total PAARNG Deployed: <b>726</b>						

PAANG Current Deployments		
Unit	Opn	Pax
193 SOW	OFS-OIR-OSS, Other	8/1
111 ATKW	IPR (HS), OFS-OIR-OSS, TS	36/6/40
171 ARW	Alert Status (HS), OFS-OIR-OSS	37
<b>Total PAANG Deployed</b>		<b>128</b>

**Total PANG Deployed**



**State Legislation of Interest.**

- HB 995 (Kaufer) - Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in Department of Military Affairs, establishing the Veterans' Outreach and Support Network Program. Provides for a program that will improve the health and wellbeing of veterans and the families of veterans through community engagement and consistent network communication and organize participants to cooperate with network partners to provide for proactive solutions to address the problems faced by veterans. **Awaiting 3rd Consideration. Set on Tabled Senate calendar 4/13/2022**
- HB 1868 - (Mako) Amends Title 63 (Professions and Occupations ((State Licensed)) repealing and replacing existing language and establishing new chapter relating to military and veterans licensure. Provides requirements for the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs relating to licensing for military applicants, examining relevant military experience, approving renewals of licenses for deployed servicemembers, gathering license fees and submitting information reports to various state officials. **Awaiting 3rd Consideration. Rereferred to Senate Appropriations, 1/26/22**
- HB 1421 (Thomas) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in Department of Military Affairs, providing that the department may request the Pennsylvania National Guard for assistance in burials and provides that if a contract is executed the department shall pay an amount not exceeding \$250. **Awaiting 3rd Consideration. Rereferred to Senate Approps 1/26/2022.**
- HB 491 (Boback) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs) establishing Chapter 99 regarding Veterans' Benefit Payment Exclusion. One hundred percent of a veterans' benefit payment may not be included as income for any commonwealth program. **Awaiting 3rd Consideration. 1/22/2022 Rereferred to Senate Approps.**
- HR 129 (Pennycuick) Concurrent Resolution establishing the Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. **Set on House Calendar 5/23/2022.**
- SB 849 (Stefano) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in veterans' preference, further providing for definitions; and, in voluntary veterans' preference in private employment, further providing for definitions. **Final Passage Senate 11/08/2021. Received by House VAEP 11/09/2021.**

**State Legislation of Interest.**

- HB 1055 (Webster) Amends "An act to authorize the recorder of deeds in the several counties of this Commonwealth to record the discharges of all honorably discharged officers and soldiers," providing that a veteran's records of discharge shall be inaccessible to anyone other than the veteran or an immediate family member or authorized agent for 85 years. **Final Passage House 11/10/2021. Received by Senate VAEP 11/12/2021.**
- HB 1108 (Neilson) Amends Title 30 (Fish), in fishing licenses, further providing for exemptions from license requirements for therapeutic recreational programs. H Game and Fish 4/6/21. Voted favorably and reported as committed H Game and Fish. 4/21/21. Discussed during public hearing H Game & Fish + H Tourism & Rec, 10/6/21. **Final Passage House 12/15/2021. Received by Senate Game & Fisheries 12/29/21.**
- SB 241 (Brewster) Amends Title 30 (Fish), in fishing licenses, exempting individuals participating in therapeutic recreation programs. Effective in 60 days. **Final Passage Senate 6/24/21. Awaiting 2<sup>nd</sup> consideration. On House tabled calendar 5/23/2022.**
- HB 1976 (Harkins) Act providing for workplace health & safety standards for public employees; providing for powers & duties of the Sec. Of L&I, establishing the PA Occupational Safety & Health Review Board; providing for workplace inspections. **Introduced in House Labor and Industry 10/18/21. Awaiting First Consideration.**
- HB 164 (Staats) Act amending Title 51 (Military Affairs), providing that a licensed funeral director, funeral entity or cemetery company shall, within 96 hours of receipt of the remains of a deceased serviceperson, notify the county director of veterans affairs of a deceased serviceperson having legal residence in the county at the time of death and provide the family of the deceased serviceperson with the contact information for the county director of veterans affairs. **Final Passage House 6/09/2021. Received by Senate VAEP 6/11/2022.**
- SB 272 (Mastriano) Amends Title 30 (Fish), in fishing licenses, providing free resident fishing licenses for first responders who have a disability incurred in the line of duty that prevents substantial employment and meets certain qualifications. **Final Passage Senate 1/19/2022. Received in the House and referred to House Game and Fisheries 1/21/2022.**



**State Legislation of Interest.**

- SB 455 (Bartolotta) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in veteran-owned small businesses, The legislation provides for eligibility, issuance and administration of the logotypes and the system for verification. Money may be utilized from the Veterans' Trust Fund to establish the logotypes and a system for verification. Violation of this act is a misdemeanor of the third degree if the individual fraudulently holds the logotype. Further provides the full amount of each fine collected for a violation shall be deposited into the Veterans' Trust Fund. **Awaiting 3rd consideration. Rereferred to Senate Approps 6/21/2022.**
- SB 150 (Ward) *Comp: HB 477 (Pisciottano)* Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in veterans' pensions and benefits, further providing for blind veteran's pension and for amputee and paralyzed veteran's pension by increasing the compensation from \$150 to \$180. **Awaiting 2nd consideration. Rereferred to S Approp 5/10/2021.**
- SB 578 (Bartolotta) Joint Resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in taxation and finance, further providing for exemptions and special provisions. **Awaiting 2nd Consideration. Laid on the table 6/26/2021.**
- SB 750 (Fontana) Amends the Pennsylvania Amber Alert System Law, establishing the Pennsylvania Green Alert System; and further providing for immunity. **First Consideration 4/5/2022. Set on Senate Calendar 5/23/2022.**
- HB 1972 (Boback) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in State Veterans' Commission and Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans' Affairs, providing the definition of "commission" is clearly explicated to mean The State Veterans' Commission within the context of this bill. Provides for "Community-Based Palliative Care." Subchapter E. Introduced H VAEP 10/13/21. **Discussed during public hearing 10/19/21. Awaiting 1st Consideration. Set on Tabled House Calendar 5/23/22**
- HB 1691 (Boback) An Act amending the act of August 26, 1971 (P.L.351, No.91), known as the State Lottery Law, in State lottery, further providing for statement of purpose, for powers and duties of secretary and for disposition of funds and providing for instant lottery game to benefit older veterans. **Set on House Tabled Calendar 5/23/22**

**Federal Legislation of Interest.**

- **H.R.3967 - Honoring our PACT Act of 2021** To improve health care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances, and for other purposes.  
Rep. Takano, Mark [D-CA-41] , Last Action: **House - 03/04/2022 Passed the House**
- **S.3388 - Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2021** To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve benefits administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.  
Sen. Tester, Jon [D-MT], Last Action: **Introduced 12/14/2021**
- **H.R.1836 - Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act of 2021** To amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that the time during which members of the Armed Forces serve on active duty for training qualifies for educational assistance under the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.  
Rep. Levin, Mike [D-CA-49], Last Action: **Passed House 1/12/2022**
- **S.89 - Ensuring Survivor Benefits during COVID-19 Act of 2021** This bill requires the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to obtain a medical opinion that determines whether a service-connected disability was the principal or contributory cause of death for a veteran who died from COVID-19.  
Sen. Sinema, Kyrsten [D-AZ] (Introduced 01/28/2021), Latest Action: **Passed the Senate – 07/21/2021**
- **H.R.2494** This bill establishes the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration to administer economic opportunity assistance programs for veterans and their dependents and survivors. Specifically, the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration must administer the following Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) programs: vocational rehabilitation and employment programs, educational assistance programs, veterans' housing loan and related programs, the Transition Assistance Program, and the database of small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans. Prior to the transfer of administrative responsibilities, the bill requires the VA to certify that (1) the transition of the provision of services will not negatively affect the provision of such services to veterans, and (2) such services are ready to be transferred.  
Rep. Wenstrup, Brad R. [R-OH-2] (Introduced 04/13/2021), Latest Action: **Passed the House – 05/18/2021**

**Federal Legislation of Interest.****Military Sexual Trauma (MST) legislation**

**H.R. 6961 - The Dignity for MST Survivors Act.** Amends title 38, United States Code, to improve hearings before the Board of Veterans' Appeals regarding claims involving military sexual trauma. Focuses on the treatment of MST survivors and their trauma. To date, hundreds of claims have been denied due to inadequate training of VA providers and board members.

Rep Mrvan [D-IN-1], Last action: **Introduced 4/06/2022**

**H.R. 2724 - VA Peer Support Enhancement for MST Act.** Amends Title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide for peer support specialists for claimants who are survivors of military sexual trauma, and for other purposes.

Rep Delgado [D-NY-19], Last action: **Introduced 4/06/2022**

**H.R. 7335 – Improving Military Sexual Trauma Claims Coordination Act.** Requires the VA to provide more advanced services on the Veterans Crisis Line, counseling and care, and resources. Provides for an automatic MST claim notification system for those in the VA's patient enrollment system.

Rep Luria [D-VA-2], Last action: **Introduced 4/06/2022**

**H.R. 6064 -** Directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to seek to enter into an agreement with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) for an independent review of examinations, furnished by the Secretary, to individuals who submit claims to the Secretary for compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code, for mental and physical conditions linked to military sexual trauma. Requires updated disability benefits questionnaires to address incorrect ratings or improper denials.

Rep Nehls [R-TX-22], Last action: **Introduced 4/06/2022**

**2022 Dates of Interest**

General Election – November 8, 2022

General Assembly

2022 House Session Schedule

June 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30

September 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21

October 24, 25, 26

November 14, 15, 16

2022 Senate Session Schedule

June 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30

# PVH Current Licensure Status



<b>Regulatory Agency</b>	<b>DVVH</b>	<b>GMVC</b>	<b>HVH</b>	<b>PSSH</b>	<b>SEVC</b>	<b>SWVC</b>
<b>Dates of Last Inspection</b>						
<b>PA Department of Health</b>	04/2022 Awaiting 2567	12/2021 Full Standard Licensure Status	09/2021 Full Standard Licensure Status	07/2021 Full Standard Licensure Status	07/2021 Full Standard Licensure Status	05/2021 Full Standard Licensure Status
<b>PA Department of Human Services</b>	N/A	N/A	11/2019 Full Standard Licensure Status	09/2021 Full Standard Licensure Status	06/2021 Full Standard Licensure Status	N/A
<b>US Department of Veterans Affairs</b>	03/2022 Revisit Required Status	02/2022 CAP accepted	02/2021 Elec record rw Provisional Certification Status	02/2022 CAP accepted	02/2022 CAP accepted	02/2021 Elec record rw Provisional Certification Status

Each DMVA Pennsylvania Veterans' Home is currently licensed by the PA Department of Health, PA Department of Human Services and certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. HVH, PSSH and SEVC have a Personal Care program.

*Last updated: 5-11-2022*

## BUREAU OF VETERANS' HOMES



### Resident COVID-19 Update

Residents		01	02	03	04	05	06	07	09	10
Home	Data Date	# of Residents with S/S of COVID-19	# of Residents Currently Positive in Facility	# of Residents Waiting Test Results	# of Residents in Hospital for COVID-19 Reasons	# of Total Residents Tested	General Resident Population Testing, Enter round # and S-Started C-Complete	# of Residents Positive for COVID-19 Cumulative	# of Residents Recovered	# of Residents That Expired with a Positive COVID-19 Status.
DVVH	5/11/2022	0	0	0	0	4842	56-S	116	94	22
GMVC	5/11/2022	0	0	0	0	11888	88-C	114	91	23
HVH	5/11/2022	0	0	0	0	14253	75-C	200	182	28
PSSH	5/11/2022	0	0	0	0	7023	135-C	157	114	21
SEVC	5/11/2022	0	0	3	0	13381	113-C	132	72	42
SWVC	5/11/2022	0	19	0	0	11236	55-C	77	55	3
<b>Total:</b>		0	19	3	0	62623		796	608	139

As of 11 May 2022

> community > commonwealth

> country

## BUREAU OF VETERANS' HOMES



### Staff COVID-19 Update

Staff		01	02	03	04	06	07
Home	Data Date	# of Staff Currently Out for COVID-19 Reasons	# of Staff Currently Positive	# of Staff Waiting Test Results	# of Total Staff Tested	# of Staff Tested Positive for COVID-19 Cumulative	# of Staff Returned to Work Cumulative
<b>DVH</b>	5/11/2022	3	1	0	10896	164	254
<b>GMVC</b>	5/11/2022	2	2	0	21127	150	159
<b>HVH</b>	5/11/2022	15	10	2	44067	473	1887
<b>PSSH</b>	5/11/2022	12	6	0	18567	217	484
<b>SEVC</b>	5/11/2022	5	5	32	21436	276	499
<b>SWVC</b>	5/11/2022	12	11	0	23506	216	465
<b>Total:</b>		49	35	34	139599	1496	3748

As of 11 May 2022

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## BUREAU OF VETERANS' HOMES



### COVID-19 Vaccination Update

#### Vaccinations (All Homes)

ResidentsBy Home	Vaccinations - Residents					
		Census	Fully Vaccinated	% Fully Vaccinated	Partially Vaccinated	Not Vaccinated
DVVH	Residents	111	111	100%	0	0
GMVC	Residents	134	134	100%	0	0
HVH	Residents	226	214	95%	0	12
PSSH	Residents	128	127	99%	0	1
SEVC	Residents	194	191	98%	2	1
SWVC	Residents	145	142	98%	1	2
Total		<b>938</b>	<b>919</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>16</b>

As of 11 May 2022

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## Pennsylvania Veterans Homes COVID-19 Update

COVID-19 links for information related to the Veterans Homes and skilled nursing facilities.

- <https://www.dmva.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx>
- <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/LTCF-Data.aspx>
- <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Monitoring-Dashboard.aspx>
- <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Guidance/SNF-Guidance.aspx>
- <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19MpLoPxayE1MDwQJJYCZxISN64V4FJSJPGzfvVBb5Mw/edit#gid=1511961664>

# Bureau Activities



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY  
AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

- **Veterans Trust Fund** - Governor Tom Wolf announced today that the 2021-22 Veterans' Trust Fund (VTF) is accepting grant applications for programs and services benefiting Pennsylvania veterans. The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) will award up to \$1.4 million in VTF grants to non-profit organizations, veteran service organizations and county directors of veteran affairs across the state. A supplemental NOFA was issued for the additional \$400k in non-profit grants. The Grant awards are anticipated to be announced in June 2022.
- **Title 43 Regulatory Update Project** – We are conducting a regulatory review of the application and adjudication procedures for our state veterans' benefits programs codified in 43 Pa. Code. The review follows a detailed process governed by the Regulatory Review Act and overseen by the Independent Regulatory Review Commission. Members from the SVC have been included on the associated working groups. The review is expected to continue through 2022, and a regular five-year review process will be established.
- **Stakeholder Engagement** - We realize that there is no way we can successfully serve veterans without the cooperation of our government partners and community partners, especially those who are on the ground level and work every day to improve the lives of veterans. We are taking a positive and collaborative approach in all we do. As veteran advocates we are holistically connecting Pennsylvania's service members, veterans, and their families to local, state, and federal benefits, programs, and recognition they have earned. We continue to work with our federal and state government partners as well to expand our ability to connect with servicemember, veterans, and their families. For example, at PennDOT Welcome Centers (Digital Monitors) – 4 million visitors per year across 13 facilities has messaging related to PA VETConnect and the PA Veterans Registry.
- **Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services** – met on May 11, 2022. More information to include past meeting minutes and presentations may be found at [veterans.pa.gov](https://veterans.pa.gov) and then click on Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services. The next meeting will be August 10, 2022, FTIG.
- **PA Veterans Registry** - Veterans, family members and veterans' advocates can also learn more about programs and services by signing up for the free Veterans Registry. Signing up is quick and easy and can be done online by going to [www.register.dmva.pa.gov](https://www.register.dmva.pa.gov). This will also allow you to sign up for the DMVA Digest our weekly electronic newsletter.

# Veteran Service Officer Training



DMVA is an accredited Veteran Service Organization that is authorized to represent veterans claims with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA).

Our Veteran Service Officers are accredited through an approved USDVA course curriculum. On average we serve 200 students per year during our annual accreditation training. The past two years we partnered with the National Veterans Legal Services Program, a virtual training, to meet our accreditation standards. Service organizations participating in our annual training are typically Vietnam Veterans of America, Disabled American Veterans, and The American Legion. Our training is also in accordance with the requirements of the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers.

DMVA has signed a cross-accreditation agreement with The American Legion, Department of Pennsylvania, that has provided great professional development opportunity for 24 VSOs accredited by DMVA (DMVA and County Staff) to participate in the Legion's training program. We continue to encourage staff to take part professional development to include our Monday afternoon PIRO Open Forum. This Open Forum allows county veterans affairs staff to ask questions of the PIRO Team while and gaining insight into veteran service officer specific tasks. The American Legion hosts a biweekly Monday evening webinar as well to offer veteran service organizations' service officers a similar experience and we do have PIRO staff participation to learn as well as answer any state/federal related questions.

**The 2022 Annual Training Conference that will be held September 13 to the 16, 2022 in State College, PA. Registrations are due by June 12, 2022. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to our PIRO Training Team at [RA-MVVSO-A-T@pa.gov](mailto:RA-MVVSO-A-T@pa.gov).**

# VIRTUAL TOWN HALLS



The Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) held the first in a five-part series of virtual Veteran Town Halls on March 16, 2022, on support/resources related to veteran suicide, and the second on May 18, 2022, on Serving Older Veterans.

The series will provide the commonwealth's nearly 800,000 veterans with a convenient platform to learn and ask questions about programs and services earned through their military service.

The following are the dates, times and topics for the four remaining 2022 Virtual Veteran Town Hall events:

- May 18, 2022, 5-6:30 p.m. – Serving Older Veterans
- July 13, 2022, 5-6:30 p.m. – Resources for Homeless Veterans
- Sept. 14, 2022, 5-6:30 p.m. – Transportation Issues Facing Veterans
- Nov. 2, 2022, 5-6:30 p.m. – Honoring Veterans for Their Service and Sacrifice

# Beware of Pension Poaching!



**Never pay for your veteran benefits.**

**Always use the free and expert assistance of a  
VA-accredited Veterans Service Officer (VSO).**

**Find a VSO at [dmva.pa.gov/vetconnect](https://dmva.pa.gov/vetconnect)**

Immediately report known or suspected pension poaching, scams or fraud to the PA Attorney General's Military and Veterans Affairs section:

Call (717) 783-1944

Email [PAvets@attorneygeneral.gov](mailto:PAvets@attorneygeneral.gov)

File a complaint online at [www.attorneygeneral.gov](https://www.attorneygeneral.gov)



# Older Adult Protective Services



Any person who believes that an older adult is being abused, neglected, exploited, or abandoned may file a confidential report at any time with any [Area Agency on Aging](#) or by calling the statewide abuse hotline at **1-800-490-8505**.

Both can receive reports 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and are responsible to investigate within 72 hours.



# OVA / VSO GRANT PROGRAM SUMMARY



<b>FY 21 - 22 Claims, Compensation and Pension Summary</b>	
<b>Monthly Content Count</b>	<b>Monthly Content Gross Amount Value</b>
<b>110,273</b>	<b>\$183,776,869.00</b>
<b>Year to Date Content Count</b>	<b>Year to Date Content Gross Amount Value</b>
<b>990,789</b>	<b>\$1,591,067,923.00</b>

Note: Data is derived from monthly Federal Veterans Affairs reports. Content Count is the number the of recipients receiving VA compensation and pension. Content Gross is the dollar amount associated with compensation and pension payments.

**As of 17 May 2022**

> community > commonwealth > **country**

# OUTREACH MONTHLY OVERVIEW



## Outreach Statistics

	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	Year to Date
Outreach Events Supported	16	20	8	3	<b>47</b>
Mobile Outreach Van Events	12	7	3	3	<b>25</b>
Veteran Interactions	384	449	402	64	<b>1,299</b>
Claim referrals to County Directors and Service Organizations	61	99	66	10	<b>236</b>
Claim referrals to other state, county and local organizations assisting Veterans	27	38	21	3	<b>89</b>
Health Care Enrollment Referrals	40	116	85	9	<b>250</b>
Number of Veterans Registry Cards distributed	67	138	78	18	<b>301</b>

As of 17 May 2022

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# VETERANS' TRUST FUND



VTF Report						
Source	Week	Month to Date	Fiscal Year Total		Total	# HOV Sold
Appropriation Transfer to VTF	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$1,700,000.00	
HOV License Plate	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,710.00	114	\$53,190.00	3,546
PA Monuments LP	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0
HOV Motorcycle License Plate	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$108.00	7	\$3,378.00	225
HOV Women's License Plate	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$480.00	32	\$1,515.00	101
Checkoff & Donations	\$47,748.00	\$116,442.84	\$1,048,917.18		\$12,876,319.65	
Veterans Trust Fund Online Donations	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$780.00		\$6,078.00	
SECA Donations	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,193.38		\$13,409.48	
County Juror Donations	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$51,904.61		\$51,904.61	
Interest	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,505.88		\$180,183.36	
VSO	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$700,000.00	
PENNDOT Costs (SFY 16-17)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$194,000.00	
PENNDOT Costs (SFY 15-16)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$194,000.00	
PENNDOT Costs (SFY 14-15)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$194,000.00	
PENNDOT Costs (SFY 13-14)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$194,000.00	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 20-21)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$41,120.98		\$782,944.98	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 19-20)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$800,000.00	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 18-19)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$780,137.46	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 17-18)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$763,749.14	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 16-17)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$641,329.75	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 15-16)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$502,126.03	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 14-15)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$472,473.67	
VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 13-14)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$442,020.00	
Veteran Programs Training	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$8,700.00	
Veterans Assistance	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$22,901.34	
VTA	\$8,000.00	\$15,533.00	\$508,072.00		5,292,109.32	
Working Balance	\$39,748.00	\$100,909.84	\$558,406.07		\$2,901,486.41	3,872

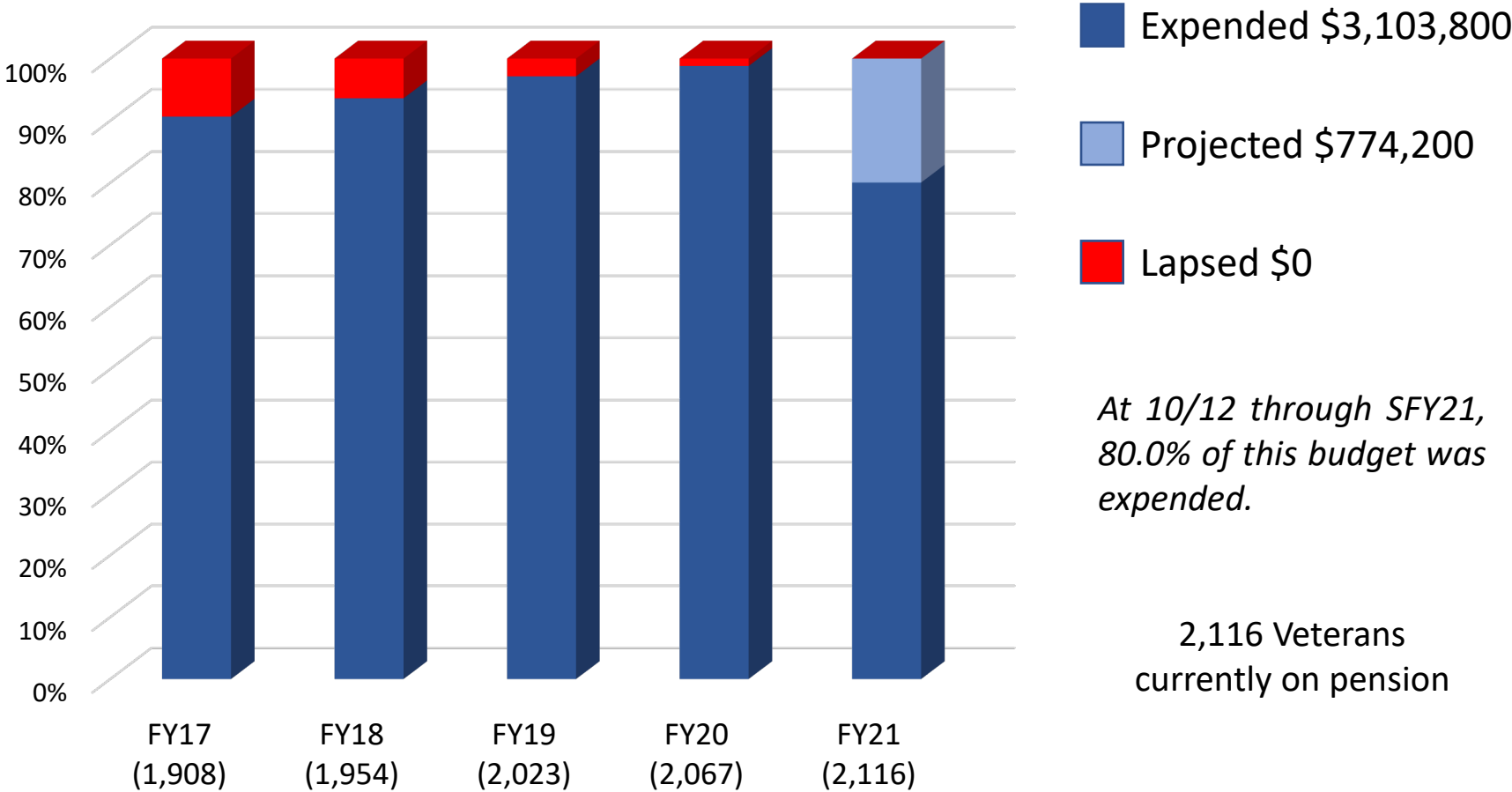
As of 17 May 2022

> community > commonwealth > country

# AMPUTEE & PARALYZED VETERANS' PENSION



\$3,878,000



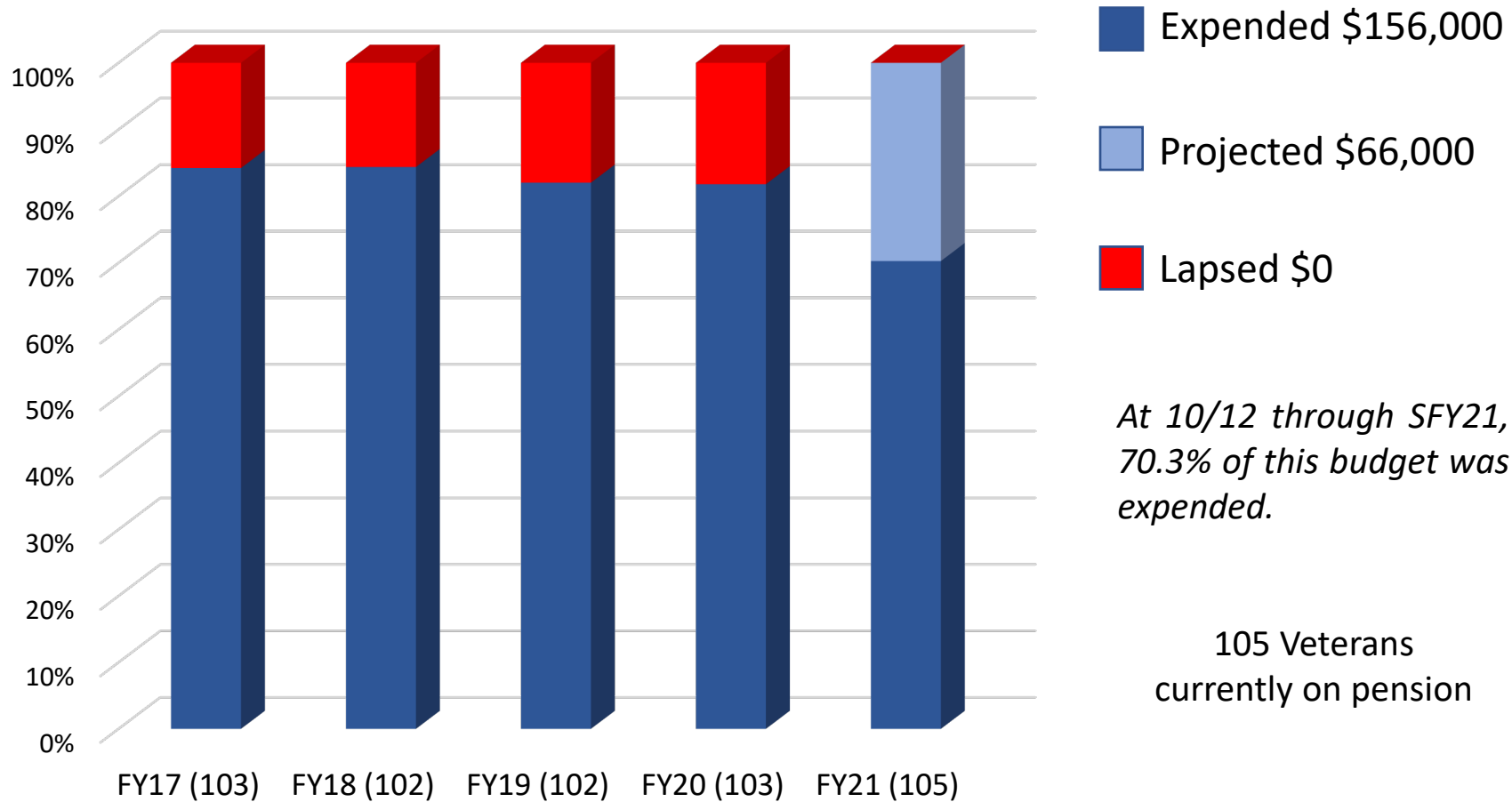
*At 10/12 through SFY21, 80.0% of this budget was expended.*

2,116 Veterans currently on pension

# BLIND VETERANS' PENSION



\$222,000



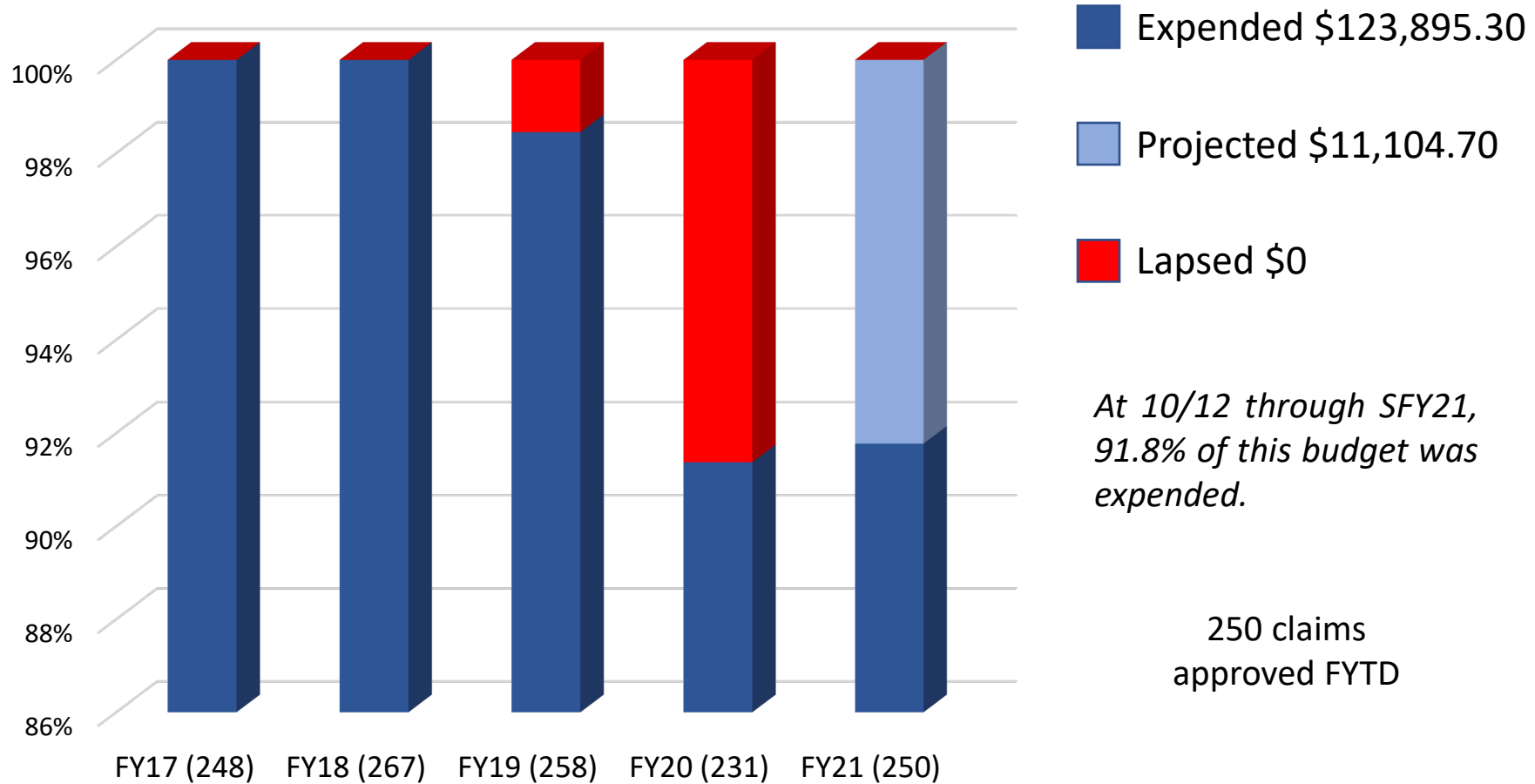
*At 10/12 through SFY21, 70.3% of this budget was expended.*

105 Veterans currently on pension

# EDUCATIONAL GRATUITY



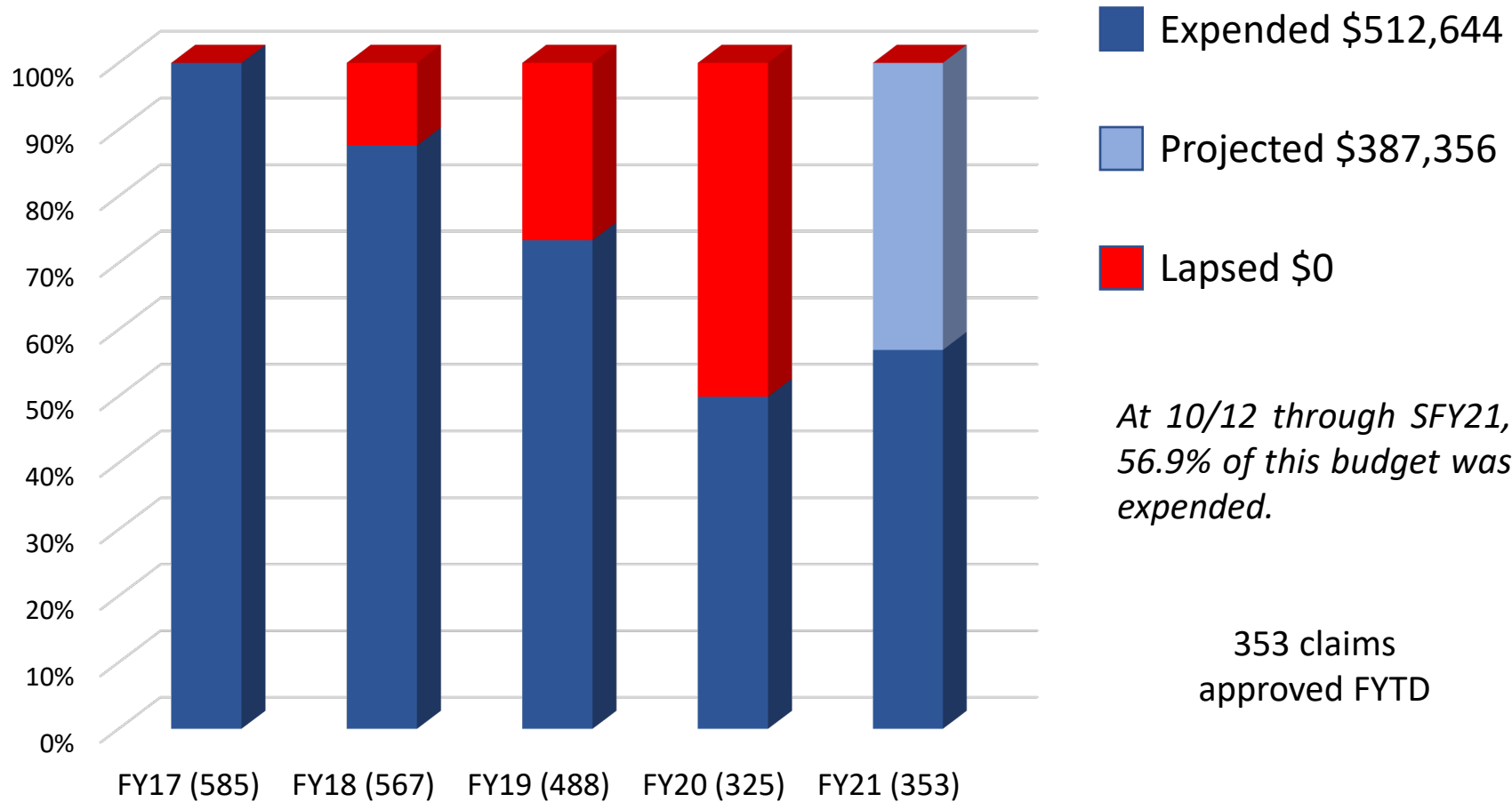
\$135,000



# VETERANS TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE



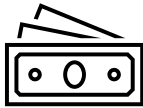
\$900,000

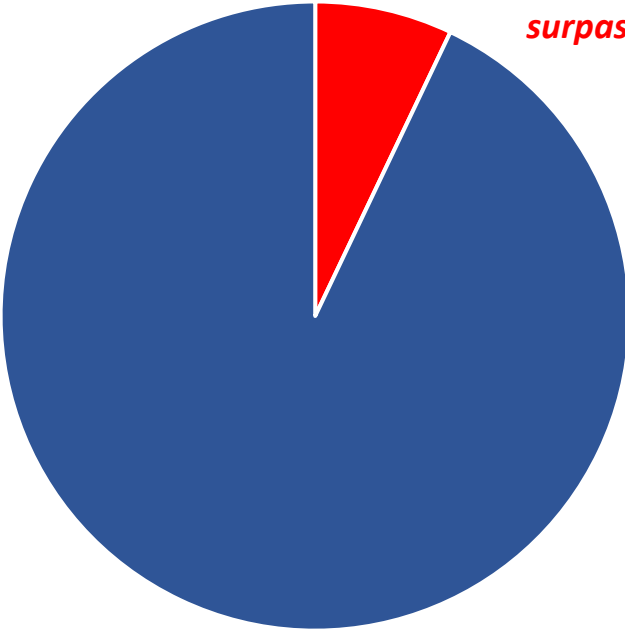


# MILITARY FAMILY RELIEF ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



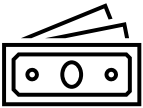
## Total Contributions FY 2005-21

 = \$2,001,363.69 *During Apr 2022, total MFRAP contributions surpassed \$2 million.*




■ Direct Private Donations ■ Dept of Revenue PIT Donations

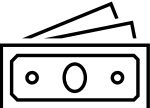
## Total Grants FY 2005-21

\$ 921,921.86 

## Total Grants FYTD 2021

\$ 17,000 

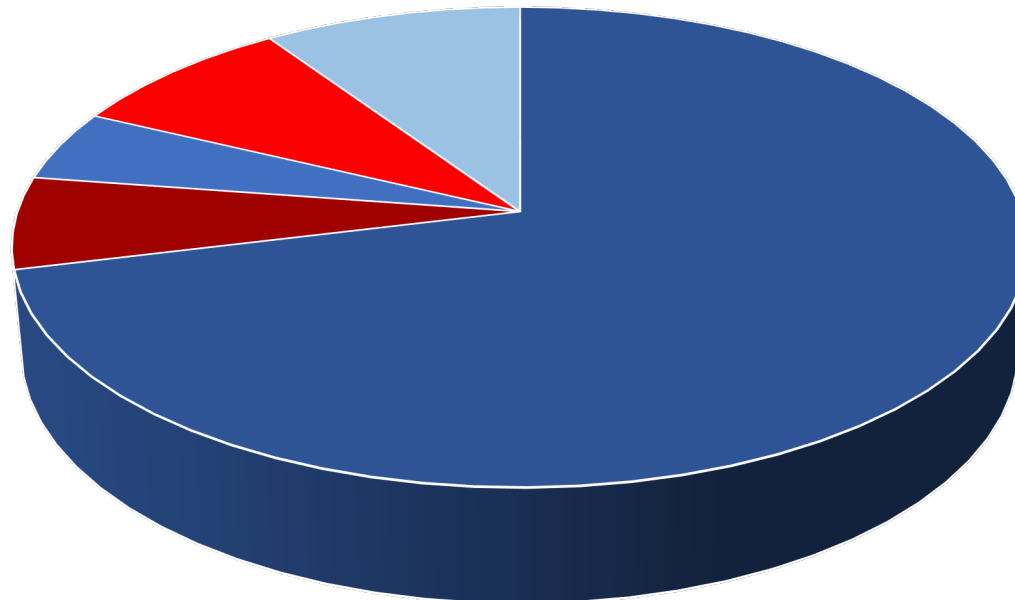
## MFRAP Account Balance

\$ 1,079,441.83 

# DISABLED VETERANS' REAL ESTATE TAX EXEMPTION



1,047 Total Adjudications between  
26 April and 20 May 2022

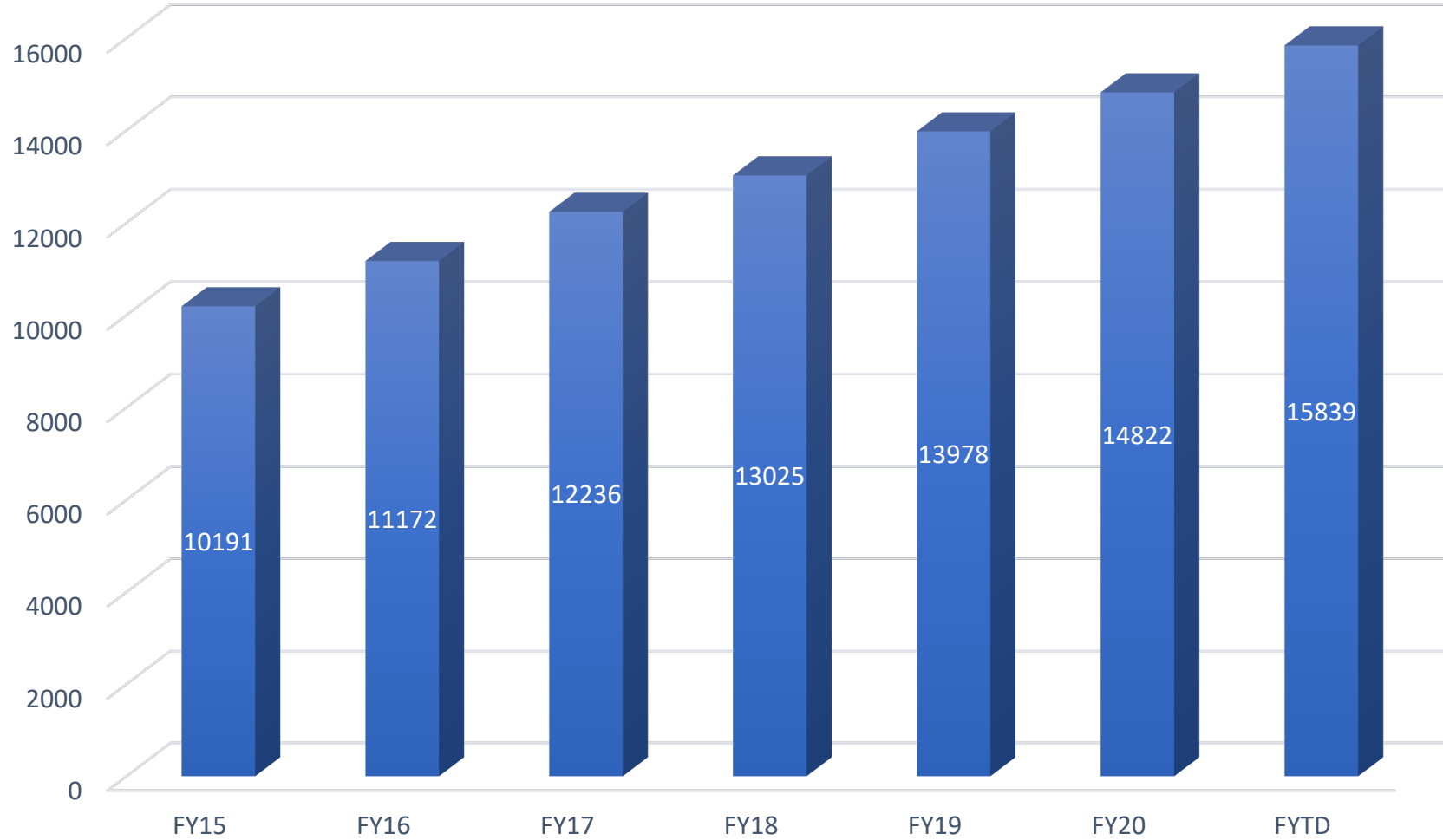


- 745 Approved (71%)
- 65 Denied: Financial Need
- 50 Denied: Ineligible\*
- 88 Removed: No Response
- 99 Removed: Eligibility Change

**\* 50 Applications Ineligible by Reason:**

- 2 – Veteran not rated total and permanent 100% during lifetime
- 16 – Property not owned solely by Veteran or as an estate by the entirety with spouse
- 14 – Veteran did not serve during a period of war or armed conflict
- 1 – Did not occupy property as principal dwelling.
- 2 – Disability not declared to be total or 100% permanent.
- 15 – Veteran did not have a 100% permanent disability due to a future exam.

# DISABLED VETERANS' REAL ESTATE TAX EXEMPTION



As of 20 May 2022

[> community](#) [> commonwealth](#) [> country](#)



## VISN 4 Access – Fiscal Year 2022 Wait Times



Clinics FY22 thru May 10	Number of Appointments	Wait <30 Days	% Wait <30 Days	Average Wait
Mental Health	185,982	177,802	95.9%	4.6
Primary Care	326,860	313,930	96.0%	5.1
Specialty Care	530,127	476,440	90.5%	10.2
Other	400,567	376,397	94.0%	6.3
ALL	1,443,536	1,344,569	93.4%	7.2

Data updated 05/12/2022 with appointment info as of 05/10/2022.

## VISN 4 Access – Current Average Wait Times



VISN 4 Facility	Primary Care		Mental Health Care	
	New Patients	Returning Patients	New Patients	Returning Patients
James E. Van Zandt VAMC	11	3	11	3
Abie Abraham HCC	11	1	14	2
Coatesville VAMC	7	3	8	3
Erie VAMC	12	3	6	2
Lebanon VAMC	6	3	8	3
Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VAMC	19	5	22	4
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System	14 (Hz) 13 (UD)	13 (Hz) 8 (UD)	8 (Hz) 17 (UD)	3 (Hz) 3 (UD)
Wilkes-Barre VAMC	9	3	13	5
Wilmington VAMC	19	10	8	6

Data updated 05/10/2022 with wait times as of 05/07/2022 for the last 30 days.

[accesstocare.va.gov](https://accesstocare.va.gov)

June 2022 Update

> [community](#) > [commonwealth](#) > [country](#)

## VISN 4 Care in the Community



	Care in the Community Consults (Scheduled and Completed)	Non-VA Unique Patients*
FY 18	87,706	62,427
FY 19	101,068	70,376
FY 20	153,506	87,041
FY 21	155,831	85,476
FY 22 (as of 05/11/22)	104,600	71,037

\*Number of unique enrolled Veterans who receive community care at VA expense

Data updated 05/12/2022 with consult info as of 05/11/2022.

NEXT MEETING



**Friday September 9, 2022**  
**at 10:00AM**

**Arrowheads Community Club**  
**Fort Indiantown Gap**  
**Annville, PA 17003**

**\*VISIT PA STATE VETERANS COMMISSION-PA DMVA FOR SVC INFO\***

# State Veterans' Commission Meeting Minutes

April 8, 2022

10:00 AM to 12:17 PM

Arrowheads Community Center, Fort Indiantown Gap

**Call to Order** **Chairman Nicholas Taylor**

The Pennsylvania State Veterans' Commission (SVC) meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM.

### Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Taylor opened the meeting with a moment of silence commemorating National "All is Ours" Day. Let us reflect on the beauty of nature, let us appreciate all we have, and let us share all we have, including for the Veterans of Pennsylvania. Chairman Taylor led a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

### Commission Introductions

Major General (MG) Mark Schindler	The Adjutant General (TAG)
Brigadier General (BG) (PA) Maureen Weigl	Deputy Adjutant General (DAG) for Veterans Affairs
Mr. Nicholas Taylor	SVC Chairman, Commander Catholic War Veterans
Mr. Bernard McDonald	Commander, AMVETS
Mr. William Hines	Commander, Disabled American Veterans
Mr. Samuel Petrovich	Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans
Mr. William Albert	Commander, Blinded Veterans of America
Mr. Justin Slep	President, PA State Association of County Directors of Veterans Affairs
Mr. Robert Heister	President, Military Officers Association of America
Mr. Joseph Chiodo	Commander, Italian American War Veterans
Mr. Larry Googins	President, Vietnam Veterans of America
Mr. Christopher Fidler	Director, Keystone Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America
Mr. David Brady	Commandant, Marine Corps League
Mr. Michael Murphy	Commander, The American Legion
Mr. Philip Arnold	Adjutant, Military Order of the Purple Heart
Mr. James Hogan	Adjutant, The American Legion
Ms. Lisa Kaye	Member-at-Large
Mr. Mark Baylis	Member-at-Large
Mr. Charles Jackson	Member-at-Large
Mr. Michael Brooker	Member-at-Large

### Others Present

Mr. Tim Liezert	VISN-4
BG Laura McHugh	Deputy Adjutant General for Army
BG (Ret) Stephen Radulski	Director Keystone State Challenge Academy
Mr. David Cowgill	VISN 4
Mr. Jeff Cavanaugh	Office of State Senator Katie Muth
Mr. Leonard Johnson	Disabled Veterans of America
Mr. Samuel D. Robinson III	Disabled Veterans of America
Mr. Nate Silcox	Office of State Senator Patrick Stefano

Mr. Joel Mutschler	Director DMVA-PIRO
Mr. Barbara Raymond	Director DMVA-BVH
Mr. Brian Natali	DMVA-PIRO (Programs and Services)
Mr. Barry Koch	DMVA-PIRO (Programs and Services)
Mr. Jeffery King	DMVA-PIRO (Programs and Services)
Mr. Samuel Estrada	DMVA-PPL
Mr. Daniel Dudkiewicz	DMVA-PIRO (Outreach and Reintegration)
Ms. Jennifer Hagaman	PASACDVA-Clinton County
Mr. Tony DiFrancesco	PASACDVA-Dauphin County
Mr. Thomas M. Coreau	PASACDVA-Dauphin County
Mr. Richard Hudzinski	Vietnam Veterans of America
Mr. Carl Curtis	Vietnam Veterans of America
Mr. William Wright	Catholic War Veterans
Mr. Gerry Wright	Catholic War Veterans
Mr. Matt Hollenbach	The American Legion
Ms. Constance Snavelly	Keystone Paralyzed Veterans of America
Ms. Kristi Brawley	Penn State Clearing House for Military Family Readiness
Ms. Janice Gavin	Penn State Clearing House for Military Family Readiness
<b>Award Presentations</b>	<b>MG Schindler</b>
<p>DMVA Certificate of Appreciation awarded to Mr. Leonard Johnson, DAV, for faithful service on the SVC from September 2019 to September 2021. Permanent Orders 33-04, award of the PA Commendation Medal to Mr. Samuel Petrovich, DAV, for meritorious service to the Commonwealth as Chairman of the SVC from October 2018 to December 2021. Permanent Orders 33-01, award of the PA Achievement Medal to Mr. Keith Beebe, MOAA, for outstanding achievement on the SVC from December 2019 to December 2021. Permanent Orders 33-05, award of the PA Meritorious Service Medal to Mr. John Cyprian for meritorious performance of duty as President, PASCDVA, and on the SVC from June 2003 to December 2021. Proclamation from the Governor on Vietnam War Veterans' Day, March 29, to all Vietnam Veterans, accepted by Mr. Larry Googins, President, Vietnam Veterans of America. Proclamation from the Governor on Airborne Hazards and Burn Pit Exposure Awareness Month, accepted by Mrs. Michelle Laird.</p>	
<b>Chairman's Opening Remarks</b>	<b>Chairman Taylor</b>
<p>Thanks to DMVA for allowing me to join in meetings at the department. On February 23rd, in Washington DC, DMVA received an Abraham Lincoln Pillars of Excellence Award from Hon. Denis McDonough, Secretary of VA, for the PA VETConnect program. Job well done for national-level recognition. There has been a change to our recommended designee to the Governor's long-term care council. On March 16th, DMVA held the first of a series of virtual Veterans Townhall meetings, on Veterans Suicide Awareness, with about 65 participants. Upcoming virtual townhalls: 5:00-6:30 on May 18 (Serving Other Veterans), July 13 (Resources for Homeless Veterans), Sep 14 (Veterans' Transportation Issues), Nov 2 (Honoring Veterans for Service and Sacrifice). Contact Joseph Butera, jobutera@pa.gov, for more information. On page 2 of DMVA Digest, notice "Please share with a friend. Register here." The Digest is not just for Veterans, but family members and others as well. On March 29th, honored to go to Bethlehem, PA, as Commander, Catholic War Veterans, to the Notre Dame Ukrainian Church to present over 50 Vietnam Veteran pins.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Questions/Discussion</u></p> <p>None.</p>	
<b>TAG's Opening Remarks</b>	<b>MG Schindler</b>

Referring to slides, PA National Guard deployments remain relatively constant. There are just under 1,000 Soldiers and Airmen deployed. It is a busy year for the Stryker Brigade, they are going to the National Training Center, in California, in November. Next year we will exceed that 1,000-mark. In Fall, 28th Division HQ is mobilizing. We are still doing State Partnership engagements with Lithuania. I will be going over to Lithuania in May to visit. Our long-term care facility missions ended on March 31st. Over the past year we had anywhere from 50-80 people on duty, surging up to 300. Many were on duty for almost two years.

On the Veterans side: In February, I participated with Rep. Ecker on his podcast re SB 248 recognizing Persian Gulf and Global War on Terror Veterans. DMVA also attended the YWCA Homeless Veterans Stand Down in Harrisburg. In March, we met with The American Legion National Commander, Paul Dillard, to talk about how they are working at the national level and with the states. And, also in March, we had an opportunity to speak with Veterans Community Initiatives in Johnstown for their Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day event.

General Weigl and her team have been working hard. She will give an update on their work. Once again, congratulations to the awardees this morning.

Questions/Discussion

None.

**Approval of the February 4, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

**Motion:** Mr. Murphy, TAL, made a motion to approve the minutes.

**Second:** Mr. McDonald, AMVETS, seconded the motion.

The body agreed; motion carried. Minutes approved.

**Reading of Official and Other Communications**

**Chairman Taylor**

Received a nomination for Delaware Valley Veterans Home Hall of Fame. To be discussed in New Business.

Questions/Discussion

None.

**Deputy Adjutant General-VA Remarks**

**BG Weigl**

Thanks to all of you for your PA VetConnect support from the SVC, VSOs, County Directors, and GAC-VS. Thank you all for that. On March 29th, I had the honor of attending a Vietnam Veterans event in Pittsburgh. It was also Women's History Month, so I also had the opportunity to recognize 20 amazing women Veterans from PA. There are 66,000 female Veterans in PA, eventually we will get around to all of them. I also want to introduce Mrs. Michelle Laird who accepted the Governor's Burn Pit proclamation. She is the wife of Scott Laird, PA National Guardsman, staunch advocate of Burn Pit Exposure Veterans. Scott retired in 2021, sadly he passed away from cancer on November 21, 2021. Michelle, thank you for your service, thank you for sharing Scott, and thank you for your advocacy.

Questions/Discussion

None.

**DMVA Bureau of Veterans Homes**

**Ms. Raymond**

I have been in BVH for about 14 years now, so I do know many of you. Recently moved into the Director role. COVID is still our biggest challenge. Currently, we have two small outbreaks at Delaware Valley and Hollidaysburg. Residents are stable. We are offering boosters to residents and staff. Our residents did very well with vaccinations. We are under a vaccine mandate for staff in the homes – they must be vaccinated or have an approved ADA or religious accommodation. We are well above 90% and in compliance. Our census is a big

challenge because of staffing. Actively recruiting for all nursing, housekeeping and dietary staff. We are going to job fairs, offering increased rates, unfortunately we cannot offer bonuses like other homes. Maintaining our numbers to provide safe care, but to increase our overall census we need to increase staff compliment. We have a new Commandant, Cheri Specht, and new DON, Deborah Cubero, in Erie. They will do a great job. We will be returning to in-person Advisory Council meetings. Monitoring Easter and Mother's Day holidays closely, keeping positive outbreaks in mind. We are excited to move forward with Veterans Homes Week, starting June 12th with many activities. Construction-wise, in Erie, we have a lot of renovations: expansions to the dining room, therapy gym, and staff breakrooms. At Gino Merli, in Scranton, we are completing a roofing project.

Questions/Discussion

BG Weigl: Joan Nissley has created a social media campaign for CNA staffing. Please follow our sites and share them with your organizations.

**DMVA Bureau of PIRO**

**Mr. Mutschler**

We have been working on collaborative effort. We have started an open forum every Monday with county staff, for training and a forum for questions. We usually have about 50-55 participants on those calls. We are also participating in bi-weekly American Legion VSO calls. We are open anytime, anywhere you want us to join. Head over to the DMVA website, click on Veterans Affairs and Mobile Outreach Team. You can always call us, but we like to have the information on that form. I will have Greg send out the email address. We have been reaching out to corporations like Hershey, PNC, and others, to drum up support for the Veterans Trust Fund but also to connect with their Veteran employees. We are also having regular meetings with the veterans' service organizations in the VSO Grant program. We are excited about the good interaction. Lastly, we have a short staffing situation in Pittsburgh right now. Thanks to Brian Natali and others for covering down out there while we work through the hiring process.

Questions/Discussion

None.

**DMVA Policy, Planning, and Legislation**

**Mr. Estrada**

HB 1868, re Professional Licensure Requirements, referred to Senate Appropriations Committee. There is a provision in that bill provides military-civilian occupational crosswalk. We have flagged that for Department of State. HB 995, re codification of PA VetConnect, is on Senate calendar for April 11. HB 1421, re Burials for National Guard members, cleared the House in June 2021 and awaiting consideration in Senate. HB 491, from Rep. Boback, Veterans Benefit Payment Exclusion, referred to Senate Appropriations. Sen. Mastriano's bill re free fishing licenses for Veterans, introduced January 21st. HB 27, from Rep. Boback, re transfer of \$1M from American Rescue Plan for VSOs, and another bill re transfer from American Rescue Plan to VTF. There is an additional bill not on the slide, HB 1972, from Rep. Boback, re Community-based Palliative Care. House VAEP committee meeting April 12th, 0900.

Federal legislation: HR 3967 passed the House in March re Toxic Exposures, Presumptions. Established an advisory committee to determine presumptive service connections.

See read-ahead package for upcoming House and Senate calendar dates.

Questions/Discussion

None.

**Approval of State Veterans' Programs Reports**

**Motion:** Mr. Brady, MCL, made a motion to approve the programs report.



**Second:** Mr. Hines, DAV, seconded the motion.

The body agreed; motion carried. Programs reports approved.

**VHA, VISN-4**

**Mr. Liezert**

Leadership announcements: Sharon Coyle, new Medical Center Director at Butler. Pittsburgh Deputy Director recently upgraded to SES position. Prachi Asher upgraded to SES in Deputy Director position. Market assessments were made public in *Federal Register* on March 14th, a requirement of the VA Mission Act of 2018 that VA proceed with capital assessment or strategic plan. Many facilities are wonderful but built during an era when our health care was provided differently than today. What does VA health care 2035 look like? What does access look like, especially after the pandemic? Now it is anytime-anywhere with emerging technologies, like telehealth. To what degree will home-based care become prevalent? How will that be managed? This is an opportunity for an initial run at the answers. This is the beginning of a process. Two years of review of data generated by the VA, then to a commission confirmed by Congress. The commission will be about a yearlong process of conducting their own hearings, interviews, and reviewing data. We say, “yes we agree,” “no we do not agree,” or we may come up with our own recommendations. Those results will be forwarded to Congress and the president. Any results from this process are likely 10-15 years away.

I would like to congratulate DMVA on the great recognition. I have been with VA for 35 years, this is my eighth assignment, and I can tell you that collaboration in PA is different and better.

There are 18 networks throughout the country. VISN-4 is the highest network in Veterans’ trust score.

COVID is still with us. We are monitoring the new variant along the Eastern seaboard, expected to move west. We are especially monitoring the passing of virus through asymptomatic carriers. We remain fully masked in our medical centers. We will increase our response as prevalence increases: checkpoints, screening, etc. The fourth booster is now available to those over 50 or with health complications.

Some significant changes to the Caregiver Support update launched a few years ago. We are taking some actions immediately. We are halting any discharge of legacy applicants or participants that were slated for October 2022. We are initiating a rulemaking process to ensure the eligibility requirements are refined to Congress’s intent when they wrote the law. And we are also leveraging internal expertise out of VBA to think about how to execute this benefit.

Questions/Discussion

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: About the asset inventory submitted March 31st, is the President’s Commission going to solicit input from the states? How might the SVC be useful?

Mr. Liezert: Those pathways have not been developed yet. We have been told they are going to conduct field hearings and assessments, engaging organizations, veterans’ groups, etc. So, while the pathways have not been worked out yet, I think the answer to your question is yes.

**Committee Reports**

**VSO Grant Committee**

**Mr. Petrovich**

Chairman Taylor: I asked Mr. Foster to consider changing the name of the committee. Bruce cannot be with us today. Committee has agreed upon “VSO Grant Committee” as it more accurately describes the purpose of the committee.

Mr. Petrovich (for Mr. Foster): There have been quarterly meetings with DMVA. Thanks to Chip Gilliland and Brian Natali for what they are doing in the meetings. Thanks again to Brian for the report. We look forward to going to Harrisburg and knocking on doors to try and get an increase in the grant from the legislature.

Questions/Discussion

None.

**RETX Committee**

**Mr. Slep**

No report currently. No comments have been brought to my attention.

Questions/Discussion

Mr. Petrovich: How many Veterans are receiving this tax relief?

Mr. Mutschler, DMVA: 15,661

**Legislative Committee**

**Mr. Jackson**

The committee received no input from other committees or requests to review anything, so had no meeting. Two issues need your consideration. The first issue relates to the Veterans' Transportation network. The SVC should work with MG Schindler on out-year budgeting, next budget cycle, to increase DMVA budget line for transportation network and salaries involved. DMVA should use the SVC and its members to address legislators about increasing the funding. The second issue is a request to modify 51 Pa. C.S. Ch. 17 to capture needed changes to that title. It appears the House VAEP wants to include our proposal to HB 1978 and the SVC position is that revision to 5117 is a first step. If it gets into 1978, it will die. We request that PPL work with the executive director of House VAEP to keep these actions separate. I do not intend to make motions on these matters. The intent is just to keep the ball rolling.

About the Veterans Justice Project, I call on Mr. Hudzinski to bring us up to date.

Mr. Hudzinski: Since last meeting, VVA met with general counsel for Sen. Browne's office. He is the prime sponsor of the bill we are trying to work. We are on the fourth draft. It was recommended in last meeting, that the language be broadened to all citizens appearing before the courts in cases where PTSD and TBI are involved. As soon as you open the door, others will start asking. Something that came up which affects this process: there was a Constitutional Convention in 1967-68 period. Article 5 section 10(c) of the constitution gives Supreme Court authority to overrule any law that interferes with its rulemaking authority. There were sections we were quoting and alluding to that were overruled by the Supreme Court. This is a long-term process.

Questions/Discussions

Chairman Taylor: Can you define "out-years" for me?

Mr. Jackson: Next budget cycle. The Transportation Network budget has not been changed in at least 5 years.

**Pensions/Relief/Grave Marking/State Military Cemetery Committee**

**Mr. Googins**

thank you for the Vietnam Veterans proclamation from the Governor. We have Memorial Day coming up. I have noticed issues with Veterans making their final wishes known or having their final wishes honored. I think we need to work on getting Veterans to talk about their final wishes. We just need to get our next-of-kin taken care of instead of having them come to us, after a Veteran has passed away, asking us what to do. I will cover that under my "Pensions and Relief hat," if you agree.

Questions/Discussions

Chairman Taylor: I appreciate your thoughts. I think it is a topic that is related to your committee. Please, think about this and we look forward to your recommendations. I think it is related and important.

[Unnamed]: What does the generation of Vietnam Veterans want us to remember about them as a Nation when they are gone? What are their last wishes?

Mr. Googins: It is a difficult subject. Press on until nobody is left. Second, record what VVA has done since 1980 and pass it on. And then, what does VVA do with its power of attorney for veterans? Those are issues within the organization.

[Unnamed]: But, how as a nation are we going to honor such great men? How do Vietnam Veterans want to be remembered? Just curiosity.

Mr. Googins: They just want to be remembered as sacrificing their lives and families because they did what the country asked. That is something to continue talking about though. All the organizations talk about this.

Chairman Taylor: If you can take that under advisement too, it is something we would like to hear more about in the future.

**Women Veterans Committee**

**Ms. Kaye**

I have been busy bringing members onto the committee. I have invited Constance Snavely as well as Marilyn Kelly-Cavotta, Director of Veteran & Military Affairs at Moravian College, and Jenny Pacanowski, Director of Women Veterans Empowered & Thriving. We are all like-minded and I am excited to have them on board. March was incredibly busy. The Veterans' Roundtable was a great idea to get everybody on the northeast side of the state together. I went to SCI Dallas, Veterans Service Unit. I look forward to visiting women's only unit in Muncie. I also tapped into a Facebook Live event, the "I Am Not Visible" campaign in DC. It was a great discussion about what we can do for female veterans. There are things we need to address for female Veterans in Pennsylvania.

Questions/Discussions

Chairman Taylor: I will get with you later with those names to issue formal appointment letters and give some guidance.

**Veteran Health Committee**

**Mr. Baylis**

I am working with an organization that does intelligence collection with a handheld device. They have put together a mental health tool for the device. It is a 9-minute test and they have given me 300 tests. Right now, I am looking for 296 more people to take it. Mr. Hines, DAV, has agreed to join the committee and I am looking for others.

Questions/Discussions

Chairman Taylor: If anyone can stay and help Mark with the tests today, please do. Let's see if we can get some data.

**Governance Committee**

**Mr. Booker**

Chairman Taylor: As of this morning, I think I have found the last and final member of your committee. I can get with you afterwards.

Mr. Booker: I have been feeling like a committee of one. It will be good to have some team members.

Questions/Discussions

None.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Chairman Taylor: I appointed Mr. Murphy, TAL, as SVC designee to the Long-term Care Council. DMVA passed it on, and the Governor's Office came back and said they are looking for someone who can obligate to a four-year term. I am renominating Mr. Baylis because of his position on the Commission and in his work life.

As mentioned, we do have an application for induction to the Delaware Valley Home (DVH) Hall of Fame. I hope you had a chance to look at that application in the read-ahead. This is a posthumous appointment.

### **Nomination of Mr. Saul Stark to the DVH Hall of Fame**

**Motion:** Mr. McDonald, AMVETS, made a motion to approve the nomination.

**Second:** Mr. Slep, PASACDVA, seconded the motion.

The body agreed; motion carried. Appointment approved.

### **Keystone ChalleNGe Academy Overview**

**Mr. Radulski**

Keystone ChalleNGe Academy exists to serve disconnected teens. That drives our service. This is a 22-week volunteer residential academy at FTIG and 20-month post-residential mentoring phase. This is a NGB program since 1993. There are 40 academies across 31 states and territories. The Adjutant General signs a cooperative agreement with NGB to administer the program. We are supervised by an Advisory Council: 6 members of the legislature, PA Department of Education, DAG-Army, DAG-Air, and TAG as an ex-officio member. We meet quarterly. You can read about the mission in our read-ahead.

It is a tuition-free, quasi-military academic environment. Of the eight core components, we focus on academic excellence, leadership and followership, and responsible citizenship. There are also 40 hours of service to the community. Life coping and job skills, physical fitness. At the end of 22 weeks, they walk out with a GED or credits on return to high school. The program is voluntary. Cadets cannot have felonies and must commit to being drug free. It is not a military feeder system, but a viable option for disconnected teens who want to succeed.

Where you can help: We match cadets with community-based mentors. We want to create those connections with service organizations, churches, etc. We also want you to put the word out to encourage teens to come to the academy. And we are broadcasting employment opportunities. We have a great staff already, but we need Cadre Team Leaders, to provide monitoring, training, and coaching for the cadets. These are Commonwealth employee positions. We are also looking for teachers for all major core subjects.

### Questions/Discussions

Chairman Taylor: Perhaps we could consider having our September meeting in conjunction with the ribbon cutting so the SVC can meet and then come over and support you.

### **Good of the Order**

Please join us on May 19th, beginning at 6:00 am, at Boxcar Café, for free coffee and donuts sponsored by Catholic War Veterans.

### **Announcements**

Chairman Taylor: Agenda items for the next meeting: We will talk about the PWVC transportation letter, and I will put Mr. Jackson's suggestions for out-year budget discussions on the agenda for the next meeting as well.

### **Next Meeting**

Friday, June 3, 2022, 10:00 AM  
Forum: Arrowheads Community Center, FIG

The minutes of this meeting are respectfully submitted by:

BG (PA) Maureen Weigl  
Deputy Adjutant General  
Veterans Affairs

DRAFT



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**May 19, 2022**

## **Twelve Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Employees Receive Governor's Awards for Excellence**

**Annville, PA** – On May 20, 2022, Governor Tom Wolf presented 12 members of the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) with the Governor's Awards for Excellence for their work to improve the lives of Pennsylvania's nearly 800,000 veterans, the fourth largest veteran population in the nation.

The awards recognize these commonwealth employees for exemplary job performance or service that reflects initiative, leadership, innovation, and increased efficiency. The DMVA 12 employees are among 50 award recipients across 12 agencies honored for their exceptional accomplishments in 2021.

"I am so proud of our twelve employees who have earned this prestigious award. Our dedicated workforce strives daily to improve the lives of veterans and their families. Today they are recognized for their excellence," said Maj. Gen. Mark Schindler, Pennsylvania's Adjutant General and head of the DMVA. "This diverse group of employees exemplify our mission of serving those that served. Congratulations and well done!"

More information to include the names of these outstanding employees can be found at: [Twelve Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Employees To Receive Governor's Awards for Excellence](#)

Learn more about the DMVA by visiting us online at [www.dmva.pa.gov](http://www.dmva.pa.gov) or follow us at [www.facebook.com/padmva](https://www.facebook.com/padmva) or [www.twitter.com/padmva](https://www.twitter.com/padmva).

**Summary of Activity from 3/26/2022 to 5/20/2022**

<b>APPS APPROVED</b>	<b>745</b>
NEW	418
REVIEW	327

<b>APPS DENIED</b>	<b>302</b>
Financial Need	65
Ineligible	50
No Response	88
Change of Eligibility	99

<b>HH Over Income</b>	<b>99</b>
NEW	49
REVIEW	50

<b>13%</b>
12%
15%

<b>APPS CREATED</b>	<b>719</b>
<b>TOTAL ADJUDICATED</b>	<b>1047</b>

Delaware Valley Veterans' Home, Philadelphia PA - Peter Ojeda - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds [Auth Beds Less Pending Cert.]	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Pending VA Certification	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	141	100	89	11	41	89%	2	1	2	42	8
Memory Care	30	30	26	4	0	87%	0	1	2	22	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>17</b>
Non-Veteran Census Percent						5%					
Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center, Scranton PA - Kathleen Ambrose - Acting Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	156	156	106	50	0	68%	4	1	3	19	22
Memory Care	40	40	29	11	0	73%	1	0	0	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>27</b>
Non-Veteran Census Percent						10%					
Hollidaysburg Veterans' Home, Hollidaysburg PA - Sam Dunkle - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	231	231	136	95	0	59%	9	3	5	11	3
Memory Care	26	26	15	11	0	58%	1	0	0	0	0
Personal Care	167	167	76	91	0	46%	3	0	1	4	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>
Non-Veteran Census Percent						18%					
Pennsylvania Soldiers' & Sailors' Home, Erie PA - Cheri Spacht - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	75	75	60	15	0	80%	3	0	2	12	7
Memory Care	32	32	19	13	0	59%	0	0	0	6	5
Personal Care	100	100	50	50	0	50%	0	0	0	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>
Non-Veteran Census Percent						12%					
Southeastern Veterans' Center, Spring City PA - Brian Gula - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	208	208	124	84	0	60%	13	1	3	29	16
Memory Care	30	30	30	0	0	100%	1	0	0	23	5
Personal Care	54	54	34	20	0	63%	0	0	0	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>26</b>
Non-Veteran Census Percent						6%					
Southwestern Veterans' Center, Pittsburgh PA -Richard Adams - Commandant											
Level of Care	Authorized Beds	Available Beds Equal Auth. Beds	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Infrastructure Beds on Hold	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	196	196	113	83	0	58%	1	1	3	11	9
Memory Care	40	40	32	8	0	80%	0	0	1	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>
Non-Veteran Census Percent						16%					
Summary / Pennsylvania Bureau of Veterans' Homes											
Veteran Census/Events	Auth Beds	Available Beds [Auth Beds Less Pending Cert.]	Beds Assigned	Beds Vacant	Pending VA Certification	Percentage Filled	Admissions	Discharges	Expirations	Waiting List Veteran/Placing	Waiting List Non-Veteran/Placing
Nursing Care	1007	966	628	338	41	65%	32	7	18	124	65
Memory Care	198	198	151	47	0	76%	3	1	3	55	26
Personal Care	321	321	160	161	0	50%	3	0	1	12	11
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,526</b>	<b>1,485</b>	<b>939</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>102</b>
Veteran Status: Non-Veteran/Veteran	Total Non-Vets (f)	Male Non-Vet	% Non Vets (f)	Total Vets (f)	% Vets (f)	Male Vets	Total Male (f)	Female Non-Vets	Female Vets	Total Female (f)	VH Totals (f)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>831</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>789</b>	<b>796</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>939</b>





# PENNSYLVANIA WAR VETERANS COUNCIL, INC.



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March 28, 2022

To: Chairman, Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission  
cc: Majority and Minority Chairs of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees  
Majority and Minority Chairs of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees  
Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor  
[sent via Email only]

Subject: Appropriate Disabled Americans Veterans Transportation Line Item Going Forward

Mr. Chairman:

We ask the State Veterans' Commission to aid us in inquiring into what DMVA submitted for the Disabled Americans Veterans Transportation line-item appropriation (aka Veterans Transportation Network/VTN budget line) for the coming fiscal year 2022-2023, and how it arrived at its submission, as the Executive Budget has again shown no increase in the face of mounting operating and replacement costs, despite the donations of individuals and veterans organizations supplementing these costs. It is our contention that such funding is ultimately working against ensuring a robust and healthy transportation network for needed VA healthcare services.

As the commission should know, the grantee, the Pennsylvania State Department of the Disabled Veterans of America (DAV), and the commission are not consulted in the formulation of the VTN budget line. We understand this might be because of regulatory prohibitions, but in this instance such a budgeting methodology is having a deleterious effect. Therefore, our intent is not to point an accusing finger, but to find the appropriate action agent for change in the Administration.

To review, the state has substantially funded the procurement of the 130 vans in the program. More are needed as a result of the aging veterans population and also as a result of the success of the Act 66 of 2007 program in getting more veterans enrolled in VA healthcare. VA healthcare often depends upon the use of these vans to transport veterans to its services – especially for those of an advanced nature, such as critical cancer treatments, surgeries, dentistry and ophthalmology.

However, thirty-four of those vehicles (26% of the entire fleet) presently have a mileage reading over 100,000 – many well over. Their continued use needed questioning during the budget formulation process. Federal and state-owned vehicles would normally and routinely be replaced at this mileage juncture for this class of vehicle. All are over 7 years in age (2005 to 2015 models), another typical replacement standard.

Thus, in an era where additional vans are being required to meet the demand for services, something more must be done to deal the mounting replacement issue. The estimated cost for replacing 34 vehicles would be \$1,201,356 at today's purchase price agreement with Ford Motor Company (which has a national discount arrangement with the DAV). The financial contributions of others, to include the provisioning of Hospital Service Coordinators, are already discounted from this figure. The continuing line-item allocation of \$336,000 does not suffice to solve an imposing problem soon enough. An increase is needed.



Consequently, we petition the State Veterans' Commission to investigate the matter, as it is authorized to do. We believe that if the Administration is made more properly aware of the problem, it would act to solve it. We will continue to approach the General Assembly, but our efforts have been thus far unsuccessful as they are routinely dependent on Administration advice on such matters.

Point of Contact for further information and discussion: Robert Gray, Tel: 717-774-0707, Email: [rl\\_gray@hotmail.com](mailto:rl_gray@hotmail.com).

Sincerely yours,

James Hogan  
Secretary

Attachments  
as



DAV Van Transportation Network (VTN) Update

Altoona VAMC:

2005 over 100,000

2007 over 120,000

2011 over 120,000

2015 over 120,000

2011 over 140,00

We have 34 vans with mileage between 100,000 and 200,270 and 130,000

Butler VAMC:

2010 over 100,000

2011 over 100,000

2015 over 110,000

Coatesville VAMC:

2010 over 100,000

2010 over 100,000

2007 over 110,000

2007 over 140,000

Erie VAMC:

2014 over 100,000

2013 over 110,000

2013 over 110,000

2014 over 130,000



**Lebanon VAMC:**

2011 over 120,000

**Pittsburgh VAMC:**

2013 over 100,000

2014 over 110,000

2012 over 120,000

2014 over 120,000

2006 over 130,000

2013 over 130,000

2012 over 140,000

2012 actual 161,620

2013 actual 162,718

2009 actual 165,515

2012 actual 167,717

2007 actual 169,236

2010 actual 170,346

2013 actual 173,874

2007 actual 200,270

**Wilkes-Barre VAMC**

2011 over 100,000

2008 over 110,000

Altoona VAMC

2002 over 100,000

2007 over 120,000

2011 over 120,000

2012 over 120,000

2011 over 140,000

Butler VAMC

2010 over 100,000

2011 over 100,000

2012 over 110,000

Coshocton VAMC

2010 over 100,000

2010 over 100,000

2007 over 110,000

2007 over 140,000

Edinburg VAMC

2001 over 100,000

2013 over 110,000

2013 over 110,000

2014 over 130,000



**TOTALS:**

7 Vans with over 100,000 2010-2014

7 Vans with over 110,000 2005-2015

6 Vans with over 120,000 2007-2015

3 Vans with over 130,000 2006-2014

3 Vans with over 140,000 2007-2012

8 Vans between 161,620-200,270 2007-2013

We have 34 vans with mileage between 100,000 and 200,270 and age 2005-2015.

**Analysis:**

The average 2022 cost of a van is \$35,334. Should we replace all of the aged/high mileage vans the cost would be \$1,201,356.

**Summary of Current Applications (Exempt)**

Count	No Activity	Review Process Started	Review App Received	New Apps Pending
15839	15433	376	30	199

**Summary of Activity from 03/26/2022 to 05/20/2022**

<b>Apps Created : 719</b>	
New	440
Review:	279
<b>Apps Approved :745</b>	
New	418
Review	327
Apps Denied Financial Need:	65
Apps Denied (Ineligible):	50
Apps Removed from Exempt List (No Response):	88
Apps Removed from Exempt List (Eligibility Changed):	99

**Summary of Ineligible Reason**

Reason	Count
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that the veteran did not have a total and/or 100% permanent disability during their lifetime.	2
The property for which you claim exemption is not owned solely by you, or as an estate by the entirety with your spouse.	16
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that the veteran did not serve during a period of war or armed conflict.	14
You do not occupy the property for which you have claimed exemption as your principal dwelling.	1
Your disability has not been declared by the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs to be a total or 100% permanent disability.	2
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs stated that you have a future exam , therefore, your disability has not been rated as total or 100% permanent.	15



## **VISN 4 Update**

### **1. Leadership Update**

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Denise Boehm as the new VISN 4 Chief Nursing Officer effective May 22, 2022. Denise has been serving as the acting director at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System since November 2021. She has also served as the associate director for patient care services and nurse executive at the VA medical center in Washington, D.C., since September 2017, where she was actively involved in the District of Columbia Hospital Association and the revitalization of the local chapter of the American Organization of Nurse Leaders.

Don Koenig returned from his detail to VA Central office where he led the Integrated Veterans Care transformation implementation and resumed his role as Director of VA Pittsburgh on May 2.

Ricky Harris was selected as the new Erie Associate Director and his appointment was effective on May 8. Mr. Harris has been serving as the Chief of Medical Administration Service (MAS) at the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center in Jackson, Mississippi since February 2020. A seasoned administrator and change management practitioner, Harris led efficient and key performance improvements in all areas at MAS – gaining distinction across the Veterans Health Administration and the SouthCentral VA Health Care Network.

We continue to recruit for a new chief of staff for Butler and Coatesville.

Derek Coughenour, Associate Director at Altoona continues to be detailed to the Associate Director at Philadelphia while Pat O’Kane is being detailed outside the VISN. Shaun Shenk also continues to serve as the Acting Associate Director in Altoona.

### **2. Patient Experience Update**

Nationally, VA’s trust score over the last 90 days was 90. In VISN 4, our trust score over the last 90 days was 92.7, which continues to be the highest of any VISN in the nation. The top compliment themes over the last 90 days were interactions with staff, quality of care, cleanliness of facility, and satisfaction with specialty care.

### **3. VA Health Chat now available in VISN 4!**

The VISN 4 Health Chat app is now available for Veterans who currently receive care through VISN 4. Veterans who are actively enrolled in VISN 4 medical centers and clinics can use the app to chat with a VISN 4 Clinical Contact Center Nurse. Nurses are available to chat from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday (except on federal holidays). This web and mobility technology solution allows Veteran to connect to an RN via chat to discuss minor health care concerns; target audience is for Veterans who have speech and/or hearing impairments and those who prefer the ease of chat over a phone call. VA Health Chat is not meant for use during medical emergencies. A link to learn more and to download the app is included below.

<https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-chat>

### **4. FY 23 VA Budget Submission**

[VA released its FY 23 budget submission on March 28.](#) The FY 23 budget submission makes critical investments in VA so it can continue to provide the care and benefits America's Veterans, families, survivors, caregivers have earned and deserve.

The Department of Veterans Affairs' total 2023 request is \$300.2 billion, a 10.5% increase above 2022. This includes a discretionary request of \$139.1 billion (with medical care collections), a 18.7% increase above 2022. The 2023 mandatory funding request totals \$161.0 billion, an increase of \$6.5 billion or 4.2% above 2022.

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, VA employees have ensured that VA did not weaken or slow down. VA got stronger and took care of Veterans when they needed it most. This budget will ensure that VA takes care of the people who have balanced the challenges of life during the pandemic and recruit additional staff to support Veterans.

The 2023 request supports 435,840 FTE, an increase of over 28,000 from the 2022 estimated level. The majority of the increase, nearly 26,000 FTE, is in medical care, which will allow VA to meet continued growth for VA provided health care services, particularly due to COVID-19-related deferred care returning in 2023.

The 2023 budget also assumes a 4.6% increase in pay for civilian employees in calendar year 2023, which VA estimates will cost \$1.8 billion above the 2022 baseline. The 2022 budget included a 2.9% pay raise.

At a cost of approximately \$48.1 million in 2023, the budget continues to fund the increased Federal employee minimum wage of \$15 an hour. This helps housekeeping aids, food service workers and many others who are the backbone of the VA.



Additionally, the RAISE Act, included in the recently enacted 2022 Omnibus funding bill will empower VA to pay employees what they are worth. The budget supports the cost of this important and much appreciated legislation, estimated at approximately \$10.4 million in 2023.

## **5. Military Environmental Exposures**

### **Rare Cancer Presumptions Proposed Rule**

The Department of Veterans Affairs [intends to propose adding certain rare respiratory cancers](#) to the list of presumed service-connected disabilities in relation to military environmental exposure to particulate matter.

VA determined through a focused review of scientific and medical evidence there is biologic plausibility between airborne hazards, specifically particulate matter, and carcinogenesis of the respiratory tract, and that the unique circumstances of these rare cancers warrant a presumption of service connection.

VA intends to focus its rule on the rare respiratory cancers above in Veterans who served any amount of time in the Southwest Asia theater of operations and other locations. VA will invite and consider public comments as part of this process.

### **Military Environmental Exposure Respiratory Condition Presumptions**

For the very first time, VA is also granting presumptively granting military environmental exposures claims to Gulf War Veterans—specifically to those who suffer from Asthma, Sinusitis, and Rhinitis as a result of their service.

This is good news, especially for the 19,773 Veterans whose claims have already been processed. As of March 21, 2022, over 14,000 of these claims have been granted, which represents a 73.4% grant rate.

This is just the start. VA is seeking every avenue possible to develop additional processes where a presumptive can be determined in a more expedient and holistic manner for Veterans.

VA is also proactively implementing provisions of the William M. Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (Public Law 116-283), adding three conditions to the list for Vietnam-era Veterans presumptively associated with exposure to herbicide agents, more commonly known as Agent Orange. Those conditions are bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism.

As of March 20, 2022, over 35,000 of these claims have been processed, with over \$336 million in retroactive benefits awarded to Veterans and survivors.

## **6. Veterans and Families Access to Voting Rights**

[VA unveiled a series of measures](#), March 24, promoting greater access to voter information for Veterans and their families as part of the department's proposed designation as a voter registration agency under the [National Voter Registration Act](#).

In accordance with [Executive Order 14019: Promoting Access to Voting](#), these steps are part of VA's "whole health" approach to care, ensuring Veterans and their families are able to exercise the right to vote which Veterans fought and served to protect.

VA is providing assistance with the voting process for tens of thousands of inpatients and residents at our hospitals, nursing homes and treatment centers, along with homebound Veterans and their caregivers. This is a major undertaking as VA expands this effort, putting voting access right at the fingertips of all Veterans who may need it.

By summer 2022, VA plans to seek designation, by state officials in six states, as a voter registration agency under NVRA and to launch a pilot voter assistance program at VA facilities in those states — with an eye to the geographic and demographic diversity of the Veteran population.

## **7. Caregiver Support Update**

Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregiver (PCAFC)

As of March 22, 2022, VA is reviewing and examining the current Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) eligibility criteria.

VA will continue to complete transitional reassessments of legacy participants, legacy applicants, and their family caregivers. Any family caregiver eligible for an increase in caregiver benefits will receive them. Legacy participants, legacy applicants and their family caregivers may decline the reassessment; however, no increase in benefits can be provided without the completion of a reassessment.

VA will not discharge or decrease any support to legacy participants, legacy applicants and their family caregivers, based on reassessment, to include monthly stipends paid to primary family caregivers before the current eligibility criteria are examined.

While VA conducts a review and examination of the current PCAFC eligibility criteria, legacy participants, legacy applicants and their family caregivers will remain enrolled in PCAFC and continue to receive support and services under PCAFC, unless revoked or discharged for a reason unrelated to reassessment.

Staff continue to complete Wellness Contacts every 120 days with current program participants.

New applications continue to be received. These are processed in a timely manner.

As part of the VA MISSION Act, Phase II of program expansion will occur in October 2022, expanding the program to include family caregivers of eligible Veterans from *all eras* who were seriously injured in the line of duty.

In addition to the VHA Clinical Review Process, there are additional appeal options for Veterans and caregivers. The Caregiver Support Line (CSL) (1-855-260-3274) can assist Veterans and caregivers with navigating these additional options and with providing information about filing a review or appeal.

#### Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS)

VISN 4 Facilities are continuing to develop, implement, and enhance services and education for caregivers.

Caregiver Support Program staff, VA providers and professionals have received training in the Campaign for Inclusive Care, which engages caregivers as part of the Veteran's care team.

Family caregivers of Veterans who aren't eligible for PCAFC can still receive support and resources through PGCSS.

### **8. Connected Care Update**

VA: Health and Benefits Mobile App: The Veterans Experience Office (VEO) and Office of Information and Technology (OIT) joined forces to create the new VA Health and Benefits mobile app. The Office of Connected Care has been a key partner in making this app a reality as well. Since its launch on July 13, 2021, more than 300,000 Veterans have downloaded it on their iOS devices from the Apple App Store and their Android devices from the Google Play Store. The app aggregates many of VA's online health and benefits tools, including some My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet features. With VA: Health and Benefits App, Veterans can:

- Complete health care and benefits transactions.
- Update their VA.gov profile account information.
- Check on claims and appeals status, and upload documents.
- Download VA documents, like VA vaccine records and the Benefit Summary and Service Verification Letter.
- View and cancel health care appointments and add them to their phone's calendar.
- Securely message their health care team.

More features will be added to the app in the coming months, such as the ability to request prescription refills, view pending (and request new) health care appointments, and manage disability compensation, education, and pension payments. A link to download the new VA Health and Benefits mobile app is included below.

**My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet Sign-In Process:** The implementation of the new My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet sign-in process has been temporarily postponed based on feedback and did not 'go live' as originally stated on April 11, 2022. The National My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet Program Office continues to move forward with the unified sign-in process and a new target date for implementation has yet to be announced. As a reminder, the new sign-in process is part of President Biden's Executive Order for the Department of Veterans Affairs to increase cyber security and protect Veterans online information. Multifactor authentication is being added to the sign-in process in order to verify a Veteran's identity. The new 'Sign-In' offers additional benefits and adds an extra layer of security for Veterans, but there will be some initial unfamiliarity.

Once Veterans 'Sign-In', they will be redirected to the new VA sign-in page. My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet users will need to choose how they wish to sign in to their account.

### **Closing**

In closing, I'd like to thank you for your continued support of VISN 4. Please let me know if you have any questions.

**APPLICATION FOR INDUCTION INTO THE HALL OF FAME**

**PURPOSE:** The Hall of Fame is established to recognize and honor achievements of outstanding Veterans who have completed honorable active service.

**1. NOMINEE'S INFORMATION**

TODAYS DATE: July 31, 2021

**APPLICANT NAME:** Marine Staff Sergeant Bernard Paul Zurawski  
**ADDRESS:** [REDACTED]  
**CITY, STATE:** [REDACTED]  
**COUNTY OF RESIDENCE:** Allegheny County  
**TELEPHONE:** [REDACTED]  
**BRANCH OF SERVICE:** United States Marine Corps  
**DATES OF SERVICE:** March 4, 1983 to March 31, 2003

**MILITARY/PERSONAL AWARDS/RECOGNITIONS:** \_\_\_\_\_

The Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal with one silver service star and one bronze star, the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service Medal with one bronze star, the Antarctica Service Medal, the Southwest Asia Service Medal and the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal.

**2. SPONSOR'S NAME:** Michael P. [REDACTED], 2010 inductee  
I nominate the above individual for the following reason(s):

**PHONE NUMBER:** [REDACTED]

For nearly a decade as VFW Post 914 Surgeon, Zurawski has led efforts by the unit's hospital visitation program to help provide refreshments and snacks for veteran patients and residents at the Southwestern Veterans' Center. His hard work and tireless volunteer efforts have enriched the lives of patients and fellow veterans. For his dedication, he was recognized as Department of PA VFW Surgeon of the Year in 2021.

  
SPONSOR'S SIGNATURE

**3. NARRATIVE SUMMARY:**

Attached to this application must be a brief biography not to exceed one typed page. This narrative should summarize the nominee's accomplishments and service to veterans and community.

**4. DD214 OR EQUIVALENT:**

Attached to this application must be a copy of the nominee's DD214 or equivalent (Enlisted Record and Report of Separation- Honorable Discharge-Form WD AGO) documenting honorable active duty service.

**5. APPROVAL:**

A. Advisory Council Awards Committee Chair:	(Name)	(Position)	(Date)
	Thomas Tallon	President	
B. SWVC Advisory Council Chair:	(Name)	(Position)	(Date)
C. State Veterans Commission:	(Name)	(Position)	(Date)

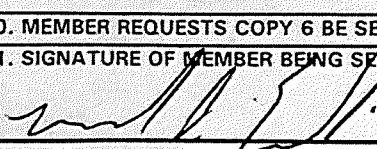
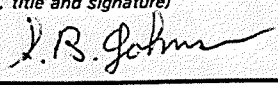
If approved, the nominee will be inducted at a ceremony which will be held at the Southwestern Veterans' Center. Please provide on a separate sheet the names and addresses of persons you would like invited to the ceremony.

It is with pleasure that I place for nomination fellow Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 914 Intrepid Life Member Marine Staff Sergeant Bernard Paul Zurawski for induction into the Southwestern Veterans' Center Hall of Fame.

For nearly a decade as VFW Post 914 Surgeon, Zurawski has led efforts by the unit's hospital visitation program to help provide refreshments and snacks for veteran patients and residents at the Southwestern Veterans' Center. His hard work and tireless volunteer efforts have enriched the lives of patients and fellow veterans. For his dedication, he was recognized as Department of PA VFW Surgeon of the Year in 2021.

Retired after 20 years of service in the United States Marine Corps, Zurawski was deployed for Operation Desert Storm as well as other overseas assignments. Among his awards and decorations are the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal with one silver service star and one bronze star, the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service Medal with one bronze star, the Antarctica Service Medal, the Southwest Asia Service Medal and the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal.

**CERTIFICATE OF RELEASE OR DISCHARGE FROM ACTIVE DUTY**

1. NAME (Last, First, Middle) ZURAWSKI Bernard Paul		2. DEPARTMENT, COMPONENT AND BRANCH USMC-11	
4a. GRADE, RATE OR RANK Staff Sergeant	b. PAY GRADE E6	5. DATE OF BIRTH (YYYYMMDD) [REDACTED]	6. RESERVE OBLIGATION TERMINATION DATE (YYYYMMDD) 00000000
7a. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE DUTY Pittsburgh PA		b. HOME OF RECORD AT TIME OF ENTRY (City and state, or complete address if known) 11-F Uansa Village [REDACTED] 15136	
8a. LAST DUTY ASSIGNMENT AND MAJOR COMMAND 2DSUPBN 2DFSSG USMARFORLANT		b. STATION WHERE SEPARATED CAMP LEJEUNE NC 28542 MCC 151 RUC 27101	
9. COMMAND TO WHICH TRANSFERRED CMC "MMSB-20"			10. SGLI COVERAGE AMOUNT: \$250,000 <input type="checkbox"/> NONE
11. PRIMARY SPECIALTY (List number, title and years and months in specialty. List additional specialty numbers and titles involving periods of one or more years.) 0431 Log/Embark & Combat Support Specialist 18 Years 6 Months		12. RECORD OF SERVICE	
		a. DATE ENTERED AD THIS PERIOD	83 03 04
		b. SEPARATION DATE THIS PERIOD	2003 03 31
		c. NET ACTIVE SERVICE THIS PERIOD	20 00 28
		d. TOTAL PRIOR ACTIVE SERVICE	00 00 00
		e. TOTAL PRIOR INACTIVE SERVICE	00 04 09
		f. FOREIGN SERVICE	00 00 00
		g. SEA SERVICE	01 03 25
13. DECORATIONS, MEDALS, BADGES, CITATIONS AND CAMPAIGN RIBBONS AWARDED OR AUTHORIZED (All periods of service) Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal (w/1 Silver Service Star and 1 Bronze Service Star), Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal (w/1 Bronze Service Star), Sea Service Deployment Ribbon (w/4 Bronze Service Stars), Antarctica Service Medal, United Nations Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, SEE REMARKS		14. MILITARY EDUCATION (Course title, number of weeks, and month and year completed) NCO Leadership School (0DD) 1985, SNCO Career NonResident Program (T8G) 1999, Landing Force Combat Service Course (LBC) 1997, SNCO Advanced NonResident Program (T3X) 1997, SNCO Career Course (T8A) 1992, Recruiters School (81C) 1991, Transportation and Storage (C08) 1990, Basic Log/Embark Specialist Course (04H) 1983	
15a. MEMBER CONTRIBUTED TO POST-VIETNAM ERA VETERANS' EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
b. HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE OR EQUIVALENT		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
16. DAYS ACCRUED LEAVE PAID RLB 21.5 SLB 0	17. MEMBER WAS PROVIDED COMPLETE DENTAL EXAMINATION AND ALL APPROPRIATE DENTAL SERVICES AND TREATMENT WITHIN 90 DAYS PRIOR TO SEPARATION		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
18. REMARKS ITEM 13 Cont-Southwest Asia Service Medal (w/1 Bronze Service Medal), Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Navy Arctic Service Ribbon, Joint Meritorious Unit Award, Navy Unit Commendation (w/1 Bronze Service Star), Letter of Appreciation, Meritorious Mast, Rifle Marksmanship Badge, Pistol Sharpshooter Badge "Subject to active duty recall by Service Secretary." "Extension of service was at the request and for the convenience of the Government." Good Conduct Medal period commences-20010304  RUC 45101 (2002-2339) AJF  The information contained herein is subject to computer matching within the Department of Defense or with any other affected Federal or non-Federal agency for verification purposes and to determine eligibility for, and/or continued compliance with, the requirements of a Federal benefit program.			
19a. MAILING ADDRESS AFTER SEPARATION (Include ZIP Code) [REDACTED] 122		b. NEAREST RELATIVE (Name and address - include ZIP Code) [REDACTED] - Wife Same as Blk 19a	
20. MEMBER REQUESTS COPY 6 BE SENT TO PA		DIRECTOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
21. SIGNATURE OF MEMBER BEING SEPARATED 		22. OFFICIAL AUTHORIZED TO SIGN (Typed name, grade, title and signature) S. B. JOHNSON, GYSGT, ADMINCHF, USMC 	
SPECIAL ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (For use by authorized agencies only)			
23. TYPE OF SEPARATION Transferred to the FMCR		24. CHARACTER OF SERVICE (Include upgrades) HONORABLE	
25. SEPARATION AUTHORITY MARCORSEPMAN PAR 7008		26. SEPARATION CODE NBD6	27. REENTRY CODE RE-2A
28. NARRATIVE REASON FOR SEPARATION SUFFICIENT SERVICE FOR RETIREMENT			
29. DATES OF TIME LOST DURING THIS PERIOD (YYYYMMDD) NONE			30. MEMBER REQUESTS COPY 4 (Initials) <b>BBZ</b>



Induction attendees:

[REDACTED] Zurawski, Spouse

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] 15122