

SNAPSHOT OF 2011-2018

- With Executive Reorganization Order 2011-01, Governor Daugaard created a separate Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Appointment of Secretary Larry Zimmerman for Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Reorganization for Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Development of new website – mobile ready and QR Code.
- Secured the data for number of veterans working for the State of South Dakota and posted on our website.
- New Department Secretary traveled the state from border to border to meet all of the County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers, tribal leaders and leaders of the veteran's service organizations.
- Extended the time for spending \$3.6 million for renovating the nursing care building and doing life-safety repairs at the State Veterans Home campus (SB 51 -2011).
- Authorized the design, construction, and equipping of a new veterans home (SB 52 -2011).
- Secured continued funding of \$1 Million to support the Veterans Bonus program (SB 4 – 2012).
- Provided for special motor vehicle license plates for recipients of the silver star medal, distinguished service cross, navy cross, air force cross, distinguished flying cross, bronze star medal with valor device, or the bronze star medal (SB 113 - 2012).
- Provided a designation for honorably discharged veterans on certain non-driver identification cards, driver licenses, and permits (SB 189 - 2012).
- Exempted veterans from the 12-month residency requirement for the purpose of tuition and fees at state public universities (SB 80 - 2012).
- Revised a previous law to comply with changes in federal requirements for the design of the new state veterans home (SB 27 2013).
- Revised provisions regarding special motor vehicle license plates for veterans with disabilities (HB 1118 – 2013).
- Passed a law that allows veterans to receive credit for certain military training and experience when obtaining licenses and other special certifications from the South Dakota licensing boards and commissions (HB 1180 - 2013).
- Passed a law to designate March 30th as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day (SB 83 - 2013), August 7th as Purple Heart Recognition Day (HB 1084 2013), and the third Friday in September as POW/MIA Recognition Day (HB 1067 - 2013).
- Secured VA funding for construction of a new state veterans home.

- Revised some of the plans related to the design, construction, and equipping of the new veterans home and appropriated state funding for it - \$16,365,044 (HB 1111 - 2014).
- Transferred the authority to appoint the superintendent of the State Veterans Home from the Veterans Commission to the Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary (SB 151 - 2014).
- Kicked off the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home Foundation – a foundation established to provide assistance and support to South Dakota’s veterans and their spouses residing at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home.
- Groundbreaking and construction of the new Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home began in 2013 and doors opened January 2016.
- Transitioned from an institutional facility at the State Veterans Home to a neighborhood environment at the MJFSVH.
- The Department took on an aggressive campaign to reach all veterans (Operation RAV). The goal was to locate and make contact with South Dakota’s 75,000+ veterans via two avenues --- phone call campaign and open houses in each county. The goal was to host at least 130 RAV open houses (two in each county) --- that goal was surpassed with 153 open houses.
- Because of their outstanding efforts with Operation RAV, the Department received national recognition when they were awarded the Abraham Lincoln Pillars of Excellence Award.
- Department received additional media coverage in the last five years because of Operations RAV and K.
- The Department worked with the Korean Consulate in an effort to recognize South Dakota’s Korean War Veterans. Starting in late 2014, the Republic of South Korea began dedicating Ambassador of Peace medals to all U.S. Veterans who sacrificed for Korea's democracy and freedom. The eligibility for this medal was for those who served in Korea's land, air and sea from June 25, 1950 through October 25, 1954. On January 12, 2016, a ceremony was held honoring these respective heroes. The program held in the rotunda of the Capitol and was broadcasted on Public TV, thus allowing those that weren’t able to make the trip to view the ceremony. At the same time medals were presented in Pierre, veteran leaders around the state placed medals on their local heroes that weren’t able to travel to Pierre. To date, almost 900 medals have been presented.
- Due to the international connection made with the Republic of Korea, South Dakota history teachers have now been invited to participate in an all-expense paid trip to Florida to participate in the Korean War Digital History Conference.
- Due to the international connection with the Republic of Korea, delegates from the Republic of Korea traveled to SD during the summer of 2016 to interview Korean War Veterans.

- Provided funding to supplement congressionally chartered veterans service organizations for their services in conducting military funeral honors (HB 1208 – 2015 and HB 1226 and SB 172 – 2016).
- Through the efforts of the Department and with the County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers and other partners the Department saw significant gains in the amount of benefits that clients whom we've assisted and represented received. Total awards for CY15 exceeded \$160 million. It is easily assumed that the federal monetary benefits received by South Dakota residents are being largely spent within the boundaries of South Dakota helping to support our strong economy.
- Expanded the state's definition of veteran to include members of the National Guard and Reserve who complete their full obligation of service in the military, or received an early discharge for a medical condition, hardship, reduction in force, or at the convenience of the military and have been separated or discharged from such service honorably or under honorable conditions. This allows eligible individuals to receive veteran license plates, veteran identification on their driver's license, veteran's employment preference and burial assistance if they meet income requirements (HB1179 – 2015).
- Added school districts to the list of entities required to provide veterans a preference in employment and promotion, as per SDCL 3-3-1; and now required that certain employees of the Department be veterans (SB 154 – 2015).
- Revised veteran's preference provisions to allow any citizen of the United States to receive veteran's preference, not only for South Dakota residents (SB 132 – 2015). In addition, we strengthened provisions relating to the veterans' preference in employment. This change clarified outdated verbiage and replaced with requirement that veteran applicants receive an interview if they meet minimum qualifications (HB 1056 – 2016).
- Extended resident tuition eligibility to the spouses and children of active duty military personnel and of qualifying veterans (SB 33 – 2015).
- Removed the twenty-year window during which veterans could use tuition benefits at institutions under the control of the Board of Regents (HB 1163 – 2016).
- Revised the provisions regarding the issuance of small game licenses and fishing licenses to certain veterans at reduced fees and to authorize certain nonresident veterans to get nonresident small game licenses at a reduced fee (SB 71 – 2016).
- Secured authorization for additional nursing facility beds for the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home (increased from 52 to 76). With the change of nursing beds, we secured an additional 32.5 FTEs for the state veterans home and additional general funds of \$462,944 and federal funds of \$570,583. (SB 172 - 2016)
- Department serves on committees/panels for Veterans Courts.

- Department continues to have constant dialogue with members of South Dakota's Congressional Delegation.
- Department works with DOC to assist incarcerated veterans.
- Department operates with a \$11.4 Million budget.
- Department has 59 Tribes and Counties participating in the salary supplement program --- this is the first time that tribes have partaken in this program.
- Department is meeting quarterly with Tribal VSOs to address issues that are specific to tribal veterans, such as housing and employment.
- Department continues to work with Tribal Affairs and South Dakota's nine tribes to secure a Code Talker Memorial.
- Continues to work with tribal leaders to secure housing for Native American Veterans.
- Continues to assist veterans through the new hurdles of the federal Veterans Choice Act.
- SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman appointed to serve on SD Native Home Ownership Coalition (2017).
- SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman appointed to Korean War Digital History Society (2017).
- SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman appointed to serve on Black Hills Area Habitat for Humanities Board (2017).
- SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman appointed to Operation Black Hills Cabin Board (2017).
- Honored South Dakota Veterans that served in Taiwan between the 1955-1979 by presenting them the United States-Republic of China Mutual Defense Commemorative Badge (2017).
- Launched Operation CARS (Calling All Returning Service members) to educate them on the services and programs available in South Dakota (2017).
- Partnered with SD Public Broadcast to host numerous screenings of the Vietnam War documentary (2017).
- Recognized numerous Vietnam War Veterans at events held throughout the year (2017).
- Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home received VA Certification (2017).
- Secured over \$666 million in benefits for South Dakota's veterans (2017).
- Included the National Guard Form NGB 22 as a means of identification to obtain veterans designation on driver's license or non-driver identification card (HB 1009 - 2018).
- Extended employment protections for all South Dakota Guard members who serve Guard units in other states (HB 1010 - 2018).
- Simplified the process for members of the United States Armed Forces and their families to renew their driver's license when stationed out of state (HB 1244 - 2018).

- Opened access for certain patriotic societies to have better access to address public schools (SB 83 - 2018).
- Provided for special motor vehicle license plates for female veterans (SB 97 - 2018).
- Raised awareness for the need to change enrollment criteria for the Veterans Health Administration to include World War II and Korean War Veterans and for eligible veterans in need of assisted living services (SJR 8 and SCR 15 - 2018).
- Received authorization to provide for the design, construction, and equipping of a state veteran's cemetery in Minnehaha County and to create a veterans cemetery operating fund (SB 91 - 2018).
- Recognized over 1,300 WWII Veterans and presented them an SD WWII coin (2018).