



# Voices for Veterans

**2017 Annual Report**

## **South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs**



**425 E. Capitol**

**Pierre, SD 57501**

**605.773.3269**

**<http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>**



## **Table of Contents**

Secretary's Message .....	3
Organization .....	4-7
Budget .....	8-9
Veteran Population .....	10-11
Legislative Highlights .....	12-13
Claims Division .....	14
Appeals .....	15
Benefits Division .....	16-17
Education .....	18-19
Economic Impact .....	20-21
Bonus .....	22-23
Military Funeral Honor Stipend .....	24
Headstone Setting Fees/Burial Allowance .....	24
Homeless Veterans .....	25
Veterans Courts .....	26-27
South Dakota Joining Forces .....	28
Public Affairs .....	29
State Veterans Home .....	30-31
Partners .....	32-38
Accomplishments .....	39





## Message from Secretary Zimmerman

I am pleased to submit the 2017 Annual Report for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA). This report summarizes our 2017 collection of work and highlights key accomplishments. SDDVA continued to provide veterans counseling and advocacy services throughout the state. These efforts were realized as a result of great teamwork by dedicated and compassionate professionals who give their best on a daily basis.

This year's report provides the opportunity to share successes and ongoing efforts to improve the quality of life for our South Dakota Veterans and their families.

We manage our programs with one key mission, to serve our veterans and families by ensuring they have access to the benefits and services to which they are entitled as a result of military service. Our mission is accomplished in a number of ways as evidenced in this report.



This past year I have been very active in two housing organizations in this great state, South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition and Black Hills Habitat for Humanity. Both of these entities are integral to housing for our veterans and our citizens. Watching homes go up on a reservation or in a rural community is very rewarding, almost as rewarding as seeing their faces when they move in.

In addition, I have had the opportunity to serve on the board of directors for Operation Black Hills Cabin, a success story that keeps growing and benefits our wounded heroes. For further details, please visit ([www.operationblackhillscabin.org/](http://www.operationblackhillscabin.org/)).



**Secretary Larry Zimmerman**

425 E. Capitol Avenue

Pierre, SD 57501-3100

Pierre Phone: 605-773-3269

Rapid City Phone: 605-394-1959

Cell Phone: 605-593-7781

Fax: 605-773-5380

<http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

Email: [larry.zimmerman@state.sd.us](mailto:larry.zimmerman@state.sd.us)



**Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard**

Claims Office—c/o VA Regional Office

2501 W. 22nd Street

Sioux Falls, SD 57105-1305

Phone: 605-333-6869

Cell Phone: 605-360-4173

Fax: 605-333-5386

Email: [aaron.pollard@state.sd.us](mailto:aaron.pollard@state.sd.us)



## **The Role of the Office of the Secretary**

The Office of the Secretary drives the Department's over-all strategy, long-range planning initiatives and oversees the operation of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA).

The word OPERATION has played a key role in our mission the past four years. We started with OPERATION RAV in 2014 by conducting over 150 outreach events and making phone calls to over 60,000 veterans. OPERATION RAV was completed with no increase in our budget!

In 2015, we ventured on with OPERATION KII. OKII afforded us a great opportunity to work with the Republic of Korea by honoring veterans that served boots on the ground in Korea. We recognized over 1,300 veterans.

OPERATION SAIGON was our focus for 2016 and we spent the year honoring our Vietnam Veterans.

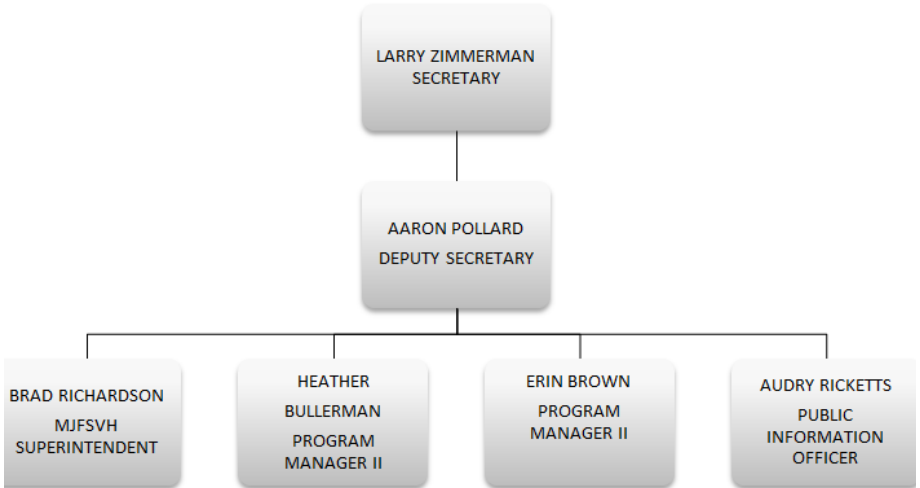
OPERATION TAIWAN was our focus in 2017 and we partnered with the Republic of China and presented the ROC Mutual Defense Badge to all veterans that served in Taiwan during 1955-1979. Additionally, we kicked off OPERATION CARS (Calling all Returning Servicemembers). Each month, we reach out to all returning servicemembers by phone and make them aware of the services available to them to assist in their transition back into civilian life.

In 2018, we are working on OPERATION WHIRLWIND by recognizing all our living World War II Veterans. We believe there are over 2,000 WWII Veterans still living in the state.

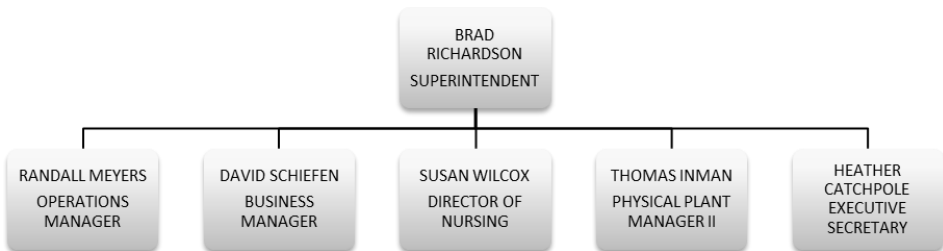
From RAV to WHIRLWIND we have been blessed with great opportunities to reach out and thank all of our veterans.



## **Organizational Chart for SDDVA**

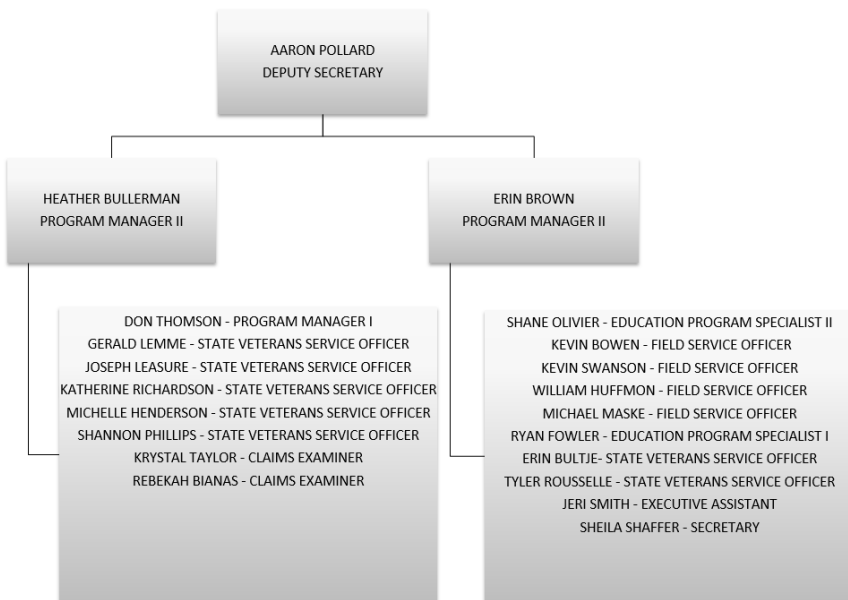


## **Organizational Chart for State Veterans Home Team**





## Organizational Chart for SDDVA Benefits Team



**Voices for Veterans**

## Budget and Finance

Connie Hohn serves as the Budget/Finance Director for the Department, as such she develops and monitors the Department’s annual budget. She works closely with the Bureau of Finance and Management, Legislative Audit and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

**FUNDING**

**SOURCE:**

**Veteran's**

<b>Affairs</b>	<b>FY13</b>	<b>FY14</b>	<b>FY15</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>
General Funds	\$ 3,852,527	\$ 3,671,173	\$ 3,853,779	\$ 2,490,440	\$ 4,009,421
Federal Funds	\$ 1,799,845	\$ 839,852	\$ 1,066,155	\$ 1,200,628	\$ 3,051,237
Other Funds	\$ 3,870,270	\$ 3,913,634	\$ 5,610,206	\$ 5,950,117	\$ 4,470,699
	<u>\$ 9,522,642</u>	<u>\$ 8,424,659</u>	<u>\$ 10,530,140</u>	<u>\$ 9,641,185</u>	<u>\$ 11,531,357</u>

**Veteran's**

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>FY13</b>	<b>FY14</b>	<b>FY15</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>
General Funds	\$ 1,622,761	\$ 1,330,248	\$ 1,404,655	\$ 1,517,246	\$ 1,573,088
Federal Funds	\$ 149,706	\$ 161,637	\$ 162,927	\$ 162,425	\$ 149,379
Other Funds	\$ -			\$ 983	\$ 1,898
	<u>\$ 1,772,467</u>	<u>\$ 1,491,885</u>	<u>\$ 1,567,582</u>	<u>\$ 1,680,654</u>	<u>\$ 1,724,365</u>

**Veteran's**

<b>Home</b>	<b>FY13</b>	<b>FY14</b>	<b>FY15</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>
General Funds	\$ 2,229,766	\$ 2,340,924	\$ 2,449,125	\$ 973,194	\$ 2,436,333
Federal Funds	\$ 1,650,139	\$ 678,215	\$ 903,228	\$ 1,038,204	\$ 2,901,858
Other Funds	\$ 3,870,270	\$ 3,913,634	\$ 5,610,206	\$ 5,949,134	\$ 4,468,801
	<u>\$ 7,750,175</u>	<u>\$ 6,932,773</u>	<u>\$ 8,962,559</u>	<u>\$ 7,960,532</u>	<u>\$ 9,806,992</u>



**EXPENDITURE**

**DETAIL**

**Veteran's**

<b>Affairs</b>	<b>FY13</b>	<b>FY14</b>	<b>FY15</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>
Personal Services	\$ 4,737,731	\$ 5,103,609	\$ 5,747,485	\$ 6,027,616	\$ 8,062,876
Operating Services	\$ 4,784,911	\$ 3,321,050	\$ 4,782,654	\$ 3,613,569	\$ 3,468,481
	<u>\$ 9,522,642</u>	<u>\$ 8,424,659</u>	<u>\$ 10,530,139</u>	<u>\$ 9,641,185</u>	<u>\$ 11,531,357</u>

**Veteran's**

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>FY13</b>	<b>FY14</b>	<b>FY15</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>
Personal Services	\$ 984,860	\$ 1,047,861	\$ 1,143,231	\$ 1,197,449	\$ 1,245,782
Operating Services	\$ 787,608	\$ 444,024	\$ 424,351	\$ 483,204	\$ 478,584
	<u>\$ 1,772,468</u>	<u>\$ 1,491,885</u>	<u>\$ 1,567,582</u>	<u>\$ 1,680,653</u>	<u>\$ 1,724,366</u>

**Veteran's**

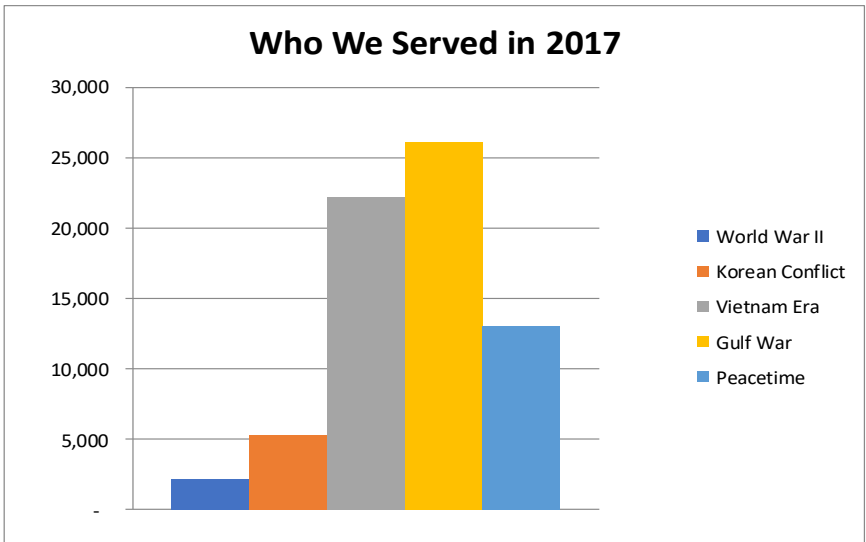
<b>Home</b>	<b>FY13</b>	<b>FY14</b>	<b>FY15</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>
Personal Services	\$ 3,752,872	\$ 4,055,748	\$ 4,604,255	\$ 4,830,167	\$ 6,817,094
Operating Services	\$ 3,997,304	\$ 2,877,025	\$ 4,358,303	\$ 3,130,365	\$ 2,989,898
	<u>\$ 7,750,176</u>	<u>\$ 6,932,773</u>	<u>\$ 8,962,558</u>	<u>\$ 7,960,532</u>	<u>\$ 9,806,992</u>



## Who We Serve

Almost a quarter of South Dakota’s veteran population served honorably during a very unique and relatively conflict-free time in our history. Many of these veterans do not seek benefits, mistakenly believing that if they did not serve in combat they do not qualify for veteran benefits and programs.

We have seen an increase in disability claims filed on behalf of Vietnam Veterans due to diseases brought on by exposure to Agent Orange.

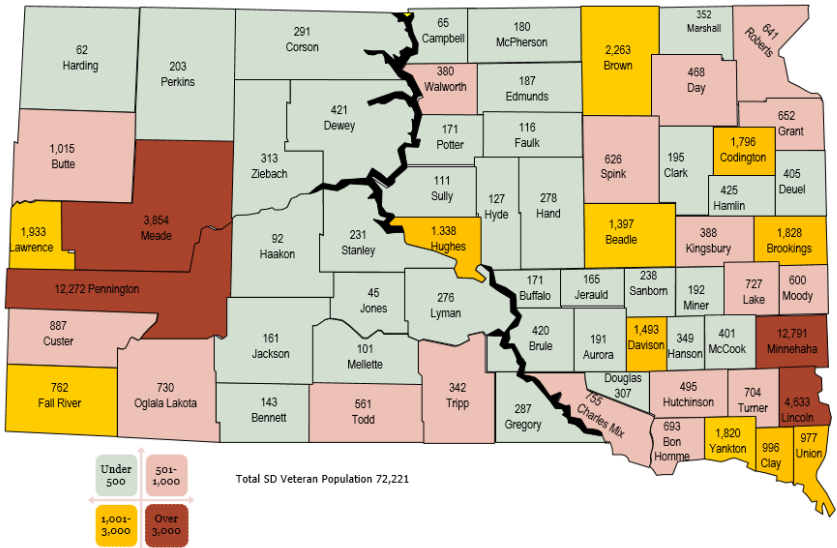


# Veterans Count

South Dakota’s efforts to honor and support our Nation’s veterans are a testament to its commitment to the men and women who served in uniform.

Veterans are one of this country’s most valuable assets and SDDVA is on the front line of providing assistance to over 70,000 veterans and their families.

**2017 SD VETERANS BY COUNTY**





## Legislative Highlights

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs monitored many pieces of legislation this year. In a state founded on values, ethics, and dedication, it is only fitting that we work with our legislators to improve the lives of our veterans. Working together we do make a difference. Some of the veteran-related bills before lawmakers in 2017 included:

**HB 1003:** Allow nursing facilities to transfer or sell nursing bed capacity.

**HB 1004:** Establish a program to assist nursing and assisted living facilities in recruiting certain health care personnel.

**HB 1062:** Make an appropriation to fund tax refunds for elderly persons and persons with a disability and to declare an emergency.

**HB 1127:** Revise the procedure for a deployed military service member to renew a concealed carry permit.

**HB 1150:** Provide for the issuance of certain hunting licenses to nonresident military veterans at the resident rate.

**HB 1197:** Revise certain provisions regarding medical assistance payments to nursing home facilities.

**HB 1202:** Make an appropriation for the support of the Veterans Outreach Center and to declare an emergency.

**HB 1208:** Provide for the sale of certain surplus real estate at the South Dakota Veterans' Home and to provide for the deposit of the proceeds.



## Legislative Highlights

**SB 5:** Allow for the redistribution of unused nursing facility bed capacity.

**SB 6:** Revise the review process to determine the need for additional nursing facilities or nursing facility beds and to require a report to the Legislature.

**SB 57:** Authorize the operation of a nursing home facility in Eagle Butte, South Dakota, and to declare an emergency.

**SB 73:** Provide a special tribal veterans license plate for certain motor vehicles.

**SB 101:** Provide for the release of certain military records of deceased veterans.

**SB 144:** Authorize service members to carry a concealed pistol or revolver without a permit.

**SB 169:** Impose a statewide property tax for purpose of providing funds to increase certain employee wages employed by community support providers and nursing facilities.

**SJR 1:** Proposing and submitting to the electors at the next general election an amendment to the Constitution of the State of South Dakota relating to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.



## **Claims Division**

Our Department's goal is to obtain the maximum benefits that are earned by veterans and their eligible family members through their service to our country. These benefits range from monthly monetary payments for disabilities incurred in or caused by the veteran's military service, monthly non-service connected pension payments for lower income veterans/widows/widowers/dependent children or helpless children, dependency and indemnity compensation payments for widows/widowers/dependents or helpless children of veterans whose death was related to their military service. The range of benefits available to eligible veterans and their families is vast.

The Claims Office personnel work directly with the decision resources in the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) Regional Office to expedite claims and to influence, through proactive advocacy, the most positive and beneficial outcomes. To this end, South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) Claims Services provides a quality control function by reviewing completed USDVA benefits rating decisions, and VA awards for benefits.

Both the Claims Services and Benefits Services are charged by statute to train and certify county and tribal veterans service officers. To maintain proficiency with the rapid changes in veterans' programs, the Department provides training opportunities at least three times a year in a formal setting, and on a daily basis as we traverse the state.

## Appeals

Another facet of our staff’s duties is their participation in the VA Appeals Process. The appeals process within the VA is complex, lengthy, and comes with its own set of laws, rules, regulations and processes.

Our staff assists veterans in preparing appeals, as well as arguing their case, through the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA). Throughout this process, our staff researches complex VA laws and compiles legal briefs to aid in the likelihood of getting veterans and their eligible dependents the benefits sought.

Our clients have the opportunity to have two hearings, one at the local level with a Decision Review Officer, held at the Sioux Falls VA Regional Office, and one at the national level with a BVA Law Judge.

An appeal decision is usually made several months or even years later. The veteran may be awarded a monthly monetary benefit from the date of the claim even if filed years earlier resulting in a retroactive benefit. Retroactive benefits and monthly compensation represent dollars that are directly infused into South Dakota’s economy.

Our team strives to resolve appeals at the earliest step in the

process while ensuring the greatest benefits to the claimant.

STATUS OF CLOSED APPEALS	Category	2015	2016	2017
	Granted	30	44	52
	Denied	16	20	10
	Withdrew	12	13	10
	Death	6	7	3
	Unknown	0	2	0
	Change of POA	12	8	14
	Dropped	1	0	1
	Total	91	169	147

## Benefits Division

Field Service Officers (FSO), who are also State Veterans Service Officers, are trained in the countless issues facing veterans who served in all eras, each having its own unique issues and challenges. Each day finds our FSOs assisting South Dakota's veterans in gaining access to the benefits to which they are entitled through their service and sacrifice.

The FSOs provide professional assistance to South Dakota's veterans and their dependents in an effort to obtain veteran's benefits

and quality health care from the Federal VA. We measure success by working tirelessly to assist the greatest number of veterans and their loved ones

as we can, while ensuring they receive the maximum benefits they have due them. We strive to resolve any issues that veterans and their families encounter within, and outside the realm of veterans benefits.





## Benefits Division

Outreach is conducted at job fairs, stand downs, congressional forums, Veteran's Day programs, Vocational Rehab conferences, SD Coalition of Military Family symposiums, South Dakota State Fair, Memorial Day programs, Yellow Ribbon events, South Dakota County Officials and Commissioners conferences, Federal Department of the VA events, Department of Social Services Adult and Aging conferences, and numerous veteran-related events around the state.



Field Service Officers travel the state training and educating Tribal and County Veterans Services Officers in VA laws, policies, and procedures. Our goal is to meet and assist as many veterans, family members, and others to the best of our ability.



## Education

The education team for the Department assists in administering various federal and state education benefits to South Dakota veterans and their families. They work hard to make sure every eligible veteran is awarded the benefit that applies to their situation. Some of their responsibilities include:

- assisting veterans with state and federal education benefits,
- conducting site visits to approve education programs and job training facilities throughout the state using State and Federal criteria
- conducting compliance surveys to ensure accuracy with GI Bill® entitlements, and
- conducting outreach activities to inform veterans of the benefits available to them.



In South Dakota, veterans can choose to use their GI Bill® from 35 institutes of higher learning (colleges and universities), 14 non-college degree institutions (high schools, welding schools, and trade schools), 79 apprenticeship programs, 239 on-the-job training programs, and two flight training schools.

Our team also works with the state benefits which include: free tuition for veterans, free tuition for children of veterans who died during service, free tuition for dependents of POW/MIA's, reduced tuition for S.D. National Guard members, free tuition to children or spouse of a S.D. National Guard member disabled or killed in the line of duty, and acquiring honorary high school diploma.

Our team has one dream - to make real differences in the lives of our veterans and their families.



## Education

### 2017 Stats at a Glance —

- Reviewed and approved 1,632 new Institute of Higher Learning (IHL), Non-College Degree (NCD) and Flight programs at colleges, technical schools, and flight schools across the state.
- 96 training programs across the state that have veterans enrolled in them. We have 318 total approved programs.
- 84 employers that have veterans enrolled into a training program.
- Conducted compliance surveys at five schools.
- Conducted compliance audits with 21 employers.
- 41 active colleges, high schools, and technical schools providing education to GI BILL® recipients.
- 38 other approved schools that did not have any GI Bill® recipients, but retained approval.
- Approved 10 new employers for GI BILL® use for OJT/APP.
- 246 GI Bill® recipients enrolled in OJT/APP programs.
- 1,862 GI Bill® recipients enrolled in schools across South Dakota.
- Submitted 74 education (OJT/APP) claims to the VA.



## Economic Impact/Out-of-State Claims

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has vowed to reduce and eliminate the backlog of compensation claims that were pending within the VA. To accomplish this, the VA has created the National Work Que (NWQ). NWQ allows claims to flow electronically to any available VA Veteran Service Representative throughout the country who is currently available to complete the work. The Sioux Falls VA Regional Office receives many brokered claims through NWQ.

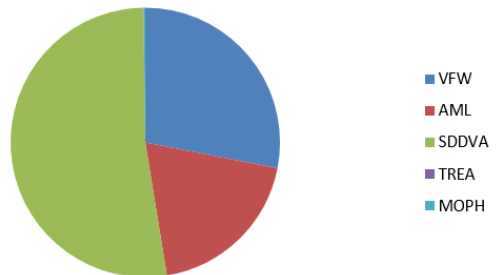
The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) vowed to treat and provide the same excellent level of customer service and expertise to these claims as well as maintaining excellent customer service to our South Dakota veterans.

In 2017 the claims office reviewed 3,521 out-of-state claims that were worked in the Sioux Falls VA Regional Office through the National Work Que.

Through the efforts of our employees, our County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers and other partners, the Department has seen significant gains in the amount of benefits that clients whom we've assisted and represented receive.

In total, South Dakota veterans garnered a total benefit of over \$650 Million in 2017. One-time retro payments for 2017 totaled \$8,538,447. Running awards were \$187.5 Million.

### 2017 AWARDS \$8,538,447.00 One-time Retro payments



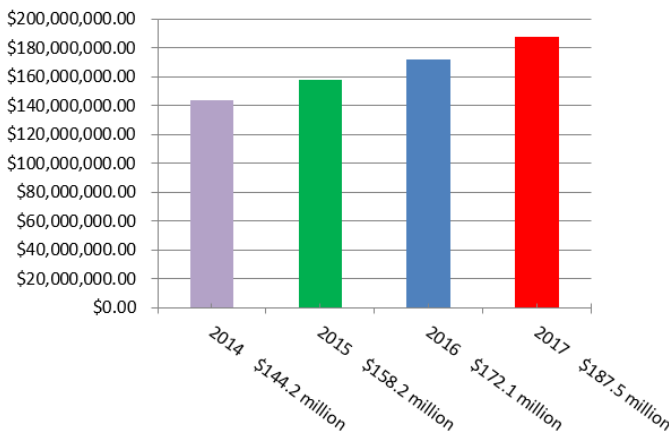
## Economic Impact

Our team worked diligently to ensure that our clients received excellent customer service and the maximum benefits they have earned through their military service.

In 2016, the VA implemented three new programs to enhance the time it takes to process a claim. Digits to Digits and the Direct Upload Tool allow our staff to electronically file claims straight to the VA. This reduces the need to scan documents at a third party vendor saving 10-30 days of claims processing time. The National Work Que was developed and implemented to enhance the timeliness in which claims are processed for veterans nationally. This has created a reduction in the amount of time it takes to complete a claim on a national level.

There are many variables that can and do effect the monetary awards that are reported. If the VA has slow production months, this will effect how sharply our monetary numbers increase.

**Awards (Running) 2014 - 2017**





## Bonus

The State of South Dakota awards a bonus to both active duty military members and to veterans who meet certain service qualifications. In its 128 years of statehood, South Dakota has paid out a bonus to thousands of our heroes for service-going back as far as the Spanish American War in 1898. In 1921, the Soldiers Compensation Act was enacted by state lawmakers. It benefitted almost 800 veterans of the Spanish American War, as well as 75 who served during the Philippine Insurrection and 29,689 veterans for their service in World War I.

South Dakota paid World War II veterans a bonus payment, as well. Those military members who served within the continental United States received .50 cents for each day of service for a maximum payment of \$500. The bonus for service outside the U.S. was .75 cents per day for a combined US and overseas maximum bonus of \$650. More than 60,000 WWII bonus claims were paid out during that bonus program period.

The same formula that was utilized in determining the bonus for World War II veterans was also used to calculate bonus payment amounts for Korean War Veterans. Approximately 26,000 payments were made through the Korean War Bonus Program.



## Bonus

Session Laws of 1969 created the Vietnam Bonus Program. More than 27,000 bonus applications were processed from the original Vietnam Bonus Program through its end on December 31, 1974.

In 1991, another Veterans Bonus Program was enacted. House Bill 1178 re-established and expanded the bonus program for those who served on active duty during certain conflict periods. HB 1178 provided for payment of a bonus to Vietnam Era veterans who did not previously receive a bonus and established a payment for individuals who served in Lebanon, Grenada, Libya, Panama and the Persian Gulf area. Service members who were active duty for Operation Desert Shield/Storm were also eligible. More than 6,400 payments were made between 1992 and 1995.



Another bonus program was started in 2004 for military members with hostile and non-hostile service in our Nation's most recent conflicts. In 2005, lawmakers re-established the eligibility to qualify for a bonus for service in the early 1990's. The current bonus program, awards payments for service going back as far as August 2, 1990. In 2017, a total of \$149,690 was paid out to bonus applicants.



## Headstones, Burial Allowance and Military Funeral Honors

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) awards payments of \$100 for setting a government headstone or marker at the veteran's resting place. The deceased veteran must have been a United States citizen, and a South Dakota resident for at least one year before entering the military or for one year prior to passing away. The fee can be paid out to the veterans' survivors, funeral homes, memorial companies or an individual or organization that permanently set the headstone or marker. In 2017, we processed over \$42,000 for the setting of headstones throughout the state.

SDDVA also provides a \$100 Burial Allowance to help defray the burial and funeral expenses of any honorably discharged veteran or the wife, widow or widower of a veteran when the estate, or immediate family, of the deceased is lacking in funds to pay the expenses.

The Fall of 2017 marked the second anniversary of the first payments made through the Military Funeral Honors program. The program was set up to reimburse veteran service organizations \$50 for each military funeral honor ceremony conducted. In 2017, 918 funeral honors claims were approved for a total payout of \$45,900. Over the past two years, the department has paid Military Funeral Honors stipends to more than 85 different posts across the state.





## Homeless Veterans

In recent years, the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs has been represented in efforts to assist homeless veterans. Department staff members have attended various homeless organization meetings-including gatherings for the South Dakota Housing for the Homeless Consortium and the South Dakota Housing Development Authority's statewide Homeless Summit. Each year, the Consortium organizes a statewide homeless count and survey, which helps provide data on the homeless population in the state. With the help of in-state partners and CSH (the Corporation for Supportive Housing), the Consortium has been working to design a Coordinated Entry System (CES) which when complete and in use, will ensure that those experiencing homelessness or at risk of being homeless are matched quickly and efficiently with available resources that will help end their homelessness or prevent that experience from happening.

A comprehensive list of homeless shelters and facilities available for veterans in South Dakota can be found on the SDDVA website at <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov/docs/SD%20Homeless%20Housing%20Resources%20by%20Regions%20and%20Project.pdf>. More information is also available through the South Dakota Housing for the Homeless Consortium website.





## Veterans Courts

Veterans Courts are a collaborative process that includes prosecutors, defense counsel, Judges, federal and state's Department of Veteran Affairs and other community-based support organizations. The goal of Veterans Court is to reduce recidivism, facilitate participant sobriety, increase compliance with treatment and other court ordered conditions, improve access to veterans benefits and services, improve family relationships and social support connections, and improve life stability.

Veterans Court programs typically focus on veterans who are currently in, or entering, the Criminal Justice System. The Court creates and supervises treatment plans to address the underlying causes of the veteran's behavior and/or substance abuse. Issues commonly addressed by the treatment programs include: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, anger issues, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse.

In order to be successful, the Veterans Treatment Court will strive to follow the Ten Key Components of Veterans Treatment Court established by the Justice For Vets division of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.

The expected length of the program is between twelve and eighteen months. A veteran will require a minimum of forty eight to sixty weeks to complete all of the phases of Veterans Treatment Court. Each phase has a minimum number of weeks for completion. The court may adjust these weeks if they see fit. Completion of all ten phases will result in graduation.

SDDVA has representation on both the Minnehaha and Pennington County Veterans Court Advisory Boards. Our staff works closely with the Courts and the veterans to ensure the veteran is aware of all benefits, provide more structure, serve as a mentor and assist in setting the veteran up for success.



## Veterans Justice Outreach

SDDVA staff have taken an active role in partnering with the Department of Corrections to work with incarcerated veterans.

Members of our team participated in a two-week correctional officer training program to allow them access to veterans within the walls of the South Dakota penitentiary.

Our team assists veteran prisoners in completing paperwork to suspend or file for benefits. Staff also assist when service treatment records are needed in support of claims or appeals.

SDDVA also plays a role in re-acclimating veteran prisoners back into society. They work closely with the veteran on such

issues as benefits claims processing, readjustment counseling, crisis intervention, housing, clothing, job readiness, job placement, securing a drivers license, opening bank accounts and support services.

It has been a very rewarding partnership for our department and we continue to learn about more avenues to assist our veterans that have been incarcerated.





## South Dakota Joining Forces

South Dakota Joining Forces (SDJF) has had an increased footprint in South Dakota since the leadership transition in July 2017. In the last couple of months, the initiative has grown with the help of a website, social media, outreach, community networking and collaboration.

With the development of this site (<http://sdjf.sd.gov/>) a central resource database has been established to make a “one stop shop” for resources and programs. Stakeholders are able to find Military Veterans and Family (MVF) focused events, community support at the following levels: county, tribal, state, and national. The site has established a detailed outline of what each county/tribe has to offer for their constituents.

We continue to grow our outreach efforts and know this is the best avenue to nurture our partners and our resources.

Our SDJF goals for 2018 are:

- Continue to grow relationships,
- Build database of contacts,
- Identify SDJF leaders throughout the state,
- Conduct outreach events,
- Grow our website and social media content.

Our SDJF mission remains “To serve veterans, military and family members in South Dakota and help them navigate the maze of programs and services to get them through the right door at the right time.”





## Public Affairs

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs public relations staff oversees and manages the Department's public information activities and media relations.

The Office is also accountable for planning statewide public events such as press conferences, listening sessions, commission meetings, and special ceremonies.

The Department's website (<http://www.vetaffairs.sd.gov>) is designed to offer veterans a centralized clearinghouse of valuable resources accessible from anywhere in the world. The Department has a mobile website, making it easier for veterans to access information from their smartphones or tablets. This year we incorporated the state's three memorial websites (World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War) into the SDDVA site, making it easier for anyone to locate.

The Department continues to disseminate a weekly newsletter electronically to all within our veteran network as well as post it on our website. The newsletter and job postings can be found at: <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov/publicaffairs/News%20Updates.aspx>.

In addition to our press releases, the Department distributes a monthly column to the media on issues relating to veterans.

The Department maintains a statewide web calendar at: <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov/publicaffairs/upcomingevents>.

The public relations office also tracks all veteran-related bills introduced, along with committee hearings during each legislative session and updates department staff daily.

Our social media foot print grew this year with the addition of Instagram and Twitter accounts.



## **State Veterans Home**

The Michael J. Fitzmaurice South Dakota Veterans Home (MJFSDVH) is located in Hot Springs, where every morning veterans enjoy panoramic mountain views. The South Dakota Veterans Home has a heritage of caring for our heroes and continues that legacy by employing staff members that maintain high levels of excellence by upholding the values of compassion, integrity, and dignity.

The State Veterans Home has 76 nursing care beds (NCU) and 24 residential living beds (RLS), and is home to World War II, Korean War, Vietnam, and Gulf War Era Veterans. At year-end we had 71 NCU beds and 23 residential beds occupied.

In 2017, our activities director was recognized as “Millie of the Year” by the South Dakota Health Care Association. The Millie Award is presented to professionals in healthcare that go above and beyond for patients in long-term care. Our activity team supports numerous off campus trips and engages the local community, veterans service organizations, and associations to come and participate in our events.

Our Home also received a Platinum Award in 2017. Platinum level is the highest level that a Nursing Home can receive. The Composite Score was developed as part of the National Nursing Home Quality Care Collaborative (NNHQCC) efforts and offers a means to look at quality from a systems perspective. Comprised of 13 National Quality Forum-endorsed, publicly-reported, long-stay quality measures, the tool is especially valuable in providing current data to help drive improvement efforts at an accelerated pace.



## State Veterans Home

On Pearl Harbor Day we dedicated our new 80 foot flag pole and raised the 20X38 foot Garrison flag. The pole was donated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department and Auxiliary of South Dakota and the flag was donated by the Custer VFW Post.

Our Home is unique in our ability to provide primary care medical services, physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy at our facility.

Every year, many selfless individuals and organizations volunteer their time at the Home. These volunteers improve the quality of the home-like atmosphere. During 2017, 65 volunteers logged in 2,275 volunteer hours within the halls of MJFSVH.

We are in the process of replacing our maintenance shop. The Office of State Engineer serves as the construction administrator and Scull Construction was awarded the construction contract. This project is expected to be completed by June 1, 2018.





## Partners

### Veterans Service Organizations

South Dakota is fortunate to have immense groups of people that have dedicated their energies to improving the lives of veterans and their families. These heroes are the veterans service organizations. Veterans Service Organizations are the backbone of veterans rights for our state and nation. They strive tirelessly to improve the lives of veterans and their families.



Collectively they provide advocacy, educate veterans on benefits, lobby Congress and legislators and provide a network for veterans. SDDVA works closely with these congressional chartered veterans service organizations:

- Air Force Sergeants Association
- American Legion and Auxiliary
- AMVETS
- Disabled American Veterans and Auxiliary
- Korean War Veterans Association
- Marine Corps League
- Military Officers Association of America
- Military Order of the Purple Heart
- National American Indian Veterans
- National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs
- National Guard Association of South Dakota
- National Guard Enlisted Association
- National Guard Enlisted Association Auxiliary
- Non-Commissioned Officers Association of America
- Paralyzed Veterans of America
- The Retired Enlisted Association
- U.S. Submarine Veterans Inc.
- Veterans of Foreign Wars and Auxiliary
- Vietnam Veterans of America





## Partners

### **South Dakota Veterans Commission**

The South Dakota Veterans Commission consists of six members appointed by the Governor. Members of the commission shall be citizens of the United States and of South Dakota, and shall be veterans who have been discharged from the armed forces honorably or under honorable conditions. Annual appointments shall be made for terms of six years.

Commissioners have the responsibility of communicating the Governor’s veteran-related public policy positions to the veterans of South Dakota and returning to the Governor those concerns and viewpoints of the veteran constituency.

Current members of the Commission are:

Chairman Lori Vosika (Hot Springs)

Vice Chairman Kella With Horn (Aberdeen)

Commissioner James Ross (Whitewood)

Commissioner Brooks Schild (Yankton)

Commissioner Daryl (KC) Russell (Aberdeen)

Commissioner Helen Parr (Sioux Falls)





## Partners

### South Dakota Veterans Council

The purpose and objectives of the South Dakota Veterans Council are to develop a statewide, intelligent, aggressive and serviceable Council for the purpose of promoting all activities found to be for the good of all veterans and their dependents and to provide a practical means by which veterans service organizations throughout the state can effectively contribute to the betterment of all veterans.

The South Dakota Veterans Council is comprised of Congressionally chartered veterans' service organizations which include: American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Vietnam Veterans of America. Membership consists of three members from each veterans service organization.

Council leadership:

President—Terry Paulsen (PVA)

Vice President—Ken Teunissen (MOPH)

Secretary/Treasurer—Lisa Cummings (PVA)

Judge Advocate—Terry Hawk (VVA)





## Partners

### County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers

The Department maintains a statewide partnership with counties and tribes. Our County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers (CTVSOs) serve as the store front for the Department and have the local contact with veterans and their families. Today it is an effective network of 62 trained CTVSOs.



The CTVSOs ensure veterans have access to the benefits they have earned. CTVSOs are not supervised by the De-

partment however, the Department provides training, certification, accreditation, counseling and outreach to the CTVSOs. The Department holds initial onsite training for all new VSOs, as well as annual conferences and mini-

conferences. (A listing of the CTVSOs can be found on the next three pages.)





## Partners—CTVSOs

Aurora County—Ron Falor  
Beadle County—Taylor Jans  
Bennett County—Don Larson  
Bon Homme County—Eric Elsberry  
Brookings County—Michael Holzhauser  
Brown County—Aaron Walberg  
Brule County—Ron Falor  
Buffalo County—Vacant  
Butte County—Robert Wagner  
Campbell County—Lester Goehring  
Charles Mix County—Todd Breen  
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe—Robert Dunsmore  
Clark County—Larry Jones  
Clay County—Cindy Aden  
Codington County—Alvin Janzen  
Corson County—Loyson Carda  
Crow Creek Sioux Tribe—Vacant  
Custer County—Jana Virtue  
Davison County—Craig Bennett  
Day County—Kevin Bohn  
Deuel County—Dennis Evenson  
Dewey County—Robert Dunsmore  
Douglas County—Fred Kuil  
Edmunds County—Ron Hoffer  
Fall River County—Dan Cullen  
Faulk County—David Huss  
Grant County—Scott Malimanek  
Gregory County—Dale Reber  
Haakon County—Terry Deuter  
Hamlin County—David Schaefer  
Hand County—Dave Johnson



## Partners—CTVSOs

Hanson County—Harry Huffman, Jr.  
Harding County—Vacant  
Hughes County—Charles Quinn  
Hutchinson County—Glenn Hartman  
Hyde County—Bob Sheffield  
Jackson County —Terry Deuter  
Jerauld County—Roger Dwyer  
Jones County—Gary Sletto  
Kingsbury County—Gary Schumacher  
Lake County—Douglas Huntrods  
Lawrence County—Jesse Ketzer  
Lincoln County—Susan Irons  
Lower Brule Sioux Tribe—Tim Felicia  
Lyman County—Gary Sletto  
Marshall County—David Daberkow  
McCook County—Keith Aden  
McPherson County—Darrell Pfeifle  
McPherson County—Harvey Schaible  
Meade County—Angela Bates  
Mellette County —Gary Sletto  
Miner County—Terrance Lee  
Minnehaha County—David Sorenson  
Moody County—Jim DeLay  
Oglala Lakota County —Denver American Horse  
Oglala Sioux Tribe — Darrell Hernandez  
Pennington County —Alex Purcell and Thomas Vallette  
Perkins County—Loyson Carda  
Potter County—Donald Herricks  
Roberts County—Angela Beacom  
Rosebud Sioux Tribe—Orlando Morrison, Sr.  
Sanborn County—Taylor Jans  
Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate—Geri Opsal





## Partners—CTVSOs

Spink County—Gordon Richard

Stanley—Charles Quinn

Standing Rock Sioux—Manaja Hill and David Harrison

Sully County—Charles Quinn

Todd County—Ronald Valandra

Tripp County—Terry Cousins

Turner County—Thomas Sparrow

Union County—Susan Irons

Walworth County—Leo Rookey

Yankton County—Michael McDonald

Yankton Sioux Tribe—Dennis Rucker

Ziebach County—Harold Veit



## 2017 Top SDDVA Accomplishments

- ◆ Continued involvement with the South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition.
- ◆ Worked with tribal leaders to secure education on housing funding for Native American Veterans.
- ◆ Compensation and pension awards for CY17 exceeded \$196 million.
- ◆ Grew our involvement in veterans courts and treatment team.
- ◆ Participated in 169 outreach events.
- ◆ Had over 180 veterans participating in On-the-Job training programs.
- ◆ Paid \$149,690 in veterans bonuses.
- ◆ Reimbursed \$45,900 for military funeral honors stipends.
- ◆ Received VA Certification for the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home, as well as the Platinum Award from the SD Great Plains Nursing Home Quality Care Collaborative.
- ◆ Initiated Operation CARS – Calling All Returning Service members—allowing us to welcome them home, thank them for their service, and put them in contact with teams that can assist them with benefits, programs, services and employment.
- ◆ Recognized and honored South Dakota Veterans that served in Taiwan during 1955-1979. Presented them with SD/Republic of China Mutual Defense Commemorative Badge.
- ◆ Through the efforts of our department and our partners, we saw significant gains in the amount of total federal benefits that veterans received. Total awards for CY17 exceeded \$642 Million.
- ◆ Brought South Dakota Joining Forces into the folds of the Department versus utilizing a contractor.



**Soldiers and Sailors World War I Memorial Building**  
**Home to the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs**

**South Dakota**  
**Department of Veterans Affairs**  
**425 E. Capitol**  
**Pierre, SD 57501**  
**605-773-3269**  
**<http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>**

