



South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

A YEAR IN REVIEW

2022

Table of Contents

Leadership	3
Secretary's Office	4
Secretary's Message	5
Veteran Population	6-8
Legislative Highlights	9
Benefits Division	10
Economic Impact	11
Field Division	12
Operation CARS, Salary Supplement, and Homeless Veterans Program	13
Bonus	14
Appeals	15
Funeral Honors Reimbursement	16
Burial Allowance and Headstone Setting Fees	17
Education, OJT, and Apprenticeship Programs	18
Public Affairs	19
Suicide Awareness	20
What's Brewing	21
Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedications	22
State Veterans Cemetery	23-26
State Veterans Home	27-28
Partners	29-32
SDDVA Contact Information	33





Greg Whitlock
Secretary
425 E. Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Pierre Phone: 605.773.3269
Email: greg.whitlock@state.sd.us



Aaron Pollard
Deputy Secretary
1600 W. Russell Street
Sioux Falls, SD 57104
Cell Phone: 605.360.4173
Email: aaron.pollard@state.sd.us

The primary mission of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs is to advocate with purpose and passion for veterans and link them to superior services, benefits, and support. Our team is at the forefront of the most demanding challenges confronting our state’s veterans and their families, regardless of what era they served in.

As is the case with all of our state agencies; our people truly make a difference. For the team at SDDVA, it truly is a privilege and an honor to serve our veterans and their family members. Our team labors tirelessly to ensure that the State of South Dakota preserves our reputation as “a veteran friendly state.”

Secretary's Office



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

SDDVA is an agency of state government created for the purpose of advising, counseling, and assisting veterans and their families in receiving their rightful benefits under the vast and complex framework of federal and state regulations.

We are extremely proud of the South Dakotans, and all who have honorably served our country over the centuries.

Providing quality and effective service to veterans and their dependents is, and always will be, our number one mission.

In doing so, we pledge to stay current and adjust quickly and carefully to new laws, be diligent in their application, and continually improve our efficiency in service to veterans and their dependents.

We draw on the rich history of American veterans and their unique contributions to our nation for inspiration and direction.

We are committed to open and effective communication that builds trust and improves performance.

Secretary's Message

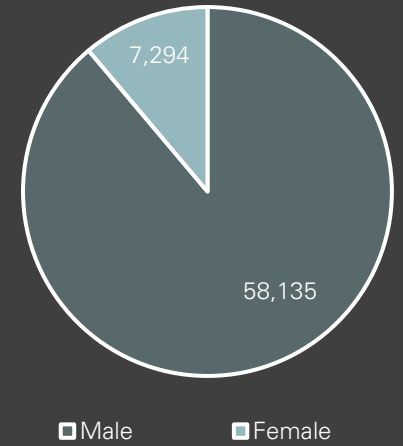
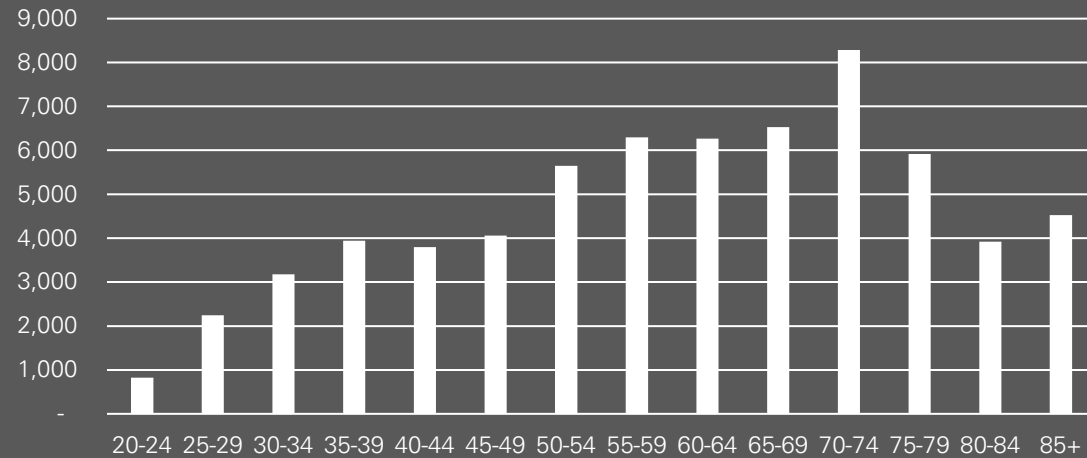
On behalf of the entire team at the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, I am pleased to present this year's annual report.

The report highlights the outstanding accomplishments of our superb team of dedicated professionals and the unmatched support we receive from our county, tribal, state and federal partners. They play a major role in the direct infusion of more than \$867 million annually for veterans in South Dakota's economy through federal compensation, education, pension benefits, and VA medical services.



WHO WE SERVED

Veterans By Age



Who We Served

There are 941 living World War II Veterans in South Dakota.

There are 3,869 living Korean War-era Veterans in South Dakota, who served from 1950 to 1955.

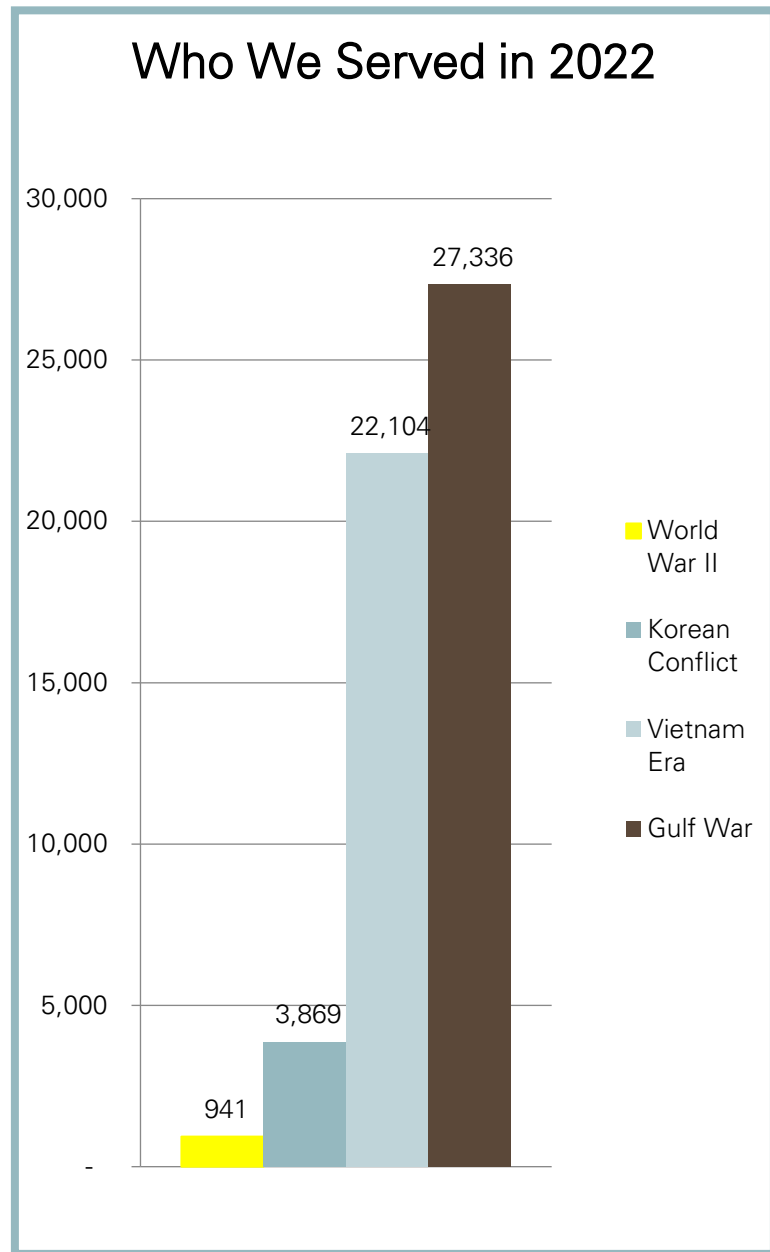
There are 22,104 living Vietnam-era Veterans in South Dakota, who served from 1961 to 1975. SDDVA has seen an increase in disability claims filed on behalf of Vietnam Veterans due to the manifestation of acute diseases brought on by exposure to Agent Orange.

There are 27,336 living Gulf War-Era and pre-9/11 Veterans in South Dakota.

There are 10,946 living post-9/11 Veterans in South Dakota. Our returning veterans, much like the Greatest Generation of World War II, are seeking employment, housing, and education opportunities for themselves, their spouses and families.

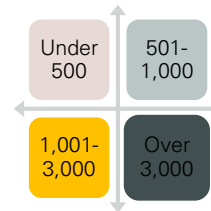
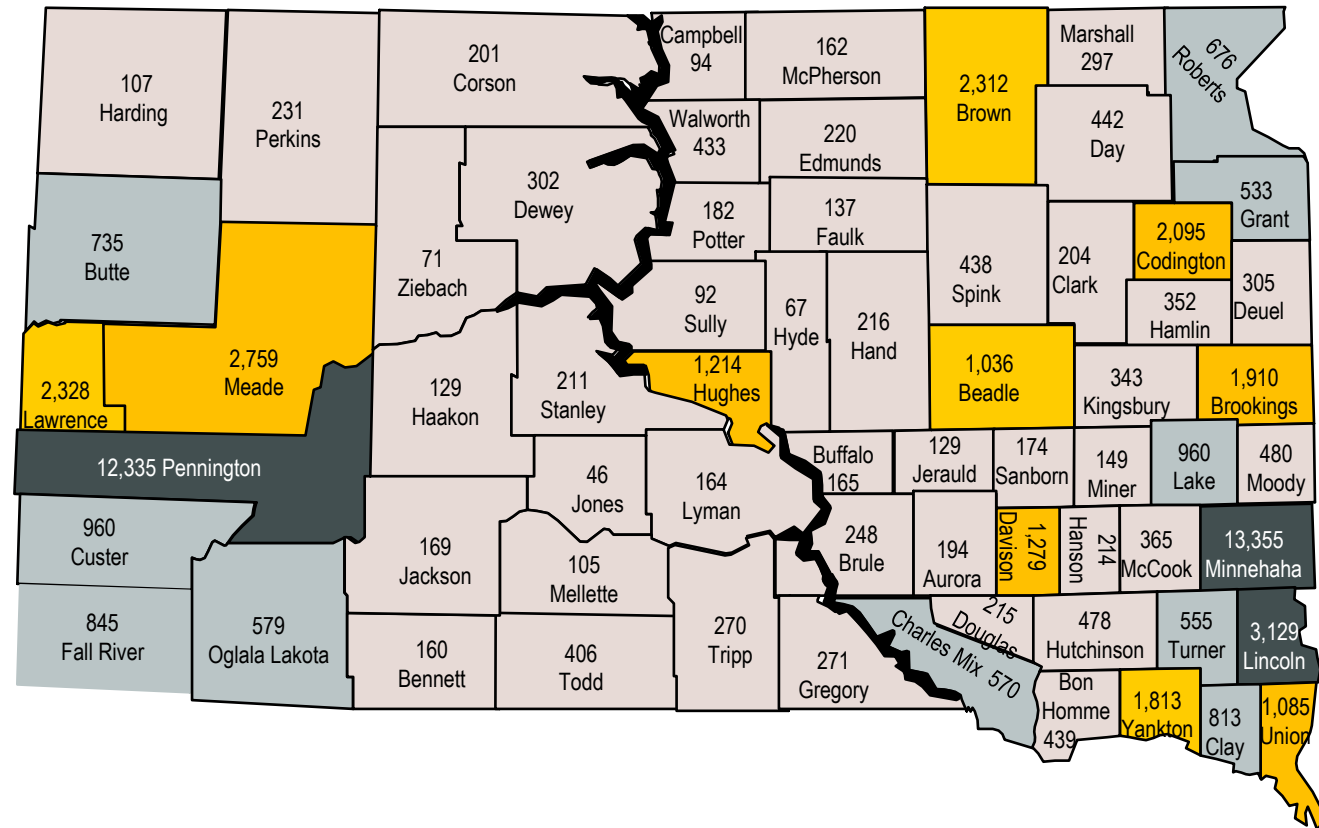
There are 13,321 living Peacetime Veterans in South Dakota. They served honorably during a unique and relatively conflict-free time in our history.

(Note: Data on pages six and seven is provided by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.)



Veteran Count

Veterans are one of this country's most valuable assets and SDDVA is on the front line of providing assistance to over 65,000 veterans and their families within our borders and countless additional veterans and their families from all over.





Legislative Highlights

- Revised the appropriation for road improvements to the State Veterans Cemetery to include \$500,000 in other fund expenditure authority, and to declare an emergency. (SB 63)
- Revised the freeze on assessments for dwellings of disabled and senior citizens. (HB 1001)
- Funds were appropriated for developing a master plan for Capitol Lake and the Veterans Memorials. (HB 1013)
- Provided a partial property tax exemption for the surviving spouses of certain veterans. (HB 1083)
- Increased household income thresholds for a paraplegic tax reduction. (HB 1284)
- Additional general funds of \$55,000 for funding military funeral honors program. (HB 1340)

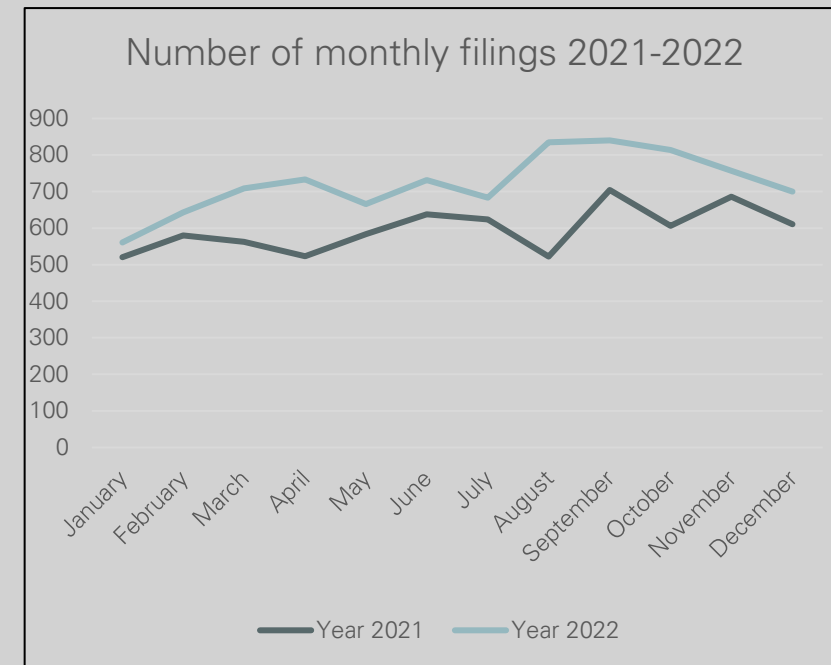
Benefits Division

Located in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office in Sioux Falls, the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) claims office provides comprehensive and quality service to veterans and their families seeking assistance in obtaining VA benefits. Our team assists veterans and their dependents in building, filing, tracking, and appealing claims for disability compensation, nonservice-connected pension, survivor benefits, education, and healthcare.

On August 10, 2022, Public Law 117-168, the PACT Act, became effective. This law:

- added two new conditions to the list of service-connected disabilities for veterans exposed to Agent Orange.
- expanded coverage to veterans who served in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Guam.
- provides extended healthcare to Gulf War veterans who served in a combat zone as well as identifying 24 conditions presumed to be linked to environmental hazards in Gulf War Veterans for which they may be eligible for service-connection and receive disability benefits.

Due to the growing veteran population in South Dakota, the number of VA benefit-related filings have multiplied over the last five years. With the passing of the PACT Act, these filings have increased significantly. Between August and December of 2022, the claims office experienced a 26% increase in filings over the same period last year. In-person interviews conducted at the claims office increased by over 40% in 2022 with 1,914 veterans consulted by our VSOs.



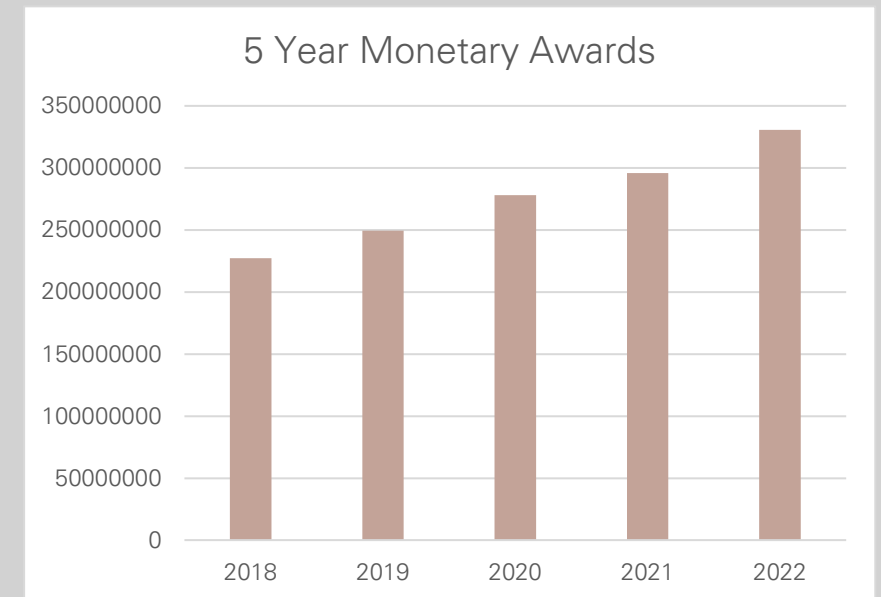
Benefits Division

Economic Impact

Through the efforts of our employees, county and tribal veterans service officers, and other partners; the Department saw significant gains in the monetary and healthcare benefits that our veterans and family members received. 2021 was a record-breaking year with our South Dakota veterans receiving monetary benefits in the form of disability and pension related payments of over \$295 Million.

In 2022, these payments increased to just over \$330 Million. Economic studies indicate these monies turn over between three to seven times in a community. Our team continues to seek every benefit available to our veterans and provide them with the best customer service possible.

With the implementation of the Blue Water Navy Act in 2019, the VA has been reviewing claims filed by veterans who, prior to that date, were ineligible for disability compensation because they had served off the shores or outside the country of Vietnam. These veterans, who are now deemed service-connected dating back to their original claim filing, or their surviving family members, are receiving large monetary awards.



Benefits Division

Field Division

A team of five field veteran service officers (FVSOs) are assigned throughout the state to work closely with all 66 counties and nine tribes to ensure those veterans service officers are familiar with laws, policies, and procedures. Each FVSO is assigned to a specific area and works with their respective tribal and county VSOs in filing for benefits and resolving special issues.

The FVSOs meet with those veterans/families who are unable to travel to county/tribal offices and assist them in filing claims. The FVSOs also assist the residents of the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home. FVSOs frequently attend outreach events such as Veterans Day programs, Congressional forums, the State Fair, Memorial Day programs, federal department of VA events, veterans stand downs, and community events to provide information on benefits.



Benefits Division

Operation CARS
Salary Supplement Programs
Homeless Veterans

SDCL 33A-1-30 and 33A-1-31 establishes a reimbursement program for SDDVA to provide financial assistance to counties and tribes in paying the salaries of their veterans' service officers. In 2022, 57 counties and three tribes made application for and were deemed eligible for a total reimbursement of \$174,375.

Calling All Returning Service Members (CARS) is a program that the SDDVA uses to reach out to South Dakota residents returning from Active Duty. This is an opportunity for us to provide them with a heartfelt welcome home, contact information to their local county or tribal veterans service officers or our state staff, and answer any questions they may have on their transition back to civilian life.

The South Dakota Housing for the Homeless Consortium is a statewide organization made up of service providers, individuals, city/county governments and state government agencies and works to address homelessness in the state. SDDVA is a member of the Consortium and is focused on the issue of homelessness among the veteran population.

Benefits Division

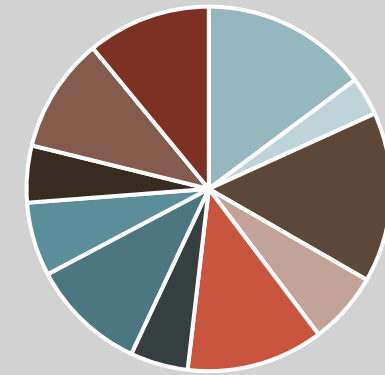
Bonus Program

The State of South Dakota is home to thousands of heroes...men and women who served honorably...and members of the military who are currently protecting our state and country, both at home and abroad. The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs is proud to say thanks to those with active-duty service through the SDDVA Veterans/Active-Duty Bonus Program. A few years ago, the US Department of Veterans Affairs published a list of the most popular state benefits...and the SDDVA Bonus Program was mentioned as one of the best in South Dakota.

<https://news.va.gov/76439/veterans-benefits-2020-popular-state-benefit/>

Through the current program, the Department awards payments of up to \$500 to discharged veterans and current servicemembers with qualifying active-duty service from August 2, 1990, through a date yet to be determined. In Calendar Year 2022, SDDVA sent out 91 bonus checks at a value of \$33,920. We appreciate our partners who help spread the word about the bonus program including county and tribal veterans service officers, members of the Reserve Component Transition Assistance Advisor Program and veterans and servicemembers who have already received their bonus who tell others about the benefit.

SDDVA Processed \$33,920 in Bonus Payments in 2022
Here is a breakdown by month:



- January \$0.00
- February \$5,020
- March \$1,160
- April \$5,120
- May \$2,170
- June \$4,120
- July \$1,740
- August \$3,480
- September \$2,220
- October \$1,710
- November \$3,460
- December \$3,720

Benefits Division

Appeals

The appeals process within the VA is complex, lengthy, and comes with its own set of laws, rules, regulations, and processes. Appeals are ever-changing, and our department works diligently to remain knowledgeable of the current and future steps of the program so we can advise claimants we represent with their best course of action. Our team assists claimants in preparing appeals, as well as developing arguments for their case. We monitor the appeal through every step and make sure that deadlines are met, and proper evidence is submitted within the VA's designated timeframes.

Our claimants can have three board appeal options: a hearing with a board judge, submit evidence for the judge to review, or have a judge review the file as it stands. Our success with virtual hearings the last two years has eliminated South Dakota's hearing backlog. As of November 2022, we have only 30 veterans awaiting a hearing as compared to 55 at the end of 2021. In 2022, we worked over 50 appeals.

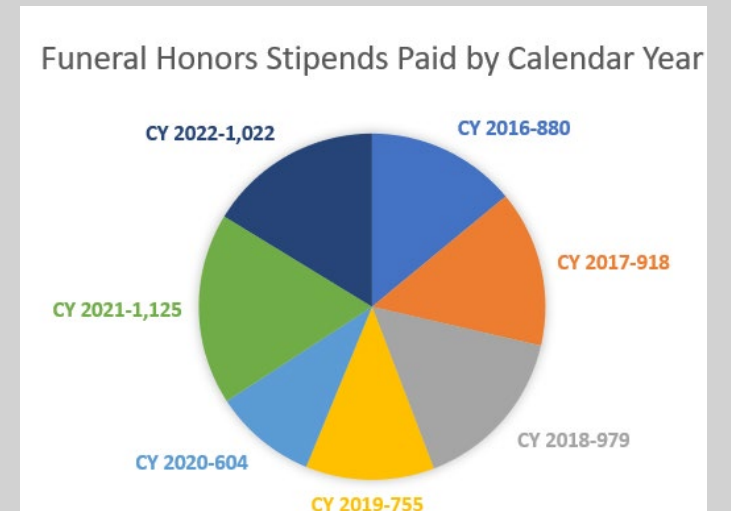
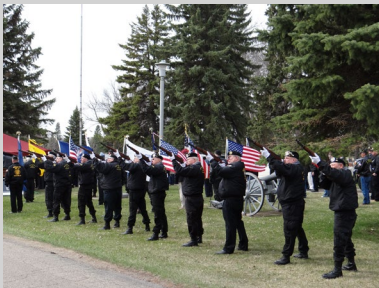
With the backlog of hearings under control we were able to continue the shift from a reactive to a proactive approach to appeals. The shift in 2022 was to do a complete case review and write up soon after submitting the request to the Board of Appeals. This allowed the Appeals Specialist to reach out to the county or to the veteran and let them know what evidence could be gathered to strengthen their case prior to the hearing. It is a better service to our veterans to let them know what to gather in support of their appeal during the interim time rather than wait until the hearing date to let them know what their case is missing. This process has continued and resulted in much faster appeal turn around times.

Benefits Division

Funeral Honors Reimbursement

Since 2015, the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs has managed the Military Funeral Honors program, which issues payments to veterans' service organizations in South Dakota whose honor guards conduct services for deceased veterans. Last year, 1,022 claims were paid out for a total of \$61,800. When the program was first initiated, the stipend was \$50, and it remained at that level until the 2022 South Dakota Legislature approved additional funding. That change has resulted in the payment being doubled to \$100. The \$100 stipend was first paid starting with services conducted after July 1, 2022.

The Military Funeral Honors program continues to grow as more veterans service organizations learn about the stipend and file for the payment. SDDVA now counts more than 130 posts and chapters that have conducted military funeral honors since 2015.



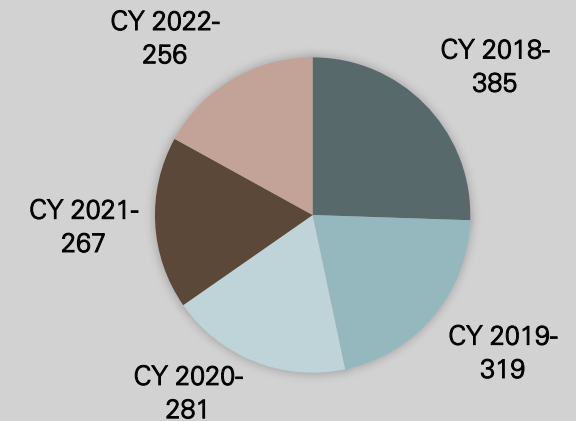
Benefits Division

Headstone Setting Fees Burial Allowance

Government headstones or markers placed at the graves of eligible veterans are furnished by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. There is no charge for the headstone or marker, however the cost of permanently setting it is the responsibility of the requesting family or applicant. The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs pays \$100 toward the cost of a government granite or marble headstone or bronze marker after the marker/headstone has been permanently placed. The veteran being memorialized must have been a resident of South Dakota for a year prior to entering the military or one-year preceding death. In 2022, \$25,600 was paid out in headstone setting fee stipends.

Another state veterans benefit administered by the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs is the Burial Allowance program. According to South Dakota Codified Law (Chapter 33A-5-2), \$100 will be paid toward the burial of a veteran or the veteran's spouse if the estate of the deceased is not sufficient to defray the costs. The burial allowance program paid for three applications that were filed.

**Headstone Setting Fee Payments Paid by
Calendar Year Since 2018**



Benefits Division

Education and Employment Programs

In 2022, there were a total of 365 approved On-the-Job Training and Apprenticeship programs . A total of 187 veterans used their GI Bill® for employment with 40 active firms and 51 active programs. In schools, there were 1,538 students using their GI Bill® for education benefits.

In South Dakota, we help connect veterans and family members with educational benefits and resources to succeed in college or within an On-the Job Training or Apprenticeship program. We support the success of veterans, current military members, and their families that are using benefits at South Dakota colleges and universities. We provide comprehensive information about benefits and resources, as well as work closely with college and university staff to ensure all veterans or family members using benefits are getting the most of their benefits. We assist in administering various federal and state education benefits to veterans and their families. Those programs include:

- GI Bill® (Chapter 1606, 30, 31, 33, & 35)
- On-the-Job-Training and Apprenticeship Programs
- Free tuition for veterans
- Free tuition for children of veterans who died during service
- Free tuition for dependents of POW/MIAs
- Reduced tuition for SD National Guard members
- Free tuition to children or spouses of SD National Guard members who have been disabled or killed in the line of duty
- Honorary high school diploma.

Veterans can choose to use their GI Bill® from 35 institutes of higher learning (colleges and universities), 20 non-college degree institutions (high schools, welding schools, and trade schools), and two flight training schools.

Our Department serves as the state approving agency (SAA). As such, we promote and safeguard quality education and training for veterans, ensure greater educational and training opportunities to meet the changing needs of veterans, and protect the GI Bill® resources available for those programs by assisting the VA in preventing fraud, waste, and abuse in the administration of the GI Bill®.

Public Affairs

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs Communications team strives to help the agency build relationships and improve communications with strategic audiences; informing and promoting veteran-related initiatives that support and further our goals.

A key objective is strengthening relationships and increasing engagement with stakeholders and improving awareness of and participation in SDDVA services.

The Department's website (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.

The Department disseminates a weekly newsletter electronically to entities within our veteran network. This newsletter and job postings can be found at: <https://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: <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/publicaffairs/upcomingevents.aspx>.

The public affairs office also actively participates in the legislative process by tracking all veteran-related bills introduced, along with committee hearings, during each legislative session, updating department staff daily and partners weekly.

We continue to use social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) to share our messages.

We offer a variety of publications and materials to keep media, veterans, and the general public up-to-date on veteran's issues around the state and nation - from legislative reports, to media contacts, newsletters, press releases, photos, annual reports and more.

Public Affairs

Suicide Awareness

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs is committed to ending the preventable tragedy of veteran's suicides. In the summer of 2019, Governor Noem tasked state agencies to develop a statewide suicide prevention strategic plan. Together, South Dakota's Departments of Health, Social Services, Education, Tribal Relations, Veterans Affairs, and Agriculture, as well as the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board formed a work group and developed [South Dakota's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#).

The development of the strategic plan included review of the prior work related to suicide prevention and review of national strategies. A framework including guiding principles, goals, objectives and strategies was created and finalized.

Key objectives and strategies center around prevention, intervention, and postvention with the main goal to reduce suicide deaths in South Dakota.

SDDVA and its multi-state agency sub-workgroup meets monthly to work on priority strategies. Key accomplishments to date include: data dashboards on the website (<https://sdsuicideprevention.org/>), key messaging within agencies media platforms and communication channels, and resiliency training.

Next steps include partnering with healthcare facilities, increased training, providing targeted outreach, developing more resources materials, and growing partnerships with other state and community leaders and providers.

The SD Suicide Prevention website serves as the main source of information. And to help with consistent and aligned messaging, an interagency communication plan was developed. The plan includes messages, social media posts, posters, toolkit items and outreach promotional materials.

SDDVA challenges our partners to do their "buddy checks" to reconnect with veterans who may need assistance but don't know where to go or who to ask. Buddy checks can be done by a personal visit, a phone call, or an email.



Public Affairs

What's Brewing

In 2022, the Department introduced a new program called "What's Brewing."

This program is a great opportunity for our Department to visit with veterans and hear first-hand about the issues they might be experiencing, as well as allow us an opportunity to brief them on new benefits and services. As the advocate for South Dakota veterans, we need to know what challenges our veterans are facing.

We walk among veterans every day and yet may not even realize the magnitude of their sacrifices to serve our country.

Our team addressed questions about veteran's benefits; including compensation, education, pension, healthcare, burial, state veterans cemetery, state veterans home, and the Pact Act of 2022.

This year's events were held in Clark, Harrisburg, Pierre, and Wagner.

In 2023, we are planning to host events in the following counties: Butte, Clay, Kingsbury, Lake, Lawrence, Union and Walworth; as well as at the veteran's resource centers at Black Hills State University, Dakota State University, and University of South Dakota.



**Veterans,
See
What's
Brewing!**



Public Affairs

Fallen Hero Bridge Dedications



The South Dakota Departments of Veterans Affairs, in partnership with the Department of Military, Department of Transportation and Governor Kristi Noem, coordinated the South Dakota Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedication Program. To date, 29 bridges have been dedicated honoring 32 heroes.

In 2022, bridges were dedicated near the following communities: Claire City, Dupree, Egan, Howard, Lantry, Murdo, Okreek, Presho, Salem, Wagner, Watertown, and Yankton.

This program affords South Dakota the opportunity to dedicate state bridges to South Dakotans who died while in active service or who are missing in action.

Naming South Dakota bridges in honor of our fallen gives us the opportunity of remembrance, reflection, and respect—to honor the men and women who gave their lives in service to this nation.

The Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedication Committee meets in April and selects twelve heroes to honor and twelve bridges to dedicate each year. Dedication of the bridges are held May through November.

South Dakota has more than 3,000 veterans that made the ultimate sacrifice. Although these heroes are no longer with us, their memories live on in the hearts of their loved ones and our state. They cherished liberty and loved freedom enough to lay down their lives to preserve our way of life.



South Dakota Veterans Cemetery

The South Dakota Veterans Cemetery is the first and only federally funded, state-owned and operated veterans cemetery in South Dakota. The official dedication ceremony was held on Memorial Day-May 31, 2021. The first veteran was laid to rest on June 4, 2021.



Hours of Operation:

Grounds: Sunrise to Sunset, Seven days per week

Office: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday (closed on federal and state holidays)

What is Provided:

Casket Gravesite, Cremation Gravesite, Cremation Niche or Scattering Garden

Pre-placed graveliner: casket only

Headstone: standard government upright granite

Perpetual care: gravesites maintained by cemetery personnel

Cost:

Veteran: All burial options are of NO cost to eligible veterans

Spouse/Eligible Dependent: \$893 all burial options

* Fees for dependents cannot be prepaid and may increase annually

Pre-Registration:

Yes, this assures eligibility in advance and eliminates delays in providing military documents to the cemetery.

Committal Services:

The cemetery can do up to seven committal services a day, Monday – Friday, on a first-come first-serve basis. Committal service times are on the hour starting at 9am and ending by 3pm. Committal services are held at the committal service shelter. Graveside services are not permitted. All interments are completed immediately after the committal service.

Military Honors:

The cemetery office will take care of making the arrangements for military honors, to include rifle volley, taps, flag folding, and presentation. Clergy services and other arrangements are the responsibility of the family or family's designated representative.

South Dakota Veterans Cemetery

Cemetery numbers for 2022:

Total Burials: 205
Total Headstones/Niches Set: 179
New Applications Received: 494
Total Walk-ins: 1,326
Total Phone Calls: 1,152
Outreach Events: 28



November 2022 marked the completion of the paving project of Slip Up Creek Road from Jim Zweep Highway to the entrance of the cemetery. This paved path has given funeral processions and all visitors a safe road to travel into the cemetery.



The South Dakota Veterans Cemetery and Midwest Honor Flight have created a partnership that has facilitated Wreaths Across America and the Midwest Honor Ride programs at our cemetery. Both programs are a way to honor and celebrate the lives of those we have buried and their loved ones.

South Dakota Veterans Cemetery

Veterans Day was the perfect setting for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs to welcome and introduce two new guardians to the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery. These guardians will serve as an affirmation to everyone who enters the cemetery that we have made it our mission to welcome to this solemn place those who offered so much to their country.

Eagles are common symbols of wisdom, vision, might, regality, and ferocity. The eagle eye is seen as a symbol of sharpness and accuracy, with the piercing gaze representing protection and vigilance.

All of the men and women buried at the state veterans cemetery offered everything. Some returned home to live their lives after they served. Some did not. Regardless of when they took their final breath, and what the circumstances were, our cemetery has become the forever home for their mortal bodies.

The eagles were sculpted by Jurek Jakowicz, and were funded by: Paul Weckman, Military Officers Association of America, Disabled American Veterans—Chapter 1, American Legion Post 15, SD Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 959, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Department of South Dakota Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans—Chapter 11, Paralyzed Veterans of America— North Central Chapter, Disabled American Veterans—Chapter 13, Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1054, as well as private partners.



South Dakota Veterans Cemetery

Eight South Dakota Military Funeral Honor Guards were presented with the South Dakota Hall of Fame “Acts of Excellence” award in April of 2022. The SDHF award was presented in recognition of the military funeral honors conducted for veterans at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery. Honor guards recognized were:

- American Legion Post 15 – Sioux Falls
- American Legion Post 23 – Garretson
- American Legion Post 65 – Dell Rapids
- American Legion Post 118 – Hartford
- American Legion Post 45 – Harrisburg
- American Legion Post 13 – Wakonda
- VFW Post 628 – Sioux Falls
- Marine Corps League – Sioux Falls

Providing military funeral honors is our nation’s way of showing gratitude and paying final tribute to a veteran’s honorable military service.

Honor Guards conducted over 140 services in 2022 at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery.



Acts of Excellence
SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA

Presented by the South Dakota Hall of Fame to:
VFW Post 628 – Sioux Falls

Honoring veterans as they are laid to rest is a special and time-honored tradition carried out by various Sioux Falls area honor guards, and most recently at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery.

Focusing on the dignity and valor of a death, the honor guard performs a ceremony that includes rifle volley, playing of Taps, and the folding and presentation of the flag to the family.

The rendering of military funeral honors is a way to show the nation's deep gratitude to those who have faithfully defended our country in time of war and peace.

The services you provide, help families remember what their loved one did, why they did it, and appreciate what it means to us as a nation.

The ceremonial paying of respect is the final demonstration that a grateful nation can provide to a veteran's family.

Honoring Those Who Have Served Our Country

Sponsored by
SANFORD
HEALTH

Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home

At the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home, we provide quality long-term care services, rehabilitative, and social services to each resident. Our goal is to ensure that each resident experiences the highest possible quality of life, every day.

Additionally, our Home is supported by dedicated volunteers from local communities, veterans service organizations and fraternal organizations who provide many additional supporting services and activities which enhance the lives of our residents. We are indebted to our volunteers and offer our appreciation.

Our Home is subject to the regulatory standards of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and the South Dakota Department of Health and undergoes annual licensure inspections by both agencies in areas of resident care, quality, and safety.

We maintain a five-star rating from Medicare, which is based on health inspections, staffing, and quality of resident care measures.

We focus on health of the whole person – intellectual, social, occupational, spiritual, emotional, and physical wellness.





Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home

2022 marked 133 years of providing service to residents at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home; underscoring South Dakota's rich legacy and commitment to take care of our heroes.

In 2022, our Home saw retirements of key leadership positions, including the superintendent, director of nursing and assistant director of nursing. Fortunately, we were able to fill all of the positions and this great team of professionals led our team in providing our high standard of care.

The Flag Pavilion was completed and the soldier memorial was moved to the Flag Pavilion footprint. Roofing projects were completed on the Kern Building and Canyon Cottage. Also, our VA Nursing Grant program wrapped up in 2022. This program assisted our staff in furthering their nursing degrees.

Across the country, long-term care facilities, including our Home, are faced with staffing shortages. This challenge has made it necessary for us to utilize temporary contract staff, and to temporarily close one household to allow us to focus on our resident's needs and provide quality care.

Partners

County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers

Aurora – Audrey Chapman
Beadle – Taylor Jans
Bennett – Don Larson
Bon Homme – Eric Elsberry
Brookings – Courtney Steffen
Brown – Aaron Walberg
Brule – Tim Thomas
Buffalo – Tim Thomas
Butte – Jasen Saivong
Campbell – Lester Goehring
Charles Mix – Jerry Seiner
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe – Robert Dunsmore
Clark – Darin Lewis
Clay – Drew Gunderson
Codington – Todd Rose
Corson – Kevin Dyda
Crow Creek Sioux Tribe – Kay Koster
Custer – Todd Fish
Davison – Craig Bennett
Day – Jeff Nelson
Deuel – Dennis Evenson
Dewey – Kevin Dyda
Douglas – Jay Vanden Hoek
Edmunds – Barb Schaefer
Fall River – Dan Cullen
Faulk – David Huss
Grant – Scott Malimanek
Gregory – Dale Reber
Haakon – Terry Deuter
Hamlin – David Schaefer
Hand – Dave Johnson
Hanson – Craig Bennett
Harding – James Pickett
Hughes – Janet Beck
Hutchinson – Glenn Hartman
Hyde – Dave Johnson

Jackson – Terry Deuter
Jerauld – Craig Bennett
Jones – Vacant
Kingsbury – Gary Schumacher
Lake – Matt Pillar
Lawrence – Jesse Ketzner
Lincoln – Susan Irons
Lower Brule Sioux Tribe – Vacant
Lyman - Vacant
Marshall – David Daberkow
McCook – Brian Havard
McPherson – Samantha Boshard
Meade – Eric Pearson
Mellette – Clinton Rasmusson
Miner – Timothy Reisch
Minnehaha – Kathy Richardson
Moody – Jerrick Charles
Oglala Lakota – Jerlene Arredondo
Oglala Sioux Tribe – Shawnee Red Bear
Pennington – Thomas Vallette/Robert Borries/Heather Funk
Perkins – Bridget Keller
Potter – Isaac Full
Roberts – Christopher Hicks
Rosebud Sioux Tribe – Orlando Morrison
Sanborn – Craig Bennett
Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate – Geri Opsal
Spink – Steve Wollman
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe – Claudette Stricker
Stanley – Janet Beck
Sully – Janet Beck
Todd – Ronald Valandra
Tripp – Milton Douglas
Turner – Thomas Sparrow
Union – Lisa Schenzel
Walworth – Peter Weinzirl
Yankton – Robert Stickney
Yankton Sioux Tribe – Dennis Rucker
Ziebach – Vacant

Partners

South Dakota County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers Association

The South Dakota County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers Association (SDVSOA) is an organization consisting of county and tribal veterans service officers across the state.

The primary purpose of the SDVSOA is to promote and further the work of all county and tribal veterans service officers in the State of South Dakota and to ensure that all of the State's veterans and/or their families are reached and receive the care and benefits to which they are entitled.

Current board members are as follows:

President—Aaron Walberg (Brown County)

Vice President—Craig Bennett (Davison, Hanson, Jerauld, and Sanborn Counties)

Secretary-Treasurer—Sam Boshard (McPherson County)

Judge Advocate—Dennis Evenson (Deuel County)

District 1—Courtney Steffen (Brookings County)

District 2—David Huss (Faulk County)

District 3—Vacant

District 4—Jesse Ketzner (Lawrence County)

District 5—Geri Opsal (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate)

Partners

South Dakota Veterans Council

The South Dakota Veterans Council is comprised of the following Congressionally chartered veterans' service organizations: 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—Connie Johnson (Military Order of the Purple Heart)

Vice President—Kevin Hempel (American Legion)

Secretary/Treasurer—Marty Pennock (Disabled American Veterans)

Judge Advocate—Terry Hawk (Vietnam Veterans of America)



Partners

Veterans Service Organizations

Veterans Service Organizations provide advocacy, educate veterans on benefits, lobby Congress and legislators, and provide a network for veterans. SDDVA works closely with these congressionally chartered veterans service organizations.

American Legion
American Legion Auxiliary
Disabled American Veterans
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary
Marine Corps League
Military Officers Association of America
Military Order of the Purple Heart
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
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary
Vietnam Veterans of America

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

Here to Serve Those
Who Served

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Pierre Administrative Office
425 E. Capitol
Pierre, SD 57501-3100
605.773.3269
605.773.5380 (fax)

Sioux Falls Administrative Office
SD Military Heritage Alliance Bldg.
Suites 406 and 407
1600 W. Russell Street
Sioux Falls, SD 57104-1330
605.360.4173

Sioux Falls Claims Office
c/o VA Regional Office
2501 W. 22nd Street
Sioux Falls, SD 57105-1305
605.333.6869
605.333.5386 (fax)

South Dakota Veterans Cemetery
25965 477th Avenue
Sioux Falls, SD 57104-6519
605.277.8094

Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home
2500 Minnekahta Avenue
Hot Springs, SD 57747-1129
605.745.5127