SDDVA Secretary Whitlock’s July Column – New Laws, Services, and Programs Impacting Veterans

Each year the Governor, South Dakota agencies, legislators, constituents, and lobbyists review, debate, and consider hundreds of legislative issues. During the 2022 legislative session, over six hundred legislative bills and resolutions were introduced, but not all were passed.

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs serves as an advocate for veterans and reviews all the bills introduced and identifies those that will impact our veterans.

House Bill 1083 amended SDCL 10-4-41 to include a surviving spouse receiving dependency and indemnity compensation as a new class for a partial property tax exemption. One hundred fifty thousand dollars of the full and true value of the property is exempt from taxation. The exemption application for the $150,000 disabled veteran exemption program is due on November 1. House Bill 1083 will apply for the first time for the 2023 assessment for taxes payable in 2024.

In other recent developments that could benefit veterans, we now have a new national three-digit phone number for all mental health, substance use, and suicide crises - 988. When someone calls, chats, or texts 988, they can expect to be connected to a specialist who is trained and prepared to deliver support to anyone experiencing a crisis. Because a crisis is defined by the person or family experiencing it, the specialist will engage with the person to understand and address the person’s unique concerns.

When it comes to benefits for veterans, some federal programs can be very confusing. Did you know that the VA has changed the Southwest Asia Theater and Blue Water Navy presumptives? And did you know the VA is expanding their caregivers’ program? As always, we encourage all veterans to visit their county or tribal veterans service officers (CTVSOs) and allow them to assist in filing claims. These men and women have worn the boots, walked through trenches, conducted maneuvers, commanded troops, sustained missions, and protected our freedoms. Who better to have on your team? To locate the CTVSO nearest you visit: https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteransserviceofficers/locatevso.aspx.

Greg Whitlock, Secretary
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