

# Annual Report

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South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



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South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

425 E. Capitol Avenue

Pierre, SD 57501

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<https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>





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**SDDVA's  
Vision**

**"Insuring  
excellence,  
integrity,  
advocacy,  
accountability,  
collaboration,  
and respect is  
carried  
through in  
everything we  
strive to do  
and  
accomplish for  
veterans and  
their families."**

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## Secretary's Message

It is my pleasure to submit to you the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) annual report for 2019.

Our Department continues to maintain its commitment to serving our veterans and their families. This year's report provides the opportunity to share successes and ongoing efforts to improve the quality of life for veterans and their families.

This year was an exciting one for the Department. We celebrated the 130th anniversary of the State Veterans Home and we broke ground for South Dakota's first state veteran's cemetery.

We're proud of our partnerships with stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels—all helping to honor those who served.

Our dedicated team, most of whom are veterans, take our goals and responsibilities to heart.

Regardless of service era, we take an all-inclusive approach to ensure all veterans have access to their benefits.

In closing, I want to thank our partners. We could not achieve our mission of serving veterans and their families without the support and commitment from the private, public and non-profit organizations who continue to put veterans first. They play a major role in the direct infusion of more than \$668 million annually for veterans into South Dakota's economy through federal compensation, education, pension benefits, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' medical services.

### **SDDVA's Mission**

**"Provide comprehensive care and quality service to veterans and their families, regarding health care, education, disability benefits, long-term care, and burial honors by providing professional customer service and care."**



## Leadership



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### SECRETARY

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### DEPUTY SECRETARY

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## 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 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. It is now our honor to serve them.

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 encourage all employees in the agency to be responsible, imaginative, innovative, and flexible.

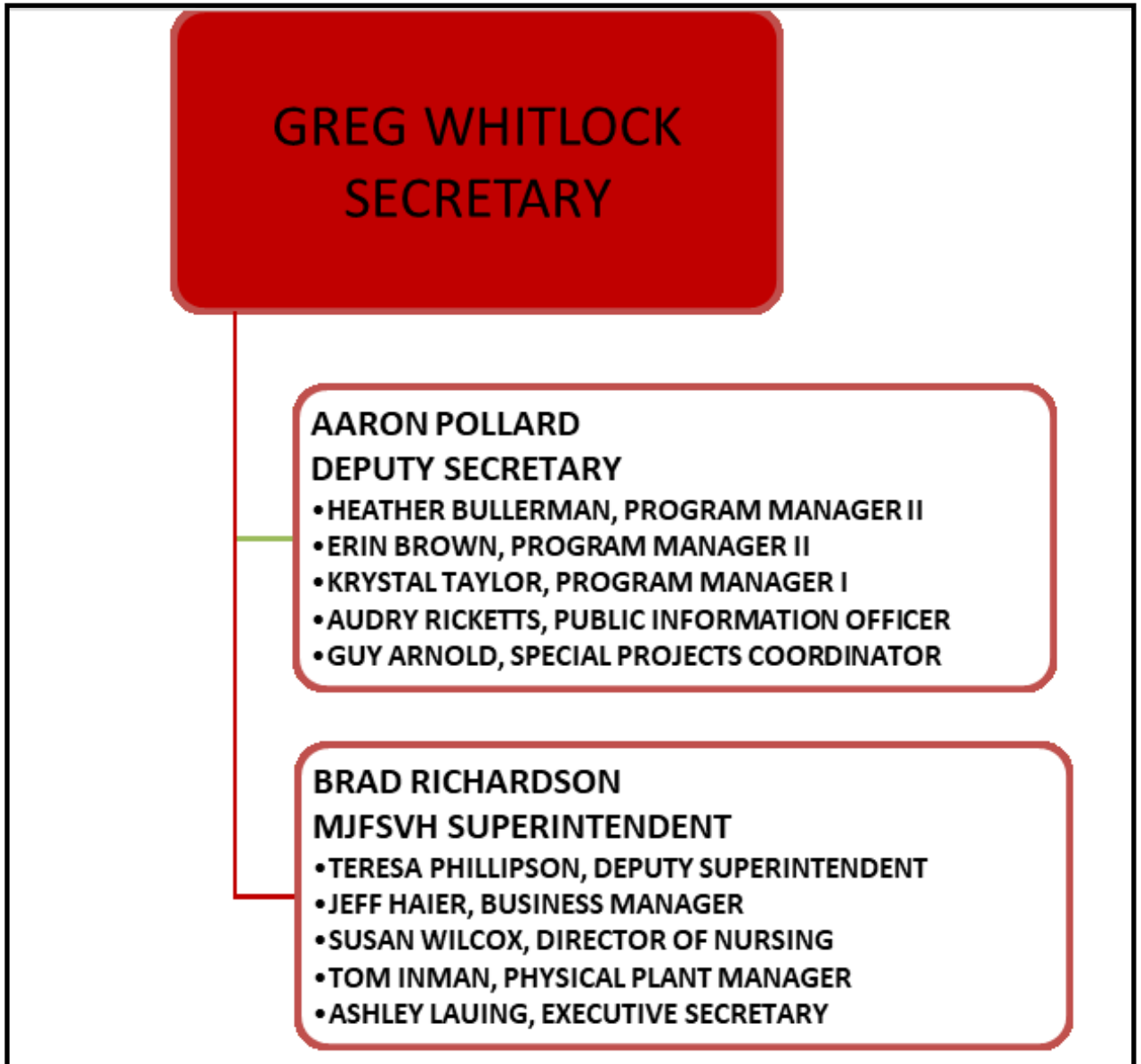
We draw on the rich history of American veterans and their unique contributions to our nation for inspiration and direction.

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

Operation CARS (Calling all Returning Servicemembers), continues to be an opportunity for us to reach out to all returning servicemembers by phone to thank them for their service, and make them aware of the programs and services available to them to assist in their transition back into civilian life.



**SDDVA Organizational Chart**



**Benefits Organizational Team**

**AARON POLLARD  
DEPUTY SECRETARY**

**HEATHER BULLERMAN, PROGRAM MANAGER II**

- KRYSTAL TAYLOR, PROGRAM MANAGER I
- GERALD LEMME, STATE VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER
- JOSEPH LEASURE, STATE VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER
- BRIAN VOGES, STATE VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER
- CODY TRAPP, STATE VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER
- SHANNON PHILLIPS, STATE VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER
- BRIDGET POORE, CLAIMS EXAMINER
- HANNAH MULDER, CLAIMS EXAMINER

**ERIN BROWN, PROGRAM MANAGER II**

- SHANE OLIVIER, EDUCATION PROGRAM SPECIALIST II
- KEVIN BOWEN, FIELD SERVICE OFFICER
- KEVIN SWANSON, FIELD SERVICE OFFICER
- WILLIAM HUFFMON, FIELD SERVICE OFFICER
- JORDAN LINDNER, FIELD SERVICE OFFICER
- BRETT DICKERSON, FIELD SERVICE OFFICER
- RYAN FOWLER, EDUCATION PROGRAM SPECIALIST I
- TYLER ROUSSELLE, STATE VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER
- JERI SMITH, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
- SHEILA SHAFFER, SECRETARY

## Budget and Finance

Connie Hohn serves as the Budget/Finance Director for the Department, and 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:

<b>Veteran's Affairs</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>	<b>FY18</b>	<b>FY19</b>
General Funds	\$ 2,490,440	\$ 4,009,421	\$ 4,113,689	\$ 4,367,050
Federal Funds	\$ 1,200,628	\$ 3,051,237	\$ 3,232,545	\$ 3,370,389
Other Funds	\$ 5,950,117	\$ 4,470,699	\$ 4,465,735	\$ 3,865,638
	<u>\$ 9,641,185</u>	<u>\$ 11,531,357</u>	<u>\$ 11,811,969</u>	<u>\$ 11,603,078</u>

<b>Veteran's Benefits</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>	<b>FY18</b>	<b>FY19</b>
General Funds	\$ 1,517,246	\$ 1,573,088	\$ 1,620,231	\$ 1,624,607
Federal Funds	\$ 162,425	\$ 149,379	\$ 183,053	\$ 173,554
Other Funds	\$ 983	\$ 1,898	\$ 23,145	\$ 1,327
	<u>\$ 1,680,654</u>	<u>\$ 1,724,365</u>	<u>\$ 1,826,429</u>	<u>\$ 1,799,488</u>

<b>Veteran's Home</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>	<b>FY18</b>	<b>FY19</b>
General Funds	\$ 973,194	\$ 2,436,333	\$ 2,493,458	\$ 2,592,442
Federal Funds	\$ 1,038,204	\$ 2,901,858	\$ 3,049,493	\$ 3,196,835
Other Funds	\$ 5,949,134	\$ 4,468,801	\$ 4,442,590	\$ 3,864,311
	<u>\$ 7,960,532</u>	<u>\$ 9,806,992</u>	<u>\$ 9,985,541</u>	<u>\$ 9,653,588</u>

<b>Veteran's Cemetery</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>	<b>FY18</b>	<b>FY19</b>
General Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 150,000
Federal Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 150,000</u>



## Budget and Finance

### EXPENDITURE DETAIL

<b>Veteran's Affairs</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>	<b>FY18</b>	<b>FY19</b>
Personal Services	\$ 6,027,616	\$ 8,062,876	\$ 8,189,771	\$ 7,756,833
Operating Services	\$ 3,613,569	\$ 3,468,481	\$ 3,622,198	\$ 3,846,246
	<u>\$ 9,641,185</u>	<u>\$ 11,531,357</u>	<u>\$ 11,811,969</u>	<u>\$ 11,603,079</u>
<b>Veteran's Benefits</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>	<b>FY18</b>	<b>FY19</b>
Personal Services	\$ 1,197,449	\$ 1,245,782	\$ 1,313,496	\$ 1,309,476
Operating Services	\$ 483,204	\$ 478,584	\$ 512,933	\$ 490,013
	<u>\$ 1,680,653</u>	<u>\$ 1,724,366</u>	<u>\$ 1,826,429</u>	<u>\$ 1,799,489</u>
<b>Veteran's Home</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>	<b>FY18</b>	<b>FY19</b>
Personal Services	\$ 4,830,167	\$ 6,817,094	\$ 6,876,275	\$ 6,447,357
Operating Services	\$ 3,130,365	\$ 2,989,898	\$ 3,109,265	\$ 3,206,232
	<u>\$ 7,960,532</u>	<u>\$ 9,806,992</u>	<u>\$ 9,985,540</u>	<u>\$ 9,653,589</u>
<b>Veteran's Cemetery</b>				<b>FY19</b>
Personal Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Operating Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 150,000
	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 150,000</u>



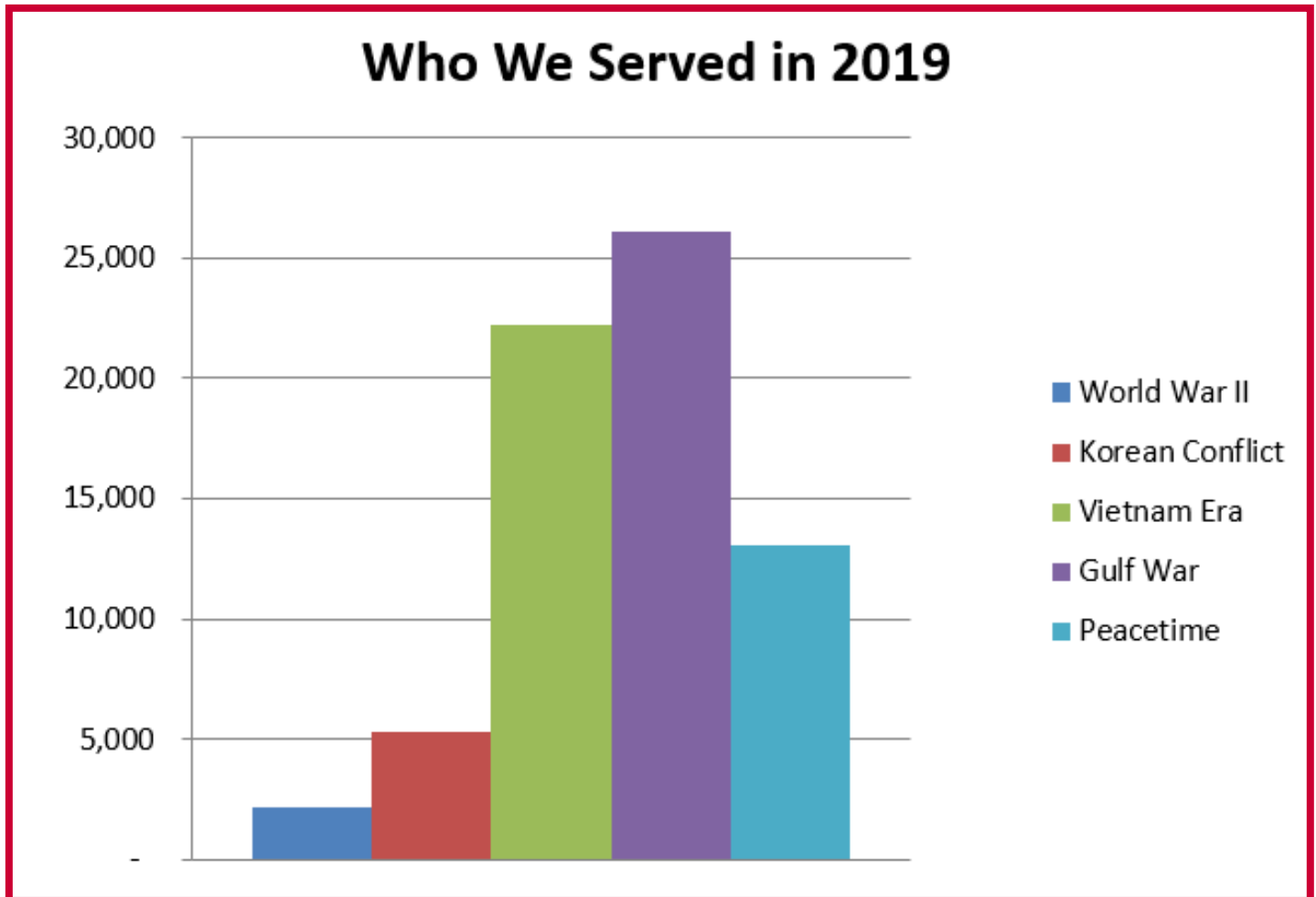
## Who We Serve



South Dakotans have a history of military service. SDDVA is committed to serving all veterans and their dependents, whether they reside in South Dakota, a neighboring state, or anywhere in the world.

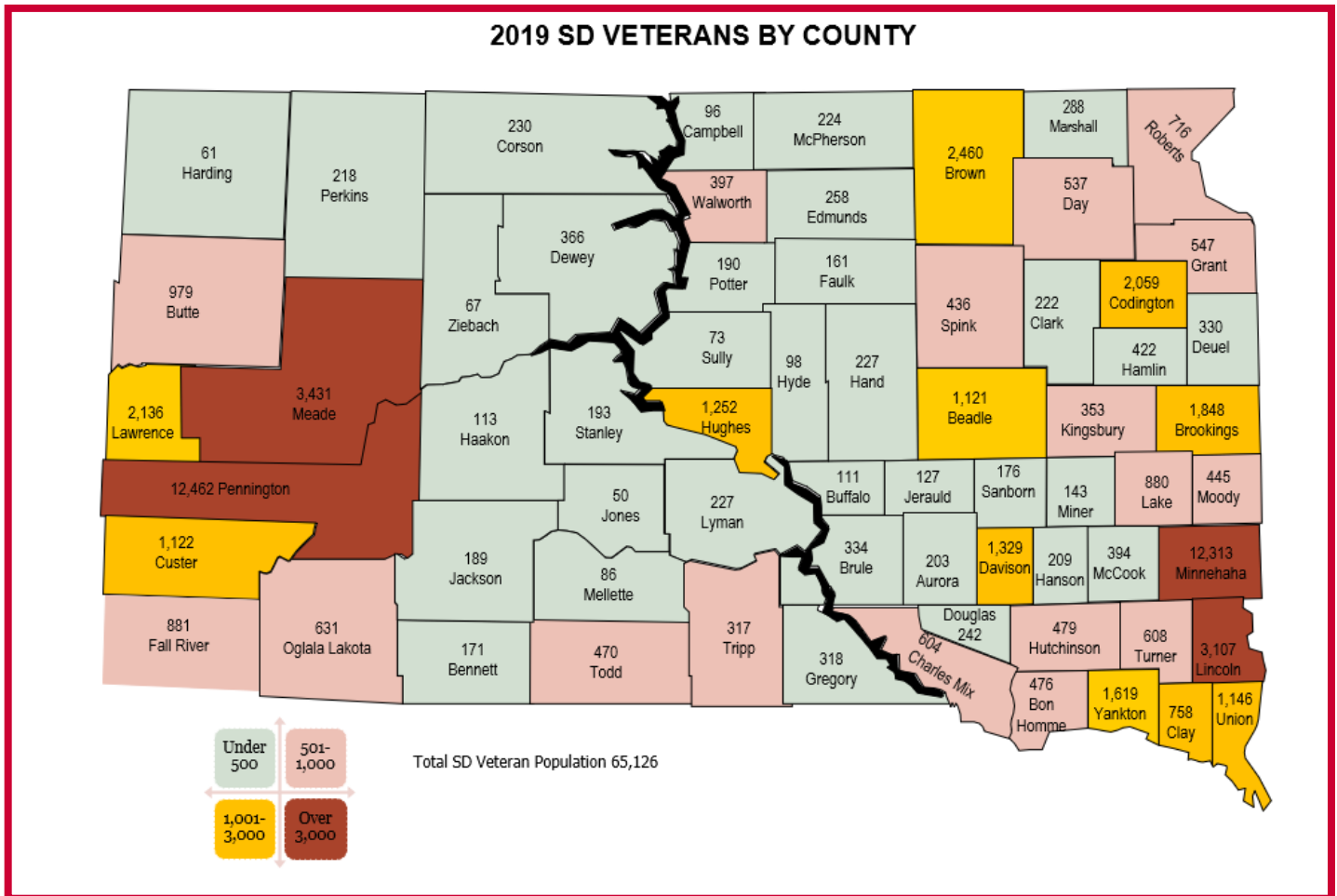
Regardless of service era, we take an all-inclusive approach to ensure all veterans have access to their benefits. Moving forward in 2020, we will continue our diligence to making service access for our veterans and family members as seamless as possible. The nature of an individual contact varies greatly depending on the needs of the individual veteran, dependent or family member.

The SDDVA team meets with veterans and their dependents to discuss their military service and determine what benefits they may be eligible for.



## Veterans Count

Veterans are one of this country's most valuable assets and SDDVA is on the front line of providing assistance to over 66,000 veterans and their families within our borders and countless additional veterans and their families from all over.



## Legislative Highlights

The Department monitored many pieces of legislation during the 2019 legislative session. 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 make a difference. Some of the veteran-related bills before lawmakers in 2019 included:

HB 1007: Revised certain provisions regarding the exemptions from the twelve-month residency requirement for university students.

HB 1080: Increased the property tax exemption allowed for certain veterans with a disability and the surviving spouses of certain veterans with a disability to \$150,000.

HB 1081: Updated statute for certain paraplegic or amputee veterans or their surviving spouses to retain a property tax exemption without having to reapply each year.

HB 1111: Provided for professional or occupational licensure for certain active duty military personnel and spouses.

HB 1201: Revised provisions regarding group pheasant hunts for disabled veterans.

HB 1260: Made an appropriation to continue the veteran's bonus program and to declare an emergency .

SB 155: Added two additional nursing facility beds for the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home.

SCR 2: Provided for legislative task forces to study, report, develop, and consider recommendations and proposed legislation regarding sustainable improvements to the continuum of mental health services available in the state.

SCR 3: Commended, honored, and thanked South Dakota's numerous women veterans for their service to our country and state.

SC 17: Honored the 130th anniversary of the establishment of the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home.



## Claims Division

The claims office epitomizes our department motto of Voices For Veterans. We follow the Department mission of providing comprehensive care and quality service to veterans and their families. In 2019 we were appropriated funds for an additional state veterans service officer to address the increase of veteran claims our department processes and the ever-changing federal rules and regulations. Our team consists of two managers, six state veteran service officers and two claims examiners. Their primary responsibility is to assist veterans, their dependents, and our county and tribal partners in building and filing claims for disability compensation, nonservice-connected pension, death benefits, education, and healthcare.

The claims office is located in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office in Sioux Falls. With the Veterans Benefits Administration changing to electronic filing, our team has taken an active role in working side-by-side with the VA to troubleshoot and come up with policies and procedures to ensure South Dakota veteran's claims are processed correctly and quickly as changes are made.

During 2019, our six state veteran service officers met with over 3,000 veterans and dependents to assist them with benefits they sought, and other issues they faced. Of those visits, over 2,500 claims were filed. They also reviewed over 6,000 claims that were submitted through our office by the county and tribal veterans service officers.

Our claims examiners are responsible for reviewing documentation for accuracy. Once filed, they follow claims until completion by the VA.

Our team takes an active role in the training of department staff and the county and tribal veterans service officers. This includes two mini-conferences, a four-day conference and various skype trainings throughout the year—over 40 hours.

The Claims Office team's primary responsibility is to work directly with the decision resources in the VA Regional Office to expedite claims and to influence, through proactive advocacy, the most positive outcome for our veterans and their dependents.







## Benefits Division

Field service officers (FSOs), who are also state veterans service officers, promote the interests and welfare of veterans, their family members, and survivors. They strive to enhance the quality of our client’s lives through advocacy, counseling, claims assistance, and special programs. In 2019 we were able to complement our team with one additional FSO.

FSOs assist, train, and work closely with all 66 counties and nine tribes throughout South Dakota.

Field service officers made 553 visits to county and tribal veterans service officers throughout the year. During these visits, the focus was training and educating on VA laws, policies, and procedures.

FSOs meet with individual veterans and family members to ensure they receive the maximum benefit they are entitled to. Utilizing our 334-page training manual, they provide the most up-to-date information and training to our partners.

South Dakota hopes every veteran makes a successful reintegration back into civilian life and their communities. We stand ready to help all veterans and their families access the services and benefits that they are entitled to.



- Outreach Events
- Yellow Ribbon Events
- Stand Downs
- Job Fairs
- Veterans Day Programs
- Congressional Forums
- Department of Labor Programs
- SD Coalition of Military Family Symposiums
- SD State Fair
- SD County Officials and Commissioners Conferences
- Memorial Day Programs
- Federal Department of VA Events
- Chamber of Commerce
- MilVet Committee
- Department of Social Services Adult & Aging Conferences

## Education

In South Dakota, we help connect veterans and family members with educational benefits and resources to succeed in college. We support the success of veterans, current military members, and their families at South Dakota colleges and universities by providing comprehensive information about benefits and resources, as well as working closely with college and university staff. We assist in administering various federal and state education benefits to veterans and their families.

Some benefits 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 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), 14 non-college degree institutions (high schools, welding schools, and trade schools), and two flight training schools.



In 2019, there were 300 active on-the-job training programs, eight new apprenticeship programs, nine new programs added in existing facilities, and 1,576 total GI Bill® students in schools.

Our Department also 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®.

Education is an essential tool to ensure a successful transition from active duty to veteran status. As emphasized during SDDVA outreach activities, the SAA works diligently to safeguard quality education program offerings in the state.

## Economic Impact

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) currently uses a National Work Que (NWQ) as the Department’s claims management and processing tool. This places claims in a “cloud” environment and claims are worked at various VA Regional Offices. The aim of the NWQ is to reduce the claims backlog, and reduce processing times nationally.

SDDVA vowed to treat and provide an outstanding level of customer service and expertise to these claims as well as maintain excellent customer service to our veterans we serve directly.

In 2019, our team reviewed over 2,100 out-of-state claims that were worked by the Sioux Falls VA Regional Office through the NWQ.

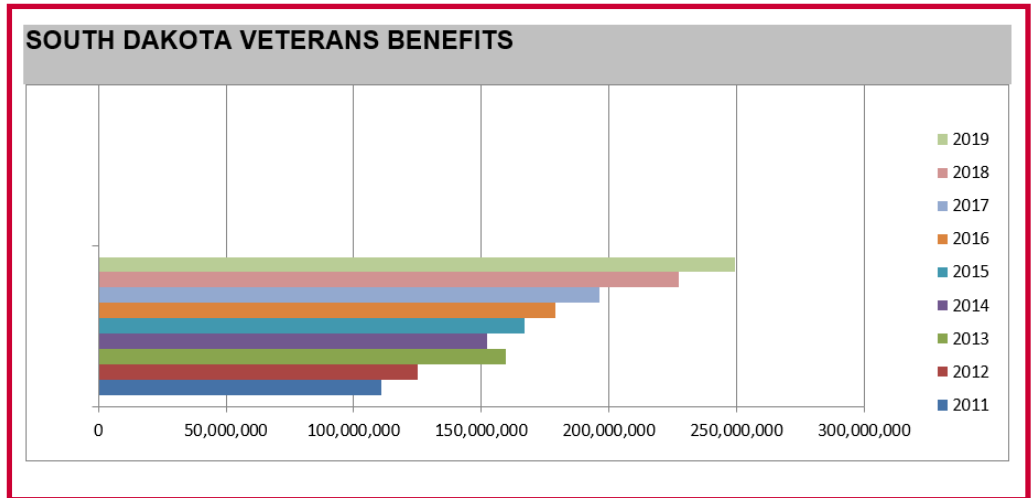
Through the efforts of our employees, our county and tribal veterans service officers and other partners, the Department has seen significant gains in the amount of benefits that clients we assist and represent receive.

In total, South Dakota veterans received a total benefit of over \$248 Million in 2019. One-time retro payments for 2019 totaled approximately \$9.5 million. Running awards were \$239 Million. Economic studies indicate these monies turn over between three to seven times in a community.

Our claims office continues to seek ways to expedite the claims process and provide the best customer service for our clients. For compensation and pension claims, our claims examiners process many of them through Digits to Digits or Direct Upload 360 and the new Direct Submit Tool. These systems electronically submit the application documents directly into the VBA’s NWQ so the claims can start processing within one to three days versus the traditional mail route which adds four to six weeks of processing time.

For claimants adding dependents, we utilize the Stakeholders Enterprise Portal. This process can add dependents in one business day. Regular processing for

these non-rating claims would normally take four to twelve months to process. Our claims examiners have also developed a way to submit healthcare applications to the Sioux Falls VAMC eligibility office, which has significantly reduced the wait time for veterans enrolling VA Healthcare.



## Bonus

The state of South Dakota awards a bonus to active duty military members and veterans who meet service qualifications. To be eligible for the bonus, veterans must have been a legal resident of South Dakota for at least six months immediately preceding entry into the armed forces. Veterans from other states who served with a South Dakota National Guard unit or a South Dakota-based unit of armed forces reserve may be eligible for the bonus. Veterans from other states who served with a South Dakota National Guard unit or a South Dakota-based unit of armed forces reserve may be eligible for the bonus.

To be eligible for payment, a veteran must have had honorable service during one of the following qualifying periods:

- August 2, 1990 to March 3, 1991 - All active service counts for payment.
- March 4, 1991 to December 31, 1992 - Only service in a hostile area qualifying for the Southwest Asia Service Medal counts for payment.
- January 1, 1993 to September 10, 2001 - Only service in a hostile area qualifying for any United States campaign or service medal awarded for combat operations against hostile forces counts for payment.
- September 11, 2001, to a date to be determined - All active service counts for payment.



No veteran may receive a bonus payment of more than \$500. However, a veteran who was eligible for a bonus for service prior to December 31, 1992 and is also eligible for a bonus for service after January 1, 1993, may receive two separate bonuses. Active Duty for training is not sufficient for Bonus purposes.

Veterans who are eligible for a bonus payment and who have a service-connected disability rated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as 10% or more disabling, will receive the maximum payment of \$500. In 2019, a total of 262 bonus applications were processed and \$82,700 was paid out to bonus applicants. More information can be found on our website at: <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/benefits/State/Veterans%20Bonus.aspx>.



## Burial and Homeless Programs

SDDVA awards payments of \$100 for setting a government headstone or marker at the veteran's resting place. 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 2019, we processed over \$31,900 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 spouse, widow or widower of a veteran when the estate, or immediate family of the deceased is lacking in funds to pay funeral expenses. In 2019, we paid out \$200 for this program.

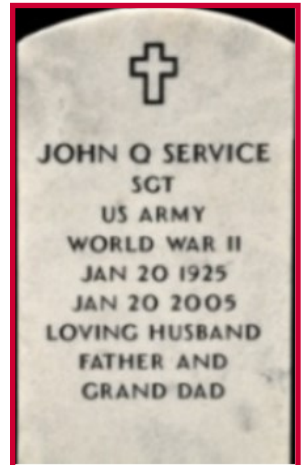
The Military Funeral Honors program reimburses veteran service organizations \$50 for each military funeral honor ceremony conducted. In 2019, we processed \$37,750 for funeral honors.

In recent years, SDDVA has been represented in efforts to assist homeless veterans. Department staff members have attended various homeless organization meetings to include the South Dakota Housing for the Homeless Consortium and the South Dakota Housing Development Authority's statewide Homeless Summit. A comprehensive list of homeless shelters and facilities available for veterans in South Dakota

can be found on the SDDVA website at: <https://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 at: <https://www.housingforthehomeless.org/>.



## Veterans Courts/Justice Outreach

Veterans Courts are a collaborative process that includes prosecutors, defense counsel, judges, federal and state Departments of Veteran Affairs and other community-based support organizations. The goal of Veterans Court is to:

- facilitate participant sobriety
- reduce recidivism
- increase compliance with treatment and other court ordered conditions
- improve access to veteran’s benefits and services
- improve family relationships and social support connections, and
- improve life stability.

Veterans Court programs 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.

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
- serve as a mentor and
- assist in setting the veteran up for success.



SDDVA has taken an active role in partnering with the Department of Corrections to work with incarcerated veterans. Our team assists veteran prisoners and their family members in completing paperwork to suspend or file for benefits. It has been a rewarding partnership for our Department.



## Public Affairs

The Department's 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 (<https://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. Our 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 relations office also tracks all veteran-related bills introduced, along with committee hearings during each legislative session and updates department staff daily and partners weekly.

We continue to use social media to share our messages.

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

The Communications Division Department's mission is to drive the overall communications strategy of the Department by providing advocacy, information, outreach, and support to our South Dakota veterans and their families.



## State Veterans Cemetery

The Department has multi-faceted roles related to veteran issues. Among those roles, is the statutory duty to “establish and operate” a state veterans cemetery. The cemetery will serve as a hallowed resting place for all eligible veterans and family members.

The South Dakota Veterans Cemetery is the first federally funded, state-owned, and operated, veterans cemetery in South Dakota. The cemetery will serve the veterans throughout the state and around the country, as there is no state residency requirement to be interred in the cemetery. This property offers a picturesque setting in northeastern Sioux Falls, conveniently located along Interstate 90. Property for the cemetery was donated to the Department Affairs by the City of Sioux Falls. Ultimately, it will provide spaces for over 28,000 burials. Eligibility considerations are outlined in the link [Eligibility for Burial](https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/) on our [website https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/](https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/).



The groundbreaking ceremony was held on September 9, 2019, initiated the project. Equipment mobilized and site preparation began shortly after groundbreaking and continued until winter weather halted operation. Construction will resume in the Spring when conditions return to favorable. We are hopeful the cemetery will be complete late 2020 or early 2021, with cemetery operations tentatively scheduled to begin in Spring 2021.

Cemetery features include: main entrance, avenue of flags, public information building/maintenance building (connected), committal service shelter, memorial area, and columbarium(s).



Stockwell Engineers was selected to design the cemetery and Journey Construction was selected to serve as the construction manager for the project.



## Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedication

In 2019, Governor Kristi Noem and the South Dakota Departments of Veterans Affairs, Military, and Transportation launched the Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedication Program.

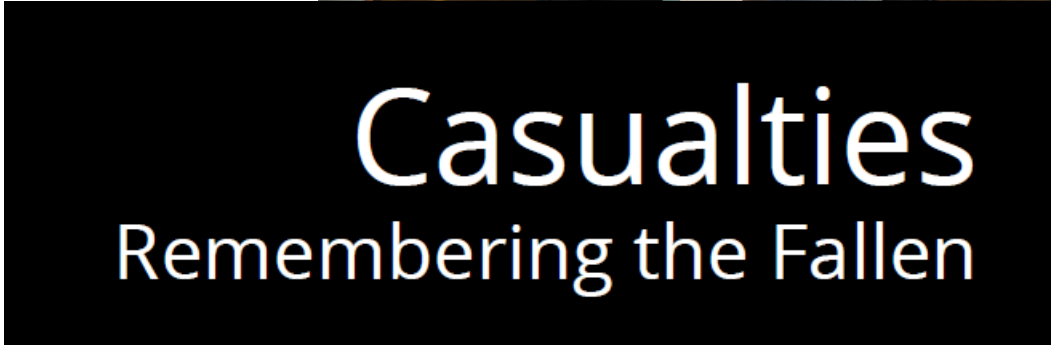
This new program will dedicate state bridges to South Dakotans who died while in active service. Naming South Dakota bridges in honor of our fallen gives us the opportunity of remembrance, reflection, and respect—to honor the men and women who gave their lives in service to this nation.

The Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedication Committee will meet annually in April and select six heroes to honor and six bridges to dedicate that year.

Dedication of the bridges will be held May through November.

The first bridge dedication was held Nov 26, 2019, in Hot Springs. This bridge is located on US HWY 38/North River

Street in Hot Springs in honor of 2LT Maynard C. Freemole. Freemole was assigned to the 337th Squadron. On December 16, over 500 B-17s and B-24s from various bomb groups based all over the part of England known as East Anglia, headed for Germany. Freemole’s plane was shot down and exploded in mid-air. In November of 1949, Lt. Freemole’s remains and those of several of his crew were returned to the United States. They are buried in a common grave at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri.



South Dakota has more than 3,000 veterans that made the ultimate sacrifice. Although these heroes are no longer with us, their memory lives 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.

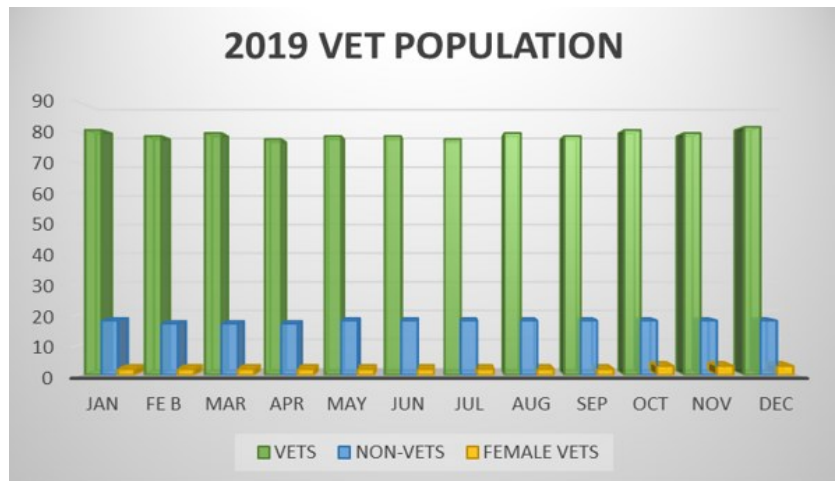
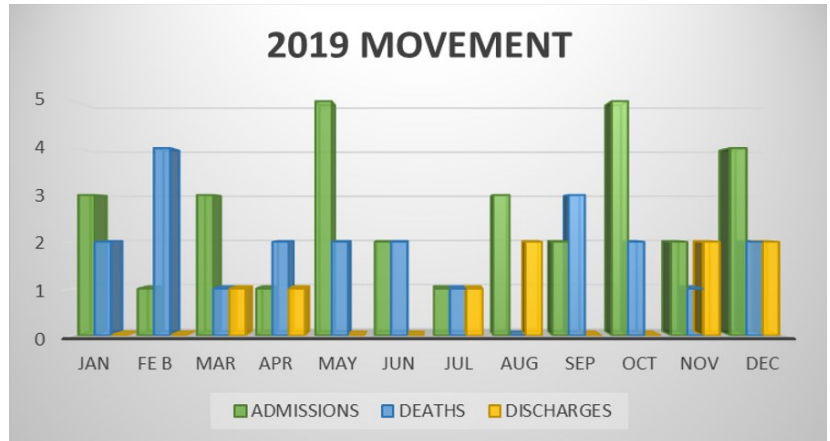


## State Veterans Home

The mission of the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home is to honor and serve our South Dakota veterans, their spouses, widows, or widowers now and for generations to come. The Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home consistently provides high-quality resident directed long-term care by maintaining excellence in personal services and treatment through professional collaboration, innovation, dedication and respect, in a setting that promotes dignity, independence and a home-like environment.

Services provided by our team of professionals include: complete medical care, pharmacy, physical and occupational therapy, 24-hour professional nursing care, meals, social services, spiritual guidance, transportation services, nutrition, and planned, supervised recreational programs and activities.

Our Home is Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified. Currently this project is at LEED Silver, and includes water efficiency, energy, atmosphere, materials, resources, indoor environmental quality, innovation and design process. The Home also has a biomass plant that burns wood chips from the Black Hills National Forest instead of fuel oil for the heating and cooling. This reduces emissions and provides an estimated cost savings up to 50% over fuel oil. In 2019 we began studying the feasibility of constructing a solar facility on our campus. We also switched over all lighting to LED which should generate a huge energy savings.



The fight to end Alzheimer's is important to the MJFSVH team. We have been working closely with the Alzheimer's Association of South Dakota. This year the Home and the Department participated in a "Longest Day" fundraiser to fight the darkness of Alzheimer's.

## State Veterans Home

With the passage of SB 155, the Home requested a recognition survey from the VA to increase the number of nursing care beds to 78. The inspection was conducted in November and we were granted a zero-deficit survey.

In 2019, we celebrated the 130th year of serving South Dakota's Veterans and their families. Missions and visions have changed over the past 130 years, but the one thing that has not changed is the dedication and commitment of the staff. The staff has a legacy of providing the highest level of care to our heroes. As veterans age and different era veterans become residents, we are prepared to meet the challenges of these changing needs. Our staff continues to expand and introduce new programs designed to best meet the current, ongoing and upcoming needs of all veterans. Caring for and maximizing the overall health, welfare and quality of life of South Dakota veterans has been, and will always be, our top priority. Our Home has been "home" to over 4,700 residents since its opening in 1889.

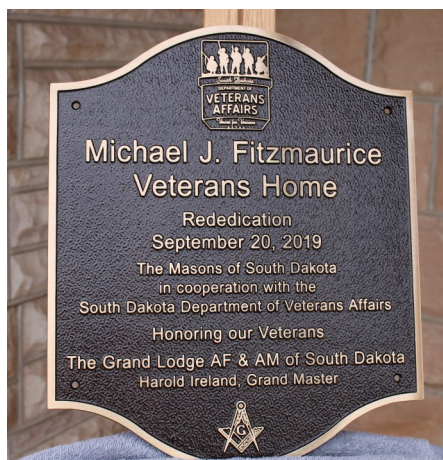
In 2019, the Home was left the \$1.2 Million estate of retired Air Force Master Sergeant Arlyn Reinert of Texas which is to be used to enrich the lives of the men and women living in the facility. One hundred thousand dollars has been earmarked each year for three years to help recruit and sustain nursing staff. The Home will match a part of the donation with the Build Dakota Scholarship as a corporate sponsor to offer full-tuition scholarships to tech colleges for nursing students. Students participating in this program must sign a contract to work for the Home for three years after completion of their educational training and obtaining their license.

The Department dedicated a member of our team to focus on community awareness and knowledge of the Home, as well as for staff and resident recruitment.

The Home became a Purple Heart Campus in June of 2019.

Portions of the 1889 Soldiers Home (Kern Building) were renovated in 2019 into ten staff/family apartments. In 2020, this building will get a facelift with a new grand staircase on the front side of the building and egress/fire escape update on the backside of the building.

Every year, many generous individuals and organizations continue to volunteer at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home. These individuals sponsor activities or special occasion meals that enhance the home-like environment. We encourage this interaction and partnering to continue within the veteran community and the local community of Hot Springs. In 2019, volunteers that donated 1,370 volunteer hours to assist our veterans and our staff.







## Accomplishments

- Operation CARS – Calling All Returning Servicemembers has been a great opportunity for us to reach out to all returning servicemembers by phone and to thank them for their service, as well as make them aware of the programs and services available to assist in their transition back into civilian life and connect them with local resources.
- Through the efforts of our staff and with our 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 VA federal funds infused into the South Dakota economy for CY19 exceeded over \$650 Million.
- Secured a National Cemetery Administration Grant for \$6,904,794 for the establishment of the South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery in Sioux Falls.
- Broke ground on the State Veterans Cemetery September 9.
- Celebrated 130 years of providing service to veterans at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home. This celebration underscored South Dakota's rich legacy and commitment to take care of our heroes.
- Received a \$1.2 Million gift from a Texas veteran for the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home. This gift afforded us the opportunity to start nursing scholarship programs, student loan repayment programs and nursing sustainment programs.
- Kicked off the Fallen Heroes Bridge dedication program – a new program naming state bridges in honor of veterans of all eras who died in combat. We will be naming six bridges a year.
- Acquiring homes from the Star Academy campus for use for staff at the State Veterans Home.
- Repurposed 1889 Soldiers Home Kern Building on the State Veterans Campus in Hot Springs into ten staff apartments, along with rental office space for other state agencies. This will improve existing state property and provide housing for employees in a community that has housing shortages.
- Maintained census at the State Veterans Home.
- Achieved VA Certification for two additional beds at the State Veterans Home for a total of 78.
- Formed a partnership with Avera to initiate comprehensive end-of-life care for our veterans.



## 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 and their dependents have access to the benefits they have earned. CTVSOs are not supervised by the Department however, the Department provides training, certification, accreditation, counseling and outreach to the CTVSOs. The Department holds onsite training for all new and existing VSOs, as well as annual conferences and mini-conferences. (A listing of the CTVSOs can be found on the next two pages.)

Officers of the CTVSO Association are:

- President—Doug Huntrods (Meade County)
- Vice President—Aaron Walberg (Brown County)
- Secretary-Treasurer—Fred Kuil (Douglas County)
- Judge Advocate—Dennis Evenson (Deuel County)
- District 1—Courtney VanZanten (Lake County)
- District 2—Ron Hoffer (Edmunds County)
- District 3—Michael McDonald (Yankton County)
- District 4—Jesse Ketzner (Lawrence County)
- District 5—Geri Opsal (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate)



Partners

**County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers**

- Aurora—Ron Falor
- Beadle—Taylor Jans
- Bennett—Don Larson
- Bon Homme—Eric Elsberry
- Brookings—Michael Holzhauser
- Brown—Aaron Walberg
- Brule—Ron Falor
- Buffalo—Vacant
- Butte—Robert Wagner
- Campbell—Lester Goehring
- Charles Mix—Jerry Seiner
- Cheyenne River Sioux—Robert Dunsmore
- Clark—Darin Lewis
- Clay—Drew Gunderson
- Codington—Alvin Janzen
- Corson—Christen Schneider
- Crow Creek Sioux—Joseph Shields
- Custer—Jana Virtue
- Davison—Craig Bennett
- Day—Kevin Bohn
- Deuel—Dennis Evenson
- Dewey—Robert Dunsmore
- Douglas—Fred Kuil
- Edmunds—Ron Hoffer
- Fall River—Dan Cullen
- Faulk—David Huss
- Grant—Scott Malimanek
- Gregory—Dale Reber
- Haakon—Terry Deuter
- Hamlin—David Schaefer
- Hand—Dave Johnson
- Hanson—Harry Huffman, Jr.
- Harding—Tara Russ
- Hughes—Charles Quinn
- Hutchinson—Glenn Hartman
- Hyde—Bob Sheffield
- Jackson—Terry Deuter
- Jerauld—Roger Dwyer
- Jones—Gary Sletto



## Partners

### County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers

Kingsbury—Gary Schumacher  
 Lake—Courtney VanZanten  
 Lawrence—Jesse Ketzer  
 Lincoln—Susan Irons  
 Lower Brule Sioux—Tim Felicia  
 Lyman—Gary Sletto  
 Marshall—David Daberkow  
 McCook—Brian Havard  
 McPherson—Samantha Boshard  
 Meade—Doug Huntrods  
 Mellette—Gary Sletto  
 Miner—Terrance Lee  
 Minnehaha—Kathy Richardson  
 Moody—Jim DeLay  
 Oglala Lakota—Jerlene Arredondo  
 Oglala Sioux—Shawnee Red Bear  
 Pennington—Thomas Vallette and Allan Taylor  
 Perkins—Bridget Keller  
 Potter—Donald Herricks  
 Roberts—Angela Beacom  
 Rosebud Sioux—Orlando Morrison, Sr.  
 Sanborn—Taylor Jans  
 Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate—Geri Opsal  
 Spink—Steve Wollman  
 Stanley—Charles Quinn  
 Standing Rock Sioux—Manaja Hill and David Harrison  
 Sully—Charles Quinn  
 Todd—Ronald Valandra  
 Tripp—Milton Douglas  
 Turner—Thomas Sparrow  
 Union—Susan Irons  
 Walworth—Stephan Volk  
 Yankton—Michael McDonald  
 Yankton Sioux Tribe—Dennis Rucker  
 Ziebach—Vacant





## Partners

### Veterans Service Organizations

South Dakota is fortunate to have immense groups of people that have dedicated their energy to improving the lives of veterans and their families. Veterans Service Organizations are the backbone of veterans rights for our state and the nation.

Collectively they 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:

- 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 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 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—Terry Paulsen (PVA)
- Vice President—Ken Teunissen (MOPH)
- Secretary/Treasurer—Lisa Cummings (PVA)
- Judge Advocate—Terry Hawk (VVA)

### 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. 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)





South Dakota  
Department of  
Veterans Affairs

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Pierre, SD 57501  
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<https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

## South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

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The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs is a state government executive department with a service mission to assist veterans, active duty service members, their families and dependents, in securing benefits earned through military service. Under the Department of Veterans Affairs are three major programs:

- veterans benefits
- state veterans home
- state veterans cemetery

# Making A Difference



South Dakota veterans inspire us to improve how we serve this courageous population as the South Dakota Department of Veterans Services and the State of South Dakota.

We are motivated to recognize their service and to find ways to connect our customers with resources, services, and information that could improve their lives.