

Annual Report

2020

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
425 E. Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
605.773.3269
<https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>



Table of Contents

Secretary's Message	4
Organization	5-6
Budget	7-8
Veteran Population	9-10
Legislative Highlights	11
Claims Division	12
Economic Impact	13
Appeals	14
Benefits Division	15
Education	16
Burial and Homeless Programs	17
VSO Salary Supplement	18
Bonus	19
Public Affairs	20
State Veterans Cemetery	21-24
State Veterans Home	25-26
Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedication	27
Partners	28-31

About Us



Secretary

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

Leadership



Deputy Secretary

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

Secretary's Message

Vision

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

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.

On behalf of the more than 125 dedicated employees at the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA), I am pleased to provide you with our annual report for 2020.

We faced significant changes and challenges in 2020! The year tested our tenacity, but we remained open for business and stayed true to our vision, mission, and goals. We maintained our commitment to serving our veterans and their families.

This year's challenges afforded us the opportunity to embrace innovation, build new relationships, and redefine our business practices and safety procedures.

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 \$743 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.



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.

Operation CARS (Calling all Returning Servicemembers), continues to be an opportunity for us to reach out to all servicemembers leaving active duty and 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

Greg Whitlock
Secretary

Aaron Pollard
Deputy Secretary

Brad Richardson
Superintendent

Heather Bullerman, Claims Manager
Erin Brown, Cemetery Director
Krystal Taylor, Asst. Claims Manager
Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
Guy Arnold, Special Projects Coordinator

Teresa Phillipson, Deputy Superintendent
Jeff Haiar, Business Manager
Susan Wilcox, Director of Nursing
Tom Inman, Principal Plant Manager
Lanae Romey, Executive Secretary

Funding Sources

Budget and Finance

FUNDING SOURCE:

Veteran's Affairs	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
General Funds	\$ 2,490,440	\$ 4,009,421	\$ 4,113,689	\$ 4,367,050	\$ 4,614,862
Federal Funds	\$ 1,200,628	\$ 3,051,237	\$ 3,232,545	\$ 3,370,389	\$ 3,767,556
Other Funds	\$ 5,950,117	\$ 4,470,699	\$ 4,465,735	\$ 3,865,638	\$ 4,512,160
	\$ 9,641,185	\$ 11,531,357	\$ 11,811,969	\$ 11,603,078	\$ 12,894,578

Veteran's Benefits	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
General Funds	\$ 1,517,246	\$ 1,573,088	\$ 1,620,231	\$ 1,624,607	\$ 1,819,155
Federal Funds	\$ 162,425	\$ 149,379	\$ 183,053	\$ 173,554	\$ 215,227
Other Funds	\$ 983	\$ 1,898	\$ 23,145	\$ 1,327	\$ 61,012
	\$ 1,680,654	\$ 1,724,365	\$ 1,826,429	\$ 1,799,488	\$ 2,095,394

Veteran's Home	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
General Funds	\$ 973,194	\$ 2,436,333	\$ 2,493,458	\$ 2,592,442	\$ 2,645,669
Federal Funds	\$ 1,038,204	\$ 2,901,858	\$ 3,049,493	\$ 3,196,835	\$ 3,552,329
Other Funds	\$ 5,949,134	\$ 4,468,801	\$ 4,442,590	\$ 3,864,311	\$ 4,451,148
	\$ 7,960,532	\$ 9,806,992	\$ 9,985,541	\$ 9,653,588	\$ 10,649,146

Veteran's Cemetery	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
General Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,038
Federal Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,038

Veteran's Affairs	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
Personal Services	\$ 6,027,616	\$ 8,062,876	\$ 8,189,771	\$ 7,756,833	\$ 8,512,170
Operating Services	\$ 3,613,569	\$ 3,468,481	\$ 3,622,198	\$ 3,846,246	\$ 4,456,610
	\$ 9,641,185	\$ 11,531,357	\$ 11,811,969	\$ 11,603,079	
Veteran's Benefits	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
Personal Services	\$ 1,197,449	\$ 1,245,782	\$ 1,313,496	\$ 1,309,476	\$ 1,517,434
Operating Services	\$ 483,204	\$ 478,584	\$ 512,933	\$ 490,013	\$ 533,082
	\$ 1,680,653	\$ 1,724,366	\$ 1,826,429	\$ 1,799,489	
Veteran's Home	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
Personal Services	\$ 4,830,167	\$ 6,817,094	\$ 6,876,275	\$ 6,447,357	\$ 6,994,736
Operating Services	\$ 3,130,365	\$ 2,989,898	\$ 3,109,265	\$ 3,206,232	\$ 3,773,406
	\$ 7,960,532	\$ 9,806,992	\$ 9,985,540	\$ 9,653,589	
Veteran's Cemetery				FY19	FY20
Personal Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Operating Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,122
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 150,000	
Veteran's Affairs	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
Personal Services	\$ 6,027,616	\$ 8,062,876	\$ 8,189,771	\$ 7,756,833	\$ 8,512,170
Operating Services	\$ 3,613,569	\$ 3,468,481	\$ 3,622,198	\$ 3,846,246	\$ 4,456,610
	\$ 9,641,185	\$ 11,531,357	\$ 11,811,969	\$ 11,603,079	

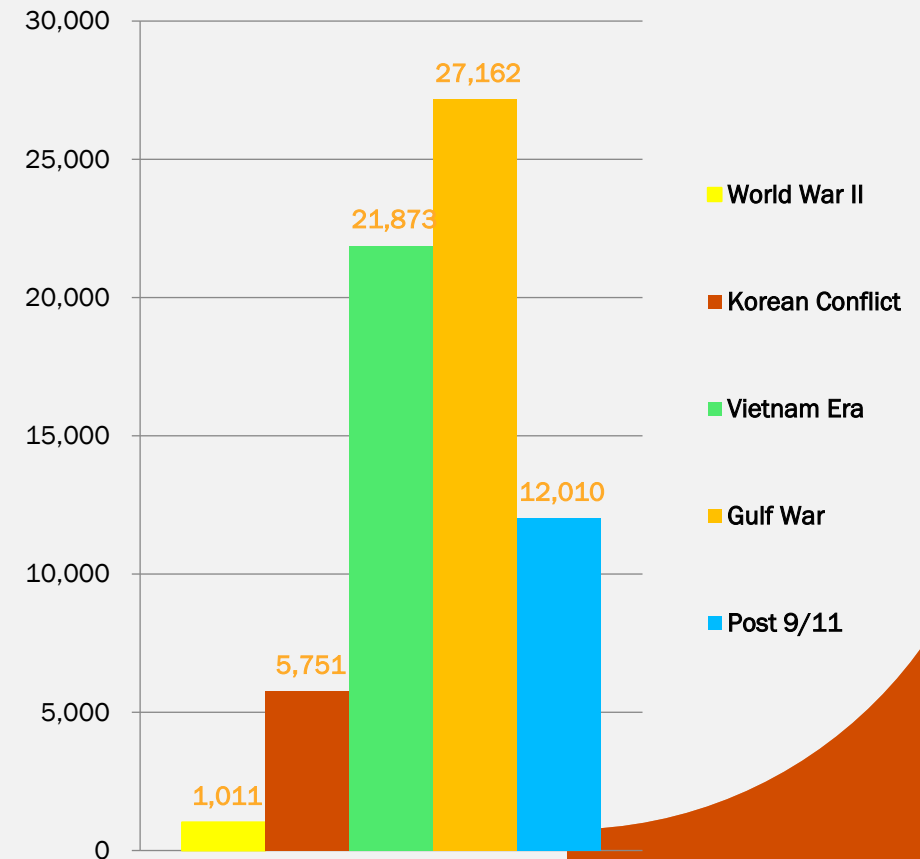
Expenditure Detail

Budget and Finance

We partner with federal, state, and local government agencies; non-profits; and veterans service organizations to ensure the needs of veterans are met.

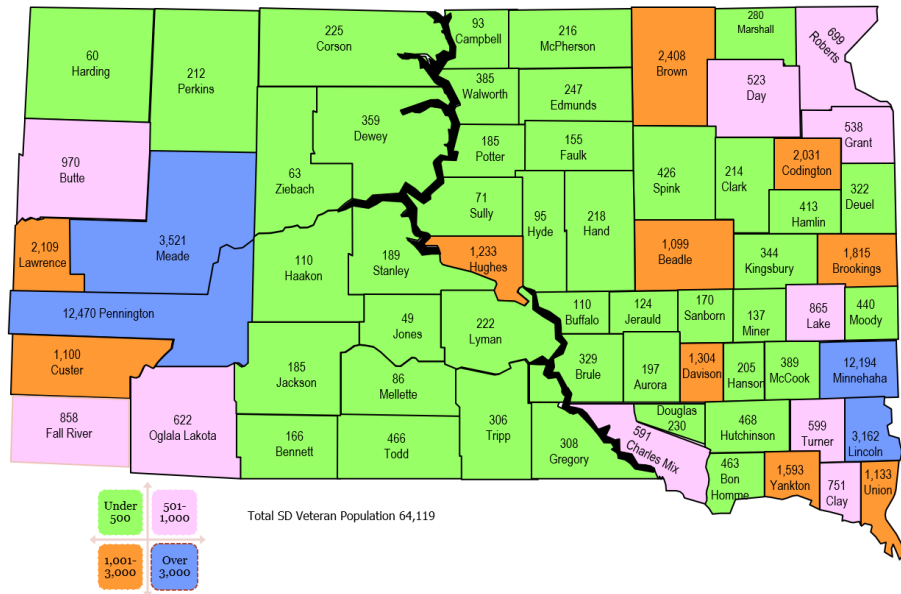
Who We Served in 2020

- There are 1,011 living World War II Veterans in South Dakota.
- There are 5,751 living Korean War-era Veterans in South Dakota, who served from 1950 to 1955.
- There are 21,873 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 triggered responses to the current wars and the manifestation of acute diseases brought on by exposure to Agent Orange.
- There are 27,162 living Gulf War-Era and pre-9-11 Veterans in South Dakota.
- There are 12,110 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 13,640 living Peacetime Veterans in South Dakota. They served honorably during a unique and relatively conflict-free time in our history.



Veteran's Count

2020 SD VETERANS BY COUNTY



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

The Department monitored many pieces of legislation during the 2020 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 2020 are listed below.

Red Tape Repealers

Veterans



Repealed the South Dakota Veterans Commission and repealed all statutes relating to the Commission. (SB 156)

Revised the federal fund expenditure authority for the State Veterans Cemetery to align with the National Cemetery Administration's grant of \$6,904,794 for the construction of state veteran's cemetery. (SB 35)



Lowered the threshold for participation in group pheasant hunts to resident veterans 20% service-connected disabled and higher. (SB 124)

Changed the free tuition program for veterans offered at regental institutes to include being offered at technical colleges. (HB 1069)

Claims Division

Personal
Interviews
826

Mail
Received
6,116

Records
Added
1,717

Documents
Uploaded
25,848

Appeals
Hearings
92

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. Our team consists of two managers, six state veterans service officers and a claims examiner. 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. This team's primary responsibility is to work directly with the decision resources in the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office to expedite claims and to influence, through proactive advocacy, the most positive outcome for our veterans and their dependents.

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 develop policies and procedures to ensure South Dakota veteran's claims are processed correctly and quickly as changes are made.

2020 brought a fresh set of challenges for the claims team. Due to construction in the regional office, they were relocated the first part of March. Two weeks later our team began working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although staff was not able to see veterans in person, they overcame this obstacle and thrived working nearly paperless from home. With all the challenges 2020 brought, we still filed 11,077 claims for veterans.

Our claims team returned to the VA Regional Office the end of July. However, the building remained closed to the public for the remainder of the year. In an effort to meet one-on-one with veterans, the claims team started staffing an office at the Military Heritage Alliance Building in Sioux Falls in September. To date, we have assisted 826 veterans at this location.

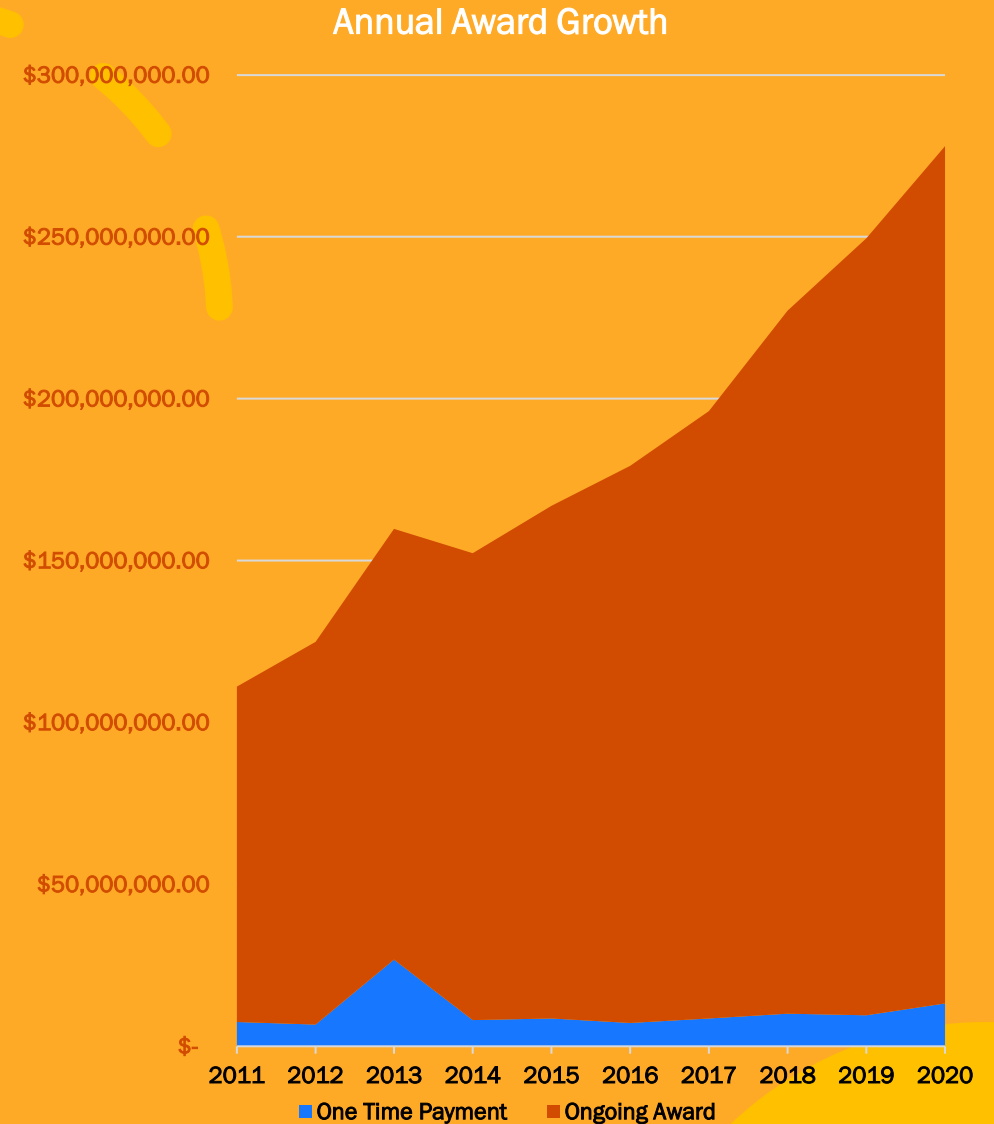
In addition to filing claims, our team takes an active role in the training of department staff and the county and tribal veterans service officers. This includes two mini conferences, a four-day conference, virtual trainings throughout the year and weekly updates.

Economic Impact

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) currently operates a National Work Que (NWQ) as their claims' management and processing tool. This places claims in a "cloud" environment and they are worked at various VA Regional Offices. The aim of the NWQ is to reduce the claims backlog and processing times nationally. SDDVA vowed to treat and provide an outstanding level of customer service and expertise to all veterans served and claims processed. With many county, state, and national service offices closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our Department, as well as county and tribal veterans service officers, assisted veterans throughout the country who were unable to acquire assistance in their regions.

Through the efforts of our employees, our county and tribal veterans service officers, and other partners; the Department saw significant gains in the sum of benefits that clients we assisted and represented received. In total, South Dakota veterans received a total benefit of over \$278 Million in 2020. We are seeing an influx in one-time retro payments in 2020 due to the implementation of the Blue Water Navy Act which granted presumptive disabilities to those who served off the shores of Vietnam. Total 2020 retroactive payments for South Dakota were approximately \$13.2 Million. Running awards were \$264.8 Million. Economic studies indicate these monies turn over between three to seven times in a community.

Our team continues to seek ways to expedite the claims filing process and provide the best customer service for our clients.



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.

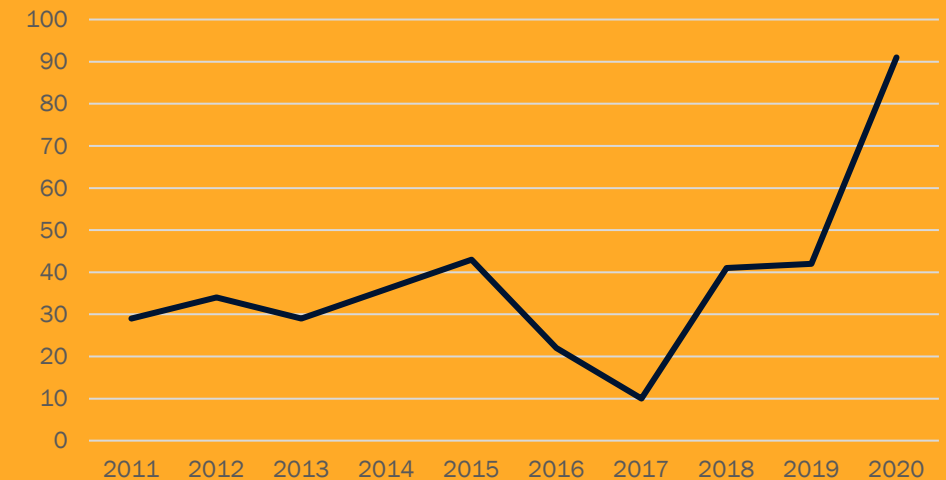
Our team assists claimants in preparing appeals, as well as developing arguments for their case up to and including the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA). We monitor the appeal through every step and make sure that deadlines are met, and proper evidence is submitted in a timely manner.

Our team strives to resolve appeals at the earliest step in the process, ensuring the greatest benefit to the claimant. Normally, our claimants have the opportunity to have two hearings, one at the local level with a decision review officer and one at the national level with a BVA Law Judge in Washington, DC via teleconference at the regional office. The pandemic of 2020 added challenges when many facilities closed to the public making it impossible to schedule and conduct any video conference hearings. BVA recognized this as unacceptable and evolved to conduct what they now call virtual hearings. A virtual hearing is essentially a three-way video call between the veteran, the representative, and the BVA judge.

We conducted our first virtual hearing in April of 2020 and were able to successfully reschedule veterans from the video docket to the virtual docket. This required hands on person-to-person coordination for each veteran from both BVA and SDDVA.

When we learned that the VA was looking to fill open hearing docket space, SDDVA jumped on the opportunity to fill that calendar. SDDVA completed 92 hearings in 2020 – during a pandemic.

Hearings Completed Each Year



Benefits Division



Field Service Officers (FSOs) travel the state assisting, training, and working closely with all 66 counties and nine tribes in the state of South Dakota. Training and ensuring everyone is familiar with VA laws, policies, and procedures is part of our meetings with the County and Tribal Veteran Service Officers across the state. We work together to provide the veterans of South Dakota the most up to date information regarding benefits.

As with state veteran service officers, the FSOs meet and assist veterans and their families with any and all benefit questions they may have. This team also assists with outreach events such as Yellow Ribbon events, VA stand downs, job fairs, Veterans Day programs, Congressional forums, SD State Fair, Memorial Day programs, Federal Department of VA events, and Chamber Committee events.

Calling All Returning Services Members (CARS) is a program that SDDVA uses to reach out to as many South Dakota residents returning from Active Duty as we can. We provide them with a heartfelt welcome home, contact information to their local CTVSO or our office information, and answer any questions they may have on their transition back home.

Education and Employment Programs

In 2020, the Department added three new On-the-Job Training programs to the already 351 approved On-the-Job Training and Apprenticeship programs. A total of 179 veterans used their GI Bill® with 56 active firms and 65 active programs. In schools, there were 1,843 students using their GI Bill®.

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.

- 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 dependent of POW/MIAs
- Reduced tuition for SD National Guard members
- Free tuition to children or spouse of SD National Guard member 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.

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®.

Burial and Homeless Programs

The Military Funeral Honors program paid 604 claims for a total of \$30,200 in 2020. This program reimburses veteran service organizations \$50 for each funeral honor ceremony they conduct. This program will continue to grow with the opening of the State Veterans Cemetery in 2021.

The Headstone Setting Fee program is a service in which we pay \$100 towards the setting of a government headstone or marker at a veterans' final resting place. This payment can be made to the survivor of a veteran, a funeral home, a monument company, or an individual or company that permanently set a headstone. In 2020 we received a total of 281 claims and paid out \$28,100.



We have continued our work with the South Dakota Housing for the Homeless Consortium and the South Dakota Housing Development Authority on the issue of homelessness among veterans. Resources for homeless shelter and facilities available for veterans in South Dakota can be found on our SDDVA website at:

<https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/docs/SD%20Homeless%20Housing%20Resources%20by%20Regions%20and%20Project.pdf>

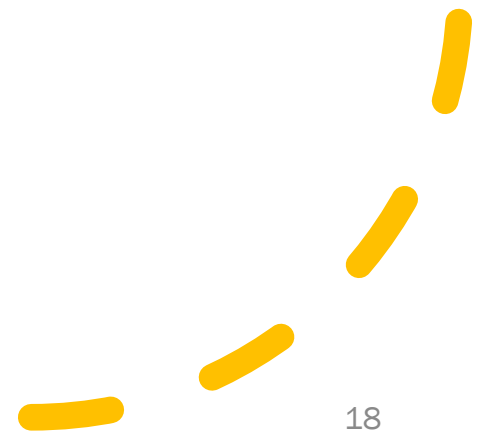


VSO Salary Supplement

SDCL 33A-1-30 and 33A-1-31 establishes a reimbursement program for the Department to provide financial assistance to counties and tribes in paying the salaries of county veterans' service officers.

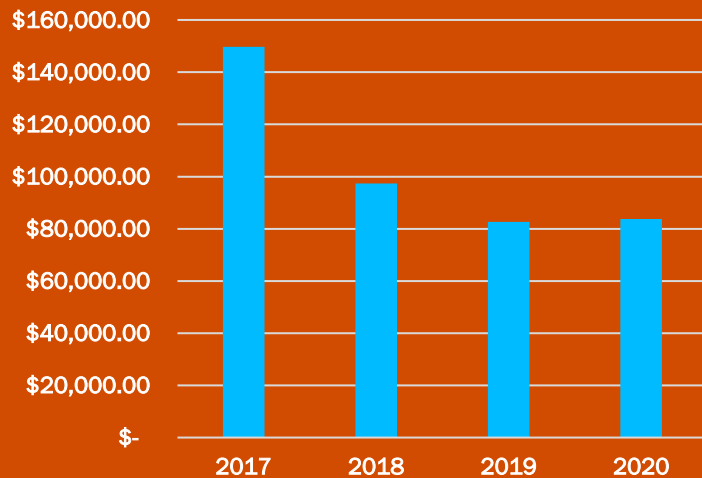
The program established and maintained by our Department provides for assistance on the basis of one dollar of state funds for each four dollars of county/tribal funds provided for payment of the salary of the veterans' service officer.

In 2020, 53 counties and four tribes made application for and met the requirements as addressed in statute for a total reimbursement of \$165,625.



Bonus

Bonus Payments



In 2020, a total of 237 checks totaling \$83,720 was paid to veterans for the South Dakota Bonus Program. Payment is made to military members who have been a resident of the state for no less than six months preceding their period of active service and who served during one or more of the following time periods:

- **August 2, 1990 – March 3, 1991:** All active service qualifies.
- **March 4, 1991 – December 31, 1992:** Service must have been in a hostile area that qualified for the Southwest Asia Service Medal.
- **January 1, 1993 – September 10, 2001:** Service must have been in a hostile area which qualified for any US campaign or service medal awarded for combat operations against hostile forces.
- **September 11, 2001 – (end date to be determined) –** All active service qualifies.

Additionally, any veteran with qualifying service before December 31, 1992, during Desert Storm and after January 1, 1993, during Operation Iraqi Freedom may be entitled to receive two separate \$500 bonus payments. Veterans who have a service-related disability rated by the Veterans Administration as 10% or more will receive the maximum payment of \$500. Verification of disability must be provided from the VA along with the application.

Public Affairs

Total hits to
website:
3,658,646

Average hits
per day:
9,996

Average hits
per visitor:
7.97

Total page
views:
873,882

Average
visitors per
day: 1,045

The SDDVA 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 (<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. 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 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 (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.



State Veterans Cemetery

State Veterans Cemetery

The South Dakota Veterans Cemetery is the first federally funded, state-owned, and operated veterans cemetery in South Dakota.

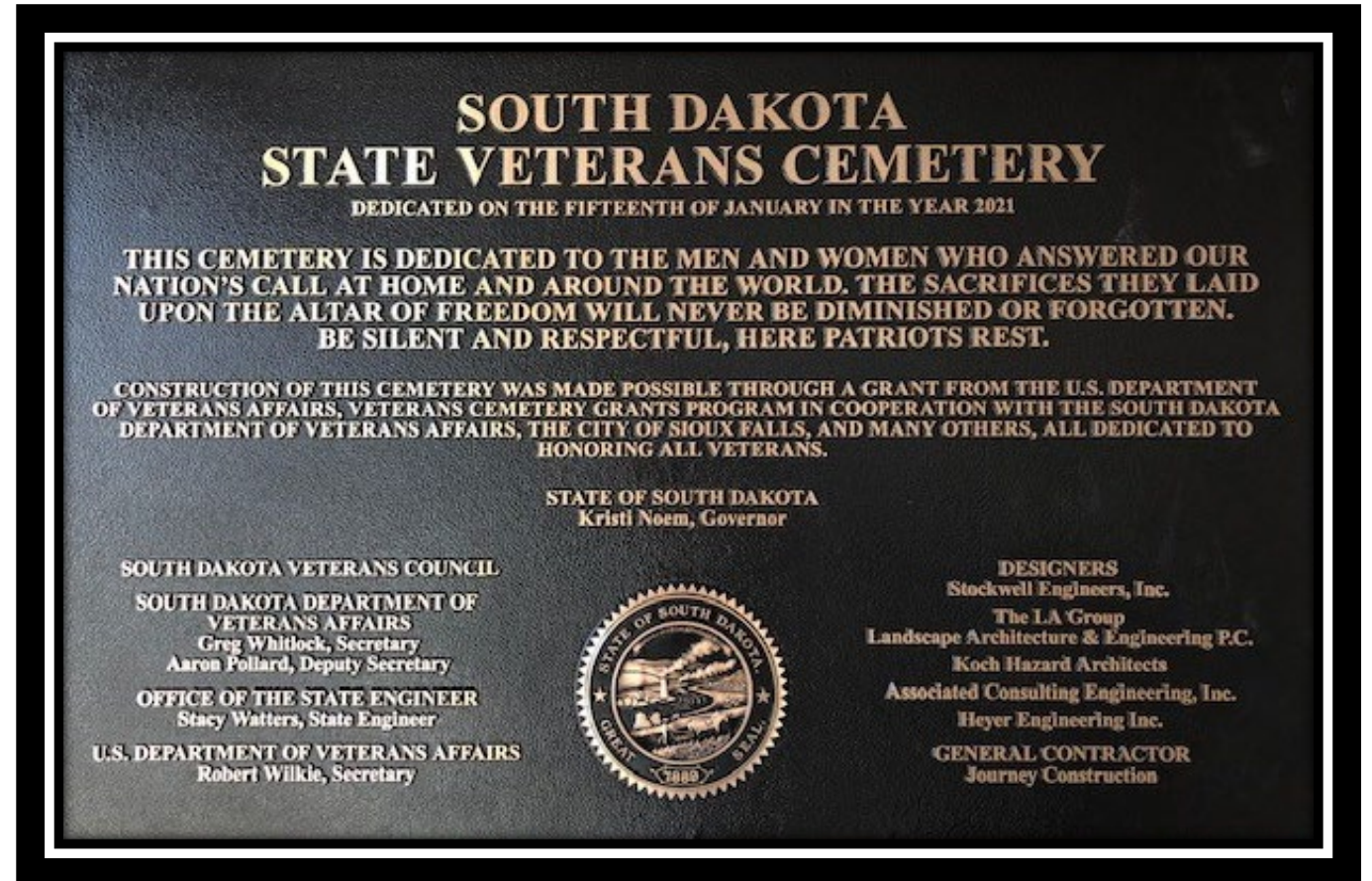
The Cemetery is located along Interstate 90 and will be opening the gates in Spring 2021.

Cemetery features include: main entrance, avenue of flags, administration and maintenance building, maintenance yard, memorial walk to include service flags, memorial wall, scattering garden, committal service shelter, columbarium, and the overall sense of honoring our service members and their dependents who are laid to rest.

Burial options are: preplaced double depth crypts for casket burials (598), oversized preplaced double depth crypts for casket burials (12), in-ground cremains burial sites (999), columbarium niches (660), and the memorial wall (50) to include the scattering garden.

We are honored to begin the operation of the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery. We look forward to serving all veterans and their families.

More information can be found at:
stateveteranscemetery.sd.gov.



Master Plan for Complete Build Out of South Dakota Veterans Cemetery



State Veterans Home



The mission of the Michael J. Fitzmaurice South Dakota Veterans Home (Home) is to honor and serve South Dakota veterans, their spouses, widows, or widowers, now and for generations to come. The 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.

We are honored to be “home” to heroes from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm/Persian Gulf, and Peace Time Veterans. Since opening in 1889, we have served over 4,490 residents. Services provided by our excellent 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.

5 WWII
Veterans

13 Korean
War Veterans

34 Vietnam
War Veterans

1 Desert
Storm/Persian
Gulf War

21 Peacetime
Veterans

Veteran Population at Home
at Year-End

State Veterans Home

Activities at the Home looked a bit different this year due to COVID-19 restrictions and precautions. Residents enjoyed bus rides, crafts, celebrating the birthday of each branch of service, singing groups, household movie nights with popcorn, a petting zoo, and much more! We appreciate our staff going above and beyond to keep our residents' minds active during this time of isolation.

Facilities

SDDVA continued to invest in the longevity and functionality of our Home in 2020:

- Activated a solar field which provides enough clean energy to power the facility during the day. Since activation, the solar field has provided an average savings of \$3,000 per month.
- Completed repairs to the original 1889 Soldiers Home by restoring the grand staircase and making safety improvements to fire escapes.
- Added three single-family homes for staff to our campus. These were relocated from the Star Academy campus.
- Added a 26-passenger drive-on-ramp bus to our transportation fleet.

Healthy Workforce

We continue to use part of the Reinert estate funds (estate of retired Air Force Master Sergeant Arlyn Reinert of Texas) along with the Build Dakota Scholarship to offer full-tuition scholarships to nursing students attending technical colleges. Students participating in this program sign a contract to work for the Home for three-years after completing their educational training and obtaining their license.

COVID-19

During 2020 the Home had ten staff and six residents test positive with COVID-19. Actions that were taken to protect our residents and our staff:

- Revised visitation policies.
- Revised admissions policies.
- Revised air exchange.
- Converted large room to a quarantine zone.
- Mass testing of staff and residents.
- Built COVID testing booth.
- Constructed visiting stations.
- Provided training opportunities for staff.
- Communicated weekly with health partners to ensure we were following respective procedures.
- Communicated weekly with families of residents.



Fallen Hero Bridge Dedications

In 2019, Governor Kristi Noem and the South Dakota Departments of Veterans Affairs, Military, and Transportation launched the Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedication Program. To date, six bridges have been dedicated.

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 meets in April and selects six heroes to honor and six 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.



Partners

Officers of the CTVSO Association are:

President—Aaron Walberg (Brown County)

Vice President—Doug Huntrods (Meade 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—Craig Bennett (Davison County)

District 4—Jesse Ketzer (Lawrence County)

District 5—Geri Opsal (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate)

County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers Association

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 63 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 two mini-conferences. (A listing of the CTVSOs can be found on the next page.)



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 Tribe—Robert Dunsmore
Clark—Darin Lewis
Clay—Drew Gunderson
Codington—Todd Rose
Corson—Kevin Dyda
Crow Creek Sioux Tribe—Vacant
Custer—Todd Fish
Davison—Craig Bennett
Day—Kevin Bohn
Deuel—Dennis Evenson
Dewey—Gerald Keller
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
Harding—Vacant
Hanson—Harry Huffman, Jr.
Hughes—Janet Beck
Hutchinson—Glenn Hartman
Hyde—Dave Johnson

Jackson—Terry Deuter
Jerauld—Roger Dwyer
Jones—Gary Sletto
Kingsbury—Gary Schumacher
Lake—Courtney VanZanten
Lawrence—Jesse Ketzer
Lincoln—Susan Irons
Lower Brule Sioux Tribe—Vacant
Lyman—Gary Sletto
Marshall—David Daberkow
McCook—Brian Havard
McPherson—Samantha Boshard
Meade—Doug Huntrods
Mellette—Gary Sletto
Miner—Tim Reisch
Minnehaha—Kathy Richardson
Moody—Jim DeLay
Oglala Lakota—Jerlene Arredondo
Oglala Sioux Tribe—Shawnee Red Bear
Pennington—Thomas Vallette
Perkins—Bridget Keller
Potter—Donald Herricks
Roberts—Angela Beacom
Rosebud Sioux Tribe—Orlando Morrison, Sr.
Sanborn—Craig Bennett
Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate—Geri Opsal
Spink—Steve Wollman
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe—Manaja Hill
Stanley—Janet Beck
Sully—Janet Beck
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

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

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 veteran's 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.

Partners

Council Leadership:

President—Terry Paulsen (PVA)

Vice President—Ken Teunissen (MOPH)

Secretary/Treasurer—Lisa Cummings (PVA)

Judge Advocate—Terry Hawk (VVA)



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.

Partners and Stakeholders

SDDVA is fortunate to have numerous partners locally, regionally and nationally that assist us in our endeavors to improve the lives of our veterans.

Henry Ford once said “Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” We appreciate our partners and all the successes we have achieved.

Americans for the Arts
Arts South Dakota
Avera Health
Cornerstone Rescue Mission
ESGR
Helpline
Midwest Honor Flight
My VA Vets Advisory Board
National Archives
National Association of Long-Term Care
National Association of State Approving Agencies
National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs
National Association of State Veterans Homes
Pierre Area Homeless Concerned Work Group
Sanford Health
Sioux Falls Chamber Veterans and Military Committee
Sioux Falls Community Action for Veterans
Sioux Falls VAMC Stakeholders
Social Security Administration
South Dakota Arts Council
South Dakota Coalition for the Homeless
South Dakota Department of Health
South Dakota Department of Labor
South Dakota Department of Revenue
South Dakota Department of Tribal Relations
South Dakota Housing Authority
South Dakota Housing for the Homeless Veterans Committee
South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance
South Dakota Suicide Prevention Executive Committee and Sub-Group
South Dakota Veterans Council
South Dakota Funeral Home Directors
United States Department of Defense
United States Department of Labor
United States Department of Veterans Affairs
VA Outreach Committee
VA National Cemetery Administration
Vet Centers



DO YOU KNOW OF A VETERAN WHO NEEDS HELP?
CALL 1.605.773.3269 OR VISIT: vetaffairs.sd.gov

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
425 E. Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
605.773.3269
<https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

