

Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission

Meeting Agenda

April 5, at 1000 AM

Location: Arrowheads Community Club

| | | |
|------|---|---|
| 1000 | Call to Order | Chairman Nicholas Taylor |
| | Moment of Silence | Vice-Chair Constance Snavelly |
| | Pledge of Allegiance | Chairman Nicholas Taylor |
| | Introduction of Commission Members | Chairman Nicholas Taylor |
| | Oath of Office: | MG Mark Schindler |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Mr. Leonard Johnson-MAL | |
| | Presentation: Certificate of Appreciation and Governor's thank you letter | MG Mark Schindler/Chair Taylor |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Mr. Charles L. Jackson, II (outgoing MAL) | |
| | Vice-Chairman's Opening Remarks | Vice-Chair Constance Snavelly |
| | Chairman's Opening Remarks | Chairman Nicholas Taylor |
| | TAG's Opening Remarks and Comments | MG Mark Schindler |
| | Approval of 2 February 2024 Meeting Minutes | Requires Vote |
| | Reading of Official and Other Communications | Chairman Nicholas Taylor |
| | DAG-VA Opening Remarks and Report | BG (PA) Maureen Weigl |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">PPL, BVH, PIROPrograms Report | |
| | VISN 4 | Requires Vote |
| | Committee Reports | Mr. Timothy Liezert |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">LegislativePensions/Relief/Grave MarkingsRETXMALTransportationVeterans' HealthVSO GrantWomen VeteransPAWVC Update | Mr. Michael Brooker Mr. Larry Googins Mr. Jesiah Schrader Ms. Constance Snavelly Mr. William Hines Mr. Mark Baylis Mr. Matthew Hollenbeck Ms. Lisa Kaye President David Gyger |
| | Unfinished Business | Chairman Nicholas Taylor |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Hall of Fame SOP | Discussion |
| | New Business | Chairman Nicholas Taylor |
| | Good of the Order | SVC Commissioners |
| | Agenda Items for Next Meeting | SVC Commissioners |
| | Closing Remarks | Chairman Nicholas Taylor |
| | Next Meeting | |
| | May 3, 2024, at 10 AM | |
| | Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville | |
| | Retiring of the Colors | Chairman Nicholas Taylor |
| | Adjournment | Chairman Nicholas Taylor |



Call to Order

Chairman Nicholas Taylor

The Pennsylvania State Veterans' Commission (SVC) meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM.

Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance

Vice Chairwoman Constance Snively led the moment of silence, which was dedicated to: Let us take a moment to remember SGT William Rivers, SPC Breonna Moffett, and SPC Kennedy Sanders, who were killed in a drone attack on an outpost in northeast Jordan as well as the 40 other soldiers who sustained injuries. Tomorrow, February 3 is known as Four Chaplains Day, a day set aside to honor the four U.S. Army Chaplains who gave their lives to save others when the US Army Transport ship Dorchester was hit by a German torpedo and sank during World War II. Through the pandemonium, according to those present, four Army chaplains brought hope in despair and light in darkness. When it became apparent there were not enough life jackets, the four U.S. Army chaplains on board removed theirs, handed them to frightened young soldiers, and chose to go down with the ship while praying. May we all display such selfless service to our comrades.

Commission Introductions

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Mr. Marc Ferraro | Designee (TAG), DMVA-EDS |
| Mr. Nicholas Taylor | SVC Chairman; President, MOAA |
| Mr. Paul Foresman | Commander, AMVETS |
| Mr. David Gui | Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans |
| Mr. William Albert | President, PA Blind Veterans Association |
| Mr. Jesiah Schrader | President, PA State Association of County Directors of Veterans Affairs |
| Mr. Steven Lavelle | Commander, The American Legion |
| Mr. James Hogan | Adjutant, The American Legion |
| Mr. Larry Googins | President, Vietnam Veterans of America |
| Mr. Stanley Majocka | Commander, Italian American War Veterans |
| Ms. Lisa Kaye | Member-at-Large |
| Mr. Mark Baylis | Member-at-Large |
| Mr. Michael Brooker | Member-at-Large |
| Mr. Gerald Hawk | Executive Director, AMVETS |
| Mr. John Getz | Adjutant, Veterans of Foreign Wars |
| Mr. Christopher Fidler | Director, Keystone Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America |
| Ms. Constance Snively | SVC V-Chairwoman, Representative, Korean War Veterans |
| Mr. Michael Rang | Commander, Catholic War Veterans |
| Mr. Philip Arnold | Adjutant, Military Order of Purple Hearts |
| Mr. David Gyger | Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars |
| Mr. Richard Fine | Commander, Jewish War Veterans |
| Mr. Tim Liezert | VISN 4 |

Absent

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Mr. Timothy Alexander | Commander, Disabled American Veterans |
| BG (PA) Maureen Weigl | DAG DMVA-OVA |
| Mr. Charles Jackson | Member-at-Large |
| Ms. Diana Henry | Commandant, Marine Corps League |

| Others Present | |
|---|--|
| CMS Shawn Phillips | PANG-Army |
| Ms. Angela Watson | Director, DMVA-Communications |
| Mr. David Cowgill | VISN 4 |
| Mr. Michael Hillman | Executive Director, PA House VAEP |
| Ms. Kerry Vanyo-TEAMS | Research Analyst, PA House VAEP |
| Ms. Serena Cruz-TEAMS | Clerk Assistant 2, DMVA-BVH |
| Mr. Rick Hamp | Special Assistant-DAG-DMVA-OVA |
| Mr. Travis Davis | Executive Director, DMVA-BVH |
| Mr. Joel Mutschler | Director-PIRO |
| Ms. Marilyn Kelly-Cavotta | Minority Strategic Advisor, DMVA-OVA |
| Mr. Guy Finucan TEAMS | Executive Assistant-DMVA-EDS |
| Mr. Brian Natali | DMVA-PIRO (Programs and Services) |
| Mr. Edward Cherry | DMVA-OCC |
| Mr. Joseph Batt | DMVA-OCC |
| Mr. Jeff Wallitsch | DMVA-OCC |
| Mr. Jeff King | DMVA-PIRO (Programs and Services) |
| Mr. Bradley Rank TEAMS | DMVA-PIRO (Programs and Services) |
| Ms. Jennifer Snyder | DMVA-OVA |
| Mr. Zackery Portser TEAMS | DMVA-PIRO (Outreach, Initiatives and Reintegration) |
| Mr. Chris Clark TEAMS | DMVA-PIRO (Outreach, Initiatives and Reintegration) |
| Ms. Susan Meighen TEAMS | DMVA-PIRO (Outreach, Initiatives and Reintegration) |
| Ms. Lana Evans TEAMS | DMVA-PRIO (Outreach, Initiatives and Reintegration) |
| Ms. Maria Tagliaferri | DMVA-PRIO (Outreach, Initiatives and Reintegration) |
| Mr. Seth Bengé | DMVA-PPL |
| Ms. Serena Cruz TEAMS | DMVA-BVH |
| Mr. Leonard M. Johnson | DAV |
| Mr. William Hines | DAV |
| Mr. David L. Wagner | DAV |
| Mr. Matt Hollenbeck | TAL |
| Mr. Richard Hudzinski | VVA |
| TEAMS Virtual Non-DMVA Guests | 36 non-DMVA plus 8 listed above DMVA staff for an overall total of 44 on TEAMS |
| Vice Chairwoman's Opening Remarks | |
| Vice Chairwoman Snively | |
| <p>Vice Chairwoman briefed the commissioners on Chairman Taylor requested that I share information about some of the different organizations that I volunteer with. One organization that could be of assistance to VSOs, the DMVA, and the State, is Bugles Across America. Bugles Across America is a non-profit organization of real bugler volunteers who sound a live rendition of Taps for funerals or other appropriate special events or ceremonies. We believe that everyone deserves a dignified rendition of Taps powered by heart and breath not batteries. There is no cost for this service. Just go to buglesacrossamerica.org. Tap the <i>Request a Bugler</i> tab or the picture in the center of the Home page. Enter the basic interrogatives of the mission. The request will be sent out to all volunteers at a minimum of a 50-mile radius. Again, the service is completely free.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Questions/Discussion</p> <p>None</p> | |
| Chairman's Opening Remarks | |
| Chairman Taylor | |
| <p>The Chairman greeted the members and welcomed them to the SVC meeting and recognized Mr. Michael Hillman Executive Director PA House VAEP.</p> | |

- Chairman informed the members the MAL Vietnam Veteran slot had been approved by TAG and sent to the Office of the Governor. We are awaiting his response. (Update 2/20/2024 Tuesday meeting: MAL position still in TAG's office, Mr. Durand will try to move it along).
- Informed members he had not yet completed the new SOP for the Hall of Fame. He anticipates having it finished by the April 5, 2024, meeting.
- Updated members on the Tuesday meetings with DMVA senior staff.
- Chairman urged DMVA-BVH to have more updated advisory council meeting information on their website. He thanked the PWVC and DMVA staff for tracking down the status of the new appointments to homes advisory councils.
- Informed the Governor will reveal his 2024-25 budget on February 6, 2024.

Questions/Discussion

None.

TAG's Opening Remarks

EDS Ferraro

EDS greeted and welcomed the members to the meeting and informed TAG was at a cabinet meeting where the 2024-25 budget was being unveiled.

EDS briefed the members on the following:

- Advised DMVA will learn shortly what is in the budget.
- Advised the deployments did change much since the last meeting in January 2024. Task Force One Paxton is preparing to deploy to the Horn of Africa, PANG already has soldiers as others deploy and redeploy. And PANG will continue to train up for all future deployments.
- Advised on the OVA side everything is moving along, attending events, and preparing for the large Vet Conference in September 2024. And pushing legislative priorities.
- Keystone Youth Challenge Academy is meeting with a lot of success, and the next class will be the largest with approximately 54 cadets.

Questions/Discussion

None.

Approval of the January 12, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Motion: Mr. David Gyger, AMVETS, made a motion to approve the minutes.

Second: Mr. Paul Foresman, VFW, seconded the motion.

The body agreed; motion carried. Minutes approved.

Reading of Official and Other Communications

Chairman Taylor

Chairman told the member he had been sent a letter from SVC commissioner Mr. Michael Rang-CWV requesting that the bylaws get reviewed about allowing SVC non-commission individuals serving as chairs of SVC committees- referring to the motion at the January 12, 2024, meeting allowing two non-commission individuals to serve as committee chairs which was approved. SVC chairman said he sent letter to all members in preparation for a discussion under new business.

Questions/Discussion

None.

Deputy Adjutant General-OVA

Mr. Mutschler

DAG-OVA was unable to attend the meeting, Mr. Mutschler acted on DAG-OVA's behalf.

Questions/Discussion

None.

DMVA Policy, Planning, and Legislation

Mr. Benge

Mr. Seth Benge directed the members to the slides presented in the read ahead.

- Mr. Benge informed members there were no changes from the slides presented at the January 2024 meeting and now.
- Informed members about bill HR307 making March 29th Vietnam Veterans Day.
- Mr. Benge mentioned a memo he recently viewed from House Representative O’Neil regarding the RETX program, Mr. Benge stated he will keep commissioners up to date.
- Mr. Benge said Mr. Wagner’s appointment to the Advisory Council was delayed and he didn’t know why. However, SVC commissioner Mr. Hogan-TAL informed Mr. Benge that Mr. Wagner recently received a letter from the Governor stating he was appointed.

Questions/Discussion

Mr. Hudzinski, a guest-VVA, asked if the legislators had decided on the amount increase for the Blind/Paralyzed Pension in hopes of lobbying for that amount. Mr. Benge said not yet.

Mr. Googins-VVA raised concerns that certain legislators voted against Vietnam Veteran Day. It was explained to Mr. Googins that what he viewed was not votes but legislators who signed onto the bill. And Mr. Benge said he would eventually provide a list of legislators who voted for or against the bill when that occurs.

DMVA Bureau of Homes

Mr Travis Davis

Mr. Travis Davis briefed the members on the following:

- Mr. Davis informed the members that BVH had been busy with complaint surveys from the Department of Health at the following homes: Delaware Valley, Hollidaysburg, Erie, and Southwest Veterans Center. They were all unsubstantiated.
- BVH had one resident testing positive for COVID, 11 for RSV and none for the flu.
- BVH had 1078 admissions. He also said wait times are dramatically lower, in fact one veteran was placed in a home within a week.
- Mr. Davis briefed the members on DAG-OVA’s task to the revenue team to recover PACT Act monies: Revenue team recouped \$500,000 and will be bringing in \$60,000 per month.
- He informed members that the Advisory Councils consist of 72 members and 18 will be expiring and insured them he is working on the situation.
- He said senior leadership will be attending NASV Conference in Washington D.C. this month for 2 days of education and spend some time with the PPL team going to the Capitol to meet with legislators.
- Mr. Davis explained to members that since they received the immediate jeopardy complaint, they dropped one star to 4-stars

Questions/Discussion

Chairman Taylor asked what the process is to restore BVH to 5-stars. Mr. Davis said the impact of the immediate jeopardy would most likely last two years. The primary means to restoring a star is to focus on quality of care which BVH is doing.

None

DMVA Bureau of PIRO

Mr. Mutschler

Mr. Mutschler directed the members to the PIRO reports/slides submitted in the read ahead.

- Reminded members about submitting for the Women’s Veteran’s magazine which had been extended to March 29, 2024.
- Informed that the media director Angela Watson was doing a tremendous job getting all the information out utilizing social media.
- PIRO has been seeing substantial growth at the trainings, and forums. He offered to the members if they had any topics, they would like covered to submit them.
- Informed members that over 40,000 PACT Act contacts statewide so far. And increase in data that has been coming in has resulted in better focusing PIRO.

Questions/Discussion

None

Approval of State Veterans’ Programs Reports

Motion: Mr. Steven Lavelle, TAL, approve the programs report.

Second: Ms. Constance Snavelly, KWVA, seconded the motion.

The body agreed; motion carried. Programs reports approved.

VISN-4

Mr. Liezert

Mr. Liezert directed the members to his materials in the read ahead.

- Mr. Liezert briefly highlighted some of the information in the submitted talking points.
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Questions/Discussions

Committee Reports

Legislative Committee

Mr. Heister

Mr. Brooker briefed the following: Good morning. The Legislative Committee is currently in the process of building our team. We plan to meet as a Committee before the April SVC Meeting to discuss the way forward and to develop and prioritize goals. Towards that end, I respectfully request an assist from each of my fellow SVC Committee Chairs and from the DMVA Team. I’d like to schedule a short phone call or video meeting in the coming weeks to hear from you what, if any, your legislative focus is. This will help to ensure the Legislative Committee becomes a source of supporting fire rather than friendly fire in providing legislative advice to the TAG. That concludes my report.

Question/Discussion

None

Pensions/Relief/Grave Markings/State Military Cemetery Committee

Mr. Googins

No official report.

Questions/Discussions

None.

RETX

Mr. Schrader

Committee Chair Mr. Schrader-PSACDVA briefed commissioners on committees meeting:

- Informed members that the previous committee under the direction of past president PSACDVA Mr. Justin Slep had the SVC approve changes to Title 43 Code Chapter 5 regarding definition of income sources for need assessment.

- He noted the PWVC wrote letters of support of HB1227 to legislators. He stated the RETX goal is continued support of not just HB1227 but all bills that support the regulatory changes the SVC recommended.

Questions/Discussions

Mr. Brooker-MAL asked if he heard Mr. Schrader say SVC is still waiting on final approval; he then asked if that were the Governor or TAG. Chairman Taylor stated it was still in TAG's office per his understanding from EDS Ferraro.

None.

Member-At-Large Committee

Vice Chairwoman Constance Snavelly

Vice Chairwoman briefed the members: No updates. As reported last month, we are reviewing the SOP and the scoring sheet, along with the application form to recommend changes or adjustments to improving the process prior to the next round of open Member at Large positions.

Questions/Discussions

None

Transportation Committee

Mr. Hines

Mr. William Hines reported on the following:

- PA DAV has submitted a contract to purchase 12 new vehicles from the DAV national. PA DAV is awaiting approval of the purchase from the DAV trust to assist in covering the cost.

Questions/Discussions

Chairman Taylor asked if these 12 vehicles were replacements or additions to the fleet. Mr. Hines said replacement of the 10 vehicles going to auction.

Veteran Health Committee

Mr. Baylis

Mr. Baylis reported on his experiences on providing transportation to rural veterans for their health care needs:

- He stated he assigned his staff to seek information from rural veterans in Monroe County regarding their experiences with transportation or lack thereof.
- He informed members he met with VISN 4 Mr. Liezert regarding transportation needs and with people in logistical who support DAV. He said he was impressed with the VISN 4 operation overall.
- He said he will continue to address veterans in rural areas under his working with the LTCC and attempt to fuse it with what DAV is doing.

Questions/Discussion

Chairman Taylor suggested that Mr. Baylis get with Mr. Hines and do some 'cross-talking' to come up with some ideas.

VSO Grant Committee

Mr. Hollenbeck

Mr. Hollenbeck briefed on the following:

- Informed organizations will be turning in their grant requests.
- Informed that the NARA has finally cleared their 600000 backlogs for military records.
- Mr. Hollenbeck briefed the SVC members as he did at the PWVC regarding Health Resolution 1822 (also known as Plus for Veterans Act) which allows individuals and companies to charge for getting veterans their benefits such as compensation and pensions. The resolution allows the individuals and companies to work with veterans even if they are not accredited by the VA. The loophole for this is if the VA does not make the individual and/or companies to get accredited within 90 days they can begin to work as veteran service officers without accreditation. He did note that his resolution is still in committee. He also noted that certain people who pass the VA

accreditation program can act as VSOs separate from any organizations; he related that some lawyers do this, but they can only charge within the consumer index.

Questions/Discussion

Mr. Hudzinski asked if the Guard Act has a House or Senate number. Mr. Hollenbeck said he would get it for him.

Chairman Taylor asked- any veteran does not have to necessarily be affiliated with any organization to receive help from an organization like the American Legion. Mr. Hollenbeck confirmed it. Chairman Taylor said we should do our best to ensure veterans know where they can go to an accredited VSO without getting charged. It was agreed to.

Mr. Baylis stated that the independent VSOs could charge a percentage of what they get the veteran rated at; for example, they could charge 10% or the amount of the veteran getting 10% rating.

Mr. Googins wanted everyone to know that each county has VSOs where the veteran can go with no charge.

Womens Health

Ms. Kaye

Ms. Kaye briefed members on the following:

- Ms. Kaye said she and other members of her committee are working with the Joint State Government Commission Task Force on veteran Womens Health. She informed the Task Force is comprised of some highly regarded health care professionals that cover all aspects of health care including congressional partners.
- Informed the Task Force focuses on health care needs, how to improve delivery of services, how PA is doing compared to other states, and other areas.
- The Task Force needs data to do a full and proper evaluation. They had sent out a 10-question survey to health care professional regarding women veterans put the sampling that came back to was too low for decision/policy making.
- Ms. Kaye called on VISN 4 to assist with data on women veterans if it's available and VetConnect if they have data. The Task Force is looking for data to focus needs.
- Ms. Kaye briefly discussed her interactions with a community hospital and influenced them to be more probative in questions of women veterans for a better overall diagnosis.

Questions/Discussions

Mr. Hudzinski asked if the Task Force had a statistician. Ms. Kaye wasn't sure.

PAWVC

Mr. Gyger

Mr. Gyger stated he did not have an official report but had wanted to get information on the Advisory Council members waiting for their approval. He said the question had been answered by Mr. Benge and Mr. Hogan-TAL.

Questions/Discussions

None

Unfinished Business

Chairman Taylor said the unfinished business of the accreditation issue briefed by Mr. Hollenbeck and his brief on the Hall of Fame SOP had already been discussed.

Questions/Discussions

None

New Business

Chairman Taylor informed the members he received a memorandum from commissioner Mr. Michael Rang-CWC outlining request to change the Bylaws allowing non-commissioners members to be

chairpersons on SVC committees. Chairman Taylor said he then sent out a memorandum to the commissioners regarding Mr. Rang’s request anticipating feedback from the members.

Chairman Taylor then proposed a motion: Change the Bylaws to allow non-commissioners to be chairpersons of SVC committees. Mr. Gyger moved the motion forward, and Ms. Snavelly seconded it.

Questions/Discussion

Mr. Brooker stated the believed the Bylaws should not be changed because commissioners were placed on the SVC, and they should want to be actively involved in SVC concerns. However, he agreed that the exceptions noted last month should extend until October 2024, but new term goes by the Bylaws that only commissioners can be chairpersons. Mr. Baylis concurred.

Mr. Googins requested that all SVC documents sent out be dated, Chairman Taylor concurred and ordered.

Vote taken on the motion, it ended as a tie 7 to 7 Chairman Taylor broke the tie with a no vote. Motion denied.

Mr. Joseph Batt-OCC said in the future, after these exceptions to chairpersons expire the SVC must honor the Bylaws going forward.

Motion: Mr. David Gyger, VFW, to change the bylaws to allow non-commissioners to be committee chairs

Second: Ms. Constance Snavelly, KWVA, seconded the motion.

The body agreed: Motion denied

Good of the Order

None

Agenda for Next Meeting

None

Closing Remarks

None.

Next Meeting

Friday, May 3, 2024, at 10:00 AM
Arrowheads Community Center, FIG

The minutes of this meeting are respectfully submitted by:

BG (PA) Maureen Weigl
Deputy Adjutant General-Office of Veterans Affairs



STATE VETERANS COMMISSION MEETING
April 5, 2024



DMVA MILITARY UPDATE

CURRENT AND FUTURE UNIT MOBILIZATIONS



| 2025 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----|-----|------------------------|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|
| FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC | JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | |
| 1-224 AVN DET 1 B - SWB -23 PAX | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 56 SBCT - 2-112 IN - HOA#1 -1041 PAX | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 56 SBCT - FLEE / FLEW - 14 PAX | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 28 MP - GTMO -111 PAX | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | 56 SBCT - JMTG-E -165 PAX | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | 56 SBCT - HOA#2 -685 PAX | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | 213 PC - OSS -16 PAX | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | 213 PC - OSS -20 PAX | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | 213 PC - OIR -8 PAX | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | 528 FIN - OSS - 25 PAX | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | 3622 ODCO - OSS - 159 PAX | | | | | |

ARNG Unit Soldiers in Theater: **1,064**
 ARNG Soldiers at MOB/DEMOB Site: **0**
 ARNG Individual Mob: **6**
 Total ARNG Mob: **1,070**

**Total PANG
 Mobilized: 806**

**Current ANG Unit Airmen Mob: 113
 Current ANG Individual Mob: 15
 Total: ANG Mob: 128**

CURRENT MOBILIZATIONS & TOTAL DEPLOYMENTS



| <u>PAANG Current Deployments</u> | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| Unit | Opn | Pax |
| 193 SOW | OFS-OIR-OSS, Other | 8/1 |
| 111 ATKW | IPR (HS), OFS-OIR-OSS, TS | 36/6/40 |
| 171 ARW | Alert Status (HS), OFS-OIR-OSS | 37 |
| Total PAANG Deployed | | 128 |

Total PANG Deployed 806

CURRENT AND FUTURE UNIT MOBILIZATIONS



| JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC | JAN24 | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV |
|------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
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| RTND | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ND | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| D | | 193 SOW- RCP- Various- 47 PAX | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 171ARW- Guam- RTND | | | | | | | | | | | | 271 CBCS (193)- RCP- Various- 30 PAX | | | | |
| | | | 171 SFS- Saudi Arabia- 15 PAX | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 171 ARW- ALERT STATUS (HS)- 37 PAX | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 111 ATKW- RPA (HS)- 36 PAX | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Current ANG Unit Airmen Mob: 135
 Current ANG Individual Mob: 6
 Total: ANG Mob: 141

CURRENT MOBILIZATIONS & TOTAL DEPLOYMENTS



| <u>PAANG Current Deployments</u> | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| Unit | Opn | Pax |
| 193 SOW | RCP, CENTCOM | 47/4 |
| 111 ATKW | IPR (HS) | 36 |
| 171 ARW | Alert Status (HS), OFS-OIR-OSS | 37/17 |
| Total PAANG Deployed | | 141 |



**DMVA
POLICY, PLANNING & LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS
MR. DUSTY DURAND**



New

HR 335 (Takac) A Resolution establishing the Pennsylvania Task Force on Agent Orange to study and issue a report on how best to connect veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and their families with the VA benefits for which they may be eligible.

HR 336 (Munroe) A Resolution designating March 29, 2024, as "Vietnam Veterans Memorial Day" in Pennsylvania.

Currently Tracking

HB 325 (Staats) Act amending Title 51 (Military Affairs) in Department of Military Affairs, providing for burial benefits. **05/23/23 Awaiting 2nd Consideration, laid on the table.**

SB 531 (Baker, L) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in State Veterans' Commission and Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans' Affairs, further providing for Veterans' Trust Fund. (Has not crossed opposite chamber). **10/03/23 Passed Senate, referred to House VAEP Cmte.**

SB 447 (Mastriano) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in Department of Military Affairs, establishing the PA VETConnect Program. **10/31/23 1st Consideration in House.**

HB 892 (Kaufer) Identical. **06/13/23 Pass House, referred to Senate VAEP Cmte.**

Blind, amputee and paralyzed veteran's pensions

HB 1091 (Williams, D) \$270/month. **05/23/23 Awaiting 2nd Consideration, laid on the table.**

HB 542 (Gregory) \$250/month. **3/20/23 Introduced and referred to House VAEP Cmte.**

SB 189 (Ward, J) \$200/month. **05/01/23 Awaiting 2nd Consideration, re-referred to Senate Appropriations.**

RETX

HB 1227 (Sappey) [Companion Bill SB 177 Bartolotta] A Joint Resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, further providing for exemptions and special provisions. **11/15/23 Voted favorably from House VAEP Cmte, awaiting 1st Consideration.**

[Report on RETX bills](#): HB 248, HB 674, HB 717, HB 1227, HB 1401, HB 2044, SB 177, SB 194, SB 450, SB 844, SB 947

[Report crossed chambers bills](#): HB 269, HB 363, HB 877, HB 892, HB 1086, SB 126, SB 146, SB 209, SB 248, SB 411, SB 429, SB 438, SB, 447, SB 477, SB 531, SB 933, **SB 915, HB 502**

[Report on passed bills](#): HB 157, HB 404, HB 804, HB 1094, SB 141, SB 829, **HB 157, SB 146**

2024 Significant Dates

Continuing Resolutions: [Budget has passed to fund all federal departments until October 1, 2024](#)

General Assembly

Senate: April 8, 9, 10, 29, 30; May 1, 6, 7, 8; June 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

House: April 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 29, 30; May 1, 6, 7, 8, 20, 21, 22; June 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28

Last day to REGISTER before the primary: April 8, 2024

Pennsylvania Primary: April 23, 2024

Last day to REGISTER before General Election: October 21, 2024

General Election: November 5, 2024

General Assembly Schedule can be found at: [Session Information - PA General Assembly \(state.pa.us\)](https://www.state.pa.us/session-information)

For all Pennsylvania Election dates: [Upcoming Elections \(pa.gov\)](https://www.pa.gov/elections)



**DMVA BUREAU OF VETERANS HOMES
MR. TRAVIS DAVIS**



PVH Current Licensure Status



| SVH Survey Table as of Mar 22, 2024 | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| SVH | Regulatory Agency | Survey Reason/Type | Survey Date(s) | Status/comments |
| DVVH | DOH Nursing | Annual Recertification | 12/18/23 - 12/21/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 01/11/24 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Incident | 12/06/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 11/07/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 09/26/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 09/14/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 08/14/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 05/30/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Life Safety | Annual Recertification | 03/21/23 | Cleared |
| VA | Annual Recertification | 12/19/23 - 12/22/23 | POC accepted, date certain 02/19 | |
| GMVC | DOH Nursing | Annual Recertification | 08/29/23 - 09/01/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Life Safety | Annual Recertification | 09/12/23 | Cleared |
| | VA | Annual Recertification | 02/27/24 - 03/01/24 | POC under development |
| HVH | DOH Nursing | Annual Recertification | 08/21/23 - 08/24/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 01/17/24 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 12/12/23 - 12/13/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 08/08/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 06/15/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 04/14/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Life Safety | Annual Recertification | 07/17/23 - 07/19/23 | Cleared |
| | DHS | Annual Recertification | 03/05/24 - 03/06/24 | POC under development |
| | VA | Annual Recertification | 06/05/23 - 06/08/23 | Cleared |

| 5 Star rating- last updated: February 28, 2024 | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------------------|
| | DVVH | GMVC | HVH | PSSH | SEVC | SWVC |
| Overall | 5 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 |
| Health Inspection | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Quality Measures | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 5 |
| Staffing | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Changes from Dec/Nov 2023 to Jan 2024 | Unchanged | Unchanged | Unchanged | Unchanged | Unchanged | Health Inspection 4 to 3 |

Each DMVA Pennsylvania Veterans' Home is currently licensed by the PA Department of Health, PA Department of Human Services and certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. HVH, PSSH and SEVC have a Personal Care program.

Last updated: 8-24-2023

PVH Current Licensure Status



| SVH Survey Table as of Mar 22, 2024 | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| SVH | Regulatory Agency | Survey Reason/Type | Survey Date(s) | Status/comments |
| PSSH | DOH Nursing | Annual Recertification | 04/18/23 - 04/21/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Incident | 05/15/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Life Safety | Annual Recertification | 04/25/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Life Safety | Occupancy Inspection | 06/28/23 | Cleared |
| | DHS | Annual Recertification | 01/25/24 - 01/26/24 | POC accepted, date certain 03/20 |
| | DHS | Abbreviated - Complaint | 08/30/23 | Cleared |
| | DHS | Abbreviated - Incident | 05/02/23 | Cleared |
| | VA | Annual Recertification | 03/18/24 - TBD | Results Pending |
| SEVC | DOH Nursing | Annual Recertification | 08/21/23 - 08/24/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 03/14/24 | Results Pending |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 10/25/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Life Safety | Annual Recertification | 08/07/23 | Cleared |
| | DHS | Annual Recertification | 10/04/23 | Cleared |
| | VA | Annual Recertification | 02/26/24 - 03/01/24 | Results Pending |
| SWVC | DOH Nursing | Annual Recertification | 06/26/23 - 06/30/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 01/30/24 - 01/31/24 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 12/20/23 - 01/06/24 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 11/21/23, 11/28/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 11/08/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Nursing | Abbreviated - Complaint | 08/17/23 | Cleared |
| | DOH Life Safety | Annual Recertification | 06/28/23 - 06/29/23 | Cleared |
| | VA | Annual Recertification | 05/02/23 - 05/05/23 | CAP accepted; date certain 08/15 |

Each DMVA Pennsylvania Veterans' Home is currently licensed by the PA Department of Health, PA Department of Human Services and certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. HVH, PSSH and SEVC have a Personal Care program.

Last updated: 8-24-2023

Resident COVID-19 Update

| Resident Status: Mar 22, 2024 | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Veteran Home | Isolation COVID | Quarantine | Isolation Influenza | Isolation RSV |
| DVVH | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| GMVC | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| HVH | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| PSSH | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| SEVC | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| SWVC | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Resident and Staff COVID-19/Influenza Update

| COVID-19, Influenza, RSV Data | | | | | | | |
|--|------|------|-----|------|------|------|-------|
| Friday, Mar 22, 2024 | DVVH | GMVC | HVH | PSSH | SEVC | SWVC | TOTAL |
| Total # of COVID + residents | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Total # of COVID + staff | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | | 5 |
| Total # of residents + for Influenza | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total # of residents + for RSV | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total # of staff +for Influenza | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total # of residents who ONLY received the 2nd 2023/2024 VACCINE | 0 | 14 | 0 | 26 | 0 | 0 | 40 |
| Total # of residents who have received the RSV vaccine | 127 | 131 | 139 | 115 | 64 | 127 | 703 |
| Total # of staff who received the Flu Vaccine | 76 | 77 | 64 | 53 | 62 | 123 | 454 |
| Total # of residents who have received the Flu Vaccine | 135 | 151 | 196 | 136 | 156 | 135 | 909 |

Pennsylvania Veterans Homes COVID-19 Update

COVID-19 links for information related to the Veterans Homes and skilled nursing facilities.

- <https://www.dmva.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx>
- <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/LTCF-Data.aspx>
- <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Monitoring-Dashboard.aspx>
- <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Guidance/SNF-Guidance.aspx>
- <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19MpLoPxayE1MDwQJJYCZxISN64V4FJSJPGzfvVBb5Mw/edit#gid=1511961664>



**BUREAU OF VETERANS PROGRAMS,
INITIATIVES, REINTEGRATION, AND OUTREACH
MR. JOEL MUTSCHLER**



- Our Servicemember, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) Community
 - Comprises approximately 14% of Pennsylvania's total population
 - Find resources and link to our team through PA VETConnect – dmva.pa.gov/vetconnect
- PACT Act Impact:
 - Over 697,000 Total Veterans/Survivors nationwide completed PACT Act-related claims
 - Pennsylvania is 8th out of 55 state/territories in completed claims
 - Over 40,000 from PA Veterans/Survivors (as of 1 March 2024)
 - Visit www.va.gov/PACT to get the latest information and updates
- Expanding Outreach Efforts
 - Pennsylvania Salutes You for Your Service: www.pa.gov/welcome-back-veterans
 - Sign up for PA Veterans Registry and the *DMVA Digest* – register.dmva.pa.gov



Expanded Access to VA Healthcare – PACT Act



- All Veterans who meet the basic service and discharge requirements and were exposed to toxins and other hazards—at home or abroad—are eligible to enroll in VA care as of March 5, 2024.
 - All Veterans who meet the basic service and discharge requirements and were exposed to toxins and other hazards while serving our country—at home or abroad—will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits.
 - Includes all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, or any other combat zone after 9/11.
 - It includes all Veterans who deployed in support of the Global War on Terror.
 - And it includes Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty here at home, including those who worked with chemicals, pesticides, lead, asbestos, certain paints, nuclear weapons, x-rays and more.
 - Sign up with an accredited Veteran Service Officer (e.g., County Director of Veterans Affairs) who can also assist with other county, state, and federal benefits or directly with the federal VA by visiting VA.gov/PACT or call 1-800-MYVA411 to find information on how to apply for VA health care.



PA VETConnect

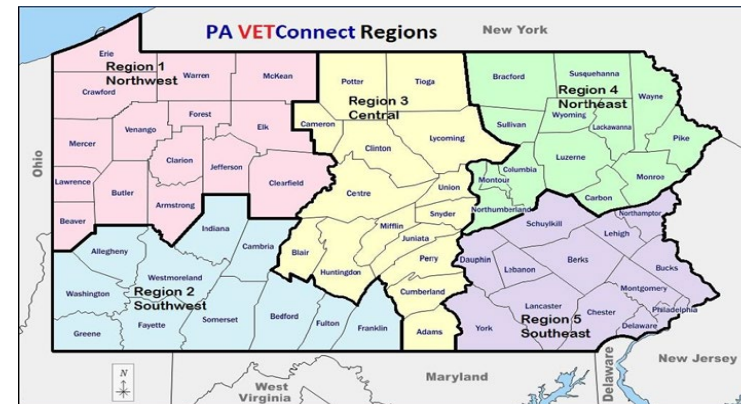


We build relationships that amplify service to the SMVF community

- **Region 1** - Attended and supported a Butler Ambulatory Peer Support Group that is getting off the ground. Provided VA resources, as well as contacts that could help support the mission of the Peer Support Group. Will be providing opportunities for Veterans in the group to speak to VSOs about possible claim submissions. Will be bringing in Vet Center reps, VA CEPC and Suicide Prevention teams, recreational nonprofits with Veteran specific supports for the Peer Group to use.
- **Region 2** - Were an integral part in helping to develop a Veterans Advocate Network for Bedford & Somerset Counties along with the VA Community Engagement & Partnership Coordinator out of James E. Van Zandt VAMC. The first meeting took place in March 2024 and will continue monthly at this time.
- **Region 3** – Collaborating with various members of the Adams County Veteran Advocate Network and other community organizations to plan another MilitaryShare Food Distribution site in Adams County due to need.
- **Region 4** - Region 3 and 4 sat in an interview with SEDA-COG on 3/19 to discuss transportation barriers for veterans; planners shared the PennDOT 5310 grant program as a possible option for CDVAs/county admins to look at as specific dedicated transportation with grant funds available to purchase a vehicle dedicated to transporting veterans. It was discussed to see if any one of the counties that participate in the Valley Veterans Coalition could be a good way to pilot a large method for other counties to adopt. Jen is working on planning a presentation with PennDOT 5310 program staff with the CDVAs and their commissioners to discuss where this may be a good place to pilot the concept.
- **Region 5** – VSS met with the Steelton Borough Mayor, Dent in a collaboration meeting with Penn State Medicine Food Access Program. We discussed the potential for a Military Food Share in Steelton, as well as the expansion of the borough’s community garden with the collaboration of veteran farmers.

■ **Successes**

- >19,700 Connections
- > 2,028 resources
- Building trust within the network



Reintegration and Outreach Events Overview



| Outreach Statistics | | | | | |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------------|
| | 1st Qtr | 2nd Qtr | 3rd Qtr | 4th Qtr | Year to Date |
| Outreach Events Supported | 87 | 88 | 41 | | 216 |
| Mobile Outreach Van Events | 8 | 9 | 9 | | 26 |
| Veteran Interactions | 2,202 | 1,471 | 987 | | 5,449 |
| Claim referrals to County Directors and Service Organizations | 684 | 369 | 141 | | 1,204 |
| Claim referrals to other state, county and local organizations assisting Veterans | 626 | 371 | 60 | | 1,057 |
| Health Care Enrollment Referrals | 438 | 182 | 76 | | 696 |
| Number of Veterans Registry Cards distributed | 350 | 143 | 116 | | 609 |
| County Directors Office Attended | 45 | 41 | 12 | | 98 |
| Legislative attended events | 56 | 42 | 2 | | 100 |

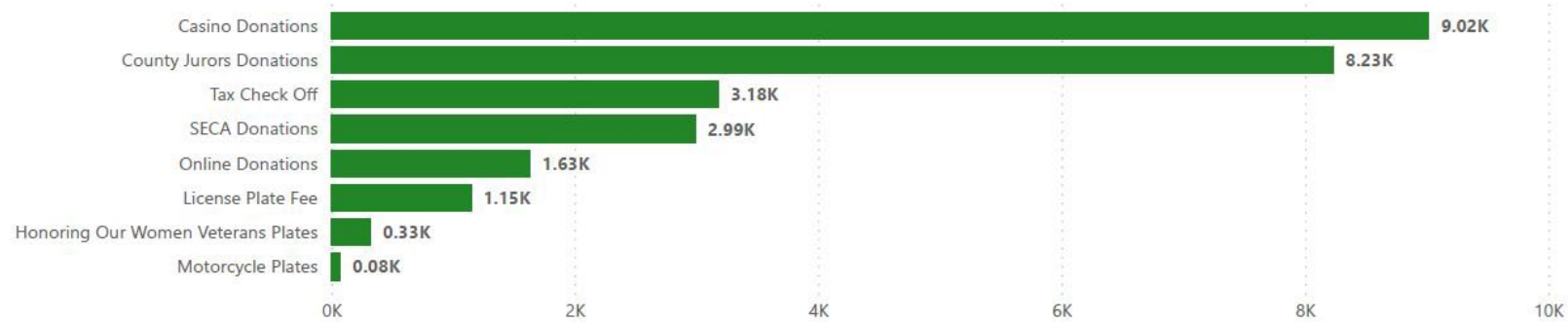
As of 29 February 2024

> community > commonwealth > country

VETERANS' TRUST FUND



Revenue (Other Than License Plate and Registration Contribution)



License Plate and Registration Contributions ("Check Off")

728.84K

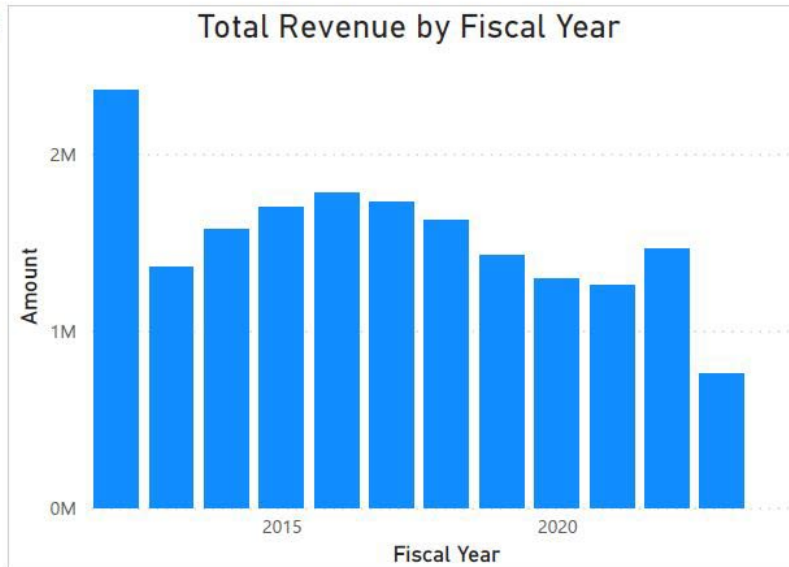
All Other Revenue

26.61K

TOTAL REVENUE

755.45K

Total Revenue by Fiscal Year



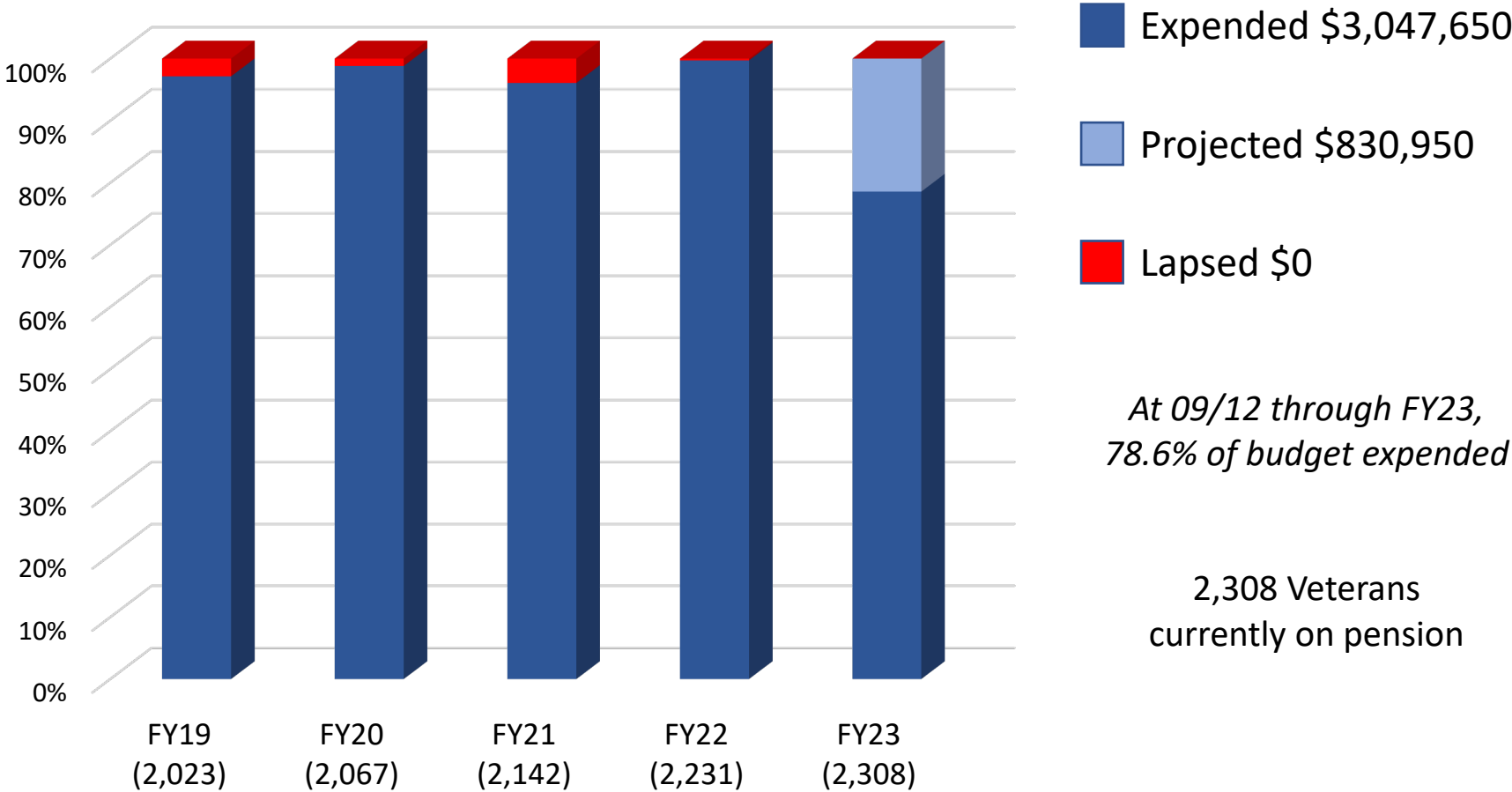
--- License Plates Sold ---



AMPUTEE & PARALYZED VETERANS' PENSION



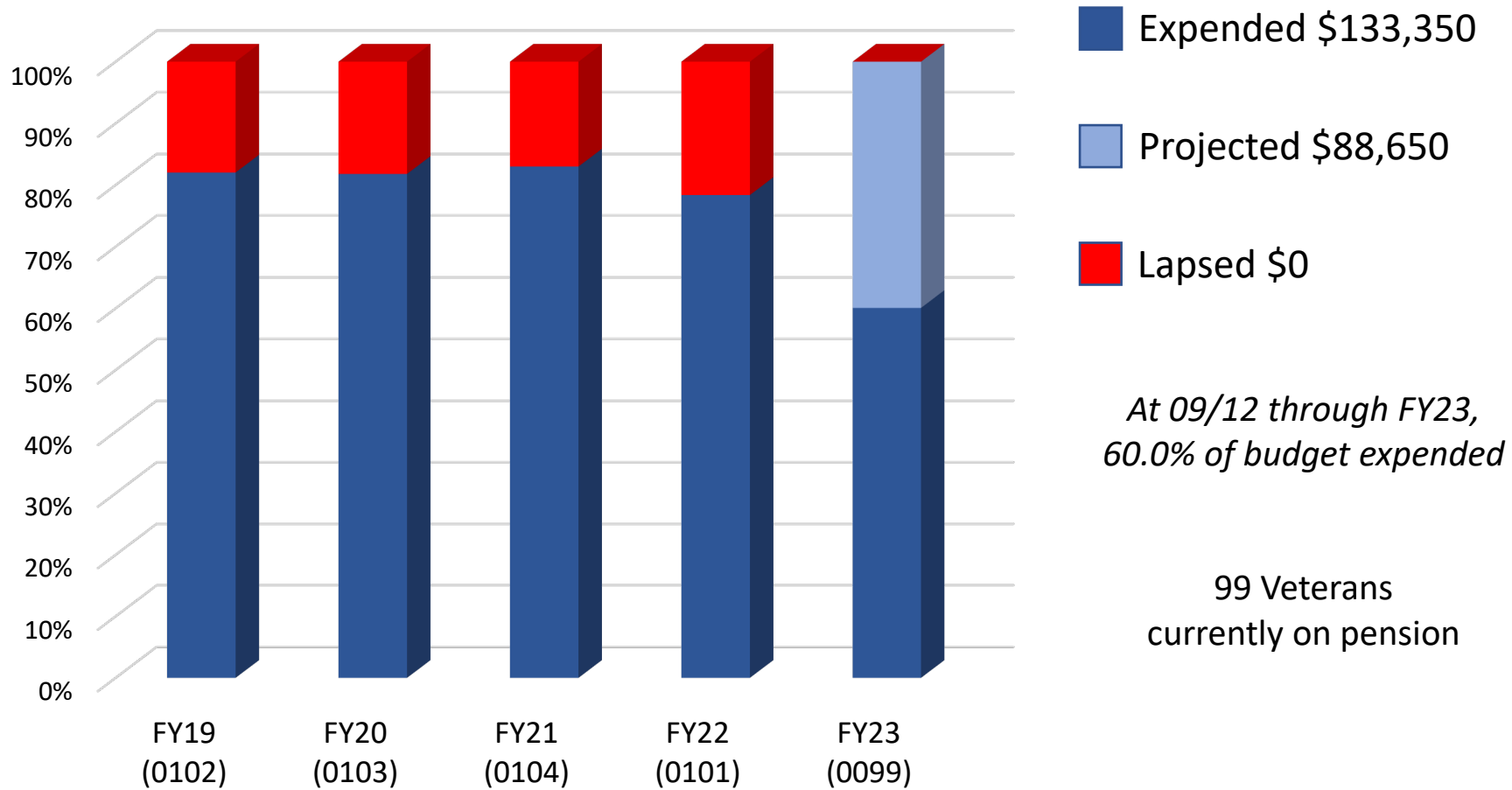
\$3,878,000



BLIND VETERANS' PENSION



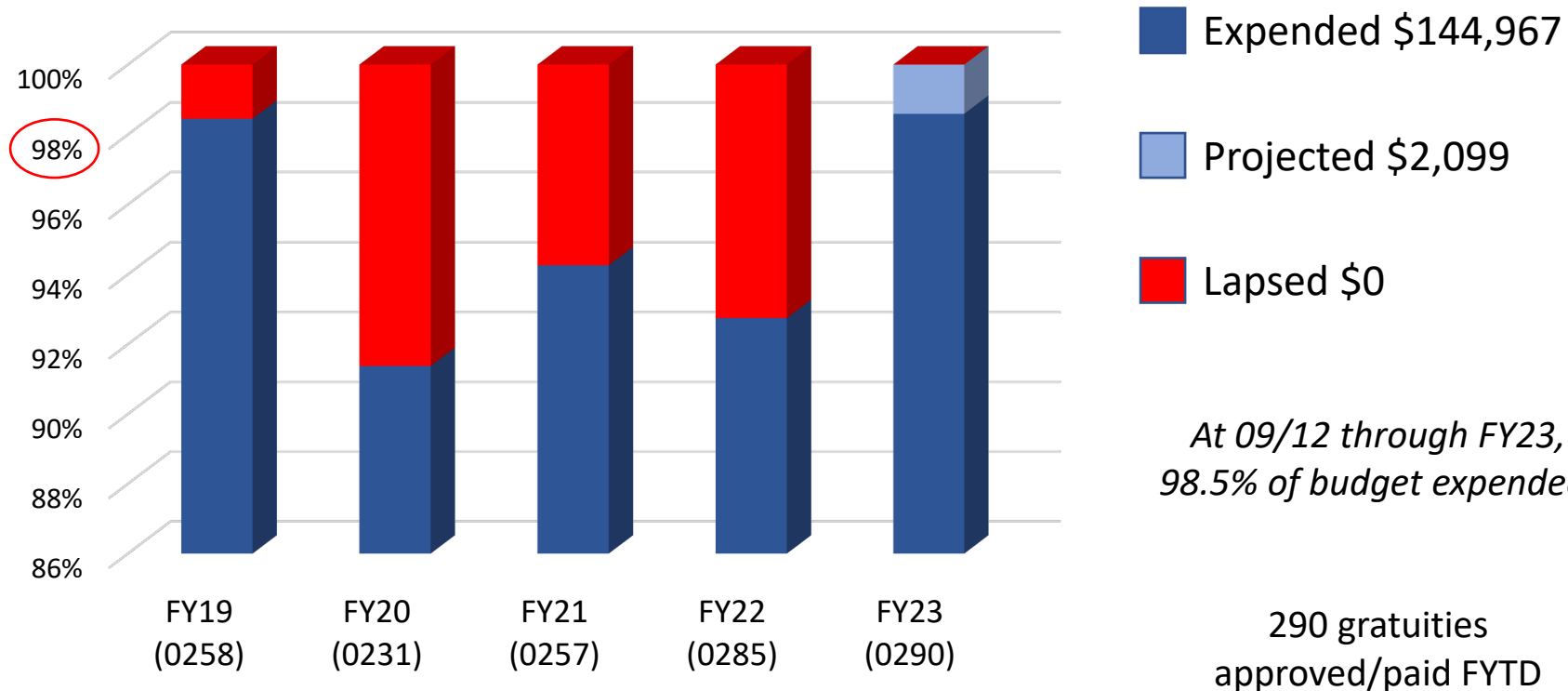
\$222,000



EDUCATIONAL GRATUITY



\$147,066*

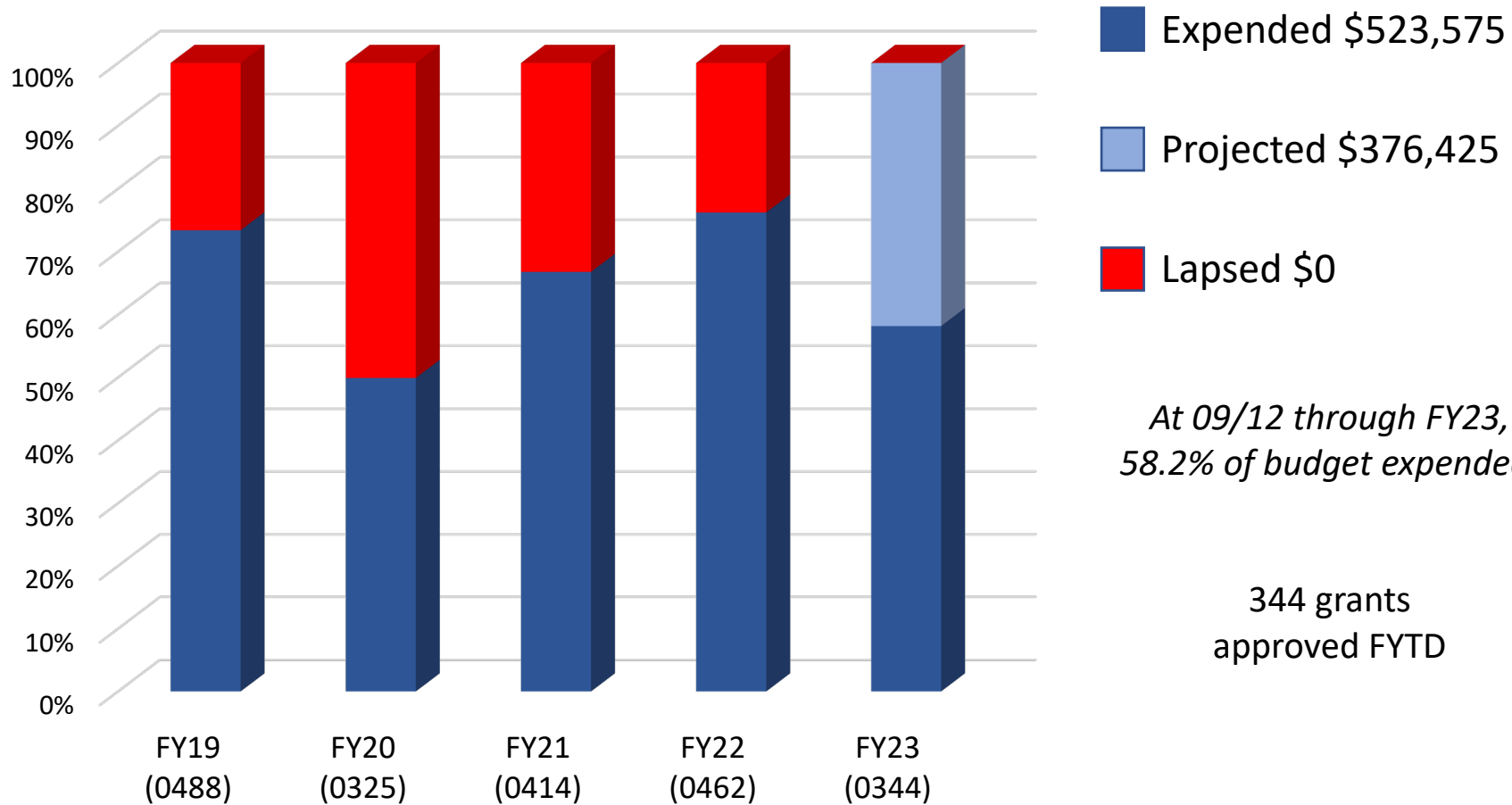


* Unforecasted growth has required increases to the initial \$135K budget.
 EG account earlier increased by \$12,066 to cover current obligations.
 Additional \$50K increase requested to cover approx. 90 pending applications.

VETERANS' TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE



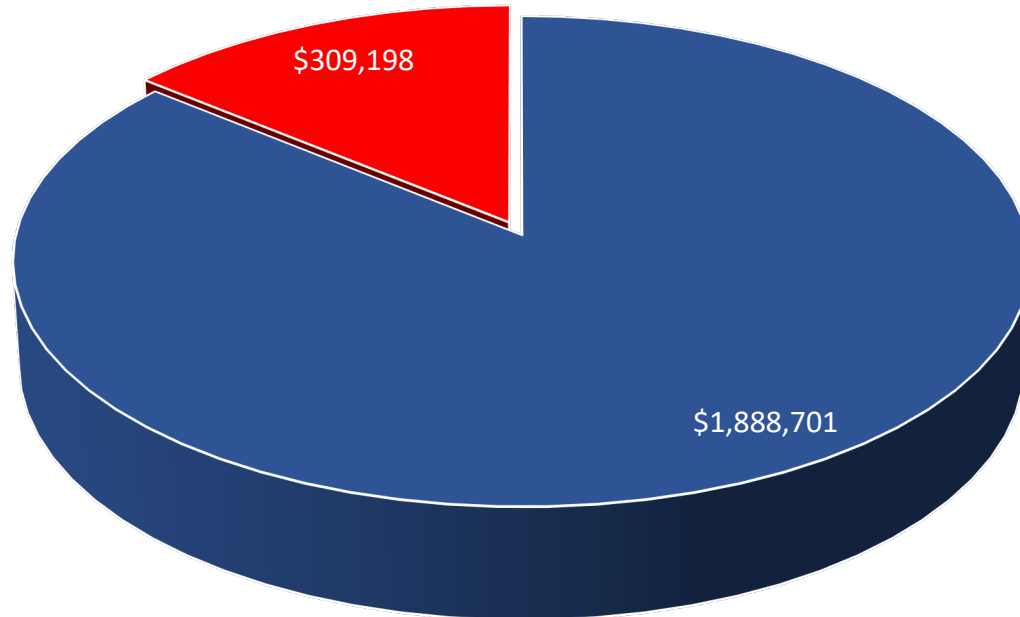
\$900,000



MILITARY FAMILY RELIEF ASSISTANCE



MFRAP Balance \$1,214,120



Total Donations FY 05-23: \$2,197,789

- Personal Income Tax Donations
- Private/Cash/Other Donations

Total Grants FY 05-23: \$1,033,337

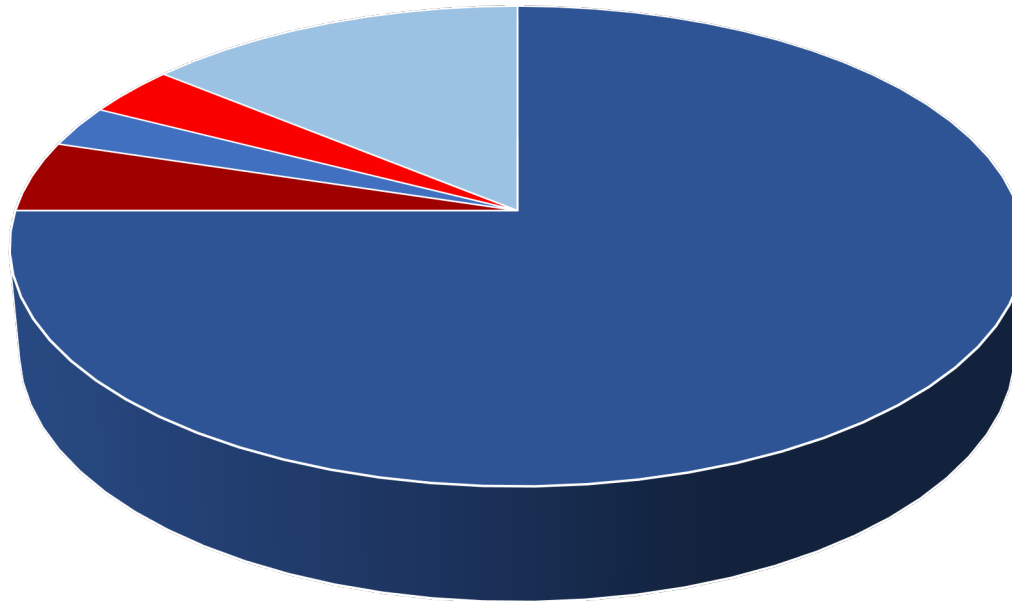
FY23 Total Donations: \$322.11

FY23 Total Grants: \$49,668

DISABLED VETERANS' REAL ESTATE TAX EXEMPTION



1,212 Total Adjudications
25 Jan to 21 Mar 2024

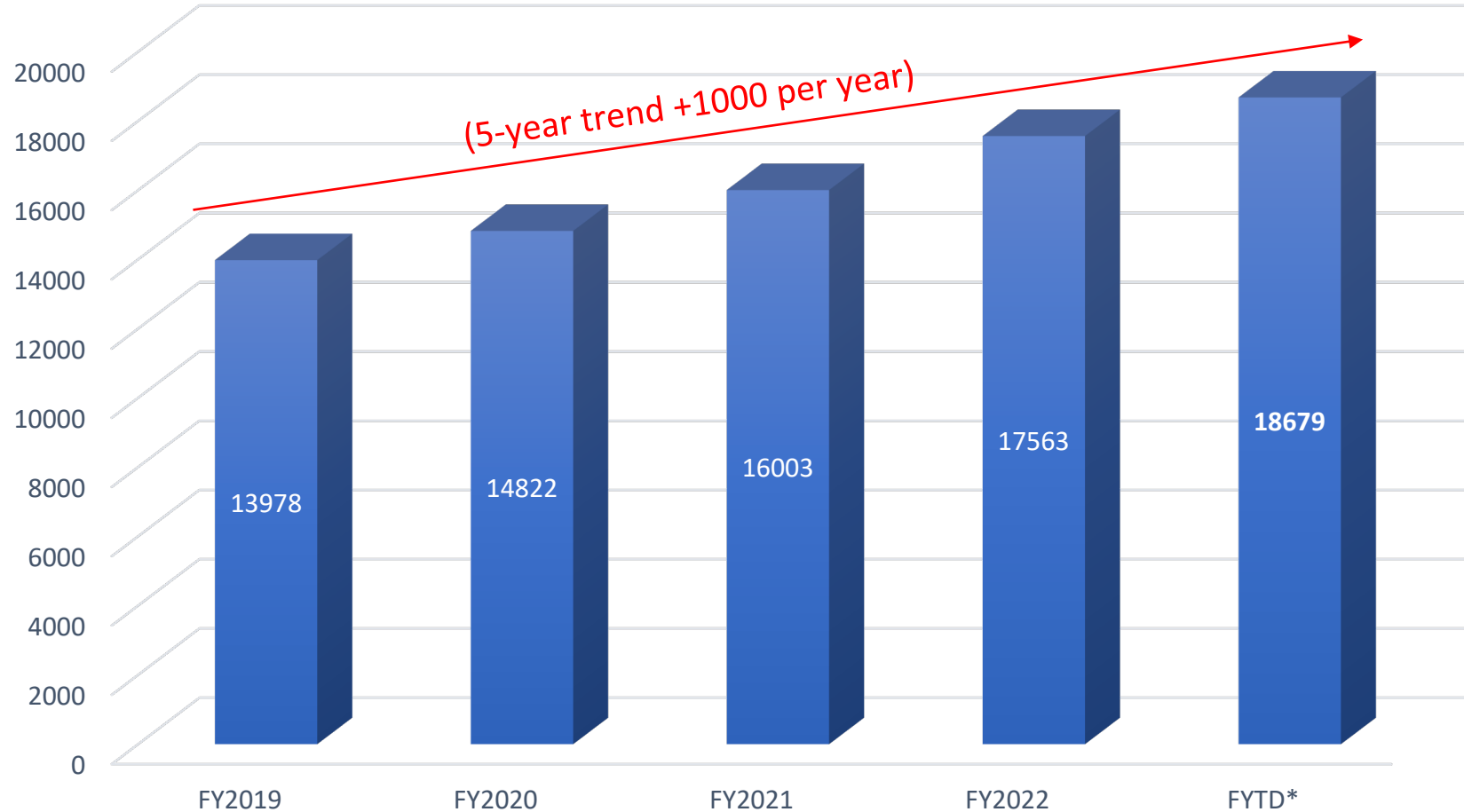


- 909 Approved (75%)
- 58 Denied: Financial Need
- 34 Denied: Ineligible*
- 170 Removed: Eligibility Change
- 41 Removed: No Response

*** 34 Applications Ineligible by Reason**

- 03 – Veteran did not have total or 100% permanent disability during lifetime
- 06 – Property not owned solely by Veteran or jointly/estate by entirety with spouse
- 17 – Veteran did not have service during a period of war or armed conflict
- 08 – Veteran's disability not rated 100% permanent due to future exams

DISABLED VETERANS' REAL ESTATE TAX EXEMPTION



* Estimated **\$56.37M** in real estate tax exemptions to disabled veterans and their surviving spouses.



VISN 4

MR. TIM LIEZERT



VISN 4 Access – Fiscal Year 2024 Wait Times



| Clinics FY24 thru March 16 | Number of Appointments | Average Wait |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Mental Health | 172,938 | 5.5 |
| Primary Care | 233,170 | 5.0 |
| Specialty Care | 473,591 | 10.1 |
| Other | 344,884 | 6.5 |
| ALL | 1,224,583 | 7.4 |

FY24 data updated 3/18/2024 with appointment info as of 3/16/2024.

VISN 4 Access – Current Average Wait Times



| VISN 4 Facility | Primary Care | |
|--|--------------|--------------------|
| | New Patients | Returning Patients |
| James E. Van Zandt VAMC | 15 | 2 |
| Abie Abraham HCC | 14 | 1 |
| Coatesville VAMC | 27 | 9 |
| Erie VAMC | 17 | 4 |
| Lebanon VAMC | 15 | 4 |
| Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VAMC | 36 | 6 |
| VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (University Drive) | 118 | 21 |
| VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (H.J. Heinz) | 28 | 12 |
| Wilkes-Barre VAMC | 9 | 2 |
| Wilmington VAMC | 16 | 9 |

FY24 data updated 3/18/2024 with wait times as of 3/17/2024 for the last 30 days.

www.accesstocare.va.gov

April 2024 Update

> [community](#) > [commonwealth](#) > [country](#)

Improvements to the Access to Care website

Average wait times for all VHA medical centers and clinics are now calculated to include additional steps in the appointment process that had not been captured in the past.

- For **new patient** appointments, average wait time is calculated from the earliest time a request for care is consistently recorded in the scheduling system to the date the appointment is completed – or the date it is scheduled to occur if not yet completed.
- For **established patient** appointments, average wait times are measured from the date agreed upon between a Veteran and provider for future care and ends on the date care is received, or the date that care is scheduled to occur if it has not yet occurred.

The upgraded calculation makes the website more reflective of the complete process of requesting and receiving care. Averages are representative of general performance and may not represent individual experience. Average wait times are never used to determine eligibility for community care.

VISN 4 Care in the Community



| | Care in the Community Consults (Scheduled and Completed) | Non-VA Unique Patients* |
|----------------------|---|----------------------------|
| FY22 | 168,182 | 89,683 |
| FY23 | 190,812 | 99,167 |
| FY24 (as of 3/18/24) | 98,572 | 70,534 |

*Number of unique enrolled Veterans who receive community care at VA expense

FY24 data updated 3/18/2024 with consult info as of 3/18/2024.

CMS Star Ratings – Publicly Reported July 2023



| Facility Name | Peer Grouping | Overall Star Rating | Hospital Summary Score |
|--|---------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| James E. Van Zandt VAMC | 4 | ★★★ | 0.12 |
| Lebanon VAMC | 4 | ★★★★ | 0.33 |
| Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VAMC | 5 | ★★★★★ | 0.41 |
| VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (University Drive) | 5 | ★ | -1.31 |
| Wilkes-Barre VAMC | 4 | ★★★★ | 0.39 |
| Wilmington VAMC | 4 | ★★★ | 0.10 |

- The CMS Star ratings, available publicly, show 50% of applicable VISN 4 facilities performing at 4 or 5 stars (5 stars being the highest rating).
- Six facilities are included in star ratings due to number of patient discharges.

- 1 star facility trending ‘no different than the national rate’ in Patient Safety Measures
 - Indicates improved performance
- January 2024 CMS Preview report shows improved performance compared to July 2023 release
 - Anticipate increases in multiple domains
 - Anticipate increase in overall star rating

SAIL Radar



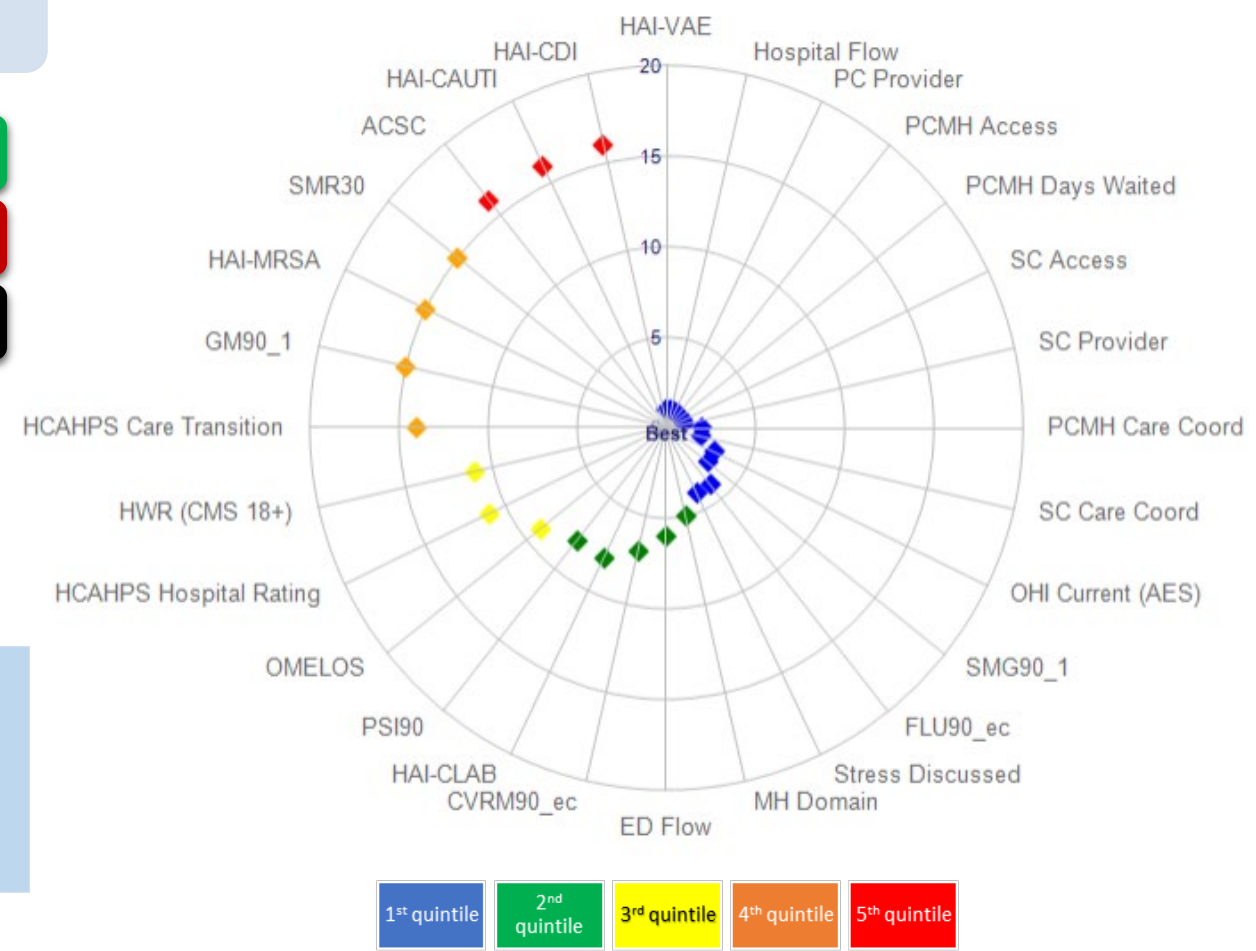
FY 23 Q4 Rank (FY23 Q3 Rank)
 • **Ranked out of 18 Total VISNs**

↓ Rank Improved = 5 (9)
↑ Rank Worse = 10 (4)
↔ No Change = 12 (15)

**Note – preferred direction in rank is down

7 Main Measures ranked **1st in performance** among 18 total VISNs

VISN 4 (FY2023Q4) (Metric)



1st quintile
2nd quintile
3rd quintile
4th quintile
5th quintile

NEXT MEETING



**Friday May 3, 2024
at 10:00AM**

**Arrowheads Community Club
Fort Indiantown Gap
Annville, PA 17003**

VISIT www.dmva.pa.gov/veterans/commissionsandcouncils FOR SVC INFO



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Healthcare–VISN 4

VISN 4 Update

April 5, 2024

Leadership Update

Dr. Jaconda Lightburn, Associate Director at the Lebanon VA has accepted a detail to the Miami VA.

The current Lebanon Assistant Director, Kathryn Barley, has accepted a detail to Acting Associate Director effective March 11th.

Mr. Robert Wentling Jr. Chief, Clinical Support has accepted the detail of Acting Assistant Director at Lebanon while Kathryn Barley is in her role of Acting Associate Director. Mr. Wentling's detail was also effective on March 11.

Paul Woodland, the Chief of Police at the Wilmington VA continues to serve as our Acting VISN 4 Security Officer.

Transportation Update

VISN 4 has welcomed Ms. Jennifer Stevey as the VISN Transportation Manager, effective February 12, 2024.

A VISN-wide transportation gap analysis is currently underway – the goal is to capture available transportation resources (whether VA, DAV, or County) and then to begin formulating a plan to mitigate identified gaps. We'll be able to work with our SVC partners to provide data and analyses that will support their legislative advocacy efforts.

A special thank you to, Rich Hudzinski, David Gray, David Gui, and Bill Hines for meeting with our VISN team on a quarterly basis while we unite our teams at the Network.

For our Veteran Service Organization Partners, if you're interested in learning more about VHA transportation options in your area, please reach out to Ms. Jennifer Stevey

(Jennifer.Stevev@va.gov) and she'll be happy to introduce you to your local Veteran Transportation Service Mobility Manager and to ask for an invite to the local Veteran Transportation Board meetings.

Expanded PACT Act Health Care Eligibility- Section 103 Implementation

Beginning March 5, VA made three new groups of Veterans eligible for VA health care years earlier than called for by the PACT Act:

- 1) Veterans who were exposed to toxins or other hazards during military service;
- 2) Veterans who were assigned to certain duty stations in Southwest Asia or parts of Africa; and
- 3) Veterans who deployed in support of certain operations after 9/11.

Here's what that means for Veterans:

If you served in Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq, or Afghanistan, you can enroll.

If you deployed to any combat zone after 9/11, you can enroll.

If you deployed in support of the Global War on Terror, you can enroll.

And even if you never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or serving on active duty here at home – by working with chemicals, pesticides, lead, asbestos, certain paints, nuclear weapons, x-rays, and more – you can enroll, too.

Bottom line: all Veterans exposed to toxins and other hazards – at home or abroad – are eligible to enroll in VA care beginning March 5.

This is the biggest expansion of VA care in generations, and we want Veterans to apply as soon as possible.

It's quick and easy to enroll. Veterans don't need to be sick or file a claim to become eligible; all they have to do is show that they served in one of those locations or operations – or participated in one of the activities that could have exposed them to toxins or hazards.

Even if Veterans don't think they need this care today, they might need it tomorrow, or the next day, or 30 years from now. All Veterans have to do is enroll, then they will have access for life.

Go to [VA.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT) to learn more about this expanded eligibility. A link will be included with the minutes.

VA Registries

As a follow up to a question at the last meeting, I wanted to provide additional information on Registries.

There are 6 Registries: Agent Orange (AO), Gulf War (GW), Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pits (AHOBP), Ionizing Radiation (IR), Toxic Embedded Fragments (TEF) and Depleted Uranium (DU).

Registries IF, AO, GW, TEF and DU have paper worksheets that includes the appropriate questions that will be used to determine eligibility. AHOBP has a secure web site survey that qualifies Veteran for the registry.

Each registry is unique, but all have face to face exams available.

IF, AO, GW, AHOBP can be done either Face to face, VA Video Connect (VVC) or if there are technology issues during VVC then finish by phone. (Phone is last resort as a BU due to technology failure during VVC)

TEF and DU must be done face to face because Urine samples must be sent out using a specific collection kit provided by the Baltimore VAMC. These kits include forms and instructions.

Public facing military exposure information is provided by HOME (Health Outcomes Military Exposures) at <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/index.asp> which includes info on the registries, contact information, Exposure mobile application and the AHOBP registry link.

Each VISN Medical Center has a clinician doing the exams and a designated coordinator.

The coordinators are listed by state at: [Environmental Health Coordinators - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)

General Military exposure information can be found at: [Military Exposures - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)

Patient Experience Update

VISN 4 has consistently received the highest trust score in the nation at 94.4% and continues to trend up. Our network also has the highest number of compliments at 79.2% and the lowest number of concerns at 11.2%.

Connected Care Update

My Health eVet Transition to VA.gov: My Health eVet on VA.gov is VAs new Veteran-facing health portal home within VA.gov. This transition will offer Veterans an improved and more accessible experience. Veterans want and need access to all their VA benefits in one place, especially as laws like the PACT Act expand access to both health care and other benefits. All Veterans deserve and expect to be able to access VAs online tools from wherever they are, on whatever device they use, and however they prefer to interact with VA. The transition within VA.gov is a two-year project which is expected to be complete October 2024 with all the core features of My Health eVet being available – including Secure Messaging, prescription refills, medical records, appointments, and newsletter/health content. Some of these features are currently available on VA.gov to a limited number of Veterans for testing purposes and feedback.

VA Mobile Apps: VA Mobile Health aims to improve the health of Veterans by providing technologies to expand clinical care beyond the traditional office visit. As part of this initiative, VA is developing secure mobile applications (apps) to support Veterans and VA care teams that increase access, communication, and coordination of care. Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care can use these technologies to provide them with increased opportunities to be an active participant in their health care and give new ways to communicate with their VA care team. Currently, there are 37 Veteran apps and 6 Family and Caregiver apps available. The VA Launchpad groups together all apps that connect to VAs electronic health record. Veterans can access multiple VA apps without logging in to each individual app by signing into the VA Launchpad. Information and training materials for the VA apps can be found on the VA App Store (mobile.va.gov/appstore).

VA Announces steps to increase life-saving screening, access to benefits for Veterans with Cancer

On March 8, as a part of the Biden Cancer Moonshot, VA announced several critical new steps to expand preventive services, health care, and benefits for Veterans with cancer:

In the next 90 days, VA is making urethral cancers presumptive for service connection for eligible Gulf War and post-9/11 Veterans. This means that Gulf War and post-9/11 Veterans who deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Uzbekistan, and the entire [Southwest Asia theater of operations](#) will not need to prove that their service caused their urethral cancer to receive benefits for it; instead, VA will automatically assume service connection for the disease and provide benefits accordingly to Veterans who have

submitted claims. In the next 90 days, urethral cancers will be added to the list of 300+ conditions considered presumptive under the PACT Act, along with [many other cancers](#).

VA is beginning the process to formally evaluate urinary bladder and ureteral cancers for presumptions of service connection for eligible Gulf War and post-9/11 Veterans. Over the coming months, VA will evaluate whether there is a relationship between urinary bladder and ureteral cancers and toxic exposures for Gulf War and post-9/11 Veterans who deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Uzbekistan, and the entire [Southwest Asia theater of operations](#). VA will then determine whether these conditions become presumptive conditions for Veterans who served in those locations and time periods.

VA is expanding access to genetic, lung, and colorectal cancer screening for Veterans. By the end of this year, VA will offer genetic testing to every Veteran who may need it, which will help VA understand, treat, and ultimately cure some patients with cancer by reading the code locked in their DNA. VA will also bring a lung cancer screening program to every VA medical facility, which will help save the lives of the nearly 5,000 Veterans who die from lung cancer every year, and VA will expand screening for colorectal cancer – the second leading cause of cancer death in America – by providing more than 1 million Veterans nationwide with convenient, safe, and effective tests that can be completed in the comfort of their homes.

VA continues to expand the reach of smoking cessation services to Veterans across the nation. As the 1-855-QUIT-VET tobacco quitline and the SmokefreeVET text message program pass their 10-year anniversaries of service, VA will add at least six additional sites to the Quit VET eReferral program by the end of 2024. This will expand capacity to offer Veteran-specific, tailored tobacco-use treatment to Veterans. Additionally, VA recently launched a new pilot program to integrate smoking cessation services into lung cancer screening in recognition of the inherent connection between smoking and lung cancer risk – and VA plans to add at least five additional sites between 2024-2025. These programs have supported tens of thousands of Veterans with high-quality tobacco cessation resources in English and Spanish: Quit VET has provided over 62,000 calls to Veterans, and more than 48,000 Veterans have made a quit attempt with the SmokefreeVET text program. In 2023, more than 5,100 Veterans enrolled in the SmokefreeVET text program and Quit VET recorded its highest volume of incoming calls yet, with counselors answering 23% more calls than the prior year. Direct referrals from VA facilities grew 34% over the same time period and by the end of 2023, 40 VA programs were implementing a patient referral program.

Authorized Monthly Status Report February 1 to 29 2024 Midnight

Delaware Valley Veterans' Home, Philadelphia PA - Margo Coleman - Commandant

| Level of Care | Authorized Beds | Beds Assigned | Beds Vacant | Filled % | Non-Veteran Census % | Admissions | Discharges/ Expirations | Attaining Adm Veteran | Attaining Adm Non-Veteran |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Nursing Care | 171 | 159 | 12 | 93% | 6% | 14 | 6 | 50 | 28 |

Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center, Scranton PA - Vito Ruggiero - Commandant

| Level of Care | Authorized Beds | Beds Assigned | Beds Vacant | Filled % | Non-Veteran Census % | Admissions | Discharges/ Expirations | Attaining Adm Veteran | Attaining Adm Non-Veteran |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Nursing Care | 196 | 167 | 29 | 85% | 16% | 7 | 5 | 20 | 20 |

Southwestern Veterans' Center, Pittsburgh PA -Richard Adams - Commandant

| Level of Care | Authorized Beds | Beds Assigned | Beds Vacant | Filled % | Non-Veteran Census % | Admissions | Discharges/ Expirations | Attaining Adm Veteran | Attaining Adm Non-Veteran |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Nursing Care | 236 | 144 | 92 | 61% | 15% | 4 | 7 | 23 | 8 |

Holidaysburg Veterans' Home, Hollidaysburg PA - Christina Dambeck - Commandant

| Level of Care | Authorized Beds | Beds Assigned | Beds Vacant | Filled % | Non-Veteran Census % | Admissions | Discharges/ Expirations | Attaining Adm Veteran | Attaining Adm Non-Veteran |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Nursing Care | 257 | 180 | 77 | 70% | 13% | 8 | 5 | 16 | 6 |
| Personal Care | 167 | 76 | 91 | 46% | | 4 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| Total | 424 | 256 | 168 | 60% | | 12 | 6 | 20 | 6 |

Pennsylvania Soldiers' & Sailors' Home, Erie PA - Cheri Spacht - Commandant

| Level of Care | Authorized Beds | Beds Assigned | Beds Vacant | Filled % | Non-Veteran Census % | Admissions | Discharges/ Expirations | Attaining Adm Veteran | Attaining Adm Non-Veteran |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Nursing Care | 107 | 101 | 6 | 94% | 11% | 3 | 5 | 6 | 5 |
| Personal Care | 100 | 57 | 43 | 57% | | 4 | 3 | 4 | 0 |
| Total | 207 | 158 | 49 | 76% | | 7 | 8 | 10 | 5 |

Southeastern Veterans' Center, Spring City PA - Brian Gula - Commandant

| Level of Care | Authorized Beds | Beds Assigned | Beds Vacant | Filled % | Non-Veteran Census % | Admissions | Discharges/ Expirations | Attaining Adm Veteran | Attaining Adm Non-Veteran |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Nursing Care | 238 | 176 | 62 | 74% | 9% | 8 | 6 | 23 | 7 |
| Personal Care | 54 | 38 | 16 | 70% | | 6 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Total | 292 | 214 | 78 | 73% | | 14 | 7 | 26 | 9 |

Summary / Pennsylvania Bureau of Veterans' Homes

| Veteran Census/Events | Authorized Beds | Beds Assigned | Beds Vacant | Filled % | Non-Veteran Census % | Admissions | Discharges/ Expirations | Attaining Adm Veteran | Attaining Adm Non-Veteran |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Nursing Care | 1205 | 927 | 278 | 77% | 12% | 44 | 34 | 138 | 74 |
| Personal Care | 321 | 171 | 150 | 53% | | 14 | 5 | 11 | 2 |
| Total | 1,526 | 1098 | 428 | 72% | | 58 | 39 | 149 | 76 |

| Veteran Status: NonVeteran/ Veteran | Male Vets | Male Non-Vets | Female Vets | Female Non-Vets | Total Vets | Total Non-Vets | Toatal Vets % | Total Non-Vet % | VH Totals |
|-------------------------------------|------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| DVVH | 147 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 150 | 9 | 94% | 6% | 159 |
| GJMVC | 138 | 0 | 2 | 27 | 140 | 27 | 84% | 16% | 167 |
| SWVC | 120 | 2 | 3 | 19 | 123 | 21 | 85% | 15% | 144 |
| HVH | 209 | 1 | 13 | 33 | 222 | 34 | 87% | 13% | 256 |
| PSSH | 135 | 2 | 6 | 15 | 141 | 17 | 89% | 11% | 158 |
| SEVC | 180 | 2 | 14 | 18 | 194 | 20 | 91% | 9% | 214 |
| Totals | 929 | 8 | 41 | 120 | 970 | 128 | 88% | 12% | 1098 |



Authorized Monthly Status Report January 1 to 31 2024 Midnight

Delaware Valley Veterans' Home, Philadelphia PA - Margo Coleman - Commandant

| Level of Care | Authorized Beds | Beds Assigned | Beds Vacant | Filled % | Non-Veteran Census % | Admissions | Discharges/ Expirations | Attaining Adm Veteran | Attaining Adm Non-Veteran |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Nursing Care | 171 | 151 | 20 | 88% | 7% | 3 | 11 | 54 | 23 |

Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center, Scranton PA - Vito Ruggiero - Commandant

| Level of Care | Authorized Beds | Beds Assigned | Beds Vacant | Filled % | Non-Veteran Census % | Admissions | Discharges/ Expirations | Attaining Adm Veteran | Attaining Adm Non-Veteran |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Nursing Care | 196 | 165 | 31 | 84% | 15% | 7 | 3 | 28 | 19 |

Southwestern Veterans' Center, Pittsburgh PA -Richard Adams - Commandant

| Level of Care | Authorized Beds | Beds Assigned | Beds Vacant | Filled % | Non-Veteran Census % | Admissions | Discharges/ Expirations | Attaining Adm Veteran | Attaining Adm Non-Veteran |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Nursing Care | 236 | 147 | 89 | 62% | 15% | 5 | 14 | 27 | 7 |

Hollidaysburg Veterans' Home, Hollidaysburg PA - Christina Dambeck - Commandant

| Level of Care | Authorized Beds | Beds Assigned | Beds Vacant | Filled % | Non-Veteran Census % | Admissions | Discharges/ Expirations | Attaining Adm Veteran | Attaining Adm Non-Veteran |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Nursing Care | 257 | 177 | 80 | 69% | 13% | 12 | 13 | 10 | 7 |
| Personal Care | 167 | 73 | 94 | 44% | | 3 | 2 | 6 | 0 |
| Total | 424 | 250 | 174 | 59% | | 15 | 15 | 16 | 7 |

Pennsylvania Soldiers' & Sailors' Home, Erie PA - Cheri Spacht - Commandant

| Level of Care | Authorized Beds | Beds Assigned | Beds Vacant | Filled % | Non-Veteran Census % | Admissions | Discharges/ Expirations | Attaining Adm Veteran | Attaining Adm Non-Veteran |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Nursing Care | 107 | 103 | 4 | 96% | 11% | 3 | 2 | 5 | 5 |
| Personal Care | 100 | 56 | 44 | 56% | | 2 | 2 | 4 | 0 |
| Total | 207 | 159 | 48 | 77% | | 5 | 4 | 9 | 5 |

Southeastern Veterans' Center, Spring City PA - Brian Gula - Commandant

| Level of Care | Authorized Beds | Beds Assigned | Beds Vacant | Filled % | Non-Veteran Census % | Admissions | Discharges/ Expirations | Attaining Adm Veteran | Attaining Adm Non-Veteran |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Nursing Care | 238 | 174 | 64 | 73% | 8% | 5 | 8 | 55 | 8 |
| Personal Care | 54 | 33 | 21 | 61% | | 1 | 2 | 7 | 3 |
| Total | 292 | 207 | 85 | 71% | | 6 | 10 | 62 | 11 |

Summary / Pennsylvania Bureau of Veterans' Homes

| Veteran Census/Events | Authorized Beds | Beds Assigned | Beds Vacant | Filled % | Non-Veteran Census % | Admissions | Discharges/ Expirations | Attaining Adm Veteran | Attaining Adm Non-Veteran |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Nursing Care | 1205 | 917 | 288 | 76% | 12% | 35 | 51 | 179 | 69 |
| Personal Care | 321 | 162 | 159 | 50% | | 6 | 6 | 17 | 3 |
| Total | 1,526 | 1079 | 447 | 71% | | 41 | 57 | 196 | 72 |

| Veteran Status: NonVeteran/ Veteran | Male Vets | Male Non-Vets | Female Vets | Female Non-Vets | Total Vets | Total Non-Vets | Toatal Vets % | Total Non-Vet % | VH Totals |
|---|------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| DVVH | 139 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 141 | 10 | 93% | 7% | 151 |
| GJMVC | 138 | 0 | 2 | 25 | 140 | 25 | 85% | 15% | 165 |
| SWVC | 122 | 2 | 3 | 20 | 125 | 22 | 85% | 15% | 147 |
| HVH | 204 | 1 | 13 | 32 | 217 | 33 | 87% | 13% | 250 |
| PSSH | 135 | 2 | 6 | 16 | 141 | 18 | 89% | 11% | 159 |
| SEVC | 176 | 1 | 14 | 16 | 190 | 17 | 92% | 8% | 207 |
| Totals | 914 | 7 | 40 | 118 | 954 | 125 | 88% | 12% | 1079 |



SOUTHEASTERN VETERANS' CENTER ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

January 11, 2024

The Southeastern Veterans' Center Advisory Council met January 11, 2024 at 10:00 AM in the All- Purpose Room of Coates Hall at the Southeastern Veterans' Center.

Advisory Council Members Participating:

Barry Amole, Vietnam Veterans of America, President
Mary Archey, Marine Corps League, Vice President- **via Microsoft TEAMS**
Richard Doherty, Military Officers Association of America
Thomas Applebach, Lehigh County Office of Veterans' Affairs
Kenneth Nadwodny, Catholic War Veterans
Robert Richardson, Resident Representative
The Hon. Tracy Pennycuik, PA State Senate- **via Microsoft TEAMS**

Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs/Southeastern Veterans' Center:

Travis Davis, Executive Director, Long-Term Care – DMVA
Brian Gula, Commandant – SEVC
Mildred Butler-Coleman, Deputy Commandant- SEVC
Lauren Stenson, Director of Nursing - SEVC
Jill Alwine, Admissions and Marketing Coordinator – SEVC
Sarah Klufas, Assistant to the Commandant - SEVC

Visitors:

Linda Neiman, Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary
Dan Kuper, Personal Care Resident

Excused Absence:

Jeffrey Elliot, PA AMVETS
Doug Forsythe, Disabled American Veterans
Kenneth Schweitzer, American Legion, Secretary
Thomas Brown, Veterans of Foreign Wars
John Getz, Veterans of Foreign Wars
VACANT, PA House of Representatives
MG Mark J. Schindler, Adjutant General - DMVA
Maureen Weigl, BG (PA) – DMVA
Barbara Raymond, BVH Director – DMVA
Mia Woods, Compliance and Ethics Officer- DMVA

Call to Order:

The Advisory Council Meeting was called to order by Barry Amole at 10:00 AM. There was a moment of silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Review and Approval of October 12, 2023, Meeting Minutes:

A motion was made by Thomas Applebach and seconded by Richard Doherty to approve the minutes of the Advisory Council Meeting held on October 12, 2023. Motion carried, and minutes were approved as written.

Report of the Medical Director:

Lauren Stenson, Director of Nursing, reported on behalf of Medical Director Dr. Violetta Berdichevskaya. We now have 2 full-time DMVA CRNPs working in the building, along with a contracted Physician. Our full-time Medical Director is expected to start in March. Since October, we have hired 6 RNs, 1 LPN, and 1 CNA. We have been able to back down on agency staffing a little bit, which is nice because it is important to us to have consistent staff that can anticipate our resident's needs.

We currently have one resident with the flu that is being treated in the facility, as well as one resident with the flu at the hospital, in stable condition. For Covid, we also have one positive resident being treated in the facility and one positive resident at the hospital, in stable condition. We do not currently have RSV in the facility.

Vaccine Update: We have 135 residents vaccinated for the flu and 81 residents have received the latest Covid booster. The Covid booster number is a little lower due to the outbreak that we had in October. The residents who had been positive needed to wait to receive the vaccine. We are starting to administer those vaccines this week. We had a slight issue with the consents for the RSV vaccine, but we are working on getting the vaccines to those that want to receive it. Right now, we are at 62 residents vaccinated for RSV. We are continuing to offer vaccines to staff as well. We have had 4 vaccine clinics since October.

Richard Doherty asked if we are seeing an uptick in flu numbers as compared to normal. Lauren stated that our numbers are about normal and that we, thankfully, have not had any flu outbreaks this year. Lauren stated that we have been wearing masks since basically October, so we are doing our best to keep it at bay.

Report of the Admissions and Marketing Coordinator:

Jill Alwine, Admissions Coordinator, provided the council with an admissions update. Jill reported that for the last quarter, the facility had an average of 211 residents, leaving us with 81 vacancies. Of those vacancies, 11 are due to staffing issues, 36 are being reserved for quarantine, and 32 are because we changed our 3 and 4-bed rooms to 2-bed rooms for infection control purposes. Over this last quarter we have had 20 admissions. For 2023, we had a total of 76 admissions. Our waitlist is at 94 total applicants, 79 veterans and 15 non-veterans. The approximate waitlist times for skilled nursing and personal care are about 2-4 months. Our memory care unit is currently about a 20-24 month wait, due to it being our smallest area. Jill also noted that we had set out some informational materials on the table if anyone would like to take some to hand out.

Richard Doherty asked Jill to repeat the waitlist numbers.

Thomas Applebach asked if those numbers included memory care. Jill confirmed that it did. Thomas Applebach then asked if we were about at capacity and Jill replied that we were pretty much at capacity. He commented on the length of the waitlist time for memory care and asked if we are seeing an upward trend in memory care needs. Jill stated that we have seen an increase in people needing that level of care, and it is across the whole industry.

Brian added that our memory care unit is a smaller 30- bed unit. He further explained that during our admission committee meetings, the team has been reviewing the incoming applications to see if we would be able to safely care for a veteran or a spouse on a different unit, rather than admitting them directly to memory care. Brian stated that we are also looking into updating our Wanderguard system in Coates Hall. This system is used to prevent a resident that is a possible elopement risk from accessing the elevators. This would also allow us to admit more residents that are a wandering risk to other units. Jill Alwine said that they also call applicants that are on the memory care waitlist to get an update and see if they still need that unit or if we may be able to admit them to a different floor. Lauren Stenson added that we also regularly review the needs of the residents on that floor to see if they still need the secured unit or if they could possibly move somewhere else.

Report of the Deputy Adjutant General – General Maureen Weigl – DMVA:

General Weigl was unable to attend the meeting.

Report of the Executive Director, Long Term Care – Travis Davis – DMVA:

Travis Davis started by saying that he will be covering Barb Raymond's portion as well, since she could not be at the meeting.

Travis announced to the council that we are going to be launching a female veteran's magazine. He mentioned that Senator Pennycuick has also assisted with this project.

The Adjutant General was out to visit all 6 of our veterans homes this holiday with several guardsmen and women. The homes threw their annual holiday parties and Travis commented that the parties felt the most normal since the pandemic started. Lots of families and children came to visit with their loved ones.

Survey Update: The Delaware Valley home just completed their Annual Department of Health survey and Federal VA survey. Both survey teams showed up during the same week, which also happened to be the week of Del Val's holiday parties. Despite all that was going on, the team did an excellent job handling everything. We also have Annual VA surveys coming up in February for Gino Merli, Erie, and SEVC.

As of today, we are at 1,094 residents across all 6 homes, this is an occupancy rate of about 71 percent. The waitlist across the state is 252, including veterans and spouses. Our census number is slowly going up and our waitlist is slowly going down.

There is not much new from a legislative standpoint since our last meeting. Regarding the federal staffing minimum update that CMS proposed, we did submit our response to the Governor's office. We have not heard anything yet. CMS is currently reading through all of the responses submitted which, last we heard, was about 10,000. On the state side, nothing has really changed with the budget. We are looking for an increase in our Medicaid rate. As of right now the General Appropriations bill has made it out of the Senate, but it is not out of the house. Travis deferred to Senator Pennycuick to see if she had any further comments.

Senator Pennycuik stated that in the most recent fiscal code, we did an increase the Medicaid rates, but it is not what was asked for. She further stated that they start the budget in the end of February, and will be looking to increase that, just based on the fact that there are a lot of seniors in PA that rely on that care. Hopefully, there will be more money coming our way soon. Travis explained that one of the reasons why we need that Medicaid increase is that when the PA Department of Health rolled out their 3-year staffing increase plan, funding was only there for years one and two. So, we need that funding to support year 3.

Regarding 5-star ratings, Delaware Valley, Gino Merli, Southeastern and Southwestern Veteran homes are all ranked as 5-star facilities. Erie and Hollidaysburg are currently at 3-stars.

We have been doing really well filling vacancies across the homes, other than direct care workers. As Lauren mentioned, we have made progress with our clinical staff, RNs, LPNs, and CNAs. But that is still the big bulk of what we need right now and that is still what is limiting us from being able to fill our beds. Right now, we have over 300 vacancies across the state. Another discipline that has been difficult for us is social services. Our VA regulations require social workers to have a master's degree. Other nursing homes and agencies in the state do not require this, but the compensation is pretty much the same. We are trying to fight this and find ways around this, because we are seeing a lot of turnover in social workers. Unfortunately, even when we try to look at using agency staffing to fill these positions, they do not have anyone to give us either.

We have a new Commandant at Delaware Valley, Margo Coleman. She has been with the DMVA for a few years and has even worked in the private sector as a Nursing Home Administrator, as well.

Construction wise: we have a lot of job order contracts going on for renovations and repairs to keep our facilities running; things such as HVACs, new dishwashers, new refrigerator equipment, roof leaks, etc. The Hollidaysburg new building project is about 20 percent complete. All the steel is completed and so far, it looks great!

We have active Covid, active Flu, and active RSV throughout the 6 homes. However, our numbers have been pretty good. Across all 6 homes, we have 8 residents with Covid, 8 residents with the flu, and 8 residents with RSV. Our numbers are fairly low compared to the general population, but we have seen a little bit of all three of these in all of our homes dating back to around Thanksgiving. We have the vaccinations available for our residents. Consent is somewhat challenging, but we are navigating the process to make sure we are getting vaccines to those that have requested them.

Richard Doherty commented on the number of vacancies across the state and asked if this was due to staffing issues. Travis replied that it was. Unfortunately, we are fighting with everyone else in the industry for the same pool of staff that has been shrinking since the pandemic. We had a lot of people retire or leave the industry and we have not seen that pendulum swing back as aggressively with direct care workers as it has with non-direct care works such as dietary, housekeeping, etc. Richard Doherty stated that his retirement community is having the same issue.

Report of the Director of Veterans' Homes – Barbara Raymond – DMVA:

Barbara Raymond was not able to attend the meeting.

Report of the Commandant – Brian Gula– SEVC:

Brian Gula started by saying that we are expecting our compliance team from headquarters to be here at the end of the month to complete our Facility Performance Assessment. This is essentially a ‘mock survey’ where they review the facility’s compliance with federal and state regulations. It is a great learning tool for us to identify any area that we may need to work on to prep us for our Annual VA and Department of Health survey. They will be here January 30th- February 1st to review skilled nursing and February 6th- 8th to review Personal Care. The compliance team tries to time it that they come in to review us before our annual surveys for the year.

Since last meeting, we did clear and are fully certified with our 2023 VA survey. We were in the plan of corrections phase last meeting, but we are now back in compliance with the Federal VA. Our 2024 Annual VA survey will most likely be in February.

As Travis mentioned earlier, TAG was out to visit the facility in December. The residents always love seeing him and the men and women in uniform.

Thank you to everyone that participated in the Friend of a Veteran program. We had an overwhelming amount of donations this year. The Volunteer Office set up a ‘Holiday Bazaar’ in Tilghman Hall with all the extra donations and resident were able to ‘shop’ for some free brand-new items. We are grateful that every resident was able to receive a Christmas gift and also got to pick out some extra items that they needed.

Brian offered props to Jill and admissions, along with the nursing staff, for completing 76 admissions this past year. We reopened one of our units this past year that was empty due to staffing and were able to fill all but 5 beds on that unit.

During 2023, we filled a lot of key positions, including our Quality Assurance department and many nursing administrative positions. Our concentration for 2024 is to work on implementing some processes to improve our care and services, along with using our Quality Assurance team to really evaluate our current processes and procedures and see where we have room for improvement.

Report of the Deputy Commandant- Mildred Butler-Coleman- SEVC:

Mildred Butler-Coleman stated that we are almost ready to close up our boiler project. We have been working on separating our hot water heating system from our facility heating system, so we will not have to shut the heat off when we are fixing the water and vice versa. Everything will finally be separate. The system is almost online. In a few weeks, we should be able to fully transfer from the old boilers to the new ones. So far, the Coates Hall building is much better in terms of consistent heat and air conditioning.

We are working on getting an upgrade to increase the speed of our internet for office staff. The building will have an increased bandwidth so that staff can operate a little more efficiently at their computers. However, what it will not do is allow everyone to get Netflix and other streaming services at this time. The hardware has been installed for the upgrade and mapped out. Verizon will then come back in and using our mapping, install the boxes and doing the wiring between them. Once this is complete, then we will need to test the network to see how much it can take to make sure it will hold up during the 9-5 hours when there is the most demand.

We are looking into updating our paging system in the buildings. Currently the systems are not linked, so if you need to page someone, you must page both buildings separately. We had a company come in and

give us an estimate on one combined system, along with fixing some issues in areas where you can not hear the pages. We are just waiting on pricing to see what we are going to do and how fast we can do it.

As Brian mentioned, we are looking to update our Wanderguard system so that if a resident is an elopement risk, they can not access any of the elevators in either building. Then we can look into having some residents that might be somewhat cognitively impaired on normal floors in a safe manor, rather than in the secured memory care unit. Thomas Applebach asked if the system is able to track resident's locations if anyone were to get out of the building. Mildred stated that the system can tell you what door a resident exited out of, but it is not like a GPS that can track someone. Berkshire is our preferred vendor and we have received a quote from them on the update.

We wanted to thank all of the volunteers that came in and helped us with all of the Holiday events we hosted for the residents. We would not have been able to do it with out you and we really appreciate everyone's hard work and dedication!

Comments from the Council:

Thomas Applebach thanked everyone for their hard work.

Ken Nadwodny stated that he had volunteered here during the holidays and was also here yesterday for the Bazaar and the veterans really enjoyed the event, comparing them to kids in a candy store.

Old Business:

Nothing to Report.

New Business:

Mildred thanked Thomas Applebach for the donations that he brought from the collection.

Good of the Council:

Nothing to Report.

Time and Date for the next Meeting:

With no further business to discuss, a motion was made to end the meeting. Motion carried. The next regular meeting of the Advisory Council will be held on April 11, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

Approved:

Kenneth Schweitzer, Secretary

Minutes submitted by: Sarah Klufas

Summary of Current Applications (Exempt)

| Count | No Activity | Review Process Started | Review App Received | New Apps Pending |
|-------|-------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 18679 | 18083 | 551 | 45 | 273 |

Summary of Activity from 01/25/2024 to 03/21/2024

| Apps Created: 1011 | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| New: | 634 |
| Review: | 377 |
| Apps Approved: 909 | |
| New: | 496 |
| Review: | 413 |
| Apps Denied (Need): | 58 |
| Apps Denied (Eligibility): | 34 |
| Apps Removed (No Response): | 41 |
| Apps Removed (Eligibility Changed): | 170 |

Summary of Ineligible Reasons

| Reason | Count |
|--|-------|
| The property for which you claim exemption is not owned solely by you, or as an estate by the entirety with your spouse. | 6 |
| The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that the veteran did not have a total and/or 100% permanent disability during their lifetime. | 3 |
| The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that the veteran did not serve during a period of war or armed conflict. | 17 |
| The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs stated that you have a future exam , therefore, your disability has not been rated as total or 100% permanent. | 8 |

Summary of Activity: 25 Jan - 21 Mar 2024

| | |
|------------------------------|------------|
| Applications Approved | 909 |
| New | 496 |
| Review | 413 |

| | |
|----------------------------|------------|
| Applications Denied | 303 |
| Financial Need | 58 |
| Ineligible | 34 |
| No Response | 41 |
| Change of Eligibility | 170 |

| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Over Income | 102 |
| New | 82 |
| Review | 20 |

| |
|------------|
| 11% |
| 17% |
| 5% |

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Applications Created | 1,011 |
| Total Adjudicated | 1,212 |