Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission
Meeting Agenda

April 4th, 2025 at 10AM **Location: Arrowheads Community Club**

1000	Call to Order	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	Moment of Silence	Vice-Chair Constance Snavely
	Pledge of Allegiance	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	Administration of Oath	Mr. Marc Ferraro
	• Pauline Bozdech-Veater appointment as MAL	
	Introduction of Commission Members	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	Vice-Chair's Opening Remarks	Vice-Chair Constance Snavely
	Chairman's Opening Remarks	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	TAG's Opening Remarks and Comments	Mr. Marc Ferraro
	Approval of 07 February 2025 Meeting Minutes	**Requires Vote**
	Reading of Official and Other Communications	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	• Jewish War Veterans	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	DAG-VA Opening Remarks and Report	BG (PA) Maureen Weigl
	• PPL, BVH, PIRO	
	• Programs Report	**Requires Vote**
	VISN 4	Ms. Denise Boehm
	Committee Reports	
	• Legislative	Mr. Mark Baylis
	• Pensions/Relief/Grave Markings	Mr. Larry Googins
	• RETX	Mr. Alvin Loveless
	• MAL	Vice-Chair Constance Snavely
	• Transportation	Mr. Robert Hammaker
	• Veterans' Health	Mr. Leonard Johnson
	• VSO Grant	Mr. John Getz
	• Women Veterans	Ms. Pauline Bozdech-Veater
	• PAWVC Update	President John Fritz
	Unfinished Business	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	New Business	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	• VSO Convention event list	
	Good of the Order	SVC Commissioners
	Agenda Items for Next Meeting	SVC Commissioners
	Closing Remarks	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	Next Meeting	
	06 June 2025, at 10AM	
	Arrowheads Community Club	
	Building 9-65	
	Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville, PA 17003	
	Retiring of the Colors	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
	Adjournment	Chairman Nicholas Taylor

State Veterans' Commission Meeting Minutes
February 7, 2025
10:00AM
Hartranft Conference Room, Fort Indiantown Gap

Call to Order	**Chairman Nicholas Taylor**

The Pennsylvania State Veterans' Commission (SVC) meeting was called to order

Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance

On February 3, 1943, an extraordinary act of heroism occurred in the icy waters off Greenland after the U.S. Army transport ship Dorchester was hit by a German torpedo and began to sink rapidly. When it became apparent there were not enough life jackets, four U.S. Army chaplains, a Methodist minister, Jewish Rabbi, Roman Catholic Priest, and a Dutch Reformed Church minister, on board removed theirs, handed them to frightened young soldiers, and chose to go down with the ship while praying.

Commission Introductions

BG John Pippy	TAG
BG (PA) Maureen Weigl	DAG DMVA-OVA
Mr. Nicholas Taylor	SVC Chairman, President - MOAA
Mr. Tim Liezert	VA-Healthcare, VISN 4
Mr. Mark Baylis	Member-at-Large
Mr. Leonard Johnson	Member-at-Large
Mr. Michael Brooker- TEAMS	Member-at-Large
Mr. John Fritz	Commander, The American Legion
Mr. James Hogan	Adjutant, The American Legion
Ms. Constance Snavely	SVC V-Chairwoman, Representative, Korean War Veterans
Ms. Diana Henry	Commandant, Marine Corps League
Mr. Gerry Hawk- TEAMS	Adjutant, AMVETS
Mr. Paul Foresman- TEAMS	Commander, AMVETS
Ms. Barbara Loncar	Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Mr. John Getz	Adjutant, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Mr. William Hines	Commander, Disabled American Veterans
Mr. Robert Hammaker	Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans
Ms. Wanda Grover - TEAMS	Commander, Blinded Veterans of America
Mr. Michael Rang	Commander, Catholic War Veterans
Mr. Alvin Loveless	President, PA State Association of County Directors of Veterans Affairs
Mr. Larry Googins- TEAMS	President, Vietnam Veterans of America

Absent

Mr. Stanley Majocka	Commander, Italian American War Veterans
Mr. Philip Arnold	President, Military Order of Purple Hearts
Ms. Lisa Kaye	Member-at-Large
Mr. Chris Fidler	Director, Keystone Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America

Others Present

Mr. Richard Hudzinski- TEAMS	VVA/LVMAC
Mr. Marc Ferraro- TEAMS	DMVA-EDS
Mr. Keith Graham	DMVA- Executive Director of Veterans Programs
Mr. Travis Davis	DMVA- Executive Director of Long-Term Care
Mr. Richard Hamp- TEAMS	DMVA- Special Assistant - DAG - OVA
Mr. Nathan Silcox	Executive Director, PA Senate VAEP
Mr. Dusty Durand- TEAMS	DMVA-PPL
Mr. Seth Benge	DMVA- PPL
Mr. Jeff King	DMVA- PIRO
Mr. Bruce Lindsey	Former Marine Captain
Mr. David Cowgill-TEAMS	VISN-4 Direct of Communications
Ms. Michelle Brandt-TEAMS	Closed Captioner
Mr. Brian Natali	DMVA- PIRO
Ms. Angela Watson	Director, DMVA Communications
Mr. Jacob Arquisola	Aid to TAG
Ms. Pauline Bozdech-Veater- TEAMS	MAL
Mr. Edward Cherry- TEAMS	DMVA- OCC
Mr. Craig Andrews- TEAMS	DMVA- Communications
Mr. Joseph Butera- TEAMS	DMVA- Communications
Mr. Richard Fine -TEAMS	Commander, Jewish War Veterans
Mr. John Noll- TEAMS	DMVA

Administration of Oath **TAG- BG Pippy**

Mr. Mark Baylis was reappointed to his position as Member-at-Large.

Vice-Chair Opening Remarks **Vice-Chair Constance Snavely**

I manage a private cemetery. When I have an interment of a veteran with a non-VA provided headstone, I let the family know about the free VA service medallion that they can request for placement on the headstone. Since we all probably attend far more funerals than we'd like, I had Becky provide a copy of the VA brochure on medallions and the form in the read ahead so that we can all spread the word. Also, about two weeks ago, Becky sent out an email providing a press release on the VA's expanded access to the Veterans Legacy Memorial, which now allows Veterans to chronicle their life story. The Veterans Legacy Memorial is the nation's digital platform dedicated to the memory of Veterans and service members. The new "Your Story, Your Legacy" feature will allow Veterans who were approved for VA's pre-need eligibility determination for burial in a VA national cemetery, to log in to a secure website where they can privately submit images, autobiographies, military and life milestones, and historical documents to tell their own story before they pass away. I provided the Veterans Legacy Memorial brochures.

Chairman's Opening Remarks **Chairman Nicholas Taylor**

- Welcomed Nate Silcox the Executive Director of PA Senate VEAP
- Mr. Taylor started off with offering Apologies to the committee for not following the bylaws back in June almost 2 years ago. "Specifically, when a MAL committee submitted recommendations for women's Veterans and the General MAL position, I should have brought that committees recommendation forward to the commission for full body approval. This would have been in accordance with the operating policies and procedures of the PA SVC dated 2 June 2023 paragraph 7F entitled committee operations." "Secondly, late last calendar year a couple of the commissioners approached me and expressed their opinions about the number of meetings and

how frequently those meetings were. And some months we tend to rehash the same old items. I took it upon myself to publish our calendar year 2025 calendar meeting dates again without presenting it to this commission."

- Congratulated Mark Baylis for his reappointment as Member-at-Large. Governor Shapiro approved the recommendations from General Pippy and signed 8 Jan. 2025. Welcomed and Congratulated Ms. Pauline Bozdech-Veater as the women's Veteran Member-at-Large on the commission. Governor Shapiro approved the same recommendation and signed her appointment on 7 Jan. 2025
- Attended the PA Veterans War Council meeting in Jan and on 6 Feb. Represented the SVC on 5 Feb. at Governor Advisory council for Veterans services.
- Participated in an office call with BG Pippy, presented a slide deck that explained what the SVC does and successes. Received his guidance, direction, and priorities.
    - What came out of the meeting was the general's intent to reach more Veterans with information and increase VA outreach activities
    - Copy of slide deck was emailed out to all the commissioners
- Emailed current organization chart that identifies the members of the current legislator session.
    - Looking for a complete list of all the legislators that have served or currently serving in the military. Seth stated he will get a copy of that information so it can be sent to the commissioners.
- Participated in biweekly VTCs Tuesday morning with Vice Chair, BG Weigle, Rick Hamp, Keith Graham, and Brian Natali. Received a suggestion from a commissioner to provide highlights from the meetings. For information purposes only an email with the highlights from the meeting will be sent out to the commissioners.
- Introduced Rebecca Yeagley, Becky, as the new administrative officer and SVC Coordinator.
    - Becky sent out the Bylaws, Title 51, and operating policies and procedures to Ms. Veater. Confirmed that Pauline received them.
- On 8 Jan. signed a memorandum of appointing a MAL Commissioner, Michael Brooker, as designee to serve on the Veterans trust fund evaluation committee.
- Will be providing commissioners with Presidents Day message early next week.
- Informed by BG Weigl that the 2nd annual VetCon is set for 22-25OCT 2025 at the Valley Forge hotel and casino.
- Was informed by Mr. Ferraro that the Old Lickdale Elementary school estimated opening date will be in late May 2025. Information to come on the ribbon cutting ceremony.
- Future activities: 25 March at capitol center Mr. Mastriano is sponsoring Vietnams Veterans' Day, Connie Snavely is going to attend in place of Nicholas Taylor to represent the commission.

<u>Questions/Discussion</u>

Mr. Nick Taylor Asked a question to the DMVA -If a Veteran's service organization wants to submit content to the Veterans registry who is the POC? BG Weigl answered: Angel Watson and CC Keith Graham

TAG's Opening Remarks	**BG Pippy**

- Thanked Mr. Silcox for managing the process of him being confirmed as the 55th Adjutant General. Hoping to get orders back from DC and in the next couple of weeks will have another ceremony, everyone will be invited to attend. Introduced 1LT Jacob Arquisola as BG Pippy new aid, will hand out business cards once received.

- Looking into how we can be innovative in everything we do, how to reach more Veterans, how to make sure that you get the same service and benefits no matter where you are in PA.
- Now that he is confirmed he is ready to do a road tour to spend one on one time with the commissioners, to listen to issues and work with the team to problem solve.
- Established an AA program held at the Chapel here on post, eventually will be moved to the new Lickdale building once completed.

Questions/Discussion

None.

Approval of December 6, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Motion: Ms. Barbara Loncar, Commander, Veterans of Foreign War, made a motion to approve the minutes.

Second: Ms. Diana Henry

The body agreed; motion carried. Minutes approved with correction of Nick Taylor affiliation.

Reading of Official and Other Communications **Chairman Taylor**

- Sent out a link recently of the 2025 Federal benefits for veterans, dependents, survivors, and care giver guide. It's a publication produced annually by the federal VA the link is a 125-page brochure. Recommends distributing it throughout your organizations.
- Request for Mr. Silcox to keep the information coming. Reminded Mr. Silcox and Mr. Hillman that the more advanced notice on upcoming bills the better the officers of the organizations can poll their organizations to get their feedback so it's not just the opinion of the officers of the organizations. Asked Mr. Silcox if he could provide what bills he thinks will be voted upon this legislative session?
    - Nate Silcox responded that he will do his best to communicate within his confines and realms of possibility.
    - Seth Benge explained things moved quickly last week, the next session is in March and that the more his team knows the more the team will relay the information.

Deputy Adjutant General-VA Remarks **BG (PA) Maureen Weigl**

- Introduced Becky as the new SVC Coordinator.
- VETCON 22-25OCT 2025 at Valley Forge will be having the SVC and War Council meeting at that timeframe, it will be very similar as last year. More details to come.
- March 27 recruit military is having a big hiring event at the Pittsburgh stadium, will send out details.
- Information to come about in Philadelphia, Hired Heros, Chamber of Commerce employer round table where they are bringing employers together to talk about hiring veterans.
- Will share notes on the GACVS meeting. Main topic discussed was hard to place Veterans.
    - Planning to do pilots and action some of the initiatives that were discussed.
- Jerseys will be delivered to the Philadelphia nursing home from the PA wounded warriors for the Superbowl.

Questions/Discussion

None

DMVA Policy, Planning, and Legislation **Mr. Seth Benge**

- Reviewed the new House of Representatives VAEP Committee members, Senate VAEP Committee members, House of Representatives Appropriations Committee Majority members, and House of Representatives Appropriations Committee Minor members.
- Discussed a few bills that are being passed and where they are in consideration. At the next meeting the information will be put on a slide to show. A lot of bills get dropped at once and it takes a little to get caught up, there's another session date in mid-March. Most of legislation will be introduced and as soon as PPL knows what could possibly be moving will brief the Chairman with the information.

Questions/Discussion

- Robert Hammaker asked question about property tax.

BVH Bureau of Veterans Homes **Mr. Travis Davis**

- Last year there were over 40 inspections from different regulatory bodies. So far, this year they have completed the Department of Human services annual surveys at Southeast Veteran center and Holidaysburg. Department of Human Services was in Erie 6 Feb., and they are wrapping up their annual survey.
- Reviewed the updated surveys and COVID-19, Influenza, RSV Data across the homes
  - COVID positive residents across 4 homes. 14 total residents? 10 staff members currently tested positive.
  - Currently have an outbreak of the flu at DVVH- 10 Residents currently being treated in house. 4 Staff members across the 6 homes with the flu.
- Currently 1130 residents in care, nursing side only, 80% of the beds filled
- Continue to have staffing issues with over 400 vacancies.
  - Mentioned the upcoming incentives
- Construction standpoint-working on 3 projects now. The biggest one is in Holidaysburg hit some delays with the transfer switch, don't have an ETA of opening yet. Once a date is set for ribbon cutting all members will be getting an invite.
- Multiple 100-year birthdays, Thanks to General Weigl for celebrating in DVVH, Erie, and SEVC.
- Advisory meeting in DVVH and sending commandants down to DC for the National Association State Veterans home meeting next week.

Questions/Discussion

- Mr. James Hogan stated the PA American legion did a hospital tour over the holidays and appreciated allowing the group into the homes.
- Mr. Nick Taylor asked if the Veteran homes have a long-term plan to expand the capability for treatment for mental health in veterans due to an increase of dementia and Alzheimer's patients. Travis answer: That's a big challenge that we are facing today. There's an increase in training on mental health for the clinical staff.
- Mr. Mark Baylis asked: Do you accept early-stage dementia or later stage Alzheimer's patients into the homes? Travis answered: Yes

DMVA Bureau of PIRO	Mr. Keith Graham

- Transportation is still an issue throughout the region. Welcoming any ideas that you may have to help be more effective.
    - Region 3 has worked with Rabbit transit in multiple areas to get free transportation for veterans and shuttles.
- Having long care concerns with VTA Grant as the account that replenishes the fund is basically driven on donations. It used to be taken out of the line item but now pulling out of the Veterans trust fund. Looking forward to ways to address the VTA grant in the future.
- VetConnect: Digital front not quite perfect. It's challenging to develop a website that is good with people of various age groups. Continuing to work with Angela and her team to refine the process.
- Outreach center: First facility looking to occupy sometime in May-June timeframe with an opening June/July timeframe. Veterans outreach center will be there a couple days a week, labor and industry, Career Link, DMVA teams. Great resources for individuals.
- At the Farm show about 200 people enrolled in VetConnect. Enrolled dozens into VA Healthcare.
    - Thanked Mr. Liezert, Marine Corps League, and DAV for sending reps to assist.

<u>Questions/Discussion</u>

- Mr. Taylor was contacted by the spouse of a Veteran. I directed her to VetConnect and said please look at the website. It has everything from health to clinics to you name it, it's there. She called me back three days later and said she was amazed and impressed and didn't know that there was that much information out there.
- Ms. Lancor brought up the Rabbit transportation issues of getting Veterans to their appointments, time frames, sometimes they don't show up and have a veteran waiting. Mr. Graham stated that there are still some challenges, and that rabbit transit is still brand new, and they are learning as we are learning.

State Veterans' Programs	Mr. Jeff King

- Amputee & Paralyzed Veterans Pension serving about 2,463 veterans right now, about 15% increase of the last five years
- Blind Veterans' Pensions sticks to about 100 Veterans on this program.
- Educational Gratuity this program has really taken off. With a five-year trend of 150% increase.
- Veterans' Temporary Assistance currently at 72% of budget in this program.
- Military Family Relief Assistance $48,177 in total grants SFY to date
- Disabled Vets' Real Estate Tax Exemption almost 22,000 veterans on the program
- Provided a screenshot of the proposed regulations on the State Veterans' Programs that is now on the Independent Regulatory Review Commission docket.
    - The SVC voted unanimously to adopt the draft proposed regulations at their public meeting on January 6, 2023. The IRRC is now directly soliciting comments from stakeholders. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking will be published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin on February 15th, and the public comment period will extend from that date to March 17, 2025. Public comment can be made to RA-Regulations@pa.gov. Here's the IRRC website: https://www.irrc.state.pa.us/regulations/RegSrchRslts.cfm?ID=3444

Approval of State Veterans' Programs Reports

Motion: Mr. Robert Hammaker, Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans, made the motion to approve the programs report.

Second: Ms. Barbara Loncar seconded the motion.

The body agreed; motion carried. Programs reports approved.

VISN-4 **Mr. Tim Liezert**

- VA secure sign-in is transitioning to a new platform - ID.me and Login.gov
- Public service announcement on vaccines, VA is experiencing more influenza-A reports than COVID. An increase of 100 more inpatient reports than last month.
- National Program Virtual Health collaborated with PennDot. There are 17 service plazas in the Commonwealth, more information on the VA virtual health platform.
- Secretary Collins was confirmed as Secretary of the VA.
- Mr. Liezert explained the process of the executive orders
    - How it comes into operation with V.A. starts with Executive Order at the present level, then comes to the agency. And V.A. adds certain implementing guidance. And sometimes, it could be several weeks before we can implement guidance to fully understand the Executive Order and how to operationalize that.
- Executive orders discussed
    - Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion / Protecting woman / Hiring Freeze / Deferred Resignation Program / Return to work
- Mr. Liezert announced his retirement of 38 years will be at the end of March 2025.
    - This position is under the hiring freeze, but there is a nomination in mind.

<u>Questions/Discussions</u>

- Keith Graham asked: With the restricted space allocations do you see the VSO being displaced? Mr. Liezert Answer: I do not
- Robert Hammaker asked how do we justify the unused vehicles that the VA is just sitting on? Mr. Liezert Answer: Do not have an answer right now, will get one to you next week.
- Mark Baylis asked who is responsible for initiating the paperwork to get the plates and registration done? Mr. Liezert Answer: Responsibility clearly starts with us getting transfer title and then we get the license. I think we own that but will dig in.
- John Getz asked what is being done about the privacy issue? Especially in Lebanon. Mr. Liezert Answer: will circle back.
- Nick Taylor asked about GAP Study? Mr. Liezert answer: Still a work in progress.
- Larry Googins asked why does it take so long to get the RSV vaccine? Mr. Liezert answer: I do not have an answer, I will get back to you.

Committee Reports

Legislative Committee **TDB**

No official Report

<u>Questions/Discussion</u>

None.

Pensions/Relief/Grave Markings/State Military Cemetery Committee	**Mr. Larry Googins**

Had no additional reports after DMVA brief.

Questions/Discussions

Brian Natali was asked to discuss the open forum that will be held on Tuesdays from 2-3. A link will be sent out to the commission.

RETX	**Mr. Alvin Loveless**

No official Report

Questions/Discussions

None.

MAL	**Vice-Chairwoman Constance Snavely**

The next Member at Large position to fill will be the seat that is currently held by Mr. Booker, whose term expires on 27 July 25. Per the Member at Large SOP, the Vacancy Announcement and application instructions should be advertised on the DMVA website 100 days prior to the expiration of the MAL term making that date on or about 17 Apr 25.

Questions/Discussions

- Robert Hammaker introduced Bruce Lindsay former Marine Captain who may be interested in the MAL position.
- Mark Baylis asked if the opening date could be moved back to avoid extension. Constance Snavely explained that the reason for the extension was due to not having any women applications, so they had to keep extending until there was a pool of women applications to choose from. BG Pippy mentioned that his team will investigate the rules and see if maybe there could be a pre-publish of the information about the upcoming MAL position.
- Jeff Harrison asked if there were any restrictions with the MAL position. Nick Taylor answered there are only two positions that have requirements. One must have a Vietnam Era Veteran, and one must be a woman Veteran

Transportation Committee	**Mr. William Hines**

- New Van coming to Elk County, they contributed 55% of their savings spent on the van, state pays the rest.
- In Altoona a service officer called stating that the 2009 van was not road worthy, this van is currently not being used. A new van ordered to replace.
- Erie Received 3 vans- 2 vans that need pictures of VIN # to get registered.
- Pittsburgh wants to expand their territory
- A total of 7 vans were ordered. Looking to get $70,000 from national. 18 vans are going to auction. The cleanliness of the vans have decreased.
- December reports: 297 Drivers, used 4,901 hours, 87,550 miles, transported 2,740 veterans. Currently have 128 vans, including 12 new vans for 2024. Waiting on SF-97s for 11 vans unused, out of those 11 vans 4 are brand new that haven't received plates or credit cards.
- Vans Ford Transit Connect donated two vans from National DAV. One van went to Wilkes-Barre VAMC and the other van, with only 31 miles on it, sat for a year in Philadelphia VAMC waiting

for it to get license plates. During the time of waiting squirrels and chipmunks ate at the wires which needed repaired. The garage that repaired wires would not inspect the van because it didn't have over 100 miles on it.

- VAMC returned the van to the garage for inspection so the Mechanic at that Ford garage took the van for a ride to put over 100 miles on it and when the mechanic returned the Check Engine Lite went on the dash. This van is still not in service.

Questions/Discussions

- Leonard Johnson checked on a van recently that is still not inspected that has been sitting since 2023.
- Robert Hammaker mentioned the grant hasn't been increased but the cost of vehicles has increased. Answer: Nick Taylor mentioned that it would be something he would like the commission to look into to see if we can get an increase of funds.

Veteran Health Committee **Mr. Mark Baylis**

No Official report

Questions/Discussions

None

VSO Grant Committee **Mr. John Getz**

- Application for grant received and due 17Feb2025.

Questions/Discussions

None.

Womens Health **Ms. Lisa Kaye**

No Official Report

PAWVC **Mr. John Fritz**

No Official Report

Questions/Discussions

None

Unfinished Business

- Leonard Johnson asked if someone could shed light on the Paralyzed Veterans Pension. Is it to stay at 150 or does it need to come to committee to vote on.
  - Seth Benge states no pensions legislations have been introduced yet. Hopefully by next meeting
  - Nate Silcox will be introducing the senate version will double check to see if the cosponsor memo has gone out. Is very interested in the issue and will continue to work with the DMVA.
- Leonard Johnson asked to verify the RETX exemption from 5 years to 10 years to submit?
  - Seth Benge believes it is still 5 years. Hopes at the next meeting to be able to brief more on this.

New Business

Chairman Nick Taylor asked for commission's approval to appointment of individuals as committee chairs: Governance committee- Mr. Michael Brooker / Legislative committee- Mr. Mark Baylis / Member at Large- Ms. Constance Snavely / Pensions, Relief, & Grave Markings- Mr. Larry Googins / RETX

committee- Mr. Alvin Loveless / VA Transportation committee- Mr. Robert Hammaker / Veterans Health Committee- Mr. Leonard Johnson / VSO committee- Mr. John Getz / Women's Veterans committee- Ms. Pauline Veater. If approved, have the chair nominees to meet no later than February 28, 2025 and look forward to having the full commission meet and provide the report at the next meeting, April 4, 2025.

Questions/Discussions

- Mark Baylis asked if anyone heard about a new center that is possibly turning into a Senior Veteran Housing and substance abuse facility combined.

Approval of Committee Members

Motion: Mr. Mark Baylis, MAL, made the motion to approve Committee Members

Second: Ms. Barbara Loncar seconded the motion.

The body agreed; motion carried. Committee members approved.

Good of the Order

- Barb Loncar asked if there's a DEERs office being put in Erie.
  - Keith Graham answer: VA does not manage the DEERs office that's part of the DOV system. Looking to potentially put an outreach center and will try to coordinate to put an DEERs center in there.
- Rich Hudzinski asked what is the possibility of reintroducing Veterans assistance line item to the Governor's budget?
  - Nick Taylor answer: Will need to research more information about why it was dropped and little bit of the history behind it.
- Michael Brooker asked the members who have interest in serving at the Governance Committee to let him know.
- Mr. Nate Silcox: On March 25th at 1130AM, Senator Mastriano is hosting a Vietnam Veterans Day at the capitol.
  - Anniversary of Victory in York Day as well as Victory in Japan day events will be held in May and September.
  - PA Department of Education has information on their website for the Purple Star schools.

Agenda for Next Meeting

Please email agendas to Chairman Nicholas Taylor

Closing Remarks

Thank you to BG Pippy for allowing the SCV committee to use the Hartranft Conference room to hold this meeting.

Next Meeting

Friday, June- 6th, 10:00 AM
Forum: Arrowheads Community Center, FIG

Annville, PA 17003

The minutes of this meeting are respectfully submitted by:

BG (PA) Maureen Weigl
Deputy Adjutant General
Veterans Affairs

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY
AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

STATE VETERANS COMMISSION MEETING
04 April 2025

As it is against the law in Pennsylvania to record, by audio and/or video, someone else without their permission under most circumstances, please note that this meeting will be recorded for administrative purposes only. By continuing to participate, you are providing your consent.

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AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Chairman Nicholas Taylor
Opening remarks

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DMVA Opening Remarks
Marc Ferraro

CURRENT AND FUTURE UNIT MOBILIZATIONS

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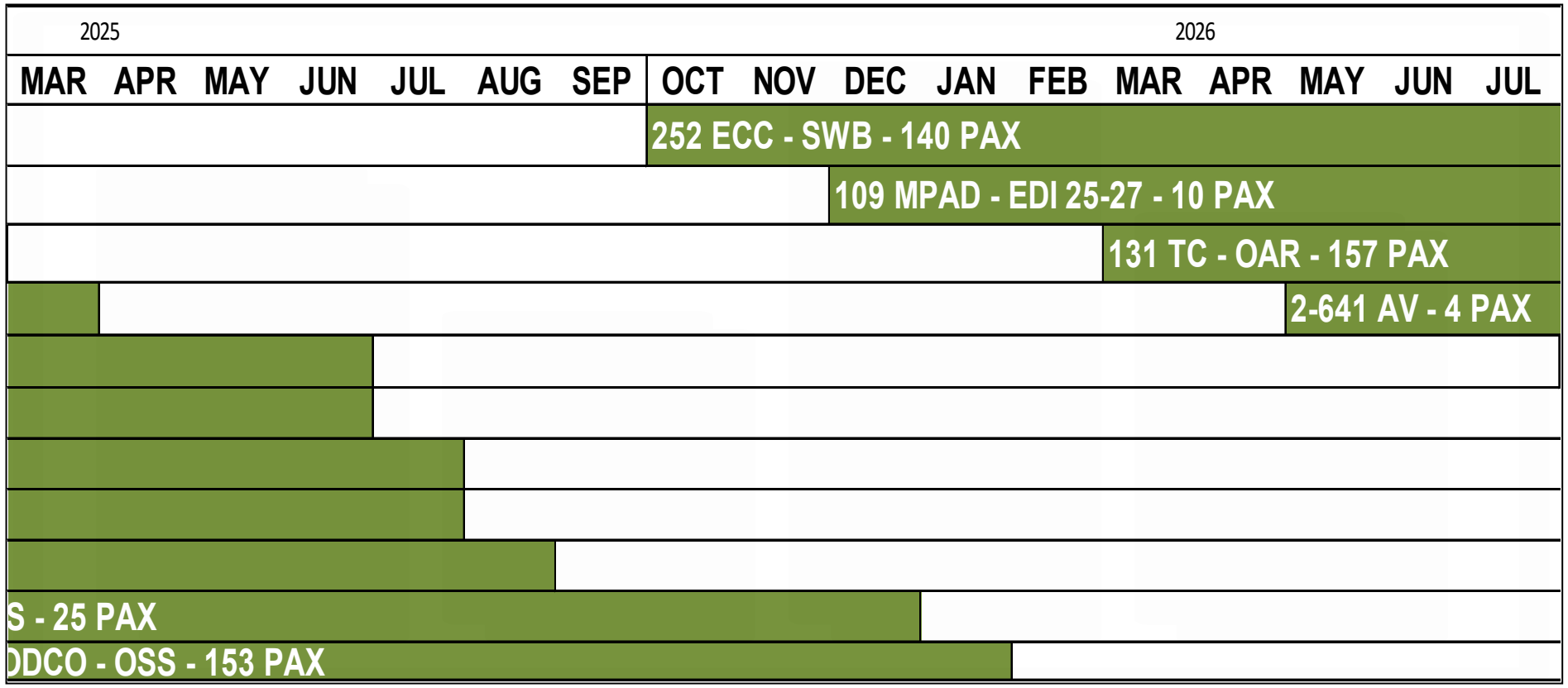

ARNG Unit Soldiers in Theater: 1, 074
ARNG Soldiers at MOB/DEMOB Site: 111
ARNG Individual Mob: 2
Total ARNG Mob: 1,187

Total PANG Mobilized: 806

Current ANG Unit Airmen Mob: 105
Current ANG Individual Mob: 17
Total: ANG Mob: 122

CURRENT AND FUTURE UNIT MOBILIZATIONS

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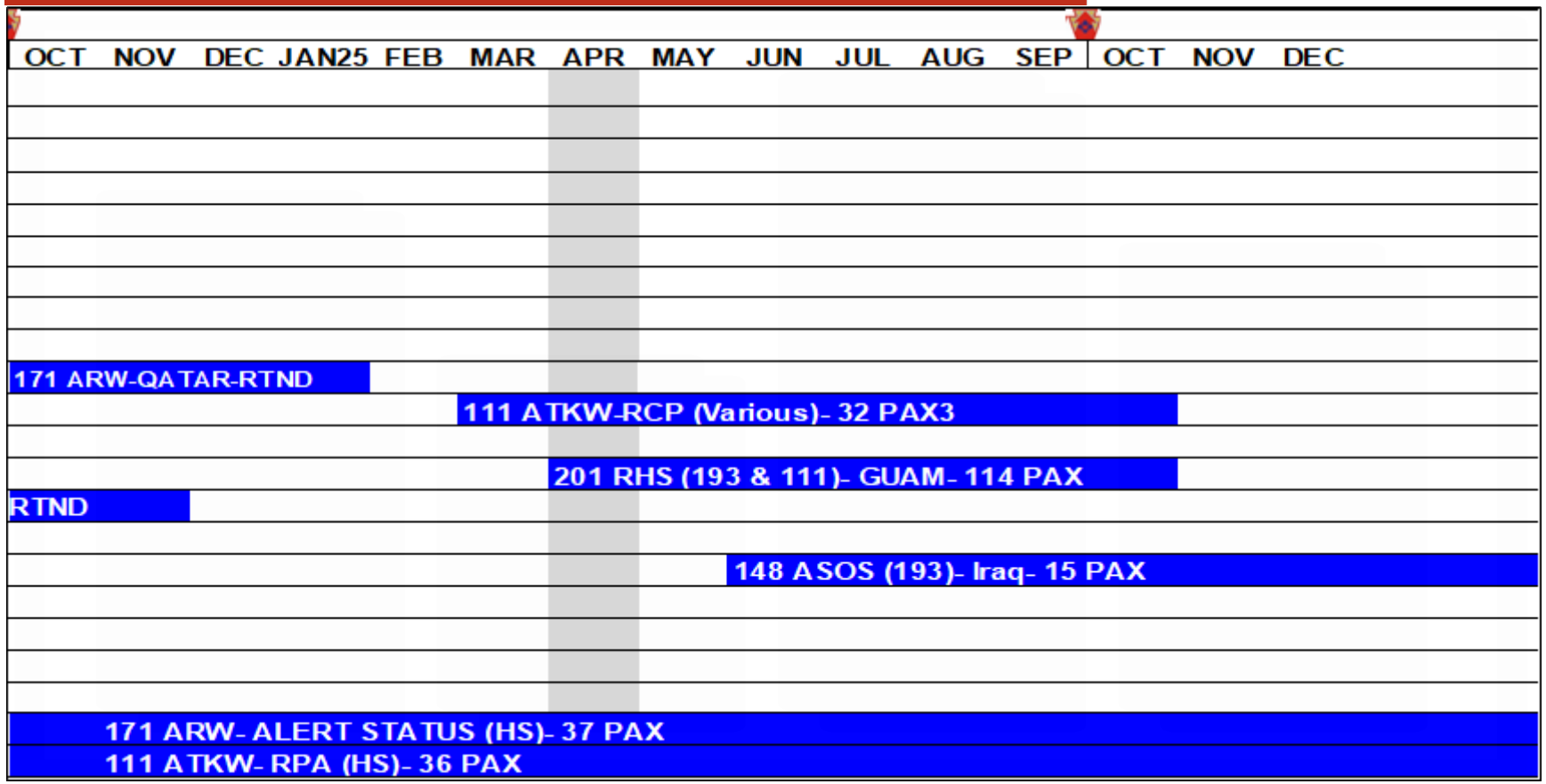

Current ANG Unit Airmen Mob: 105
Current ANG Individual Mob: 17
Total: ANG Mob: 122

CURRENT MOBILIZATIONS & TOTAL DEPLOYMENTS

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AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

PAANG Current Deployments		
Unit	Opn	Pax
193 SOW	CENTCOM, AFRICOM, PACOM	7/6/3
111 ATKW	IPR (HS), EUCOM, PACOM	36/1/32
171 ARW	Alert Status (HS)	37
Total PAANG Deployed		122

Total PANG Deployed 806

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DAG-VA Opening remarks
BG (PA) Maureen Weigl

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PPL
Seth Benge

Policy, Planning, and Legislative Affairs

Pennsylvania
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

Current Legislation

SB 173 (Pennycuick) An Act amending Title 51 (Military Affairs) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in general provisions, providing for veteran of Korean Armed Forces. **Passed 1st Consideration House 19MAR**

HB 304 (Cerrato) An Act amending Title 51 (Military Affairs) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in general provisions, providing for veteran of Korean Armed Forces. **Referred to the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee 19MAR**

SB 129 (Mastriano) An Act amending Title 51 (Military Affairs) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, further providing for advisory councils for veterans' homes. **Referred to the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee 17MAR**

HB 427 (Staats) An Act amending Title 51 (Military Affairs) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, providing for burial benefits. **Passed 1st Consideration House 04FEB**

SB 130 (Mastriano) An Act amending Title 51 (Military Affairs) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, providing for burial benefits. **Passed 2nd Consideration Senate 03FEB**

SB 144 (Mastriano) An Act providing compensation to persons in active service in connection with the Global War on Terrorism or their beneficiaries. **Passed 2nd Consideration Senate 29JAN**

SB 146 (Baker) An Act amending Title 51 (Military Affairs) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in State Veterans' Commission and Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans' Affairs, further providing for Veterans' Trust Fund. **Passed 2nd Consideration Senate 05FEB**

HB 799 (Deasy) An Act amending Title 51 (Military Affairs) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, providing for veterans' benefits and services workplace posting; and making an editorial change. **Passed House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee 25MAR**

Current Legislation

HB 319 (Labs) An Act amending Title 34 (Game) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in hunting and furtaking licenses, further providing for resident license and fee exemptions. **Referred to House Game and Fisheries 27JAN**

HB 219 (Kutz) An Act amending the act of March 4, 1971 (P.L.6, No.2), known as the Tax Reform Code of 1971, in realty transfer tax, further providing for excluded transactions. **Referred to House Finance 22JAN**

HB 458 (Hill-Evans) An Act amending Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in post-trial matters, further providing for eligibility for relief, providing for postconviction review for veterans with service-connected mental health disability. **Referred to House Judiciary 03FEB**

HB 636 (Munroe) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in disabled veterans' real estate tax exemption, further providing for duty of commission. Directs the State Veterans Commission to review all determinations of need at least once every 10 years. **Referred to House Local Government 20FEB**

SB 133 (Batolotta) A Joint Resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, further providing for exemptions and special provisions. **Referred to Senate State Government 22JAN**

Proposed Civil Service Modernization Act will have NO effect on Pennsylvania's Veterans Preference rules.

2025-2026 Session
General Assembly
Senate: April 1 & 2; May 5, 6, 7, 12, 13; June 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30
House: April 7, 8, 9, 22, 23, 24; May 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14; June 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11,16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30

2025 Pennsylvania Elections: Upcoming Elections
Mar 25, 2025 Special Elections
36th Senatorial District (Lancaster County)
35th House Legislative District (Allegheny County)

May 20, 2025 Primary
Last day to register May 5th 2025
Last day to request a mail-in or absentee ballot: May 13, 2025

Nov 4th, 2025 Municipal Election
Last day to register to vote: Oct. 20, 2025
Last day to request a mail-in or absentee ballot: Oct. 28, 2025

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DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY
AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

BVH
Travis Davis

Survey Update

Pennsylvania
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

SVH Survey Table as of March 21, 2025

SVH	Regulatory Agency	Survey Reason/Type	Survey Date(s)	Status/comments
DVVH	DOH Nursing	Annual Recertification	10/15/24 - 10/18/24	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaint	09/10/24	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaint	08/19/24	Cleared
	DOH Life Safety	Annual Recertification	10/21/24	Cleared
	VA	Annual Recertification	12/17/24 - 12/20/24	CAP accepted, date certain 4/1
GMVC	DOH Nursing	Annual Recertification	08/13/24 - 08/16/24	Cleared
	DOH Life Safety	Annual Recertification	08/21/24	Cleared
	VA	Annual Recertification	02/25/25	Suspended
HVH	DOH Nursing	Annual Recertification	07/15/24 - 07/18/24	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaint	12/02/24	Cleared
	DOH Life Safety	Annual Recertification	07/15/24 - 07/17/24	Cleared
	DHS	Annual Recertification	01/29/25 - 01/30/25	POC accepted, date certain 3/31
	DHS	Abbreviated - Complaint	11/06/24	Cleared
	DHS	Abbreviated - Incident	08/15/24	Cleared
	VA	Annual Recertification	06/10/24 - 06/14/24	Cleared, full certification

SVH Survey Table as of March 21, 2025

SVH	Regulatory Agency	Survey Reason/Type	Survey Date(s)	Status/comments
PSSH	DOH Nursing	Annual Recertification	03/04/25 - 03/07/25	POC under development
	DOH Life Safety	Annual Recertification	03/11/25	POC under development
	DHS	Annual Recertification	02/06/25	POC accepted, date certain 3/19
	VA	Annual Recertification	02/24/25 - 02/25/25	Suspended
SEVC	DOH Nursing	Annual Recertification	06/11/24 - 06/14/24	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaint	03/20/25	Results Pending
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaint	11/18/24	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaint	10/01/24	Cleared
	DOH Life Safety	Annual Recertification	06/10/24	Cleared
	DHS	Annual Recertification	11/13/24	Cleared
	DHS	Abbreviated - Incident	01/03/25	Cleared
	VA	Annual Recertification	02/24/25 - 02/25/25	Suspended
SWVC	DOH Nursing	Annual Recertification	05/06/24 - 05/10/24	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaint	12/27/24	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaint	08/07/24	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaint	07/03/24	Cleared
	DOH Nursing	Abbreviated - Complaint	06/13/24	Cleared
	DOH Life Safety	Annual Recertification	05/14/24 - 05/15/24	Cleared
	VA	Annual Recertification	05/07/24 - 05/10/24	Cleared, provisional certification

Infection Prevention Update

Pennsylvania
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

COVID-19, Influenza, RSV Data

Friday, March 21, 2025	DVVH	GMVC	HVH	PSSH	SEVC	SWVC	TOTAL
Total # of COVID + residents	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total # of COVID + staff	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total number of residents who have received the 2024/2025 COVID vaccine	125	147	169	116	149	127	833
Total number of Influenza+ residents	1	3	1	0	0	0	5
Total number of Influenza+ staff	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total # of residents who received the 2024/2025 Influenza vaccine	139	168	203	127	154	145	946
Total # of staff who have received the 2024/2025 Influenza vaccine	135	94	98	50	51	95	523
Total # of + RSV residents	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total # of residents who received a dose of RSV vaccine	10	37	67	12	5	22	153

5 Star rating - last updated: February 26, 2025

	DVVH	GMVC	HVH	PSSH	SEVC	SWVC
Overall	5	5	4	4	5	4
Health Inspection	3	4	2	3	4	3
Quality Measures	5	5	5	2	3	4
Staffing	5	5	5	5	5	5
Changes from January 2025/ February 2025	Unchanged 2	Unchanged	Unchanged	Unchanged	Unchanged	Unchanged

Resident Status: March 21, 2025

Veteran Home	Isolation COVID	Quarantine	Isolation Influenza	Isolation RSV
DVVH	0	0	1	0
GMVC	0	0	3	0
HVH	0	0	1	0
PSSH	0	0	0	0
SEVC	0	0	0	0
SWVC	0	0	0	0

*Influenza vaccines residents only : 946 COVID vaccines residents only: 833 Vaccine Numbers since 9/16/24

*COVID: None *RSV: None Influenza: 1 resident at DVVH, 3

residents at GMVC, 1 resident t HVH

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/19MpLoPxayE1MDwQJJYCZxlSN64V4FJSJPGzfvVBb5Mw/edit#gid=1511961664

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY
AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

BUREAU OF VETERANS PROGRAMS, INITIATIVES, REINTEGRATION, AND OUTREACH

Mr. Keith Graham

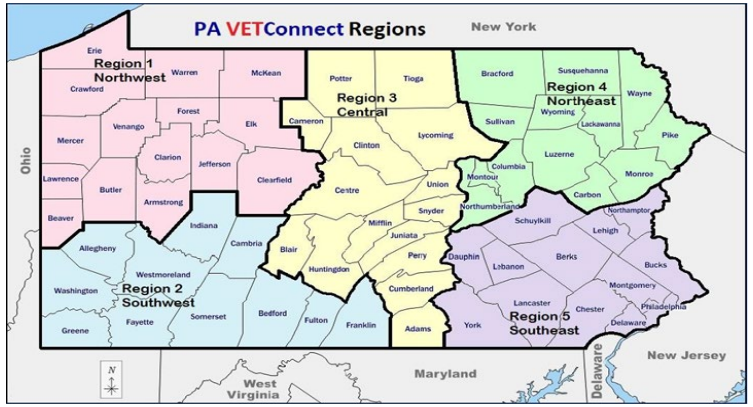
PA VETConnect

Pennsylvania
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

We build relationships that amplify service to the SMVF community

- Region 1 – Veteran from SCI Mercer was placed at Allegheny Valley Veterans Center since Oct 2024. He is the first Veteran coming out of incarceration they accepted since RPOC made the connection. To this date he has been a great fit there and has set a great example to further the partnership for housing options for Veterans coming out of incarceration.
- Region 2 – Together With Veterans (TWV) - Greene monthly coffee event hit a new milestone at Waynesburg University. We had over 80 veterans present. Some of those in attendance included JROTC students from local high schools, 3 VA Vet Center staff from both the Wheeling & Morgantown WV locations and veteran students or staff attending and working at Waynesburg University.
- Region 3 – RPOCs from R3, R1 and R5, along with 2 VSU Managers from DOC, toured “Tomorrow's Hope” a halfway house in Clearfield County that works directly with DOC. They accept sex offenders and have opportunities for our veteran re-entrants.
- Region 4 – VSS assisted a veteran along with the Columbia County Veterans Affairs office. The disabled veteran needed help with paying for heating and deck repair that was at risk of injury entering and exiting the home. Columbia County CDVA was able to apply and secure funds through PA Wounded Warrior to pay for heating and VSS was able to connect the veteran with Helping Heroes NEPA to pay for the deck repairs needed.
- Region 5 – RPOC and VSS along with the Veteran Service Unit (VSU) Manager from SCI Phoenix met a previously incarcerated veteran who has purchased 3 properties in Pottstown. He has turned those houses into veteran transitional housing. One of the houses being a female only house.

- **Successes**
  - >25,700 Connections
  - Building trust within the network
  - PA VETConnect now Powered by PA Navigate – Connecting Veterans with resources and support



Reintegration & Outreach Events

Pennsylvania
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

Outreach Statistics					
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	Year to Date
Outreach Events Supported	111	128	45		**283**
Veteran Interactions	1,894	1,551	1,071		**4,516**
Women Veterans		141	135		**276**
Family Members or Caregivers		357	565		**924**
Claim referrals to County Directors and Service Organizations	661	557	239		**1,457**
Claim referrals to other state, county and local organizations assisting Veterans	537	395	150		**1,082**
Health Care Enrollment Referrals	381	286	150		**817**
Number of Veterans Registry Cards distributed / enrolled	291	432	339		**1,062**
County Directors Office Attended	55	64	16		**135**
Legislative attended events	50	77			**130**

Amputee & Paralyzed Veterans' Pension

Pennsylvania
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

SFY24/25 Budget: $4,408,050

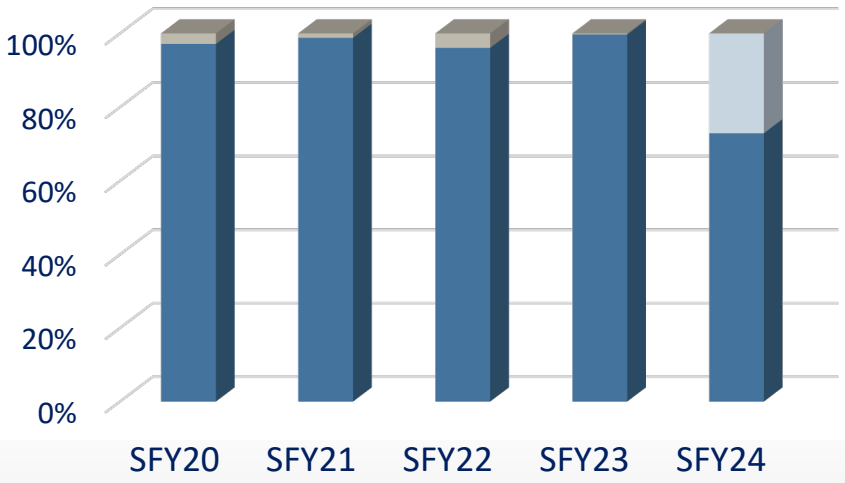
Expended $3,214,150 .....

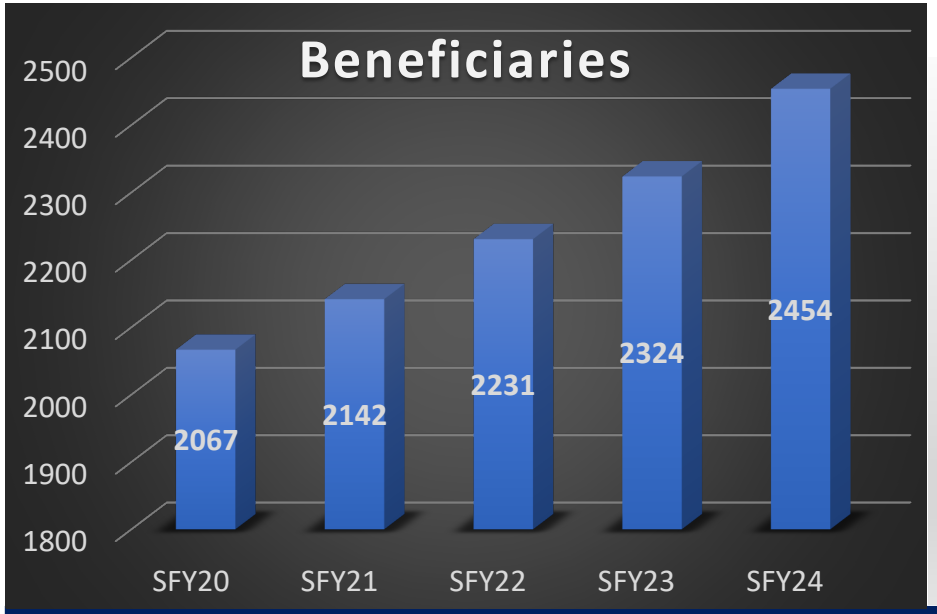
Projected $1,193,900 .....

Lapsed $0 .....

At 3/4 thru SFY, 72.9% of budget expended.

Budget Execution





Notes: 2,454 Veterans currently on pension.

Five-year trend shows a 15% beneficiary increase largely attributable to positive external factors such as the federal PACT Act of 2022.

Currently experiencing surge in applications covered by a supplement to the budget.

Blind Veterans' Pension

Pennsylvania
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

SFY24/25 Budget: $222,000

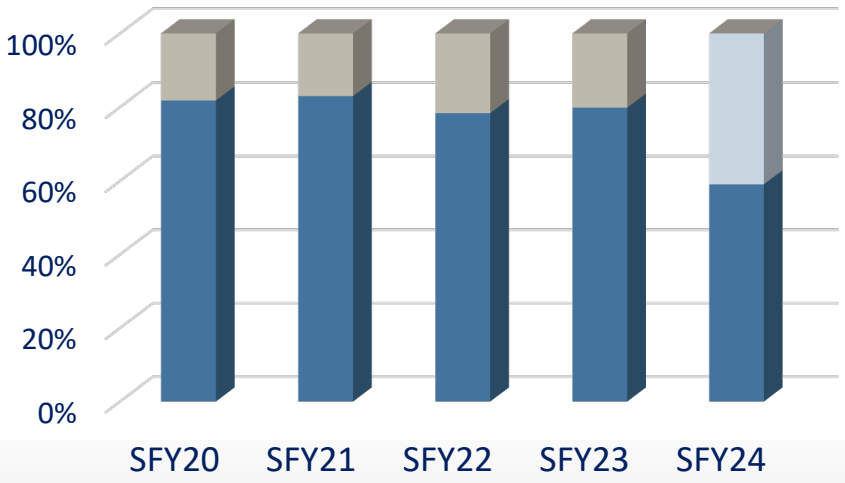
Expended $131,100 .....

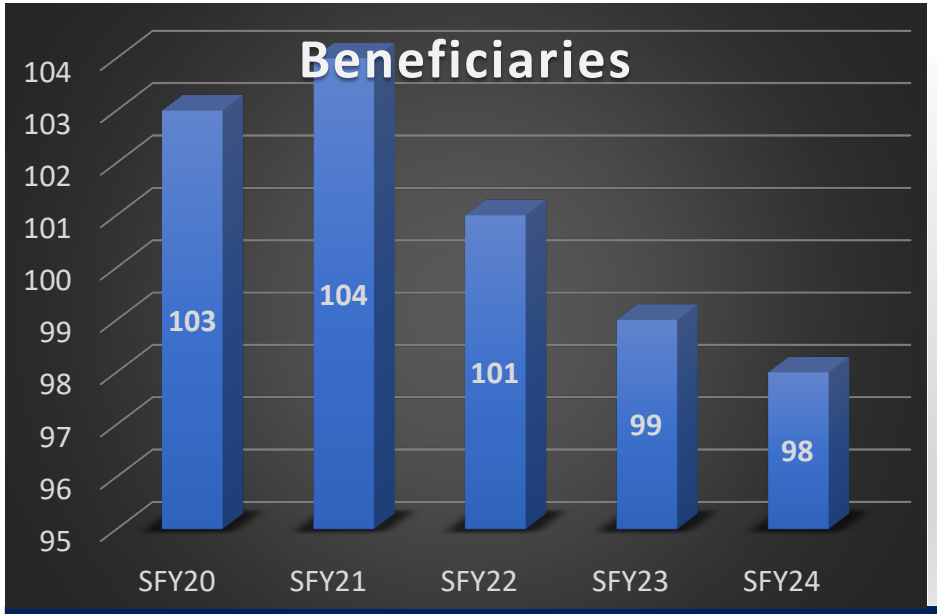
Projected $90,900 .....

Lapsed $0 .....

At 3/4 thru SFY, 59.0% of budget expended.

Budget Execution





Notes: 98 Veterans currently on pension.

Five-year trend shows a steady average of 101 pensioners. This beneficiary population is not significantly affected by the federal PACT Act of 2022 or other current external factors.

Expect continued stability.

Educational Gratuity

Pennsylvania
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

SFY24/25 Budget: $321,599

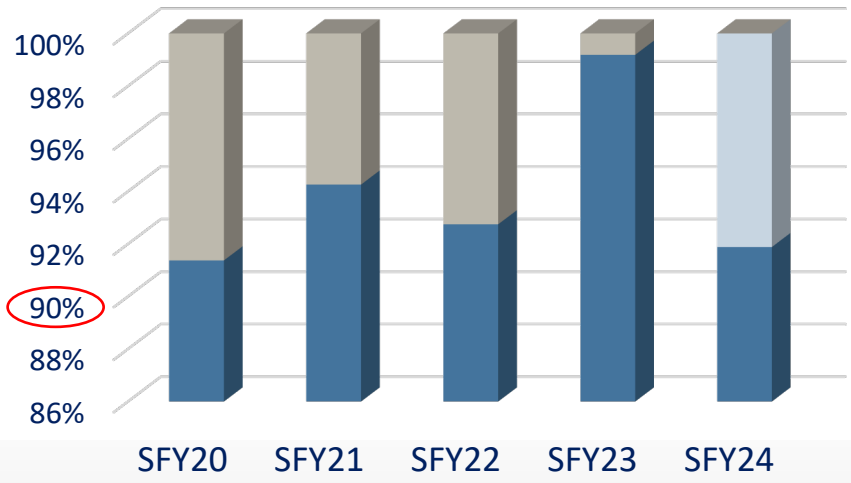
Expended $295,500 .....

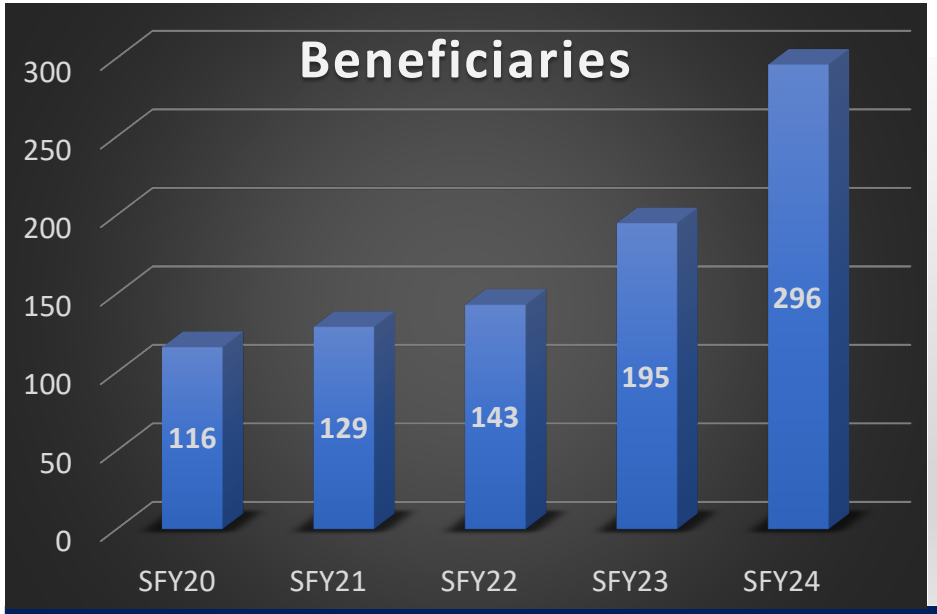
Projected $26,099 .....

Lapsed $0 .....

*At 3/4 thru SFY, **91.8%** of budget expended.*

Budget Execution





Notes: 591 gratuities have been paid this SFY.

Five-year trend shows **150%** beneficiary increase since SFY20 attributable to positive external factors such as the PACT Act of 2022, Act 27 of 2024, and children of early GWOT veterans now aging into higher education.

Supplement to budget requested.

Veterans' Temporary Assistance

Pennsylvania
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

SFY24/25 VTF Allowance: $850,000

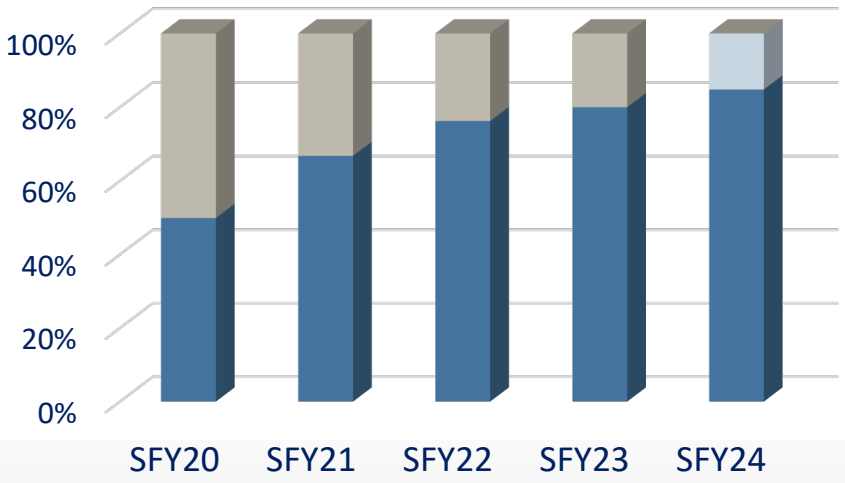
Expended $720,712 .....

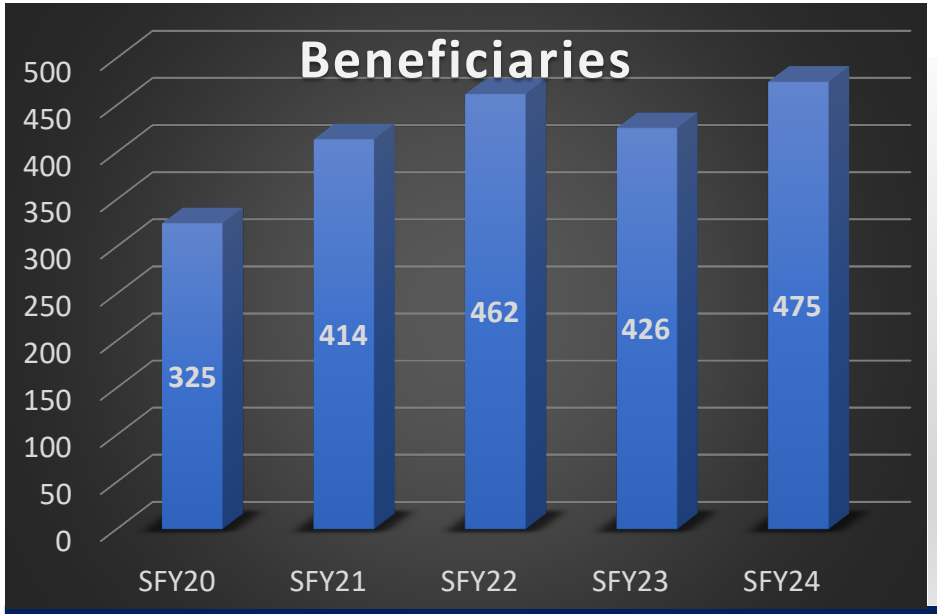
Projected $129,288 .....

Lapsed $0 .....

*At 3/4 thru SFY, **84.7%** of budget expended.*

Budget Execution





Notes: 475 grants issued SFY to date.
($87,400 in TS Debby disaster-related assistance granted to Tioga and Potter county veterans.)

Five-year trend shows an average of 420 VTA grants per year.

Expect to expend the total $850,000 VTF allowance this SFY.

Military Family Relief Assistance

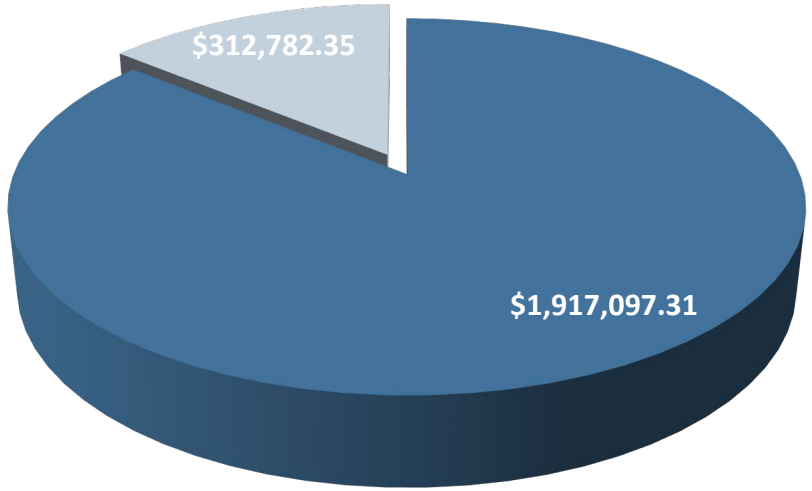
Pennsylvania
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

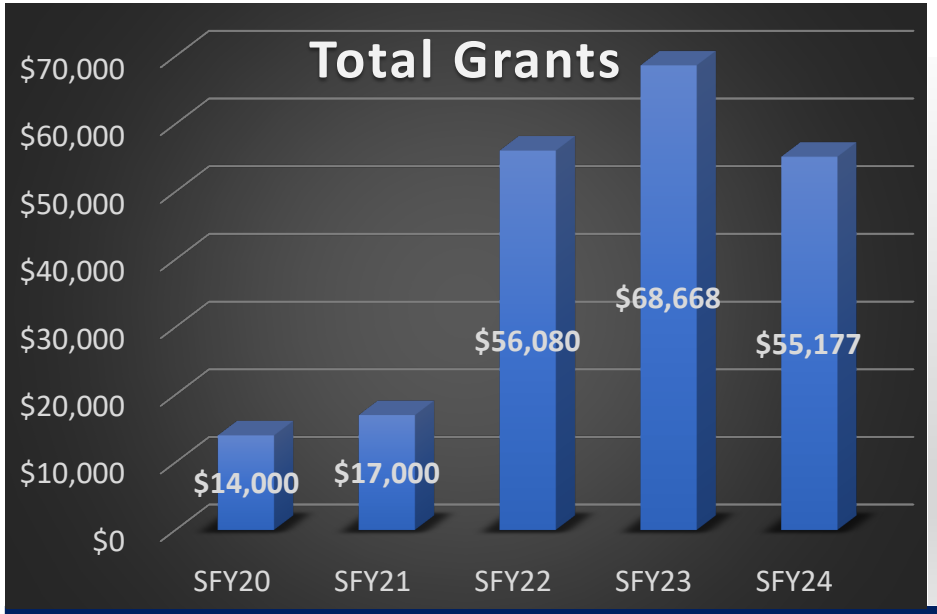
Personal Income Tax Donations .....

Private/Cash/Other Donations .....

Total Donations SFY05-24: $2,229,880
Total Grants SFY05-24: $1,051,669

MFRA Fund Balance: $1,178,209.80





Notes: $55,177 in total grants SFY to date.

Five-year trend shows large grant increases over the last two years with low points in 2020-2021 (Covid-19). Overall, the current grant trend is low compared to earlier years with higher active-duty mobilization rates.

Expect grants to continue trending at $55-$75K.

Disabled Vets' Real Estate Tax Exemption

Pennsylvania
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

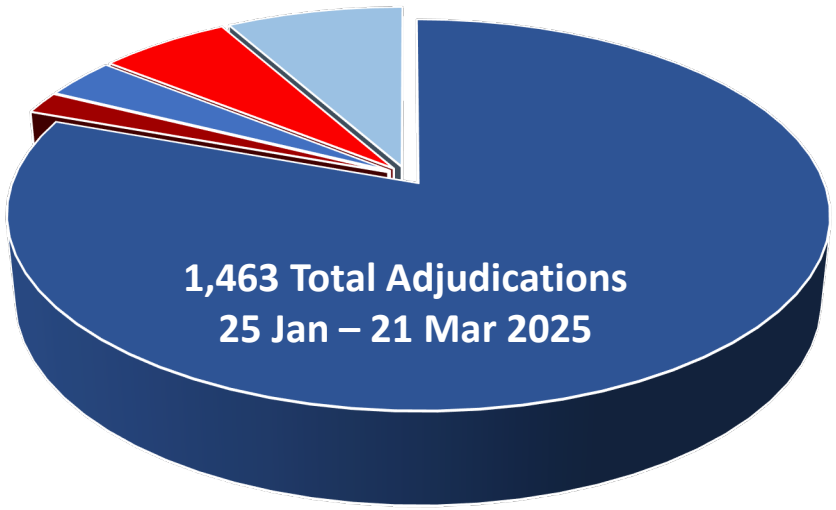
1,175 Approved (80.3%) .....

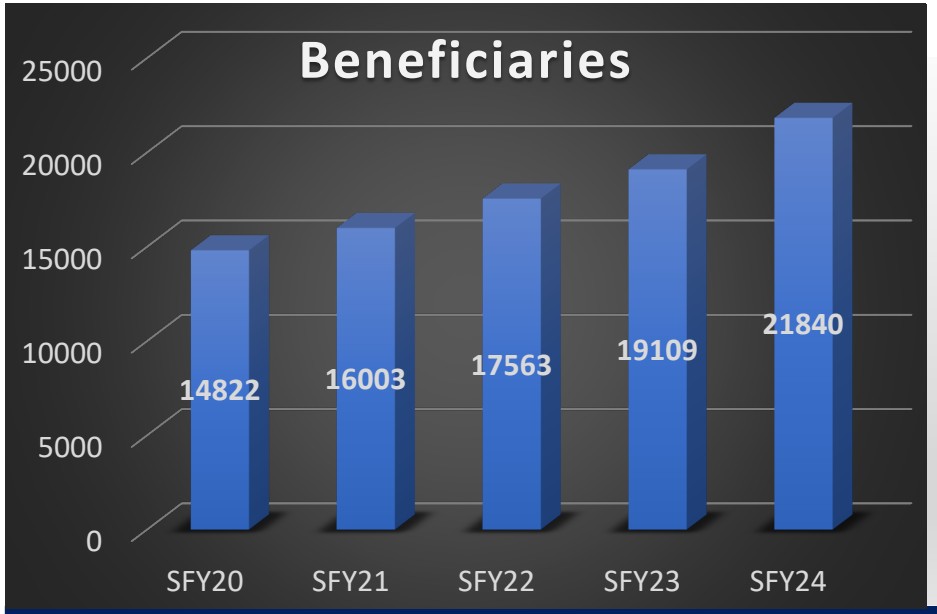
27 Denied: Financial Need .....

57 Denied: Eligibility .....

115 Removed: Change of Eligibility/Need .....

89 Removed: No Response to 5-Year Review .....





Notes: **21,840** Veterans and surviving spouses currently receive est. **$74.8M** in exemptions.

Five-year trend shows average beneficiary increase of over 1,400 per year attributable to positive federal PACT Act and Act 27 of 2024 effects on eligibility and need.

Expect continuing increases.

PROPOSED RULEMAKING

DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

[43 PA. CODE CHS. 5 AND 5A]

State Veterans' Programs

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (department) and the State Veterans Commission (commission), under the general authority in 51 Pa.C.S. § 701 (relating to overall powers of department), section 506 of The Administrative Code of 1929 (71 P.S. § 186) regarding rules and regulations, and the specific authority in 51 Pa.C.S. §§ 1704(7), 7701(b), 7702(b) and 8904(1), propose to delete Chapter 5 and replace it with proposed Chapter 5a (relating to State veterans' programs) as set forth in Annex A.

The department and commission propose to issue Chapter 5a to extensively update and clarify the application, adjudication, appeal and administration procedures of State veterans' programs.

The contents for this proposed rulemaking are as follows:

Subchapter A. General Provisions

§ 5a.1. Scope and purpose.

§ 5a.2. Definitions.

§ 5a.3. Delegation of authority.

§ 5a.4. Waiver of the regulations.

§ 5a.5. Adjudication standards.

§ 5a.6. Service in war or armed conflict.

§ 5a.7. Common-law marriage.

§ 5a.35. Adjudication procedures.

§ 5a.36. Administration of pension.

Subchapter E. Educational Gratuity Program

§ 5a.41. Scope and purpose.

§ 5a.42. Definitions.

§ 5a.43. Governing statutes, regulations and policies.

§ 5a.44. Application procedures.

§ 5a.45. Adjudication procedures.

§ 5a.46. Administration of gratuity.

Subchapter F. Veterans' Temporary Assistance Program

§ 5a.51. Scope and purpose.

§ 5a.52. Definitions.

§ 5a.53. Governing statutes, regulations and policies.

§ 5a.54. Application procedures.

§ 5a.55. Adjudication procedures.

§ 5a.56. Administration of temporary assistance.

I. *Background and Need for Amendments*

This proposed rulemaking is necessary for several reasons. Current Chapter 5 was last amended in 1991. Organizational changes within the department and numerous amendments to the underlying authorities over 34 years, not reflected in the current regulations, require the department to delete Chapter 5 and replace it with Chapter 5a.

This proposed rulemaking addresses the statutory amendments, updates and clarifies definitions and procedures accordingly and promotes cross-programmatic con-

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VISN 4

Ms. Denise Boehm

VISN 4 Access – Fiscal Year 2025 Wait Times

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DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Clinics FY25 thru March 12	Number of Appointments	Average Wait
Mental Health	183,127	5.1
Primary Care	227,410	4.0
Specialty Care	478,815	10.3
Other	380,401	6.8
ALL	1,269,753	7.4

FY25 data updated 3/14/2025 with appointment info as of 3/12/2025.

VISN 4 Access – Current Average Wait Times

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VISN 4 Facility	Primary Care	
	New Patients	Returning Patients
James E. Van Zandt VAMC	12	2
Abie Abraham HCC	13	2
Coatesville VAMC	14	4
Erie VAMC	21	3
Lebanon VAMC	23	3
Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VAMC	25	5
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (University Drive)	N/A	8
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (H.J. Heinz)	28	11
Wilkes-Barre VAMC	14	2
Wilmington VAMC	19	7

FY25 data updated 3/14/2025 with wait times as of 3/14/2025 for the last 30 days.

www.accesstocare.va.gov

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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.

FY25 data updated 3/14/2025 with wait times as of 3/14/2025 for the last 30 days.

www.accesstocare.va.gov

VISN 4 Care in the Community

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Care in the Community Consults (Scheduled and Completed)		Non-VA Unique Patients*
FY23	190,810	99,167
FY24	211,725	103,826
FY25 (as of 3/14/25)	101,325	70,744

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

FY25 data updated 3/14/2025 with consult info as of 3/14/2025.

CMS Star Ratings – July 2024

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DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Facility Name	Peer Grouping	Overall Star Rating	Hospital Summary Score
James E. Van Zandt VAMC	4	★★★	0.04
Lebanon VAMC	4	★★★★★	0.68
Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VAMC	5	★★★★	0.23
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (University Drive)	5	★	-1.20
Wilkes-Barre VAMC	4	★★★★	0.58
Wilmington VAMC	4	★★★★	0.35

- The CMS Star ratings, available publicly, show 67% of applicable VISN 4 facilities performing at 4 or 5 stars (5 stars being the highest rating).
  - Lebanon increased from 4 to 5 stars
  - Wilmington increased from 3 to 4 stars
- Six facilities are included in star ratings due to number of patient discharges.
- CMS Star ratings update annually.

SAIL Radar

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DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

FY 24 Q4 Rank (FY24 Q3 Rank)

- **Ranked out of 18 Total VISNs**

Rank Improved = **11** (7)

Rank Worse = **7** (6)

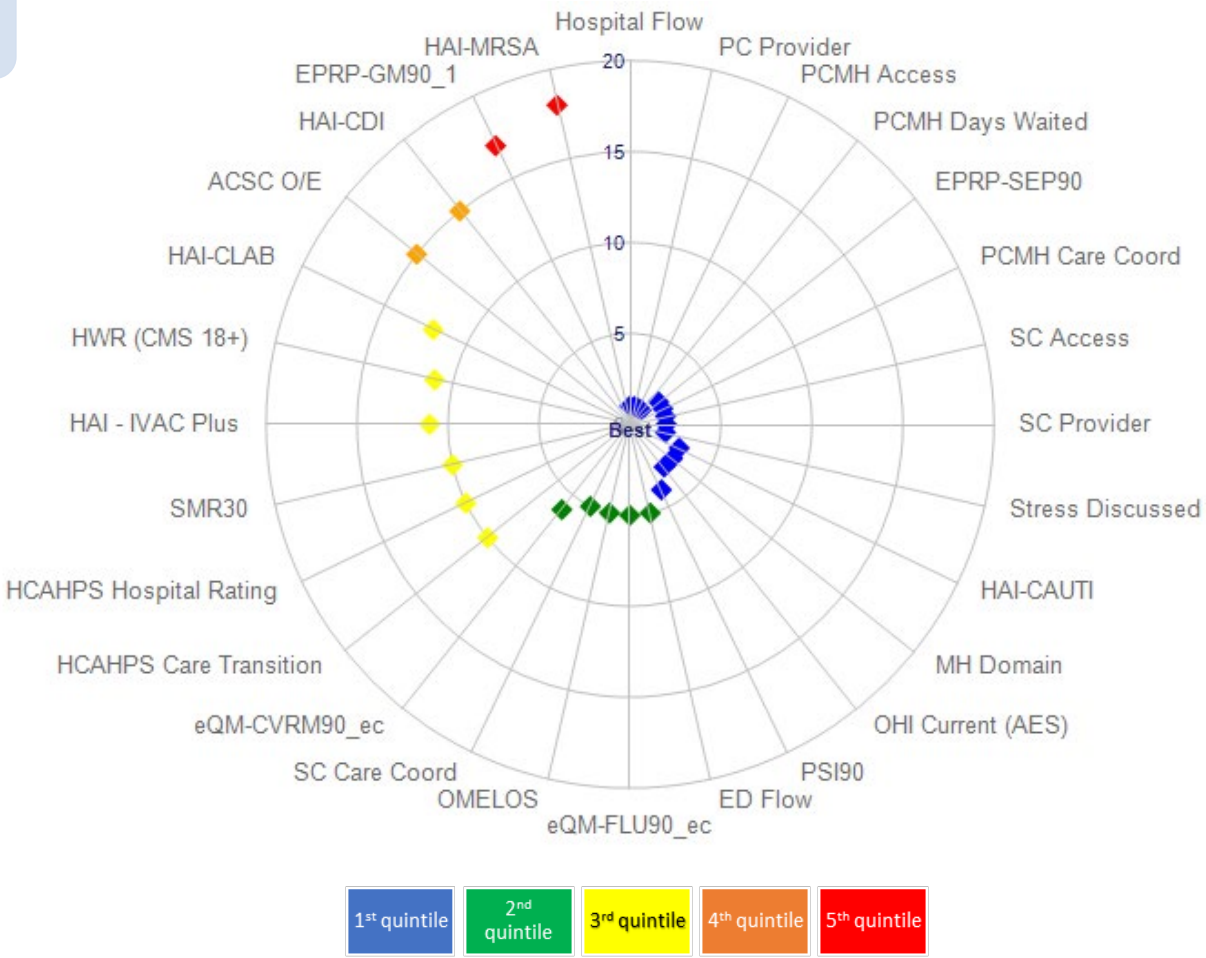
No Change = **9** (16)

**Note – preferred direction in rank is down

12 Main Measures in the **1st Quintile** among 18 total VISNs

2 Total 5th quintile Main Measures – previously 4

VISN 4 (FY2024Q4) (Metric)



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DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Committee Reports

Legislative	Mr. Mark Baylis
Pensions/Relief/Grave Markings	Mr. Larry Googins
RETX	Mr. Alvin Loveless
MAL	Vice-Chair Constance Snavely
Transportation	Mr. Robert Hammaker
Veterans' Health	Mr. Leonard Johnson
VSO Grant	Mr. John Getz
Women Veterans	Ms. Pauline Bozdech-Veater
PAWVC Update	Mr. John Fritz

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY
AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

- Unfinished Business
- New Business
- Good to the order
- Agenda items for next meeting
- Closing Remarks

NEXT MEETING

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY
AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

06 JUNE 2025 at 10:00AM

Arrowheads Community Club
Building 9-65, Fort Indiantown Gap
Annville, PA 17003

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

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
VA Healthcare–VISN 4

VISN 4 Update

April 4, 2025

Leadership Update

Tim Liezert, VISN 4 Network Director will retire on March 28, after 38 years of service with the VA.

Denise Boehm, VISN 4 Chief Nursing Officer has been appointed to serve as the Interim VISN 4 Director effective March 28.

Chuck Thilges, VISN 4 Deputy Network Director retired on February 28, 2025, after nearly 40 years in the U.S. military and VA combined.

David DiGiacomo Associate Director at the Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center in Clarksburg, West Virginia, has been appointed to serve as the Interim VISN 4 Deputy Network Director effective March 16.

Kim Butler, the Associate Director at the Wilmington, VA has been appointed to serve as the Acting Associate Director of the Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center effective March 16.

Mike Amos, Wilmington VAMC Health Administration Services Supervisor, has been appointed to serve as Wilmington's Acting Associate Director effective March 16.

Eric Haycisak, Associate Chief Nurse, Outpatient Services at the Altoona VA, is currently serving as their Acting Associate Director of Patient Care Services.

Thomas Bennett, the Chief of Police at the Butler VA, is currently serving as the Acting Chief VISN 4 Security Officer.

Transportation Update

The Veteran Transportation Service (VTS) at each VAMC in VISN 4 will begin planning to incorporate all vehicles used to transport Veterans into the VA-approved VetRide software system. This implementation will include both VTS and Veteran Transportation Network (VTN) programs. VISN 4 will use VetRide to track vehicle usage statistics including the number of rides, miles, passengers, etc., as well as maintenance

details. This is particularly important as we strive towards providing program information and transparency to our Veteran Service Organization partners. Another program enhancement is the creation of a one-stop request for Veterans and VA staff to request a ride to/from their VA healthcare appointments. We anticipate completing both projects across VISN 4 by September 30, 2025.

Patient Experience Update – Trust

VISN 4 continues to have the highest trust Score across the enterprise at 95%.

Our network also has the highest number of compliments at 79.4% and the lowest number of concerns at 10.3%. The top 5 compliments recently are cleanliness of facility, quality of care, interactions with staff, satisfaction with Specialty Care, and courtesy of healthcare providers.

Connected Care Update

VA Appointments on VA.gov: Beginning Thursday, March 13, 2025, Veterans will now manage their VA appointments in the new My Health*e*Vet experience on VA.gov. For those Veterans logging into their My HealtheVet account, a link (Go to appointments on VA.gov) will display under the Appointments box that when selected will redirect Veterans to VA.gov which will now serve as the sole source of information for VA appointments.

VA's Secure Sign-In Transition Update: As of March 4, 2025, Veterans are no longer able to use their My Health*e*Vet (MHV) UserID and Password to access their Premium My Health*e*Vet Accounts. Veterans are required to have an identity verified ID.me or Login.gov account to gain access to their personal information on My Health*e*Vet, VA.gov and VA mobile apps. Veterans using the DS Logon option will need to transition to a ID.me or Login.gov account by September 30, 2025, to login to these same platforms.

Over 147,000 Veterans in VISN 4 have created an ID.me or Login.gov account to access VA web services. For those Veterans who have not transitioned to an ID.me or Login.gov account or have not been able to adopt one of the accounts, the information within their My Health*e*Vet Premium Accounts will continue to be store until circumstances change. In the meantime, these Veterans can access care in person, by phone, or by mail.

HRO Highlight: Altoona James E Van Zandt VAMC

All 5 HRO Principles were exhibited by the staff at the Altoona James E Van Zandt VAMC who were caring for a Veteran who needed a place to live and food security ensuring the Veterans needs were met.

A homeless Veteran needed a place to live after being evicted from a local nursing home. The Veteran was denied all other community nursing home options due to eligibility criteria, so a hotel was needed. Katrina Lawecki worked to get a hotel set up and a plan in place. The Veteran was taken to a local hotel to find out when he arrived that the room would not meet his physical needs, so he was taken back to the Altoona VA at the end of a normal business day. When most other people would have given up for the day,

Katrina continued to call hotels in the area and surrounding counties. She was able to secure a hotel room for two nights in Altoona and arranged for transportation to get the Veteran there that evening. The next day she continued to reach out to hotels in the area to locate a hotel room for a long-term stay. A hotel room was available an hour and a half away, in Clearfield County. Katrina was able to find a viable transportation option to get the Veteran to the hotel.

Jeremy Vogel met with the Veteran to ensure he had food, gift cards for personal items, and to check on him medically. He reviewed the Veteran's medication list, set up his glucometer, educated him on how to use it, and discussed other medical concerns with him prior to being transferred to the new hotel. Jesse Morgret and Jeremy Vogel continued to work with the Veteran to try to secure permanent housing. During this time, the Veteran was not managing well at the hotel and the Area Agency on Aging got involved and he was admitted to the hospital. The hotel he was staying at refused to allow the Veteran to return. The hospital ended up discharging the Veteran to a hotel back in Altoona. Jesse and Jeremy met with the Veteran several times at the hotel. They ensured he had food and checked on his medical needs. A nursing home bed outside of the Altoona VA catchment area was secured for the Veteran. All three of these staff members went above and beyond to help this Veteran.

The HRO principles that were met include: Sensitivity to Operations, the staff focused on care processes to ensure the Veteran received proper housing. Preoccupation with Failure, Katrina never gave up and found a way to get the Veteran a place to stay until long-term housing could be secured. Reluctance to Simplify, Katrina had to get to the root cause as to why some of the hotels were rejecting this Veteran and she was able to determine it was due to his physical needs.

Commitment to Resilience, despite being refused a hotel room locally, Katrina did not give up until she was able to secure this Veteran a room and ensure transportation was available. Deference to Expertise, these three staff members worked together and relied on each others expertise to ensure the Veteran had housing, food, money and all his medical needs were being met. These three individuals are a testament to our ICARE values and HRO principles.

Electronic Health Record Deployment Update

The VA will complete deployment of the Federal Electronic Health Record system at nine additional medical facilities, bringing the total to go live in 2026 to 13, with complete deployment of the EHR at all VA medical facilities as early as 2031.

The nine additional VA facilities will be announced later this year following planning sessions among officials from VA's Electronic Health Record Modernization Office, regional and local VA medical leaders, VA clinicians, and EHR vendor Oracle Health.

The Federal EHR system seamlessly manages data exchange between VA and the Department of Defense, improving customer service and convenience for VA and DOD patients.

VA is pursuing a market-based approach to site selection for its deployments going forward. This will enable the department to scale up the number of concurrent deployments, while also enabling staff to work as efficiently as possible.

VA will adopt a standard baseline of products, workflows, and integrations aligned with subject-matter-expert recommendations. The standardized national baseline will ensure successful Federal EHR implementation, accelerate deployments, simplify decision-making, and support future optimizations.

A link where you can find more information about VA's overall EHR modernization effort in included in the read ahead material.

See here.

RETX - Exempt List

mvfigsqlprod01
3/21/2025
rep_VADC_RETX_Exempt_List_New

Summary of Current Applications (Exempt)

Count	No Activity	Review Process Started	Review App Received	New Apps Pending
212,840	21,301	490	49	322

Summary of Activity from 01/25/2025 to 03/21/2025

Apps Created: 1,169	
New	865
Review	304

Apps Approved: 1,175	
New	828
Review	347

Apps Denied (Need)	27
Apps Denied (Eligibility)	57
Apps Removed (Eligibility Change)	115
Apps Removed (No Response)	89

Summary of Ineligible Reasons

Reason	Count
The U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs has determined that the veteran was not rated 100% prior to death.	1
It has been determined that the information submitted with your application does not substantiate your financial need for the exemption.	2
The applicant was no longer interested.	1
The property for which you claim exemption is not owned solely by you, or as an estate by the entirety with your spouse.	11
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that the veteran did not serve during a period of war or armed conflict.	25
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reported the service member's death as a casualty while on active duty.	1
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.	13
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that you did not serve during a period of war or armed conflict, and you have a future exam, therefore your disability has not been rated as total or 100% permanent.	2
Your disability has not been declared by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to be a total or 100% permanent disability.	1
Your military service was characterized as other than honorable.	1

Summary of Activity: 25 Jan - 21 Mar 2025

Applications Approved	**1,175**
New	828
Review	347

Applications Denied	**288**
Financial Need	27
Ineligible	57
No Response	115
Change of Eligibility	89

Over Income	**39**	**FALSE**
New	39	5%
Review	0	0%

Applications Created	**1,169**
Total Adjudicated	**1,463**