

FISCAL YEAR 26 **ANNUAL REPORT**
ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE OREGON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS



OREGON DEPARTMENT
of **VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

Director Dr. Nakeia Council Daniels



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

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August 1, 2026

The Honorable Tina Kotek
Governor of Oregon
State Capitol Building
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Governor Kotek,

On behalf of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) and the Advisory Committee to the ODVA, we are pleased to submit the Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Report, as required under ORS 406.220. This report reflects a year of renewed momentum, strategic investment, and meaningful progress in advancing the well-being of Oregon veterans and their families.

This report reflects a year of meaningful progress in strengthening Oregon's commitment to the Oregonians who have served our nation. Throughout Fiscal Year 2026, the Advisory Committee and ODVA worked together to expand access to earned benefits, strengthen partnerships, improve customer service, and ensure that veterans' voices continue to inform the policies and programs that shape their lives.

As Oregon's veteran population continues to evolve, so too must the way we serve it. Veterans today represent every generation of military service, every community, and increasingly diverse backgrounds and experiences. Meeting their needs requires innovation, collaboration, and a commitment to continuously improving how services are delivered. This report demonstrates how ODVA and the Advisory Committee are working together to meet veterans where they are—through stronger partnerships with counties, Tribal governments, Veteran Service Organizations, educational institutions, healthcare providers, and community organizations across Oregon.

During FY2026, the Advisory Committee strengthened its role as an independent advisory body through expanded community engagement, the establishment of standing subcommittees focused on women veterans, veteran suicide prevention, and transportation, participation in statewide grant evaluations, and increased opportunities to hear directly from veterans across Oregon. These efforts have strengthened the Committee's ability to provide informed recommendations while ensuring the experiences of Oregon veterans remain central to the agency's work.

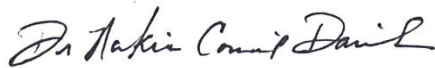
At the same time, ODVA continued making strategic investments that will benefit veterans for years to come. The agency has advanced planning of needed organizational improvements, modernized technology and customer service, expanded statewide outreach, increased access to behavioral health and housing resources, strengthened government-to-government partnerships with Oregon's Tribal nations, and continued advocacy for the future Roseburg Veterans' Home. Together, these efforts reinforce Oregon's commitment to improving every veteran's journey.



While this report highlights significant accomplishments, it also acknowledges the important work that lies ahead. Veteran suicide, housing stability, transportation, long-term care, and ensuring equitable access to earned benefits remain among Oregon's highest priorities. Addressing these challenges will continue to require strong leadership, meaningful partnerships, and a shared commitment to serving those who have served us.

We appreciate your continued leadership and steadfast support of Oregon's veteran community. Thank you for your commitment to ensuring Oregon remains a place where veterans and their families are honored, supported, and connected to the benefits and opportunities they have earned.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dr. Nakeia Council Daniels". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nakeia" being particularly prominent.

Dr. Nakeia Council Daniels
Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert VanVoorhis". The signature is cursive and elegant, with the last name "VanVoorhis" being the most distinct part.

Robert VanVoorhis
Chair, Advisory Committee to the ODVA



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2026 Advisory Committee members (l to r) Tim Smart, Jim Little, Chair Robert Van Voorhis, Director Dr. Nakeia Daniels, Mario Smith, and Ashley Taylor during the committee's June Quarterly Meeting in Astoria, Oregon.

Oregon Veterans Continue to Serve

ABOUT THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE OREGON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Advisory Committee

Established in 1945 alongside the founding of the ODVA, the Advisory Committee has served more than 80 years as a vital link between Oregon's veteran community and state leadership. Originally created to advise the newly formed agency in organizing and coordinating federal and state veterans' benefits following World War II, the Committee has continually evolved to reflect the changing needs and demographics of the state's veteran population.

As a nine-member committee, the Advisory Committee was formed by the Oregon Legislature to provide guidance and public accountability for the state's veterans' programs. Appointed by the Governor, members of the Committee bring a diverse range of lived military experience, geographic representation, and backgrounds. Each member serves in an advisory capacity to the ODVA Director and the Governor, helping provide advisement about programs and issues that are responsive to the real-world needs of Oregon's veterans, service members, and their families.

Over time, the Committee's scope has expanded to reflect the increasingly complex landscape of veterans' affairs. While early Committee efforts focused primarily on postwar reintegration and state home and loan benefits, today's Advisory Committee hears from veterans about a wide array of issue areas, including mental health and suicide prevention, aging veteran services, housing and

homelessness, rural veteran access, education, services for diverse communities, and difficulty with federal benefit access.

Today, the Advisory Committee continues to serve as a cornerstone of Oregon's commitment to honoring and supporting those who have served. Through its leadership, advocacy, and accountability, the committee ensures that ODVA remains grounded in the voices and needs of Oregon's more than 260,000 veterans—past, present, and future.

The Committee is composed of veterans appointed by the Governor who collectively represent diverse military service eras, geographic regions, professional backgrounds, and lived experiences. Members serve without compensation and dedicate their time to advocating for veterans through quarterly public meetings, community engagement, policy discussions, and direct collaboration with ODVA leadership.

Committee Purpose Under ORS 406

Established under Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 406.210 through 406.230, the Advisory Committee to the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs serves as the Governor-appointed advisory body to the Director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The Committee provides counsel and recommendations on matters affecting Oregon veterans, their dependents, and survivors, helping ensure their needs are recognized and addressed in a timely and effective manner. In fulfilling its statutory responsibilities, the Committee reviews emerging issues affecting Oregon's veteran community, evaluates the department's programs and operations, and provides recommendations to strengthen services, improve agency performance, and inform the development of veteran programs, policies, and benefits. Through this work, the Committee serves as an important bridge between Oregon's veterans, the Department, and state government, ensuring that veterans' voices continue to inform the future of veteran services across the state.

FY2026 Advisory Committee Membership

The Advisory Committee completed FY2026 with a full nine member and engaged membership representing veterans from across Oregon.

- Robert Van Voorhis – U.S. Army, Chair
- Christina Morales Wood – U.S. Army, Vice Chair
- Mary J. Mayer – U.S. Air Force, Secretary
- James Little – U.S. Navy
- Ashley Taylor – U.S. Army
- Shawn Flynn – U.S. Army
- Mario Smith – U.S. Army
- Tim Smart – U.S. Navy / Oregon Army National Guard
- Christopher Waine – U.S. Army

The Committee wishes to recognize Officers Robert Van Voorhis for his dedicated leadership and service as Chair during FY2026, as well as Christina Morales Wood, past Secretary and Vice Chair for her years of service to Oregon veterans prior to her resignation from the Committee. Their leadership helped strengthen the Committee's governance, expand member engagement, and position the Advisory Committee for continued success.



Those We Serve

OREGON VETERAN LANDSCAPE

each veteran's experience is unique, together they reflect a community that continues to evolve in age, demographics, and service-related needs.

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Advisory Committee recognize that understanding these changing demographics is essential to ensuring veterans receive the benefits, services, and support they have earned. As Oregon's veteran population changes, so too must the policies, partnerships, and programs designed to serve them.

Veteran Population

Vietnam-era veterans remain the state's largest veteran cohort, comprising 34.6 percent of the veteran population, followed by Post-9/11 veterans (25.5 percent), peacetime veterans (23 percent), Gulf War veterans (13.4 percent), Korean War veterans (3 percent), and World War II veterans (0.5 percent).

Oregon's veteran population is aging rapidly, with veterans aged 65 and older now comprising more than 51% of the state's veteran population — approximately 134,000 individuals as of 2024. This trend is projected to continue over the next decade, reshaping the needs and priorities of Oregon's veteran community. The number of World War II and Korean War veterans is declining sharply due to advanced age and service-related health conditions. In 2024, just 1,277 WWII veterans and 7,770 Korean War veterans remain in Oregon. Meanwhile, Vietnam War veterans are now predominantly over the age of 65, facing similar aging-related challenges including chronic health issues, mobility limitations, and increased need for supportive services.

ODVA continues to observe a significant increase in disability claims from Vietnam-era veterans, particularly those impacted by toxic exposures such as Agent Orange. The passage of the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022 has expanded access to benefits and healthcare for veterans exposed to toxic substances, providing long-overdue support to this aging cohort.

Gulf War era veterans, encompassing those who served during the first Gulf War and in Post-9/11 conflicts, now represent a growing and significant segment of Oregon's veteran population. In 2024, 25.5% of Oregon veterans served during the Gulf War era, while 23% are Post-9/11 veterans, reflecting the enduring impact of the nation's longest periods of sustained conflict.

These veterans have faced distinct and complex challenges, particularly due to the high frequency of multiple deployments to combat zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan. The intensity and duration of these conflicts have led to higher rates of service-connected disabilities among Gulf War and Post-9/11 veterans compared to prior generations. Many live with the lasting effects of physical injuries, traumatic brain injuries (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other behavioral health conditions that can complicate the transition to civilian life.

Thanks to remarkable advances in battlefield medicine and protective technologies, more service members are surviving their injuries than ever before—a truly wonderful achievement. This progress also means that more veterans are returning home with serious and complex medical conditions, and it is both our duty and our honor to provide the long term, highly specialized care they deserve. Additionally, many Gulf War and Post-9/11 veterans were exposed to environmental hazards, including burn pits, airborne toxins, and chemical agents, contributing to chronic health conditions that may not manifest until years after service.

Oregon's veteran population is growing increasingly diverse and is expected to continue this trend over the coming decades. As of 2024, approximately 10.1% of Oregon veterans are women, a figure projected to rise to 13.2% by 2034 as more women serve in military roles that were previously closed to them. Despite this growth, women veterans continue to face barriers in accessing VA healthcare and benefits, often due to lack of awareness, systemic gaps in services, and experiences of discrimination within veteran service systems.

Similarly, the racial and ethnic composition of Oregon's veteran population is changing. Currently, 15.4% of Oregon veterans identify as black or brown veterans, with the largest groups including Hispanic or Latino (4.9%), Black or African American (1.5%), Asian (1.2%), American Indian and Alaska Native (0.8%), and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (0.2%). Additionally, 6.7% of veterans identify as one or more other races. By 2034, black and brown veterans are projected to comprise 20.4% of Oregon's veteran population, reflecting the broader demographic shifts in the armed forces and the state.

Oregon's veteran community also includes an estimated 2.8% who are LGBTQIA+, a population that faces distinct challenges stemming from historic and systemic discrimination, as well as gaps in culturally competent care and support.

Federal Expenditures

Federal investment through earned veteran benefits continues to play a significant role in supporting Oregon veterans, their families, and local communities in Oregon.

During Federal Fiscal Year 2024, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provided more than \$4.15 billion in direct benefits and healthcare expenditures to Oregon veterans, including:

- \$2.05 billion in VA health care services;
- \$1.98 billion in disability compensation and pension benefits; and
- More than \$125 million in education, vocational rehabilitation, and employment benefits.

More than 96,900 Oregon veterans are enrolled in VA health care, while nearly 84,000 veterans receive disability compensation or pension payments, and more than 7,300 veterans utilized education and vocational rehabilitation benefits during FY2024. These investments not only improve the lives of veterans and their families but also contribute significantly to Oregon's economy by investing in healthcare services and institutions, educational institutions, and veteran income that is spent in local communities.



Advisory Committee FY26 Highlights

Fiscal Year 2026 represented an important milestone in the continued development of the Advisory Committee to the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs. Building upon the successful reestablishment of the Committee during the previous year, members focused on strengthening governance, enhancing member engagement, and expanding their capacity to advise the Director on issues affecting Oregon veterans and their families.

Top left to right: Secretary and Vietnam veteran Mary J. Mayer speaks at Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Event; Committee Member Mario Smith speaks with veteran during Townhall held in Astoria on June 3; Committee engagement during Townhall; Director Dr. Daniels Installs FY25 Officers during September meeting in Pendleton; Committee member Ashley Taylor during a women veterans engagement; Committee Member Jim Little during a meeting held at Blue Mountain Community College; Chair and Vietnam veteran Robert Van Voorhis speaking at ODVA's Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day event; Director Dr. Daniels, Mario Smith, and Ashley Taylor; Members Jim Little and Tim Smart; Director Dr. Nakeia Daniels, Christopher Waine and Mario Smith; Director Dr. Daniels and Ashley Taylor during a women veterans event; Secretary Mary J. Mayer holding the Governor's Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Proclamation following speaking at the event.

Throughout the year, the Committee welcomed new members, completed its full complement of gubernatorial appointments, strengthened internal governance practices, and expanded opportunities for members to engage directly with veterans, agency leadership, and community partners throughout Oregon.

Committee Membership

During FY2026, the Advisory Committee reached full membership, bringing on veterans representing multiple generations of military service, diverse professional backgrounds, geographic regions throughout Oregon, and a broad range of lived experiences.

Mr. Jim Little, retired Vietnam Navy Chief Warrant Officer 4, of Roseburg was the ninth and final member to be appointed by Gov. Kotek in March of 2025. Mr. Little is active on the Douglas County Veteran Advisory Committee and a long-time advocate of efforts to construct the third veterans' home in Roseburg.

The addition of new members strengthened the Committee's collective expertise and enhanced its ability to provide informed recommendations on issues affecting veterans across the state. The Committee's membership reflects Oregon's diverse veteran community, including representation from rural and urban communities, women veterans, diverse veterans, and veterans from eras of military service ranging from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Committee also experienced transitions in membership during the fiscal year. In March 2026, Christopher Waine resigned from the committee to better advocate for local veteran needs in his community and in June 2026, incoming Chair Christina Morales Wood resigned due to professional commitments that impeded on her ability to fully take on the chair and committee commitments. Both members were long tenured in their positions, serving in their second four-year terms, and represented Oregon veterans in quarterly meetings held across Oregon, fostering productive dialogue among fellow committee members, veterans and their families, community partners, and agency leadership.

Officer Elections

During the June 2026 quarterly meeting, members elected a new slate of officers to lead the Committee into Fiscal Year 2027, ensuring continuity in leadership and maintaining the Committee's commitment to effective governance and veteran advocacy.

FY 2027 Advisory Committee Officers

Mary J. Mayer, Chair
Vietnam Veteran, U.S. Air Force

Jim Little, Vice Chair
Vietnam Veteran, U.S. Navy

Shawn Flynn, Secretary
Post 9/11 Veteran, U.S. Army

Member Orientation

To ensure members were well prepared to fulfill their statutory responsibilities, the Advisory Committee partnered with ODVA to conduct a comprehensive full day orientation in June 2025.

The orientation provided members with an overview of ODVA's organizational structure, state veteran programs, responsibilities under committee bylaws, ethics requirements, and the Advisory Committee's role under Oregon law. Members met with agency leadership and subject matter experts to gain a deeper understanding of the services and programs available to Oregon veterans.

As part of the orientation, Committee members toured both the Oregon Veterans' Home in Lebanon and the Oregon Veterans' Home in The Dalles. These visits provided firsthand insight into the skilled nursing, memory care, and rehabilitative services available to Oregon's aging veterans while

highlighting the importance of long-term care planning and the need for continued investment in veteran housing and healthcare infrastructure. The orientation reestablished a foundation for effective governance by ensuring all members shared a common understanding of the agency's mission, priorities, and responsibilities.

Membership Handbook

The Committee also collaborated with ODVA to develop its first comprehensive Membership Handbook.

The handbook serves as a foundational resource for both current and future members, providing guidance on statutory responsibilities, bylaws, meeting procedures, ethics requirements, public meeting laws, officer responsibilities, committee operations, and member expectations. It also includes background information on ODVA programs, organizational structure, and key contacts to support members in carrying out their advisory responsibilities.

By documenting institutional knowledge and standardizing onboarding practices, the Membership Handbook strengthens continuity between appointments, promotes effective governance, and positions the Advisory Committee for continued success in the years ahead.

Creation of Subcommittees

One of the Advisory Committee's most significant accomplishments during FY2026 was the establishment of three standing subcommittees dedicated to issues identified as priorities for Oregon's veteran community. While the full Committee continues to advise the Director on matters affecting veterans statewide, the subcommittees provide members with the opportunity to examine complex issues in greater depth, engage subject matter experts and stakeholders, and develop informed recommendations for consideration by the full Committee.

Each subcommittee operates under an approved charter that defines its purpose, scope, and responsibilities. Throughout the year, members met outside of quarterly Committee meetings to gather information, identify emerging issues, and strengthen collaboration with ODVA staff and community partners.

Women Veterans Subcommittee – Christina Morales Wood, Subcommittee Chair

The Women Veterans Subcommittee was formally established to elevate the voices and experiences of Oregon's women veterans while identifying opportunities to improve outreach, access to earned benefits, and recognition of their military service. As one of the fastest-growing veteran populations in Oregon, women veterans often experience unique barriers to accessing benefits and services, making dedicated advocacy and engagement essential.

Guided by its charter, the subcommittee serves as a forum for identifying issues affecting women veterans, supporting statewide outreach efforts, reviewing available services, and providing recommendations to the Advisory Committee and the Director of ODVA.

In 2026, an initial and essential first step for the subcommittee was the development and distribution of a statewide Women Veterans Survey in June 2026. The survey was designed to better understand the needs and thoughts of Women Veterans in Oregon. The subcommittee gathered direct feedback from women veterans regarding their awareness of available benefits and services, barriers to accessing care, preferred methods of communication, and areas where additional support may be

needed. Survey results may help inform committee recommendations that enhance outreach strategies and policy recommendations.



The subcommittee also supported efforts to strengthen communication and engagement with women veterans by participating in Women Veterans Day activities, promoting opportunities for women veterans to connect with ODVA resources, and encouraging participation in Advisory Committee meetings and community events. Members continued to advocate for greater recognition of women veterans while emphasizing the importance of ensuring that women veterans see themselves reflected in Oregon's veteran community.

The work of the Women Veterans Subcommittee established an important foundation for ongoing collaboration with ODVA and community partners, ensuring that the voices and experiences of women veterans continue to inform the Committee's recommendations and future priorities.

Suicide Prevention Subcommittee– Ashley Taylor, Subcommittee Chair

The Suicide Prevention Subcommittee was established to support Oregon's ongoing efforts to prevent veteran suicide by examining behavioral health challenges, promoting awareness of available resources, and identifying opportunities to strengthen statewide prevention initiatives. Recognizing that suicide prevention requires a coordinated, community-based approach, the subcommittee serves as a forum for understanding emerging issues, engaging with subject matter experts, and developing recommendations that support veterans and their families.

Guided by its charter, the subcommittee focuses on increasing awareness, reducing stigma associated with seeking help, promoting safe firearm storage, and supporting collaboration among federal, state, Tribal, and community partners working to improve veteran behavioral health outcomes.

In 2026, the subcommittee received updates on statewide behavioral health initiatives, including the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families. The subcommittee also learned about and began promoting ODVA's *Beyond the Military Uniform* online resource promoting activities, community, mental health resources and crisis tools to support veterans wellness.

The subcommittee also supported ODVA's distribution of free firearm safety devices through veteran service organizations and community partners. Recognizing that secure firearm storage is an evidence-based suicide prevention strategy, members promoted the availability of gun locks as one practical tool that helps reduce access to lethal means during times of crisis while respecting responsible firearm ownership.

By strengthening its understanding of behavioral health challenges and collaborating with agency staff and community partners, the subcommittee laid the foundation for future recommendations

focused on improving veteran well-being, increasing awareness of available resources, and supporting statewide suicide prevention efforts.

Transportation Subcommittee – Robert VanVoorhis, Subcommittee Chair

The Transportation Subcommittee was established to examine one of the most persistent barriers facing aging, disabled and rural Oregon veterans—access to reliable transportation for healthcare and other essential care services. Because Oregon's veterans live in communities across a geographically diverse state, transportation challenges vary widely between urban, rural, and Tribal communities.

The subcommittee's charter directs members to identify transportation barriers, engage transportation providers and community partners, evaluate existing programs, and develop recommendations that improve access to earned benefits and services for veterans throughout Oregon.

In 2026, the subcommittee began evaluating transportation challenges affecting veterans across the state and heard presentations regarding existing transportation programs and grant opportunities available through the Oregon Department of Transportation and community providers.

Through these discussions, members recognized that transportation barriers extend well beyond simply finding a ride. Veterans often travel hundreds of miles to access VA Medical Centers, Community-Based Outpatient Clinics, Community Care appointments, Compensation and Pension examinations, and other essential services. Rural veterans may experience limited transportation options, extended travel times, and difficulties coordinating return transportation following medical appointments.

To illustrate the scope of these challenges, the subcommittee developed a transportation issue paper using U.S. Highway 26 as an example. Stretching approximately 470 miles across Oregon—from Seaside to Nyssa—the highway demonstrates how veterans living along a single transportation corridor may rely on multiple VA medical centers, community care providers, and local transportation systems. The example highlights the complexity of coordinating transportation across jurisdictions and reinforces the need for improved communication, coordination, and regional transportation solutions.

The Transportation Subcommittee will continue working with ODVA, the Oregon Department of Transportation, veteran service organizations, and local transportation providers to better understand statewide transportation needs and identify practical solutions that improve veterans' access to healthcare, earned benefits, and supportive services.

Veteran Services Grant Evaluations

ODVA's Veteran Services Grant Program invests state Lottery funding into community service providers that deliver direct services to veterans in local Oregon communities. By supporting innovative local projects and expanding services statewide, the program strengthens Oregon's network of veteran-serving organizations and helps ensure veterans can access assistance close to home.

The Advisory Committee continued to fulfill its important statutory role in supporting the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs Veteran Services Grant Program. Established under ORS 406.142,

the grant program provides competitive funding for organizations delivering direct services to veterans in areas such as behavioral health, housing stability, employment, education, transportation, outreach, and other critical community-based services. The statute also recognizes the Advisory Committee's role in advising the Department regarding the administration of the program and identifying priority areas for investment.

During the 2025-27 grant cycle, Advisory Committee Chair Robert Van Voorhis served as the Committee's representative on the grant evaluation panel. Working alongside representatives from veteran service organizations, community partners, and ODVA staff, he participated in the review and evaluation of competitive grant proposals submitted from organizations throughout Oregon. The evaluation process considered each proposal's ability to improve outcomes for veterans, demonstrate organizational capacity, establish measurable objectives, and address identified community needs.

Committee participation in the grant review process helps ensure that funding recommendations are informed not only by technical evaluation criteria, but also by the lived experiences and statewide perspective of Oregon veterans. By contributing directly to the evaluation process, the Advisory Committee supports transparent stewardship of public resources while helping direct investments toward programs that expand access to earned benefits and improve the lives of veterans and their families across Oregon.

Listening to Veterans Across Oregon

The Advisory Committee serves as a direct and formal connection between Oregon veterans and the agency. By participating in public events, engaging with veterans in their own communities, and hosting town halls throughout the state, Committee members ensure that the voices of Oregon veterans help inform agency priorities and future policy decisions.

Throughout FY2026, Advisory Committee members expanded their presence across Oregon by participating in statewide outreach events, public ceremonies, conferences, and community discussions. These engagements strengthened relationships with veterans, local organizations, Tribal governments, and community partners while providing valuable opportunities to hear directly from veterans about emerging needs and challenges.

In addition to quarterly business meetings, the Committee continued its longstanding tradition of hosting public Veteran Town Halls. Held immediately following each quarterly meeting, the town halls provide veterans, family members, and community partners an opportunity to address the Committee directly, share local concerns, identify emerging issues, and offer guidance to veteran services through referral to ODVA staff. By rotating the in-person meeting locations throughout Oregon and offering the meetings virtually to attend, the Committee continues its commitment to making participation accessible to veterans across the state while ensuring regional perspectives are represented in discussions with ODVA leadership.

FY26 quarterly meetings were held in:

- Pendleton - Sept 2025
- Salem – Dec 2025
- Virtual (statewide) – March 2026
- Astoria – June 2026

Committee members also represented Oregon veterans at numerous statewide events, including:

- **ODVA 80th Anniversary Celebration and Veteran Benefit Expo** – Committee members participated in ODVA's 80th Anniversary Celebration and the annual Veteran Benefit Expo, engaging directly with veterans and their families while promoting awareness of the Advisory Committee and encouraging participation in future public meetings. *June 2025*
- **Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day** – Committee Chair Robert Van Voorhis and Secretary Mary J. Mayer delivered remarks honoring the service and sacrifice of Vietnam veterans during Oregon's annual Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Ceremony. Several additional Committee members attended in support of Oregon's Vietnam veteran community. *March 2026*
- **Tribal Veteran Service Officer Conference** – Committee members attended ODVA's Tribal Veteran Service Officer Conference, strengthening relationships with Tribal governments and gaining greater understanding of the unique opportunities and challenges affecting Native American veterans throughout Oregon. *June 2026*
- **Women Veterans Engagement** – Members participated in Women veteran engagements such as Women Veterans Day, the Oregon Women Veterans Conference, and other women events throughout the year, supporting outreach efforts, listening to the experiences of women veterans, and helping increase awareness of programs and services available through ODVA.

Collectively, these engagements strengthened the Committee's visibility throughout Oregon while reinforcing its role as a trusted voice for veterans. By listening first and engaging directly with veterans where they live and receive services, Committee members gained valuable insight that continues to inform recommendations to the Director and supports ODVA's mission of improving every veteran's journey.



Agency Initiatives

BUILDING A STRONGER ODVA

Investment in Services that Support Veteran Services

Throughout FY2026, ODVA continued investing in the people, systems, technology, and strategic initiatives that strengthen the agency's ability to serve Oregon veterans today while looking ahead and preparing for the challenges of tomorrow.

ODVA leadership and staff continuously engage in meaningful engagement with the veteran community, partners and providers to ensure veterans are honored and there is no wrong door to access to benefits, resources and supports.

FY2026 marked the stabilization of ODVA's executive leadership team led by Dr. Daniels, providing the agency with an experienced and diverse leadership team and structure to guide strategic initiatives, oversee daily operations, and support continued organizational growth. The addition of key executive positions has strengthened agency operations, enhanced collaboration across divisions, and increased the agency's capacity to plan for the organizational modernization that is needed to respond to the evolving needs of Oregon veterans and their families.

Together, the leadership team has focused on building a stable culture of collaboration, accountability, and customer focused service while ensuring the agency remains responsive to veterans, employees, and community partners in FY26.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA)

In 2025, ODVA completed its 2025-2030 Agency Strategic Plan, reinforcing the agency's commitment to evolving with the needs of Oregon's veterans. The plan, developed by ODVA

leadership beginning in summer 2024, sets clear priorities and annual actions to strengthen accountability and impact.

A key feature of the updated plan is a stronger focus on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). In spring 2025, ODVA engaged a DEI consulting firm to help integrate equity strategies into agency programs and operations. The agency also launched its first DEIA Committee, which guides efforts to reduce barriers to services and foster an inclusive environment for both veterans and ODVA employees.

Through these efforts, ODVA is building a more responsive and equitable organization, ensuring that every Oregon veteran and their family is supported throughout their life journey. ODVA continued advancing its commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility through implementation of agency-wide DEIA initiatives designed to strengthen both workplace culture and service delivery.

Working with employees, leadership, and external partners, the agency launched a comprehensive assessment of organizational practices, gathered employee feedback through surveys and focus groups, and began developing long-term strategies to reduce barriers and improve access to services for historically underserved veteran populations.

These efforts recognize that Oregon's veteran community continues to grow more diverse and that ensuring equitable access to earned benefits requires ongoing evaluation, partnership, and continuous improvement.

Every Veteran Informed Performance (EVIP)

During FY2026, ODVA finalized planning of the Every Veteran Informed Performance (EVIP), a long-term strategic initiative designed to strengthen accountability, improve customer service, and ensure every veteran has equitable access to information about the benefits and services they have earned.

EVIP establishes a framework for measuring agency performance through meaningful data, outcome-based metrics, and continuous improvement. By identifying service gaps, evaluating program effectiveness, and using performance data to inform decision-making, EVIP will help ensure agency resources are focused where they can have the greatest impact. More importantly, the initiative reinforces a simple principle: every veteran should know about the benefits they have earned, have every opportunity to access them, and receive effective services delivered with great customer service.

Technology Modernization

FY2026 marked a significant milestone in ODVA's ongoing technology modernization efforts with the successful implementation of a new Home Loans Servicing System—the agency's first major business application replacement in more than 25 years.

The modernized system significantly improves the customer experience by providing borrowers with secure online access to account information, payment history, loan management tools, and self-service resources. At the same time, it streamlines internal operations through improved workflow automation, enhanced reporting capabilities, and more efficient servicing processes.

The successful completion of this project demonstrated ODVA's readiness to modernizing its technology infrastructure, improving operational efficiency, and delivering the level of customer

service Oregon veterans expect and deserve. It also establishes a strong foundation for future technology improvements that will continue enhancing veteran services across the agency.

Veteran Legislation

During the 2025 Legislative Session, several bills strengthened veteran services, improved public access to information, and preserved Oregon's military history for future generations.

- **House Bill 2341 – Expanding Outreach to Veterans:** House Bill 2341 authorizes the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs to receive email contact information in addition to mailing address, from the Oregon Department of Transportation for individuals who voluntarily identify as veterans when obtaining services through DMV and agree to receive information about earned veteran benefits.
- **House Bill 2344 – Honoring Oregon's World War II Legacy:** House Bill 2344 supports the continued preservation and interpretation of Oregon's World War II history by authorizing updates to the Oregon World War II Memorial and the development of educational resources that recognize the service and sacrifice of Oregonians during the war.
- **House Bill 2559 – Expanding Access to Earned Benefits:** House Bill 2559 allows state agencies to use a summary of benefits letter from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs when determining an applicant's eligibility for benefits or services that are offered by or through the state agency.

Advancing Oregon's Third State Veterans Home

The Roseburg Veterans' Home remains one of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs' highest strategic priorities and represents a significant investment in meeting the long-term care needs of Oregon's aging veteran population.

During FY2026, ODVA achieved several major milestones that moved the project closer to construction. The agency maintained its Priority 1 status in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) State Home Construction Grant Program, positioning Oregon to receive federal funding that will provide up to 65 percent of construction costs. To ensure federal funding eligibility, ODVA increased its state funding request from \$35 million to \$38.5 million, allowing the project to remain on the Priority 1 Funding list without requiring resubmission. ODVA is currently project number 88 of 89 on that list.

In the summer of 2026, the transfer of approximately 14 acres on the Roseburg VA Medical Center campus from the USDVA to the State of Oregon entered a federal review process. The proposed transfer was submitted to Congress for a required 90-day review period, a key milestone toward securing the project site.

Suicide Prevention and Behavioral Health

During FY2026, ODVA continued expanding and improving Beyond the Military Uniform, Oregon's first statewide veteran suicide awareness and prevention campaign and online resource. Designed to reduce stigma, encourage help-seeking, and connect veterans and their families with trusted behavioral health resources, the website serves as a centralized hub for federal, state, Tribal, and community-based services, wellness activities, volunteer opportunities, and crisis planning tools.

This year, ODVA completed a significant enhancement of the website, transforming it from a single-page resource into a more user-friendly platform with dedicated sections for Activities, Community, Mental Health Resources, and Crisis Resources. New content was also added to better serve women veterans, LGBTQ+ veterans, aging veterans, and family members and caregivers, making it easier for visitors to find resources that reflect their unique experiences and needs.

Since its launch, Beyond the Military Uniform has attracted more than 178,000 website visitors, generated 4.1 million media impressions, reached approximately 458,000 Oregonians, and directed more than 7,000 users to resources. More than 227 community resources have also been added to the site, strengthening its role as a statewide resource supporting veteran wellness, community connection, and suicide prevention.

Meeting Veterans Where They Are

Throughout FY2026, ODVA continued expanding its statewide presence through strategic outreach, community partnerships, targeted engagement, and advocacy designed to connect veterans with the benefits and services through advocacy and awareness.

During calendar year 2025, ODVA participated in 224 outreach engagements, connecting with an estimated 43,364 veterans, family members, and community partners throughout Oregon. These engagements included 80 tabling events, 57 speaking engagements, and 46 community events.

Outreach extended into nearly every region of Oregon, with 38 percent of engagements occurring in the Willamette Valley, 28 percent in the Portland metropolitan area, and the remainder reaching veterans throughout Southern Oregon, Eastern Oregon, the Oregon Coast, the Columbia Gorge, and through statewide virtual events. Whether participating in a local resource fair or a statewide conference, each engagement represented an opportunity to increase awareness of earned benefits, strengthen partnerships, and build trust with Oregon's veteran community.

Director Dr. Daniels and ODVA staff at the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Annual Tribal Veteran Summit.



Serve, Advocate, and Partner

FY 25 KEY PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In FY26, the agency made significant strides in its mission to serve, advocate for, and partner with Oregon's veteran community. This section highlights agency program outcomes and key accomplishments focused on expanding critical services, enhancing advocacy, and building strategic partnerships to address the evolving needs of veterans.

Aging Veteran Outreach: The Aging Veterans Outreach Coordinator plays a vital role in ensuring that Oregon's aging veterans—whether living independently, in care facilities, or in long-term care—receive access to the benefits and services they have earned. This position coordinates with partners such as long-term care facilities, Veterans Service Officers (VSOs), the Department of Human Services (DHS), and healthcare providers to educate and connect veterans to both state and federal benefits that can improve their quality of life.

Many aging veterans have never filed for benefits or had their disability ratings reviewed as new health conditions emerge. In FY 2026, the Aging Veteran Outreach Coordinator assisted 57 veterans or eligible dependents, resulting in more than \$248,000 in retroactive benefit awards.

To expand its reach, the program conducted 41 outreach engagements, connecting with more than 17,000 individuals across Oregon. These efforts included 3 housing-related events and continued participation in suicide prevention outreach, recognizing the critical mental health needs within this population.

Appeals Office: In FY 2026, the Appeals Team conducted 179 federal VA appeals hearings, along with 23 Higher-Level Review meetings and 86 predetermination hearings, continuing to ensure strong representation for Oregon veterans in their appeals efforts. These efforts contributed to more than \$79 million in retroactive payments awarded to veterans and dependents, a substantial increase from the previous year.

ODVA also represented 1,037 new veteran claimants under Powers of Attorney (POA), resulting in 13,951 new disability claims awarded—totaling nearly \$25 million in new compensation and pension payments to Oregon veterans and their families. The POA process authorizes ODVA’s state and county veterans service officers to represent veterans or survivors in filing and pursuing claims.

Additionally, under a Memorandum of Agreement with the USDVA, ODVA transitioned to fully digital document processing for claims and appeals casework. In FY 2026, ODVA’s Quality Control, Submittals, and Information Processing team uploaded 145,061 documents, supporting faster and more efficient service delivery.

Campus Veteran Coordinator: During Fiscal Year 2026, the Campus Veteran Coordinator (CVC) Program continued to strengthen Oregon’s veteran support ecosystem through expanded outreach, deeper community engagement, and increased collaboration with institutions across the state. The program remained focused on supporting military connected students while broadening its presence in rural, coastal, tribal, and underrepresented communities.

The CVC program hosted multiple virtual meetings for campus partners and held its Annual Campus Veteran Summit, which brought together 24 in person attendees and 7 virtual attendees, representing 13 Oregon schools. The summit featured a highly successful Student Leader Breakout Session with 9 student leaders from institutions across the state. The event demonstrated ongoing statewide engagement and continued to serve as a vital hub for coordination, professional development, and shared best practices.

This year saw significant increases in outreach. The CVC connected with or visited campuses on the far edges of Oregon, beyond the I 5 corridor and Willamette Valley—including the coastal community colleges, institutions in Southern and Eastern Oregon, schools along I 84, and satellite campuses such as OSU Cascades in Bend. These visits helped strengthen relationships with schools that historically had limited involvement in statewide veteran support programming.

The CVC program also expanded its network among private institutions, including new connections with Pacific University. Renewed efforts to support schools with minimal or dormant veteran services like at Columbia Gorge Community College have resulted in revived engagement and programming.

FY26 included deeper engagement with Oregon’s tribal communities, with the CVC participating in tribal veteran outreach events like the NARA Veteran Luncheon or the Tribal Veteran Advocate Conference aimed at strengthening trust and collaboration with tribal veteran organizations.

The CVC continued its strong support for underrepresented student veteran demographics. This included:

- Ongoing collaboration with the LGBTQ+ Veteran Village program, supporting five Pride events statewide in FY26.
- Participation in and support of the Women Veterans Conference and helping to transport and set up the IANI exhibit at schools.
- Supporting grant programming like the Veterans Educational Bridge grant engage with students in Trades, Apprenticeships and On-the-job training. This included tabling at expos and tradeshows, and presenting to trade union leadership.
- Continued, monthly presence at the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training.

Community involvement also expanded through new engagement with Veterans Homes, including speaking at Veterans Day observances and attending student social activities such as ice cream socials at the Dalles Veterans Home. The CVC further supported multiple graduation and campus veterans day events across the state, reinforcing visibility and recognition for student veterans' achievements.

The program also collaborated with ODVA leadership and campus partners to support special events such as Dr. Daniels' visit to the University of Oregon for Black History Month, showcasing the Lylle Reynolds-Parker Black Cultural Center and their programming.

Campus Resource Center Grants: Established in 2017 and made permanent by the 2019 Oregon Legislature, the Campus Veteran Resource Center (CVRC) Grant Program provides funding to expand and enhance Veteran Resource Centers at Oregon's public universities and community colleges. These grants help institutions strengthen their capacity to support student veterans as they transition from military service to college life, achieve their educational goals, and successfully transition into the workforce and their communities.

In the 2025-27 biennium, ODVA awarded a total of \$800,000 in grants to 19 public universities and community colleges across Oregon. The program was fully expended and supported services for 5,538 unique veterans statewide. Institutions collectively requested over \$1.5 million, with award amounts ranging from \$17,899 to 55,899 per institution.

<u>Campus Veteran Resource Center (CVRC) Grant Awardees</u>	<u>Award Amount</u>
Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC)	\$39,899
Central Oregon Community College (COCC)	\$48,899
Chemeketa Community College (Chemeketa CC)	\$38,899
Clackamas Community College (Clackamas CC)	\$17,899
Columbia Gorge Community College (CGCC)	\$40,899
Eastern Oregon University (EOU)	\$34,638
Klamath Community College (KCC)	\$54,269

Lane Community College (LCC)	\$47,899
Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC)	\$53,399
Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC)	\$33,899
Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT)	\$48,899
Oregon State University (OSU)	\$39,699
Portland Community College (PCC)	\$33,899
Portland State University (PSU)	\$46,898
Rogue Community College (RCC)	\$35,410
Southern Oregon University (SOU)	\$25,899

Charitable Checkoff Funds for Veteran Suicide Prevention & Awareness: Established in 2013, the Veteran Suicide Awareness and Prevention Charitable Checkoff Fund was created to raise awareness and prevent veteran suicide in Oregon. This fund allows Oregonians to contribute voluntarily when filing state income tax returns, with all proceeds dedicated to efforts that support suicide prevention efforts among veterans and their families.

ODVA makes these funds available through grants to counties, Tribes, and Oregon public universities and community colleges to support local and culturally tailored veteran suicide awareness and prevention efforts. ODVA awarded 16 such grants totaling \$75,500. Grants ranged from \$3,000 to \$5,000 per recipient, supporting activities such as mental health awareness events, outreach campaigns, connection to crisis services, service-dog veterinary services, free haircuts, luncheons, car shows, and mental health trainings to name a few.

In September 2024, the agency launched www.BeyondtheMilitaryUniform.com (BTMU), Oregon's first-ever statewide veteran suicide awareness and prevention campaign and website resource. The campaign was designed to increase awareness of suicide prevention, reduce stigma around seeking help, and connect veterans, service members, and their families with resources that support mental health, well-being, and community connection.

Recognizing that veterans are not a monolithic population, the effort was intentionally developed to ensure access for diverse, multi-generational, multicultural, and geographically dispersed veteran communities across Oregon. First a website was developed to centralize resources supporting mental health and veteran wellness. The primary resources included federal VA, state, and community based mental health services, community-based activities, volunteering opportunities for veterans, awareness of veteran meetups, veteran community therapy opportunities, and importantly, crisis resources including a crisis planning toolkit.

Campaign messaging emphasizes that seeking support is a sign of strength and encourages veterans and their families to build connections, access resources, and create plans for seeking help when needed.

ODVA contracted with a professional advertising firm to develop the site and implement a statewide media strategy to build awareness of the new resource. Outreach includes billboards, print advertising, digital advertising, programmatic media, radio messaging, social media advertising, direct mail, and search engine optimization. These efforts directed Oregonians to a dedicated website with an easy-to-remember address: BeyondTheMilitaryUniform.com.

Campaign investments were strategically weighted to ensure traditional media channels to reach Oregon's aging veteran population and rural communities. More than two-thirds of media spending was dedicated to outdoor advertising, print, radio, and direct mail, while digital advertising expanded reach and engagement among veterans and family members online. This blended approach ensured statewide visibility and helped reach veterans where they live, work, and connect with their communities.

ODVA partnered closely with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Oregon Health Authority, veteran service organizations, behavioral health experts, community-based organizations, and veterans themselves to inform campaign messaging and resource development. Campaign materials acknowledge that the effort is made possible through taxpayer contributions to the Veteran Suicide Awareness Charitable Checkoff Fund.

The website also allows community members and organizations to submit resources for consideration. Each submission is reviewed by ODVA staff before inclusion to ensure relevance, credibility, and alignment with the campaign's mission.

Following the successful launch of the campaign, this year ODVA just completed work to further enhance the website. The site was restructured to improve navigation and make it easier for visitors to locate resources that meet their individual needs. The site evolved from a single page site to a five page site, driving visitors to Activities, Community, Mental Health Resources, and Crisis Resources from the Homepage. New sections were added to support diverse veteran populations, including women veterans, LGBTQ+ veterans, aging veterans, and family members and caregivers.

Since its launch, BTMU has demonstrated significant statewide reach and engagement. The campaign website has received 178,000 visitors, including more than 7,000 actively engaged with the site's content, generating clicks to support programs and services, downloading the crisis-planning toolkit and wellness resource, and exploring veteran-specific assistance available through federal, state, and community partners.

The campaign's paid media efforts generated more than 4.1 million impressions, reaching approximately 458,000 individuals statewide, with more than 36,000 link clicks directing users to the website. Engagement was particularly strong among older veterans, with individuals age 65 and older accounting for more than 25,000 campaign-driven clicks. The campaign also fostered meaningful community participation, resulting in the addition of 227 community-submitted resource links from partner organizations and individuals across Oregon.

Conservatorship and Representative Payee Programs: In FY2026, ODVA’s Conservatorship and Representative Payee Programs served a total of 123 clients, including 74 conservatorship clients and 49 representative payee clients. These programs support veterans who are unable to manage their personal finances due to mental illness, cognitive impairment, physical disability, or substance use disorders. Through these services, ODVA helps ensure that clients have stable access to housing, food, clothing, and transportation for medical and mental health care—enhancing their overall quality of life.

ODVA managed more than \$23.6 million in client assets and 13 properties on behalf of veterans and their families. The agency filed claims on behalf of clients to secure additional benefits and maintained its fiduciary service fee at 7%, consistent with previous years.

Counties, Tribes and National Service Organizations Pass-through Funding: During the 2025-27 biennium, ODVA administered more than \$11.5 million in pass-through funding to counties, Tribes, and National Service Organizations to support and expand veteran services across Oregon. These funds help sustain local Veteran Service Offices (VSOs), ensuring veterans and their families have direct access to assistance with filing claims, pursuing appeals, and securing the state and federal benefits they have earned. Funding also supports outreach and engagement efforts designed to connect veterans with these critical resources.

A total of \$10.2 million is distributed to 36 counties throughout the biennium. As of June 30, 2026, just over \$5 million has been expended to support local veteran service operations. In addition, ODVA has provided more than \$186,000 of nearly \$600,000 allocated in funding to six of Oregon’s nine federally recognized Tribes, enhancing the availability of veteran services on the following Tribal lands:

<u>Tribal Veteran Service Offices</u>	<u>Amount</u>
The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde	\$37,308
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation	\$37,308
Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians	\$37,308
Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians	\$37,308
Coquille Indian Tribe	\$37,308

ODVA has provided \$351,660 of \$703,320 in pass-through funding to three National Service Organizations (NSOs)—the National Association for Black Veterans (NABVETS), American Legion, and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). These funds support the work of NSOs in representing veterans in their claims and appeals processes, while extending ODVA’s reach to underserved and diverse veteran populations.

Federal Highly Rural Transportation Grant: In the 2025-27 biennium, ODVA was once again awarded the \$500,000 Highly Rural Transportation Grant (HRTG) from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. This grant is administered in partnership with Oregon’s 10 highly rural counties:

Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Wallowa, and Wheeler. ODVA also retains a portion of the grant to support statewide coordination and oversight.

The HRTG program helps eliminate transportation barriers for veterans in highly rural communities, providing door-to-door, ADA-compliant transportation at no cost to veterans. This service includes assistance with boarding and disembarking and is critical for veterans who must travel significant distances to access VA medical centers, regional health services, and behavioral health care.

During this grant cycle, the program provided 1,057 trips to 137 unique veterans, covering 83,856 miles and delivering a total of 2,382 hours of transportation services. Since the program's inception in 2014, participating counties have cumulatively logged nearly 2.6 million miles transporting Oregon's highly rural veterans to necessary healthcare services.

Each participating county received \$45,000 with the exception of Sherman County, which received \$35,000, and ODVA receiving \$48,500 to administer the program. Counties collaborate closely with VA Medical Center Transportation Coordinators to ensure seamless scheduling and coordination, while also working with County Veteran Service Offices to promote the program and refer to eligible veterans.

Oregon Veteran Home Loans: Oregon voters created the Oregon Veteran Home Loan Program in 1945 to help veterans returning from World War II purchase homes. Since then, the program has provided more than \$10 billion in low-interest loans to more than 340,000 Oregon veterans. Oregon remains one of only three states that offers a state-based veteran home loan program, distinct from the federal VA Home Loan Guarantee.

In FY 2026, ODVA closed 115 new loans, funding \$51 million in home purchases, with an average loan amount of \$444,018. While new loan production was lower than the previous year, ODVA's loan servicing portfolio also declined slightly by 2%, reaching 1,556 active loans, but with a total portfolio increase of more than \$3.2 million - totaling \$413.4 million as of June 30, 2026. These changes reflect a continued increase in home values and a high interest rate environment. ODVA maintains a lower than conventional rate offering to veterans through the sale of federal Qualified Veteran Mortgage Bonds (QVMBs).

The program maintained strong performance in borrower payments, with a delinquency rate of 1.2%—representing only 18 loans in delinquency status—and two loan defaults in FY26.

Houseless Veterans: ODVA launched its Houseless Veterans Program in June 2021 with the hiring of the agency's first Houseless Veterans Coordinator. The coordinator works closely with federal, state, county partners, Veterans Service Officers (VSOs), and community-based houseless service providers to address the urgent and complex needs of Oregon's unhoused veteran population.

In FY 2026, the program handled 206 houseless veteran cases which lead to 9 temporary shelter referrals, 2 permanent housing referrals, 1 alternative type of housing solution referral, 9 medical and behavioral health care referrals, 85 referrals to assistance with food or other emergency needs, and supported 68 veterans in applying for ODVA's Financial Assistance Grant. Additionally, the program facilitated 15 referrals to claims assistance at Veteran Services Offices, helping connect veterans to benefits and services that can support long-term stability.

Outreach efforts with partners lead to reaching 74 veterans struggling with housing stability across the state. These engagements also strengthen ODVA's connections with housing providers, mental health professionals, and community organizations working to prevent and reduce veteran homelessness.

This program continues to be a critical advocate and resource for some of Oregon's most vulnerable veterans. Upon ODVA receiving data from Oregon DMV, this program reaches out to those veterans who have indicated they have no permanent address to offer services and assistance. In FY26, this program identified and contacted 206 veterans through this state partner data sharing effort.

Incarcerated Veterans: Established in 2016, the Incarcerated Veterans Program assists veterans transitioning into and out of Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC) custody. The program's coordinators verify the veteran status of individuals entering custody to assess benefit eligibility and provide targeted support. The core function of the program is to mitigate the negative impacts of incarceration on veterans and their families by ensuring timely notification to the USDVA to prevent overpayments, establishing manageable repayment plans when needed, and facilitating the transfer of withheld benefits to eligible family members in cases of financial hardship.

Ultimately, the program aims to help incarcerated veterans access benefits and resources that will support their reentry, reduce recidivism, and minimize the risk of homelessness upon release.

In FY 2026, ODVA's Incarcerated Veterans Coordinators contacted 730 incarcerated veterans individually and engaged with 1,010 veterans through group meetings held in correctional facilities across the state. These engagements provide critical education on benefits, eligibility, and available reentry resources.

The program also submitted 652 documents to the USDVA and filed 146 claims on behalf of incarcerated veterans to help preserve or establish their access to benefits upon release.

LGBTQ+ Veterans: ODVA continues to provide direct claims assistance, advocacy, and representation for Oregon's LGBTQ+ veterans and their families. During FY2026, the LGBTQ+ Veterans Coordinator assisted veterans with 43 military discharge upgrades and character of service waivers, including 10 cases involving Department of Defense record corrections related to past policies that discriminated against LGBTQ+ service members. These efforts help veterans correct military records affected by historical discriminatory policies, restoring access to earned federal and state veterans' benefits while ensuring their military service is properly recognized and honored.

The coordinator also provided expert assistance in filing 197 disability claims, managed 166 individual cases, helped 19 transgender veterans with military record name changes, and addressed 9 cases involving houseless LGBTQ+ veterans.

Outreach and education remain core to the program's impact. In FY 2026, this program participating in 70 outreach events and reaching 2,346 veterans statewide. The program also conducted 15 partner trainings to improve service provider awareness of the unique needs of

LGBTQ+ veterans. Events included participation in Pride celebrations, Breaking the Silence film screenings, and other community gatherings designed to connect veterans, families, and service partners to available resources.

Oregon Military Helpline Pass-through Funding: Between July 1, 2025 and March 31, 2026 the Oregon Military Helpline received 946 contacts. Of those contacts, 219 (23%) agreed to receive a referral, and 488 total resources were offered.

** 4th quarter data (April - June 2026) data is not available until July 31st.*

Oregon Veterans Emergency Financial Assistance Grants: The Oregon Veterans Emergency Financial Assistance Program (OVEFAP) provides critical financial support to veterans and their families facing emergencies such as temporary housing instability, past-due rent or mortgage payments, utility shut-offs, emergency medical or dental expenses, and emergency transportation needs. Applications are available online and through the county and Tribal Veteran Service Offices.

During the 2025-27 biennium, ODVA granted \$160,875 in financial assistance to 106 veterans and eligible family members experiencing a financial emergency. In total, the agency received 330 applications, with veterans collectively requesting over \$1.4 million in assistance. The average award amount was \$538, highlighting the program's role in providing meaningful relief even as demand exceeded available funding.

In addition to providing direct financial aid, ODVA connects OVEFAP applicants with a broader network of support, including County and Tribal Veteran Service Offices, Oregon's Community Action Agencies, National Service Organizations, and other state and local partners. This holistic approach ensures that veterans in crisis are not only receiving immediate financial support but are also linked to longer-term resources and services to help stabilize their circumstances.

Oregon Veterans' Homes: The Oregon Veterans' Homes provide state-certified skilled nursing and memory care for veterans, their spouses, and Gold Star parents. Oregon operates two veterans' homes: one in The Dalles and one in Lebanon. The program is self-sustaining and recognized for providing award-winning, high-quality care at a lower cost to veterans and their families.

In FY 2025, the combined average occupancy across both Homes was 81%, with The Dalles averaging 71% occupancy and Lebanon maintaining a stronger 90% occupancy rate. The average daily private pay rate was \$290.31, with The Dalles at \$253.58 and Lebanon at \$327.05.

Both Homes continue to be recognized for exceptional care, having received multiple Pinnacle Customer Experience Awards in FY 2024, including The Dalles earning awards in all 16 categories assessed and Lebanon in 14 of 16 categories. These accolades were complemented by additional industry and association recognition.

Oregon Rural Veterans Healthcare Transportation Grant: The purpose of the grants is to augment the federal Highly Rural Veteran Health Care Transportation Grant to provide free transportation to veterans in rural areas seeking healthcare (physical or mental) and related services at U.S. Department of Veterans Administration (VA) facilities, VA authorized health centers, and other healthcare facilities.

The goal of the RVHTG program is to overcome transit-based barriers between veterans living in rural areas and the healthcare services they have earned and expand access to transportation for veterans living in rural areas of Oregon that may not be covered by the federal VA's Highly Rural Transportation Grant. To leverage Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) Public Transportation Division's mobility expertise, ODVA entered into an Interagency Agreement with ODOT to develop and implement the RVHTG program.

This biennial grant awarded more than \$1.1 million to eight transportation providers in Oregon currently provide free rides for veterans to VA facilities, non-VA health/behavioral health appointments, pharmacies, and other health-related services in numerous rural and highly rural counties across Oregon.

<u>Grant Awardee</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Wheeler County Community Transportation	\$20,000
Malheur County	\$20,000
Jefferson County	\$250,000
Tillamook County Transportation District	\$350,000
Basin Transit Service District	\$55,664
The Klamath Tribes	\$65,954
Coos County Area Transportation District	\$150,000
Rogue Valley Transportation District	\$135,000
Prior biennium award extension	\$62,382

State Approving Agency (SAA): The State Approving Agency (SAA) ensures that educational and training programs in Oregon meet both state and federal quality standards required for veterans and eligible dependents using G.I. Bill® benefits. In this role, the SAA reviews and approves education and training facilities, conducts compliance visits, provides technical assistance, and performs comprehensive reviews of course catalogs. The SAA also serves as the key liaison between Oregon's veterans and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), ensuring a strong connection between veterans and their education benefits.

In FY 2026, the SAA completed 117 facility and program approvals, conducted 40 site visits, and aided on 312 technical issues related to program compliance and eligibility. The agency also engaged in 16 outreach activities to expand awareness of GI Bill® benefits among veterans, schools, and employers. Oregon's SAA maintained the highest possible VA evaluation rating, a distinction it has earned every year since assuming the SAA contract from the VA in September 2019.

As of FY26, there are 2,700 approved programs available to Oregon veterans and their families, providing a diverse array of educational and vocational training opportunities.

Training, Certification and Outreach (TCO): Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) are certified, trained professionals with expertise in federal Title 38 law, enabling them to represent veterans in filing disability and pension claims with the USDVA. ODVA's Training, Certification, and Outreach (TCO) team ensures that Oregon's VSOs are well-trained, certified, and accredited by the VA through a robust and comprehensive training program.

In FY 2026, TCO conducted 5 VSO training courses, certifying 17 state, county, and Tribal VSOs for VA accreditation. The team also trained 14 new VSO and administrative staff ensuring a state network of trained professionals supporting Oregon veterans. TCO continued to provide flexible training options, including regional in-person sessions and virtual training courses, to ensure accessibility for all service officers across the state.

In addition to training, the TCO team provided expert guidance on 468 veteran and survivor cases in FY 2026. The team also expanded its outreach efforts, participating in 39 statewide events, including Yellow Ribbon Events for Oregon National Guard and Air National Guard members activated under Title 10 orders. These engagements ensure that Guard members, many of whom are newly eligible for federal veteran benefits, receive timely information and assistance with claims that may start, pause, or resume in connection with their deployments.

Tribal Veterans Coordinator: ODVA supports Oregon's nine federally recognized Tribes by providing guidance on federal and state veterans' benefits, programs, and services available to Tribal veterans and their families. The program also collaborates with the USDVA Office of General Counsel to support the accreditation of Tribal Veteran Representatives, enhancing the capacity of Tribes to advocate on behalf of their veterans.

In FY 26, the coordinator has actively engaged with each of Oregon's Tribes to strengthen partnerships and expand support for Tribal veterans. The program conducted 17 outreach engagements, delivered 2 partner trainings, and connected with 506 veterans across Tribal communities in Oregon.

Veteran Services Grants: ODVA's Veteran Services Grant Program provides state funding to nonprofits, Tribal governments, city and county governments, quasi-government agencies, and transportation districts to deliver outreach and direct services to veterans and their families. These grants enable partner organizations to expand services in critical areas such as housing stability and homelessness prevention, transportation, legal services, education and training, employment, physical and mental health, and other essential supports.

In the 2025-27 biennium, ODVA awarded a total of \$972,653 in grant funding, expending \$300,899 as of June 30, 2026. The program supported services for 2,579 unique veterans, with grant awards ranging from \$10,500 to \$145,000. 16 organizations were awarded grants, with total requests reaching \$3.6 million.

<u>Veteran Service Grant Awardee</u>	<u>Amount</u>
American Military Encouragement Network (AMEN)	\$128,000
Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon	\$85,760
Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians	\$42,276
Disability, Aging and Veteran Services (Washington County)	\$44,977
Fort Kennedy	\$51,400
Housing Our Veterans	\$145,000
Lake County Senior Citizens Association	\$47,128
Linn County Veterans Services	\$35,000
Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments	\$28,000
Paws Assisting Veterans	\$50,000
Reveille and Retreat Project	\$10,500
Solid Ground Equine Assisted Activities and Therapy Center	\$80,000
St. Andrew Legal Clinic	\$90,000
VetREST	\$33,400
Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness	\$110,972
Wheeler County Community Transportation	\$41,000

Veteran Volunteer Program: The Veteran Volunteer Program, established in 2018, was created to train and coordinate volunteer activity around the state to identify aging veterans who are not yet receiving veteran benefits and connect them with county veterans service officers to learn about potential state and federal earned benefits. Once a veteran has been referred to a local veteran services office, volunteers provide follow up to ensure that they have access to any services or benefits needed. In addition to educating veterans about their earned benefits, volunteers provide vital information about other state resources such as food stamps, Medicaid, and housing programs for which veterans may qualify. Volunteers help to guide veterans to the offices where they can receive assistance.

In FY 2026, the program expanded by 36% with 136 active volunteers who contributed 2,695 volunteer hours—more than doubling the hours from the prior year. The program also trained 13 new volunteers and conducted 108 outreach engagements across 23 counties, reaching 20,510 veterans.

Veterans' Educational Bridge Grant Program: Established by the Oregon Legislature in 2019, the Veterans' Educational Bridge Grant Program (VEBG) provides financial assistance to veterans who face delays in completing their education due to the timing of course offerings.

With the passage of House Bill 2271 in 2024, the program was permanently expanded to include all Oregon resident veterans, as defined in ORS 408.225, regardless of eligibility for the federal GI Bill®. The program also now supports veterans enrolled in:

- Career schools licensed by the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC)
- Registered apprenticeships through the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI)
- On-the-Job Training (OJT) programs offered by public employers

Additionally, veterans may now use VEBG funds to pay off student account debt that may prevent them from registering for future terms.

In the 2026-27 biennium to date, ODVA has funded 35 veterans through the Veterans' Educational Bridge Grant Program, awarding a total of \$100,868, with \$114,268 requested.

Women Veterans Coordinator: The Women Veterans Coordinator position was established in 2016 to improve outcomes for Oregon women veterans in five specific areas: outreach, advocacy, data, research, and policy. Focused outreach and advocacy are achieved via listening sessions and ongoing outreach to women veterans around Oregon, to increase awareness of women veterans and their unique experiences, issues, and needs as well as to assist in claims filing, especially related to difficult or challenging claims.

In FY 26, the program engaged with women veterans, conducting 4 partner trainings and provided case support for 16 women veterans. The program assisted 4 women veterans with emergency financial assistance grants, conducted 10 outreach engagements, including 4 "I Am Not Invisible" (IANI) campaign showings.

Key program initiatives include the Women Veterans Conference which was held in Sept 2025 in Bend, and the "I Am Not Invisible" campaign and exhibit. The biennial Women Veterans Conference, last held in FY 2024 at the Salem Convention Center, welcomed more than 200 Oregon women veterans, offering direct access to veteran benefits, resources, and nearly 100 state and federal partners. Casework was provided onsite, and nearly 50 additional women veterans reached out post-event for assistance with benefits and services.

The "I Am Not Invisible" campaign, launched in 2017, features a photo exhibit of 22 Oregon women veterans designed to raise awareness of the contributions and challenges of women veterans. The exhibit has continued to travel throughout Oregon and nationally, even exhibiting at the U.S. Capitol in 2017, and was recognized with the USDVA Pillars of Excellence Award in 2021. In FY 2025, the campaign completed 15 shows across the state, maintaining its impact and visibility.



Our Commitment

REFLECTING ON A YEAR OF SERVICE

leadership, the Committee has witnessed firsthand the agency's efforts to strengthen its foundation, expand outreach, and address the evolving needs of our state's diverse veteran population after intensive growth and change.

The accomplishments highlighted throughout this report represent more than programs completed or initiatives launched. They reflect thousands of individual interactions with veterans and their families—claims filed, benefits secured, partnerships strengthened, communities engaged, and barriers removed. They represent an agency and an Advisory Committee committed to listening first, working collaboratively, and continuously improving how Oregon serves those who served our nation.

On behalf of the Advisory Committee, we are proud to reflect on a year of significant growth, renewed momentum, and deepened commitment by ODVA in service to Oregon veterans and their families. As the advisory body tasked with ensuring the voices of veterans are heard at the highest levels of state



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