



OREGON DEPARTMENT
of VETERANS' AFFAIRS

REPORT TO THE

VETERAN

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

JUNE 2025



REPORT TO THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

For the regularly scheduled quarterly virtual meeting on June 11, 2025.

This report can be downloaded at: www.oregon.gov/odva/Connect/Pages/Advisory-Committee.aspx

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE INFORMATION

Since the Advisory Committee was established in 1945, it has held a distinct and fundamental role in advising the Director and staff of ODVA. Advisory Committee members are military veterans appointed by the Governor, act as advocates for veteran issues, and represent veteran concerns across Oregon. The Advisory Committee is fortunate to have volunteer members from every generation of veterans and communities across this state who bring diverse talents and experiences. As an Advisory Committee, they are informed by the broader veterans' community that they serve. As such, all Oregon veterans, their families, and our partners are invited to attend and participate in the quarterly meetings held across the state.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS *See member bios [here](#)*

Robert “Bob” Van Voorhis, Vice Chair, USA.....	John Day
Christina Wood, Secretary, USAF.....	Portland
Christopher Waine, USA.....	Hermiston
Mary Mayer, USAF.....	Portland
Ashley Taylor, USA.....	Scappoose
Shawn Flynn, USA.....	Portland
Mario Smith, USA	Portland
Tim Smart, USN	Gresham
James Little, USN	Roseburg

COMMITTEE INFO AND CONTACT ONLINE

Learn more about the committee, meetings, or learn how to apply to be appointed by the Governor to serve as a member of the Veterans Advisory Committee.

Webpage: www.oregon.gov/odva/Connect/Pages/Advisory-Committee.aspx

Email: odva_vaac@odva.oregon.gov



OREGON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS LEADERSHIP

Dr. Nakeia Daniels, USA	Director
Jamal Fox.....	Deputy Director
Rex Emery.....	Chief Operating Officer
Esmeralda Boies.....	Executive Assistant to the Director
Jay DeFillipo, USA.....	Legislative Director
Nicole Hoeft.....	Strategic Communications Director
Nicole Dolan.....	Chief Financial Officer
David Kampff, USAF.....	Chief Information Officer
Jerrika Self.....	Human Resources Administrator
Kelly Breshears.....	Aging Veteran Services Division Director
Sheronne Blasi, USN.....	Strategic Partnerships Director
Joseph Glover, USN.....	Appeals & Special Advocacy Director

CONTACT ODVA ONLINE

Learn more about agency programs, access a staff directory, or learn about federal and state veteran benefits using the links below:

- Website:** www.oregon.gov/odva
Blog: www.oregondva.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/odvavet
Subscribe: <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/ORDVA/subscriber/new>
Order Veteran Benefit Magazines for your organization or self:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VeteransBenefitMagazine>



ADVISORY COMMITTEE QUARTERLY MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, June 11, 2025 | 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM | Held In-person
Edward C. Allworth Oregon Veterans' Home | 600 N 5th St, Lebanon, OR 97355

- I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**
 - a. Pledge of Allegiance
- II. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**
 - a. Recognition and Welcome of New Members
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - a. Approval of the [March 2025 VAC Quarterly Meeting Minutes](#)
- IV. ODVA DIRECTOR'S REPORT**
- V. GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADVISOR** - Doug Grafe, Wildfire and Military Advisor Office of Governor
- VI. ODVA PROGRAM REPORTS**
 - a. Aging Veteran Services – Kelly Breshears, Division Director
 - b. Appeals and Special Advocacy – Joe Glover, Division Director
 - c. Strategic Partnerships – Sheronne Blasi, Division Director
- VII. NEW BUSINESS**
 - a. Election Of Officers
- VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS**
 - a. Next Advisory Committee Quarterly Meeting
Date TBD: September 2025 | Time: 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM
Location: In-person, Oregon Veterans' Home - The Dalles
 - b. **BUSINESS MEETING ADJOURNED**

VETERAN TOWN HALL

Following every quarterly business meeting, the VAC holds a Town Hall inviting the public to ask questions or share information with the committee and Director. This time is set aside for individuals to bring up broader veteran community issues. Community members are also invited to submit written public comments to the committee by emailing odva_vaac@odva.oregon.gov.

VETERAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER BIOS

Robert VanVoorhis, Vice Chair	Robert volunteered in 1966 for the US Army and proudly served with the 1/3rd Infantry Regiment (Old Guard) at Arlington National Cemetery and the 2/39th Infantry Regiment with the 9th ID in Vietnam. After college, he worked in software development and finance and served as a reserve deputy in King County. He is a life member of the VFW, American Legion, DAV, MOPH, and National Infantry Association. He served on the board of the SE District Oregon St. Elks and drives for John Day DAV/VA van transport.
Christina Wood, Secretary	Christina enlisted in the Air Force in 1998 as a Serbian Croatian Cryptologic Linguist, ultimately serving a decade in the military intelligence community before separating to follow her husband's career overseas. While living at USAG Yongsan, Korea and USAG Wiesbaden, Germany she dedicated herself to the local nonprofit organizations supporting military families with morale, welfare, and scholarship support. Retiring to Oregon in 2015 she established a second career in nonprofit work. She is an active community volunteer focusing on public education and veterans' advocacy issues. Christina, her husband, and their four incredibly adaptable "Army brats" call Portland home.
Christopher Waine	Chris served with the 1-25th Infantry Support Battalion out of Ft. Lewis WA where he worked as a wrecker operator providing field level repair and vehicle recovery for Deuce Four infantry's Critical Response Team. He is semiretired and operates a business in Eastern Oregon. Chris is a lifetime member of Disabled Veterans of America and has over 15 years of personal experience navigating Veteran Benefits and Health Administrations.
Mary Mayer	Mary is a Vietnam era woman veteran and native of Portland, retired from the United States Air Force in 2002. Mary is involved with MOAA Portland Chapter, United Veteran Groups of Oregon (UVGO), Air and Space Forces Association and NCMA. She also has a history of serving veterans with her positions on numerous veteran committees and boards, in addition to other community involvement.
Ashley Taylor	Ashley is a Post 9/11 Army veteran from Columbia County, currently working on the Suicide Prevention Team at the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Ashley is also a veteran spouse and advocate of veteran's behavioral health.

Shawn Flynn	Shawn served in the Army as an Airborne Ranger in the medical field. Residing in Multnomah County, he is the Chairman for Veterans Affairs Portland NAACP and NABVETS, specifically partnered to enhance VSO functions. He also works with black businesses to help them grow; financing, mentoring, connecting and recruiting.
Mario Smith	Mario Smith is from Multnomah County and is a dedicated advocate for veterans. Smith served in the U.S. Army, including a deployment in Afghanistan and is actively involved in veteran-focused organizations, including the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Veterans Service Organization (VSO), the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and the National Association for Black Veterans (NABVETS), where he contributes his lived military experience and voice to supporting and advancing veteran causes.
Tim Smart	Tim Smart is a Native American veteran from Multnomah County with a distinguished record of military service. Serving first in the U.S. Navy and later in the Army National Guard from 1984 to 2009, Smart's career spans multiple wartime and peacetime periods, where he dedicated himself to protecting and supporting his country. His broad service experience provides him with valuable insight and commitment to the well-being of veterans.
James Little	James Little, of Roseburg, enlisted in the Navy at 17, serving 30 years as an enlisted man and commissioned officer, retiring as a Chief Warrant Officer W-4. His career included key assignments in major historical events and leadership roles, including overseeing officer assignments and strategic deployments. He received 29 medals and ribbons for his service. After retiring, he worked as a Department of Defense Exercise Engineer training military air traffic controllers. A 100% service-connected disabled veteran, he is the author of <i>Brotherhood of Doom: Memoirs of a Navy Nuclear Weaponsman</i> and <i>Sweet & Sour Uncle</i> . He has held leadership roles in multiple veterans' organizations and has been recognized for his humanitarian contributions, including the Four Chaplains Legion of Honor and Bronze Medallion awards.

REPORT TO THE VETERAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE FROM DIRECTOR DR. NAKEIA DANIELS


I'm pleased to introduce a new addition to ODVA's executive leadership team: Jerrika Self, our new Human Resources Administrator. Jerrika joined us in April from the Department of Environmental Quality and brings extensive experience from both public and private sector HR leadership. She holds an MBA in Human Resources Management from Capella University, and her Southern and Haitian heritage enriches her leadership with warmth, authenticity, and creativity. We are excited to have her on board and look forward to the contributions she will bring to the agency's continued growth and culture.

The Oregon Legislature's 2025 Regular Session remains underway, with numerous veteran-focused bills continuing to progress through the legislative process. Many of these proposals show strong promise for final passage, reinforcing the state's ongoing commitment to improving the lives of those who have served. The Legislature is expected to adjourn by June 30 (Sine Die), and I encourage you to review the accompanying Legislative Report for additional insight into ODVA's policy priorities and activity during this session.

Earlier this month, we welcomed U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Doug Collins to Oregon. I had the privilege of attending a roundtable discussion at the Eugene Healthcare Center along with VAMC Director Patrick Hull, where we addressed the critical needs of Oregon's veterans — especially in the areas of rural access, behavioral health, transportation, and federal-state coordination. It was a powerful reminder of how vital intergovernmental and community partnerships remain in our work.

This year also marks an extraordinary milestone: the 80th anniversary of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs. Since 1945, ODVA has stood as a steadfast advocate for veterans and their families, evolving to meet the changing needs of each new generation. Importantly, this year also represents the 80th anniversary of the Veterans Advisory Committee, which was established alongside ODVA to ensure veterans' voices remained at the forefront of state policy and oversight. For eight decades, this committee has served as a trusted and enduring partner — a legacy of advocacy, leadership, and public service that each of you carries forward with distinction.

80th Anniversary Celebration and Veteran Benefit Expo



The poster features the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs logo on the left, a large American flag graphic, and the text "VETERAN BENEFIT EXPO". The main text reads "June 16 Salem Armory Auditorium 11:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m." and "All Your State, Federal and Local Veteran Benefits Under One Roof!". A red banner on the right says "Come Early to attend ODVA's 80th Anniversary Celebration @ 10 a.m.". The website "www.expo.oregondva.com" is at the bottom. Logos for the Oregon Lottery and the Oregon State Seal are in the bottom right corner.

June 16
Salem Armory Auditorium
11:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

All Your State, Federal and Local Veteran Benefits Under One Roof!

www.expo.oregondva.com

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY  **OREGON LOTTERY** 

I'm proud to share that the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs will celebrate a major milestone next month — our 80th Anniversary Celebration and Veteran Benefit Expo, taking place on Sunday, June 16, at the Salem Armory.

This event marks eight decades of ODVA’s commitment to serving Oregon’s veterans and their families. Since our founding in 1945, in the immediate aftermath of World War II, ODVA has grown and evolved to meet the changing needs of every generation of veterans — from the Greatest Generation to our most recent post-9/11 service members.

The 80th Anniversary Expo will bring together a wide array of state, federal, nonprofit, and community partners — all under one roof — to connect veterans directly with the services, benefits, and resources they have earned. The event will include a formal anniversary ceremony at 10 a.m., followed by a benefit expo open to the public throughout the day.

I encourage each of you to share this event with your networks and communities. This is a chance to not only honor the legacy of service across generations, but to strengthen the continuum of support that ensures every Oregon veteran can thrive.

ODVA Signs Agreement with Coquille Indian Tribe to Assist Tribal Veterans



Pictured: Tribal Council Vice Chair Jen Procter Andrews and Dr. Nakeia Daniels, surrounded by other Tribal leaders, veterans, and community members, signed the Coquille Indian Tribe’s first MOU with ODVA.

In May, I had the honor of joining the Coquille Indian Tribe on their sovereign land in North Bend to formally sign a Memorandum of Understanding that will lay the foundation for a stronger partnership and deeper support for Tribal veterans and their families.

This agreement is more than a formality—it is a symbol of trust and shared commitment. Together with Tribal Council Vice Chair Jen Procter Andrews, and surrounded by Tribal leaders, veterans, and community members, we signed the Coquille Indian Tribe’s first MOU with ODVA. This historic step will lead to the establishment of their first Tribal Veterans Service Officer (TVSO), a position jointly funded by the Tribe and ODVA. That TVSO will serve as a culturally competent, trusted advocate—helping Tribal veterans navigate the federal VA system and access the benefits they’ve earned, while also honoring their unique identities and lived experiences as members of a sovereign nation.

The ceremony itself was powerful—rooted in the traditions of the Coquille Indian Tribe and grounded in mutual respect. It reminded me why this work matters. Native Americans serve in the U.S. military at the highest rate per capita of any ethnic group, and they’ve done so since before this country was even founded. We have a responsibility—not just as a state agency, but as stewards of Oregon’s commitment to justice and equity—to ensure that these veterans are seen, heard, and supported.

This agreement marks ODVA's fifth MOU with Oregon's nine federally recognized Tribes. You can see the MOU signing event here: <https://www.facebook.com/odvavet/videos/645091501858628>

Statewide Memorial Day Event



***Pictured:** Clips from the 2025 Statewide Memorial Day Celebration.*



On May 26, I had the solemn honor of leading the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs' annual Memorial Day Ceremony at the Oregon World War II Memorial on the Capitol grounds. With more than 250 people gathered beneath clear skies, we stood together to remember and reflect on the lives of Oregon's fallen heroes — those who gave everything in defense of our nation.

This year's ceremony held particular meaning, as it marked the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II and the founding of our agency. In my remarks, I spoke about the enduring legacy of service and sacrifice — from the Civil War to Afghanistan — and the profound responsibility we carry to uphold the promises made to those who served and to their families.

We also recognized those whose fate remains unknown — the more than 81,000 service members still missing in action, including hundreds from Oregon. I shared stories of three Oregonians whose service and sacrifice exemplify the courage and conviction of generations past. Each story was a powerful reminder that the cost of war is measured not only in lives lost, but in the generations who carry that absence forward.

One of the most meaningful moments for me was welcoming James Little, our newest member of the Veterans Advisory Committee, as a guest speaker. His reflections as a 30-year Navy veteran were deeply moving and added a powerful voice to the program.

Memorial Day is not just a tradition. It is a sacred call to remembrance. I am grateful to all who joined us in honoring Oregon's war dead — not only with ceremony, but with resolve. As I shared with those in attendance, we are the stewards of their legacy. And it is our duty to remember them not just with words, but with action.

You can watch the event here: <https://www.facebook.com/odvavet/videos/3157116094488033>

2025 Esprit de Corps Banquet



Pictured: Clips from the Esprit De Corps event supporting Courtney Place, a new veteran affordable housing complex named after Senator Peter Courtney, a strong supporter of Oregon Veterans..

I had the incredible honor of delivering the keynote address at the 2025 Esprit de Corps Banquet, hosted by Courtney Place Veterans Housing in partnership with the YMCA of Marion and Polk Counties. Held at the historic Reed Opera House in Salem, this inspiring event brought together veterans, partners, and community leaders to celebrate the impact of collaboration in service to Oregon veterans.

As presenting sponsor, the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs was proud to help shine a spotlight on the remarkable work Courtney Place has done over the past year—providing safe, stable housing to 34 veterans and delivering essential wraparound services. From medical transportation and peer mentorship to job placement and food assistance, the team at Courtney Place is making a tangible, lasting difference in the lives of those who served.

I spoke about our shared commitment to ending veteran homelessness, and how models like Courtney Place remind us that no one agency or organization can do this work alone. It takes true esprit de corps—a spirit of unity, trust, and service—to meet the complex needs of our veteran community.

I left the evening deeply moved by the stories of resilience and hope shared by the veterans who have found support and stability at Courtney Place. Their voices reinforce why this work matters and why we must continue investing in programs that uplift veterans and build strong, connected communities.

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day

ODVA held a Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day ceremony at the State Library of Oregon with dozens of Vietnam veterans attending from across the state. This annual observance holds deep meaning—not only as a national day of recognition signed into law eight years ago, but as a long-overdue welcome for a generation of veterans who returned home to anything but gratitude.



Pictured: Clips from the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day event held at the State Capitol Library.

March 29 also marked 51 years since President Nixon first proclaimed a Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day in 1974. And this year, it was particularly meaningful as we commemorated the one-year anniversary of the groundbreaking for Phase 1 of Oregon’s Vietnam War Memorial on the Capitol grounds—now completed and standing as a lasting, dignified tribute to those who served during that era.

Heroes of World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War Take Honor Flight

Earlier this month, I had the distinct honor of serving as the keynote speaker at the send-off banquet for this spring’s Honor Flight. These veterans—heroes of World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War—were preparing to embark on a once-in-a-lifetime journey to Washington, D.C., where they would visit the national memorials built in their honor.

Accompanied by their Guardians, these veterans were visibly moved by the recognition and care shown to them by the Honor Flight Northwest Oregon team. The room was filled with gratitude, pride, and reflection. I was humbled to share words of appreciation and to personally thank each veteran for their service and sacrifice.

Pictured: Clips from this springs Honor Flight.



Honor Flight is more than a trip; it's an act of healing and remembrance. I want to extend my sincere thanks to Honor Flight Northwest Oregon and the dedicated volunteers and donors who make this experience possible. Your commitment to honoring our veterans is a powerful reminder of the impact we can make when we come together to lift those who served.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Jay DeFillipo, Legislative Director

With just over a month left to go the 83rd Oregon Legislature is wrapping up a long session and finalizing policy bills while working on the long list of budgetary bills that await final decision. With just over 3000 bills introduced this session, it has been a steadfast pace in the halls of the capital. This session seems to be laser focused on addressing Oregonians' shared priorities: schools, homelessness, housing costs, health care, and the safety of every community. News this past week that the Quarterly Revenue Report had alarming news of a projected decrease in revenues has put a dull light on many of the budget requests awaiting review.

The Veteran Committees diligently worked through over 200 bills that had direct impacts to Veterans. Many of the bills focused on tax relief and economic benefits for veterans. There were also a series of bills to address homelessness, suicide prevention and educational benefits for disabled veterans. Another bill, still alive in the Senate addresses predatory companies that prey on disabled veterans for portions of their disability claims. The "claim shark" bill provides protections for veterans that fall victim to these bad actors. Several other bills still in hopper bring additional resources to ODVA through grant increases and position authorizations.

ODVA was also able to present through the Governors office three bills that have made it through the legislative process. The first, HB 2341 is a bill to require other specific agencies to provide ODVA email addresses of veterans that apply for benefits. Currently ODVA only gets names and physical addresses. The second bill, HB 2344 is a much needed upgrade of the WW2 memorial on the Capitol Grounds. The bill updates our authority to add names and reestablish an informational tool for the memorial. The final ODVA proposed bill is HB 2559 which allows for the VA – "Statement of Benefits" form to be used to verify someone's eligibility as a veteran. This long overdue bill will make it easier for veterans to access services while also allowing those with VA character of Service upgrades to also receive benefits they have earned. The Governor has already signed HB 2341, and we are awaiting her signature for the last two.

These bills can be tracked and the progress followed by signing up for the ODVA Legislative Digest, a comprehensive list of bills that I track for the Agency. The sign up for this is [Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs : Legislation : Connect With ODVA : State of Oregon](#). As we wind down session, I will be removing bills as they fail to move forward and also show bills that have made the final hurdle. At the end of session I will also publish a year end report that will have detailed information of the bills that passed that have an impact on our Veteran community.

Wearing my other legislative hat as a Rules coordinator, I am happy to report that we continue with the rules making process for the ODVA Veterans Home Loan Refinancing Program. We have completed a rules advisory committee and are now about to schedule a public hearing in mid-June. The final rules will be published sometime in July with the first offer of a refinance product by the end of summer or early

fall. This is exciting news as ODVA will be able to offer our Veterans an option to refinance existing Home Loans.

That wraps up the Legislative update. I encourage all our veterans to participate in the legislative process and ensure your voices are heard. The Oregon Legislative Information system at [Oregon State Legislature](#) provides easy to understand information on the legislature and information on how to testify on bills. It is an honor to be able to serve the Veterans of our great state and I look forward to the months ahead as I continue to work on helping our legislature pass legislation that helps our Veterans.



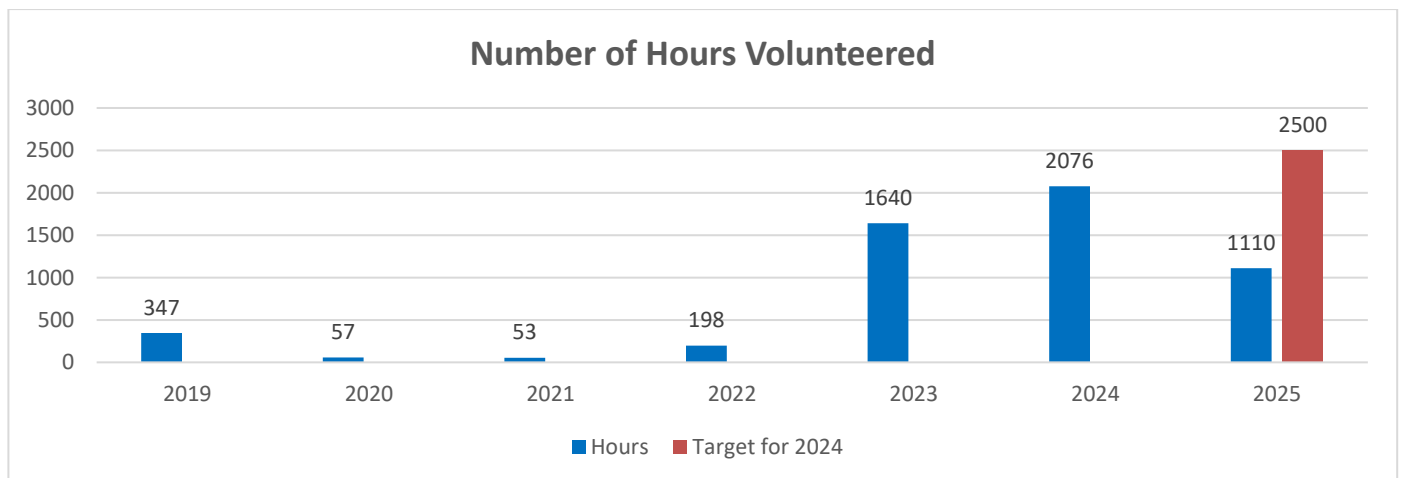
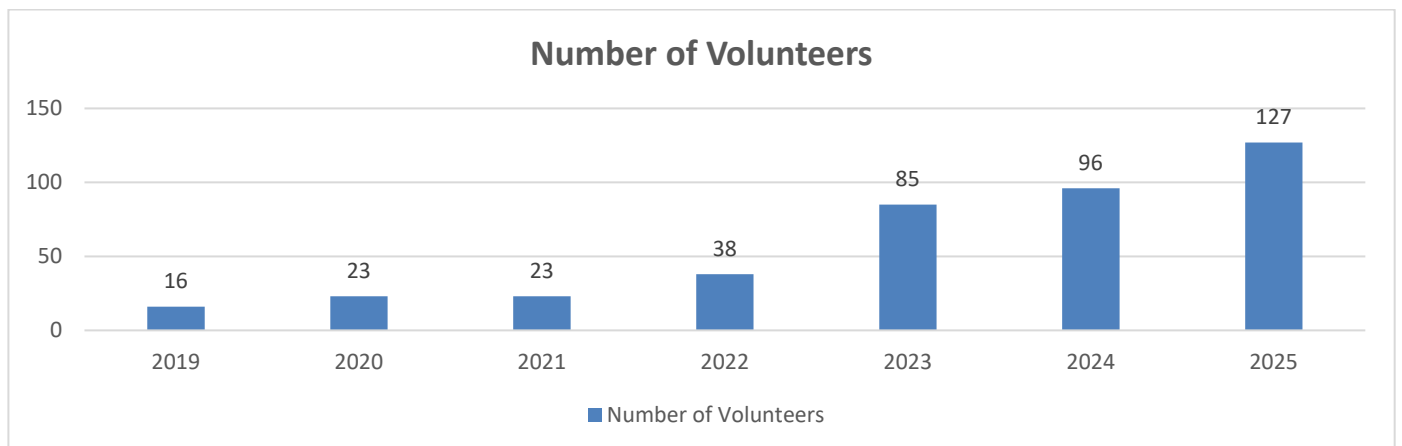
AGING VETERAN SERVICES DIVISION

Kelly Breshears, Aging Veteran Services Director

ODVA Veteran Volunteer Program, Mark Newell, Program Coordinator

General Information: Aging Veteran Services last presented on the Volunteer program in June 2024. At that time the program had almost 100 active volunteers in the program. Between January 2024 and June 2024, volunteers in the program provided approximately 839 hours of veteran volunteer service. The goal of the program was to have 2,500 volunteer hours by the end of 2024.

While we didn't quite reach our goal, we are proud to say volunteers in the program served 2,076 hours in the calendar year 2024. So far in 2025, volunteers have provided 1,110 hours in services to Oregon veterans. We hope to surpass last year's numbers with additional outreach events in addition to increasing the number of volunteers active in the program.



Since January 1st of this year to date:

- We have recently trained 19 new volunteers who are currently moving through the background check process.
- We have volunteers in 25 of the 36 counties in Oregon.
- To date we have had volunteers attend 46 events throughout Oregon.
 - Examples of events:
 - Honor Flight Portland Banquet
 - Madras Welcome Home Event
 - Eugene Gun and Knife Show
 - Jackson County Expo
 - Morrow County Veteran Coffee
 - Elks Club Lincoln City
 - Canby Gun Show
 - Multnomah County Resource Fair
 - Elks Statewide Convention
 - Saturday Market Salem
- We have had 23 volunteers visit with individual veterans and their families in Oregon reaching out to 796 individuals.
- In total we have reached out to 4952 Veterans and their family members so far this year. This is in comparison to 2921 total people last year at this time.

Success story:

A veteran approached a volunteer at an event in Corvallis Oregon. The veteran filed a claim on his own twice in the past for service connection and the claim was denied both times. He was ready to give up. The volunteer suggested that he try going to his local Veteran Service Officer (VSO) for assistance. The volunteer gave the veteran a Veteran Benefits magazine, pointing out the contact number for the office he needed to connect with.

After contacting the VSO for assistance, the veteran was able to win his claim for service-connection for both conditions he had previously been denied and is working on a third condition with his VSO. Sometimes, we just need to lay the path to where a veteran can gain help in filing claims and then give a bit of hope of success so the veteran will walk that path.



APPEALS AND SPECIAL ADVOCACY DIVISION

Joe Glover, Appeals and Special Advocacy Division Director

Training, Certification, and Outreach

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) is recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Office of General Counsel as the accredited state organization to assist Oregon veterans and their families with the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims. This work is done in partnership with County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers (VSO), allowing for a statewide supportive network.

There are many steps required to be recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as an accredited state agency such as the ODVA. One of these requirements is to complete an annual Training Conference for all VSOs who are certified under ODVA's accreditation.

This May, the Training, Certification, and Outreach team successfully planned and completed the in-person training conference.

The training conference was held May 13th and 14th, and had approximately 120 State, County, and Tribal VSOs and ODVA staff.

The conference featured trainings by the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP). NVLSP is a non-profit legal organization that helps veterans and their families perform high-level advocacy work at the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC). Through an agency Memorandum of Agreement, NVLSP provides annual training to State, County, and Tribal VSOs on new legal precedents, changes in legislation, and legal strategy support for difficult cases or challenging scenarios. This year, NVLSP's training highlighted among others, claim writing for benefits relating to establishing service connection for mental health disabilities, women veteran advocacy, and Clear and Unmistakable Errors. Additional trainings included trainings on appeals, working with Tribal veterans, and helping aging veterans access fiduciary and representative payee services.

An additional training was given to discuss strategies for how to assist veterans applying for discharge upgrades, specifically on "compelling circumstances". The focus of the discharge upgrade work is particularly timely and needed due to the change focus for veterans who were discharged prematurely from the military due to Don't Ask, Don't Tell, or other similar discriminatory policies.

The in-person training conference was a resounding success and provided an opportunity to bring together an already tight-knit community to learn, train, and network with one another.

Additionally, in April, ODVA hired a new TCO team member. This person comes to ODVA from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs where she performed the role of rater and as a program analyst.

In addition to her VA experience, she is a military retiree, retiring from the U.S. Navy with over 20 years of active-duty service.

Division Success Story:

A veteran reached out to ODVA in January 2024 to seek help overturning their dishonorable discharge from their time in the service and accordingly were denied access to VA health care.

They began working with LGBTQ+ Veteran Coordinator Ian Michael. Ian assisted this veteran with advocacy to overturn the health care denial and helped them apply for VA disability benefits.

In October 2024 the veteran was informed that their status as having served “Honorable for VA Purposes” was established and they were now eligible for care.

In March 2025, the veteran was awarded 100% service connection effective back to January 2024, and a retroactive payment of over \$45,000.00.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS DIVISION

Sheronne Blasi, Strategic Partnerships Division Director

The Strategic Partnerships Team is made up of Special Advocacy Coordinators (e.g. Tribal Veterans, Incarcerated Veterans, Campus Veterans); the Veterans Education Team (State Approving Agency, Campus Veteran Coordinator, and an Education Manager); a Grants Coordinator; a Grants Specialist; and the Division Director.

The division is responsible for pass-through funding to counties, Tribes, and national service organizations to expand and enhance their veteran services in the areas of VA claims and appeals and outreach. The division leads the agency's work around veteran suicide prevention in partnership with the VA, other state agencies, counties, Tribes, and other community partners.

Grants administered by the Strategic Partnerships division are listed below. Information on each of these grants is found on ODVA's website.

- Veteran Suicide Awareness and Prevention Grants to counties, Tribes, and Oregon's public universities and community colleges
- Veteran Services Grants
- Campus Veteran Resource Center Grants
- VA's Highly Rural Transportation Grants
- Rural Veteran Healthcare Transportation Grants (administered by ODOT in partnership with ODVA)
- Oregon Veterans Emergency Financial Assistance Grant (**OVEFAP**)

Regarding the OVEFAP grant, ODVA saw another record month in May of applications, which really demonstrates the ongoing emergency financial needs of Oregon's veterans and their families. OVEFAP grants can be awarded for

Below are some ODVEFAP statistics from May 2025:

- Number of requests received: 28
- Total amount requested: \$369,266
- Number of requests that were housing stability/homelessness related: 12
- Total number awarded (and % awarded compared to number requested) 7 (25%)
- How many of those awarded, were housing related: 5
- Total amount awarded (and % compared to total amount request): \$8,854 (2%)

Wellness and Selfcare

At the beginning of the year the division conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis that will be included in the agency's upcoming Strategic Plan. From this SWOT analysis we collectively agreed that one of the priorities for the division in 2025 is a deliberate focus on wellness and self-care for our team.

We put together a small committee to lead the work of self-care this year. The team spent some time developing a recommended plan of action for the division, presented the plan, and adapted feedback into programming going forward. The committee identified great wellness and self-care resources, best practices, training, etc. The committee guides the division in mindfulness exercises at the beginning of our division meetings, offers new ideas for care, and even set up a Teams channel for us to share articles, ideas, encouragement, etc.

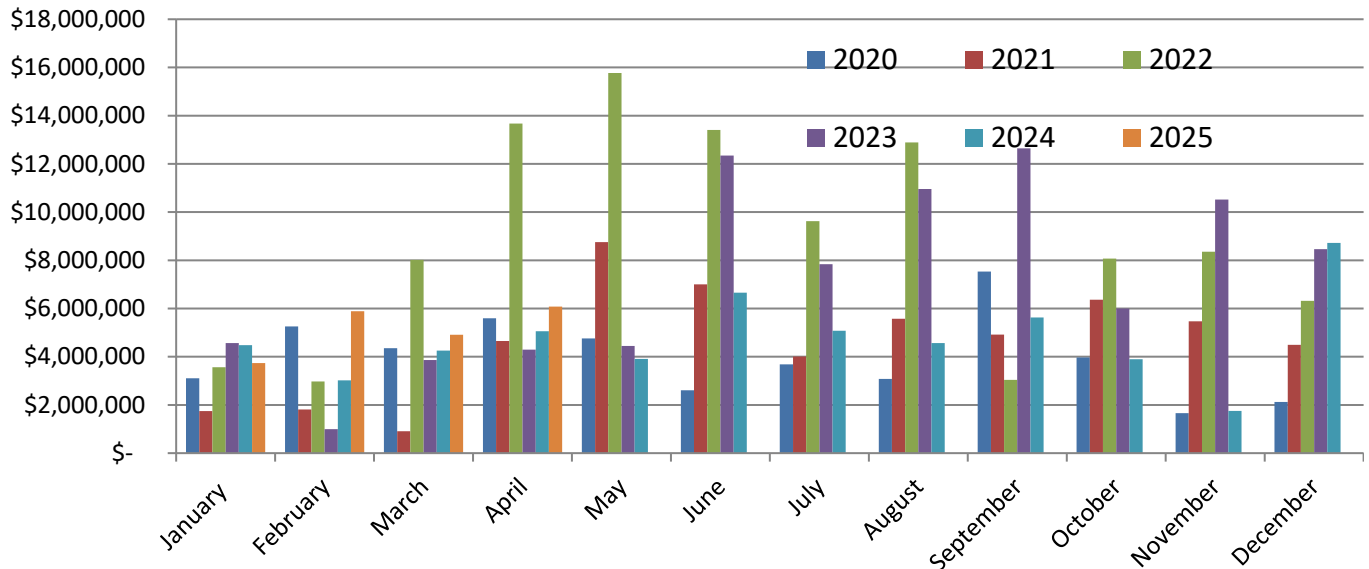
In May, as part of our personal focus on health and wellbeing, some of us participated in the local Run 2 Remember event. It was a fun event (although not required) where some of us got to know each other a little bit better. And the husband (and U.S. Marine Corp. veteran) of one of our team members took 3rd place in the run!

The committee has noted that June 20 is national “Bring Your Dog to Work Day” so they’ll be inviting the team to share the ways having their furry (or scaly or feathered) co-workers in their home office has been beneficial. They’ll also be posting an article in the Teams channel on the benefits of pet ownership on stress levels and inviting the team to post pictures of their pets in the Teams thread for sharing at the meeting (bonus morale points for pets in Pride gear 😊).



HOME LOAN PROGRAM REPORT

Cody Cox, Home Loan Program Manager



Home Loan Production Review

- Home Loan Program production for the 1st Quarter 2025 was 36 loans for \$14.5 million. For the same period in 2024, production volume was 29 loans for \$11.8 million.
- The chart below shows a 2020 - 2025 monthly production comparison of dollar volume funded for the OrVet Home Loan program.
- At the end of the 1st Quarter 2025, ODVA has a total of 1,581 loans in portfolio, with a total dollar amount under servicing of \$402,099,484. Of these, 1,529 loans and \$398,507,398 are 'new' loans. 'Old' loans were at 52 units totaling \$3,592,086. At the end of the 1st Quarter 2024, the ODVA had a total of 1,560 for \$384,938,105 under servicing. Year over year, our servicing portfolio increased by \$17,163,379 which represents an increase of 4.46%.
- A significant achievement occurred at the end of this quarter. The servicing portfolio surpassed \$400 million in loans under management for the first time since my start date in 2013.

Loan Delinquency Review

- The total of all loans reporting in the 90-day or greater delinquency position was at 2 units, expressed as 0.1% in unit delinquency on a portfolio of 1,578. This is unchanged from the previous quarter.
- ODVA servicing portfolio performance shows a continued reduced delinquency rate as compared to other Government and private sector residential loan programs. The Mortgage Bankers Association publishes a quarterly National Delinquency Survey, and the following represents Oregon specific

comparative data from the most recently available First Quarter 2025 report. The delinquency rate expressed as a percentage of total loans (units) past due for the Federal Veterans Affairs home loan program in Oregon was 3.45%. FHA home loans in Oregon were at 7.39%. Conventional Prime home loans Oregon was at 2.28%. For this reporting period, the total delinquency for the ODVA home loan program was 0.70% at 10 units, which is decreased from the prior quarter.

-END OF REPORT-

APPENDIX

Summary Of Programs

Aging Veteran Outreach: The Aging Veteran Outreach Coordinator position was established in 2017, and coordinates services directed at aging veterans residing in their homes or care facilities around the state. The position is integral to the Agency's mission to ensure aging and vulnerable veterans receive the highest quality and priority representation from an ODVA veteran service officer. The outreach coordinator works with the Department of Human Services and other agencies on aging in conjunction with the Federal VA to ensure each aging Veteran has applied for benefits and is receiving all entitlements through USDVA and other government and nonprofit entities.

More information: www.oregon.gov/odva/Resources/Pages/Aging-Veterans.aspx

Appeals and Claims: The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), involves a complex legal system. To qualify for benefits, veterans, their dependents, and survivors must file a claim against the United States by providing evidence they are eligible to receive the benefit through the submission of legal, military, and medical evidence.

ODVA employs state-certified and federally accredited Veterans Service Officers (VSOs), who are subject matter experts in Federal VA law (Chapter 38 United States Code and Chapter 38 Code of Federal Regulations). These VSOs represent veterans, their dependents, and survivors before the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA) in claims and appeals through a signed Power of Attorney.

More information: Email ORVets.Benefits@odva.oregon.gov

Campus Veteran Resource Center Grant: Senate Bill 143 (2017) established the Campus Veteran Resource Center Grant Program to support campus veteran resource centers and resource coordinators on the campuses of Oregon community colleges and public universities. The grant funds aim to help veterans successfully transition from military service to college life, succeed in college and complete educational goals, and transition from college to the workforce.

More information: www.oregon.gov/odva/agency-programs/grants/Pages/Campus-Grant.aspx

Conservatorship and Representative Payee Programs: In 1964, the Legislative Assembly authorized the Conservatorship program to manage the financial affairs of veterans who could not oversee their affairs and had no other recourse. Today, ODVA's Conservatorship Program provides professional fiduciary services to manage the income and assets of veterans and their dependents deemed incompetent by the Federal VA to manage their federal resources. Conservatorship clients are appointed to ODVA as Conservators by a circuit court judge.

Conservatorship helps to ease the burdens often associated with paying bills, collecting funds on debts owed to the Veteran, corresponding with creditors, and buying or selling real estate or other investments. Professional fiduciaries work closely with family members and other interested parties, such as guardians, to plan for the welfare and best interests of the Veteran.

In 2014, SB 251 clarified the law to allow ODVA to act as fiduciary and Representative Payee for veterans. Representative Payees serve veterans deemed incompetent by managing the Veteran's monthly income provided by the USDVA and the Social Security Administration. The Representative Payee applies for benefits, establishes budgets, and arranges payment for care and other bills for services for the client. The Representative Payee works with the USDVA, Social Security Administration, guardians, family members, social workers, and other responsible individuals to ensure the veterans' financial needs are met within their ability to pay.

Learn more: www.oregon.gov/odva/Benefits/Pages/Long-Term-Care.aspx

County Veterans Service Officers Program (CVSO's): ODVA's statewide partnership with counties began when the legislature appropriated money to aid counties in promoting services to veterans on a local level. It is an effective network of trained County Veterans Service Officers (CVSO) in all 36 counties who provide veterans, their eligible dependents, and survivors with VA benefits and claims representation.

CVSOs are not supervised by ODVA; however, the Agency provides initial and ongoing training, certification and accreditation, guidance and support, and outreach to the CVSOs. The ODVA Appeals Team in Portland handles most CVSO appeal cases for the USDVA.

Locate a County VSO: www.oregon.gov/odva/Services/Pages/County-Services.aspx

Highly Rural Transportation Grant: Highly Rural Transportation Grant: Since 2014, ODVA has administered the US Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) Highly Rural Transportation Grant (HRTG), which provides free transportation to and from VA and VA-authorized medical appointments for any veteran living in one of ten Oregon's VA defined highly rural counties. The agency partners with ODOT to distribute grant funding to its transportation district partners within each of the ten counties. Services include door-to-door pick-up and drop-off in ADA-compliant vehicles, with assistance in loading or unloading at no cost to the Veteran. The program runs year-to-year, and transportation services are subject to grant fund availability each federal fiscal year. As of the end of 2022, veterans living in highly rural counties have received free rides totaling more than 2 million miles.

Locate transportation: www.oregon.gov/odva/Services/Pages/Transportation-Services.aspx

Home Loan Program: A constitutional amendment approved by voters in 1944 established the Veterans' Home and Farm Loan Program to fund the purchase of homes and farms by Oregon residents who served in the armed forces during World War II. Persons who joined the armed forces on or after September 1, 1940, were eligible to receive loans if they served for at least 90 days after mobilization and were honorably separated, discharged, or furloughed into a reserve unit.

Today, this program provides low-interest rate mortgages on single-family, owner-occupied homes to qualified veterans. The Home Loan program is a historically self-supporting program that uses other funds. Revenues are derived from loan and contract repayments, proceeds from bond sales, fee and rental income, and investment earnings. No General Fund monies are used in its operations.

More information: www.oregon.gov/odva/Home-Loans/Pages/default.aspx

Houseless Veterans: The 2019-21 LAB established the Agency's first Houseless Veteran Coordinator. ODVA began the Houseless Veteran Program upon hiring its first Houseless Veteran Coordinator in June 2021. The Houseless Veteran Coordinator collaborates with federal, state, county, and tribal agencies, Veterans Service Officers, and community homeless service providers to meet the urgent and unique needs of Oregon's diverse veteran

communities. In addition to advocating for Oregon veterans experiencing houselessness or at risk of being houseless, the program provides direct service to veterans and their families seeking federal and state veterans' benefits, including access to local VA health care, documentation of service, as well as other available state benefits, and local homeless services organizations and low-income assistance programs.

More information: www.oregon.gov/odva/Resources/Pages/Homeless-Veterans.aspx

Incarcerated Veterans: First established in 2016 and codified by HB 4038 (2018), the Incarcerated Veterans Program is in its seventh full year of operation and has been highly successful. This program aims to work with veterans entering the state prison system and transitioning to release. Since the program began in August 2016, the ODVA Incarcerated Veteran Coordinators, in coordination with the Oregon Department of Corrections, met with over 3,500 individuals transitioning through the state prison system to determine veteran status and then provide assistance as needed to veterans and their families.

To facilitate a successful transition to the community and to reduce recidivism rates for veterans, the ODVA Incarcerated Veterans Coordinator also collaborates with the US Department of Veteran Affairs' re-entry social worker to meet with veterans when they are transitioning out of the prison system to identify available resources, ensure all possible benefit claims are filed and enroll veterans in Federal VA healthcare.

Learn more: www.oregon.gov/odva/Resources/Pages/Justice-Involved-Veterans.aspx

LGBTQ+ Veterans: Senate Bill 946 (2015) created the LGBTQ+ Veterans program that offers direct services to veterans in the LGBTQ+ community, assists with military records corrections, discharge upgrades, and service-connected claims work for VA benefits. The program also provides extensive outreach to LGBTQ+ veterans. It helps enroll veterans with specialized health care through a Veterans Health Administration LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator. Through these efforts, veterans within the LGBTQ+ community now receive trauma-informed and dignity-affirming care while also connecting these veterans with state and local services.

Learn more: www.oregon.gov/odva/Resources/Pages/LGBTQ-Veterans.aspx

National Service Organizations (NSO): ODVA partners with national veteran service organizations in Oregon that provide veteran benefit and claims representation, like state, county, and tribal Veterans Service Officers; however, they do not work under ODVA's Power of Attorney and are not trained and certified by ODVA. The American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the National Association of Black Veterans participate in this funding opportunity.

Oregon Veterans' Homes: The 1993 Legislative Assembly authorized the Director of Veterans' Affairs to establish and administer a State Veterans' Home to provide long-term care for needy, disabled veterans. The Dalles was selected as the first Oregon Veterans' Home location and opened in the fall of 1997. The 1995 Legislative Assembly laid the groundwork for establishing a second Veteran's Home to be operated by a non-government entity. The statute limits Oregon to two Veteran's homes until they are constructed and operated for a period of time to determine efficiency and feasibility. Cited in Lebanon, the second OVH opened in 2014. The 2011 Legislative Assembly, through HB 2578, gave authority to build a third Veterans' Home in Roseburg.

Care at the Oregon Veteran's Homes is an "earned benefit" available to veterans, their spouses, and parents who had a child die while serving in the United States Armed Forces. Qualifying veterans must have served as defined by the Federal VA to be eligible for this benefit. Both homes provide rehabilitative and long-term nursing services by staff whose knowledge and skills meet the unique needs of veterans. In addition, both homes have an

endorsed memory care community, which allows them to care for veterans with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

Learn about Oregon Veterans' Homes: www.oregon.gov/odva/Vets-Homes/Pages/default.aspx

Rural Veterans Healthcare Transportation Grant: During the 2019 Legislative session, and again in the 2021 session, ODVA was provided funding to create a veteran's healthcare transportation program for counties and tribes that are rural but do not meet the federal restrictions, defining the county as highly rural. Veterans are provided free rides to their healthcare and behavioral healthcare-related appointments and are not restricted to VA facilities. ODVA partners with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to administer this grant program.

Locate transportation: www.oregon.gov/odva/Services/Pages/Transportation-Services.aspx

State Approving Agency: In 2019, ODVA assumed Oregon's State Approving Agency (SAA) function under a contract with the USDVA. The SAA monitors and approves eligible schools and training facilities that administer federal GI Bill® education benefits to ensure compliance with applicable state and federal laws designed to protect the integrity of the GI Bill® program. ODVA receives federal funds primarily to cover salary-related costs, and some state funding supplements the program.

More information: www.oregon.gov/odva/agency-programs/Pages/SAA.aspx

Military Help Line: Military Help Line: Since 2017, ODVA has contracted with Lines for Life to provide a military and veterans crisis hotline that provides 24/7, confidential crisis supports for veterans and their loved ones. ODVA does not retain funds to administer this program.

Call the Lines for Life Military Helpline today: 1-888-457-4838 or www.linesforlife.org/get-help-now/services-and-crisis-lines/military-helpline/

Training, Certification and Outreach: ODVA is responsible for the training, certification, and accreditation of all counties, tribal, and state Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) operating under ODVA's power of attorney with the USDVA. Training is conducted on the latest Federal VA legal, medical, and process information and eligibility information about accessing Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and National Cemetery Administration (NCA) benefits.

ODVA trains and accredits VSOs to file defensible claims for disability compensation and pension benefits on behalf of veterans and their families. Claims are filed through ODVA's Powers of Attorney (POA) or a national service organization's POA, as the claims are legal documents reviewed and adjudicated by the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

More information: Email ORVets.Benefits@odva.oregon.gov

Tribal Veterans Service Officer Program (TVSO's): SB 80 (2017) directed ODVA to provide aid and assistance to federally recognized Indian tribes in Oregon regarding programs and services for Native American veterans overseen by the tribes. The legislation also codified efforts of the federal VA's Office of General Counsel, supporting the accreditation of tribal Veterans' representatives in Oregon.

The budget includes pass-through funding for a Tribal Veterans Service Officer (TVSO) Program to provide direct veteran VA benefits and claims representation through the federally recognized tribes in Oregon. ODVA partners with tribal governments with a Memorandum of Understanding with ODVA. As with County VSOs, Tribal VSOs are not supervised by ODVA; however, the Agency provides training, certification, accreditation, guidance and support, and outreach support to their programs. The majority of TVSO appeal cases are also handled by ODVA's Appeals office in Portland.

Locate a Tribal Veteran Services Office: www.oregon.gov/odva/Services/Pages/Tribal-Veteran-Services.aspx

Veteran Services Grant: House Bill 2891 (2017) established the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs Veteran Services Grant Fund. The grant funds aim to leverage existing programs and resources available to veterans in local communities. Eligible grant recipients are not-for-profit organizations, local and tribal governments, and other related entities that provide direct services to veterans in Oregon. Services provided free of charge to veterans include legal assistance, housing and services, outreach to tribal veterans, behavioral health services, peer-to-peer support services, and employment assistance programs.

More information: www.oregon.gov/odva/agency-programs/grants/Pages/Veteran-Services-Grant.aspx

Veteran Volunteer Program: Established by HB 2908 in 2017, the Veteran Volunteer Program, developed 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 or Tribal Veteran Service Offices to learn about potential state and federal earned benefits. Once a veteran has been referred to a local Veteran Service Office, volunteers provide follow-up to ensure that the veterans 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. While not trained VSOs, these volunteers help to guide veterans to the various offices where they can receive assistance.

Learn more about volunteering: www.oregon.gov/odva/Benefits/Pages/Volunteer-Program.aspx

Veterans Educational Bridge Grant: House Bill 2201 (2019) created the ODVA Veterans Educational Bridge Grant Program to assist veterans in education or training programs who experience an interruption in their degree or training progress due to the unavailability of necessary courses or student debt, preventing them from registering for classes. The bill also provided funding for a grant administrator to implement and oversee the grant program.

The grant program's purpose is to provide financial assistance to veterans who cannot receive GI Bill® benefit payments when classes or training hours are not available or have student debt preventing course registration. The Bridge Grant can help stabilize the Veteran's household finances until they are able to access classes or training hours, which will allow them to resume their benefit payments. The program aims to support veterans' successful completion of their academic programs and transition to civilian career and community life

More information: www.oregon.gov/odva/agency-programs/grants/Pages/Educational-Bridge-Grant.aspx

Veterans' Emergency Financial Assistance Program: Established by HB 3504 (2005), this program aims to provide a one-time grant to veterans or their immediate family members who need emergency financial assistance. Grants are awarded monthly to veterans who experience sudden and unanticipated financial instability. Most grant requests support keeping veterans in their homes by assisting with past-due monthly rent and mortgage payments, utility payments, home and vehicle repair, and dental and medical expenses. Applicants are also connected with a local county or tribal Veteran Service Officer for access to other veteran services and benefits and community resources to encourage financial stability.

Grant Application:

www.oregon.gov/odva/Documents/VS1024%20Oregon%20Veterans%E2%80%99%20Emergency%20Financial%20Assistance%20Program%20Application_02-2022.pdf

Women Veterans: House Bill 3479 (2015) created funding and authority for a program 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.

Learn more: www.oregon.gov/odva/Resources/Pages/Women-Veterans.aspx