

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

**South Dakota Department of
Veterans Affairs**

INSIDE STORY HEADLINE

Table of Contents

Secretary's Message	2
Mission, Vision and Overview.....	3
Organization	4-5
Budget	6
Veteran Population	7
Legislative Highlights	8
Outreach	8
Benefit Services.....	9
Claims Services	10
Economic Impact.....	11-12
Appeals	13
Bonus.....	14
Homeless Veterans	14
Military Funeral Honor Stipend.....	15
Headstone Setting Fees.....	15
Education	16
Public Affairs	17
State Veterans Home	18-19
Partners	20-22
Accomplishments	23

(300 copies were printed at the cost of \$4.50 each of April 30, 2016)

Message from Secretary Zimmerman

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs has the distinct privilege of serving the men and women whose service in the Armed Forces helped to secure our freedom.

We work in concert with County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers and Veterans Service Organizations to advocate for veterans and their families and survivors, ensuring that they receive quality and timely care, support, benefits, and recognition for their service and sacrifice.

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs exists to serve South Dakota's veterans. I'm extremely proud of our staff for carrying out our mission.

Now, more than ever we need to continue to deliver on our promise to take care of our veterans. We need to keep our sleeves rolled up and work collectively to ensure our veterans have a successful journey after they return home.

South Dakota has a long, proud history of serving those who have sacrificed and served our country. We are proud of this history and the partners that have shared in our success.





MISSION, VISION AND OVERVIEW

Vision: Voices for Veterans

Mission: To advocate for and provide the pathway for all veterans and their families to receive the benefits due to them.

Overview: The challenges facing South Dakota veterans as they return home from their service to our nation remain unchanged from previous years. Severely wounded personnel, including those suffering Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress, will strain the VA Health and Benefits systems for decades to come. This is of great concern in South Dakota as there are high numbers of National Guard, Reserves, and active duty personnel participating in multiple deployments. At a time when the United States Department of Defense and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs may have difficulty providing timely services to many veterans in need, SDDVA will augment and enhance needed support to obtain VA services and benefits to those who have served.

SDDVA continues to collaborate with individuals, organizations, commissions, and national and state agencies to develop, promote and support the interests of South Dakota's veterans.

LEADERSHIP

Secretary

Larry Zimmerman

425 E. Capitol Avenue

Pierre, SD 57501

Pierre Phone: 605-773-3269

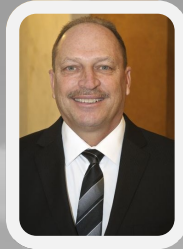
Rapid City Phone: 605-394-1959

Cell Phone: 605-593-7781

Fax: 605-773-5380

<http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

Email: larry.zimmerman@state.sd.us



Deputy Secretary

Aaron Pollard

Claims Office—c/o VA Regional Office

PO Box 5046

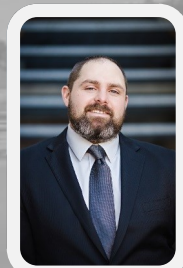
Sioux Falls, SD 57117-5046

Phone: 605-333-6869

Cell Phone: 605-360-4173

Fax: 605-333-5386

Email: aaron.pollard@state.sd.us



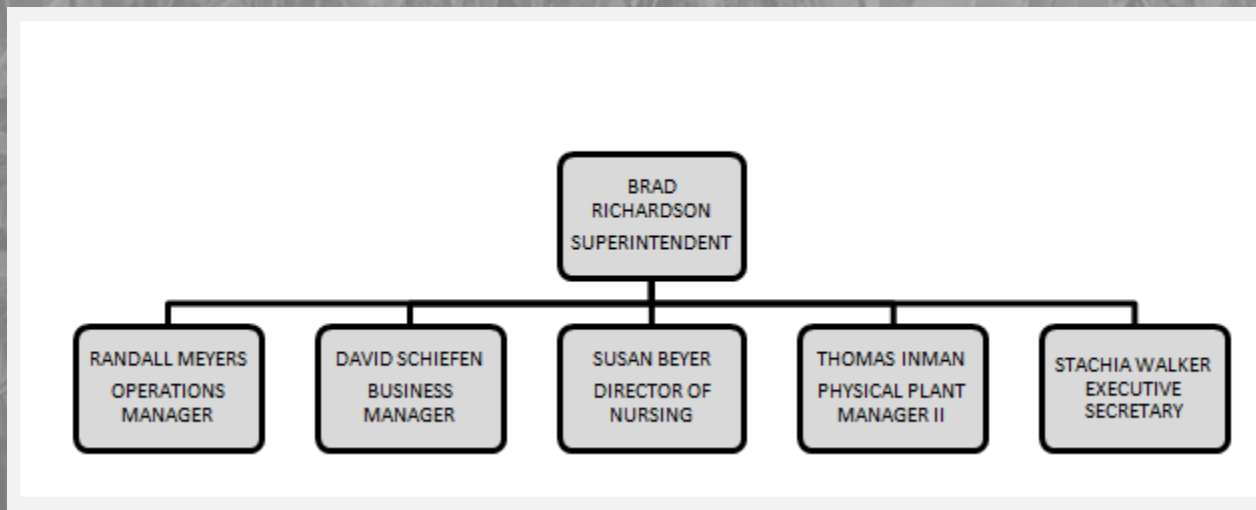
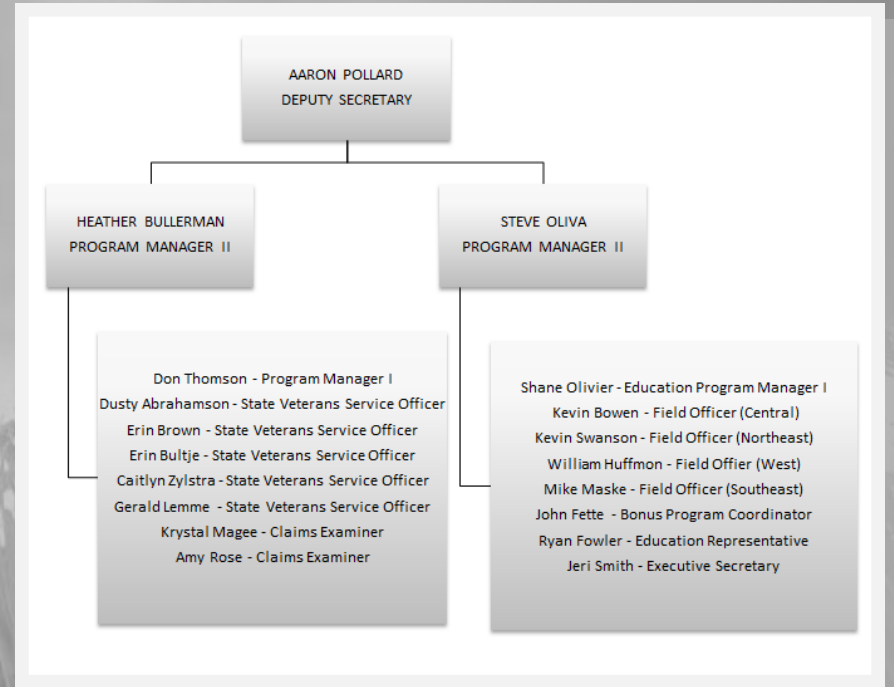
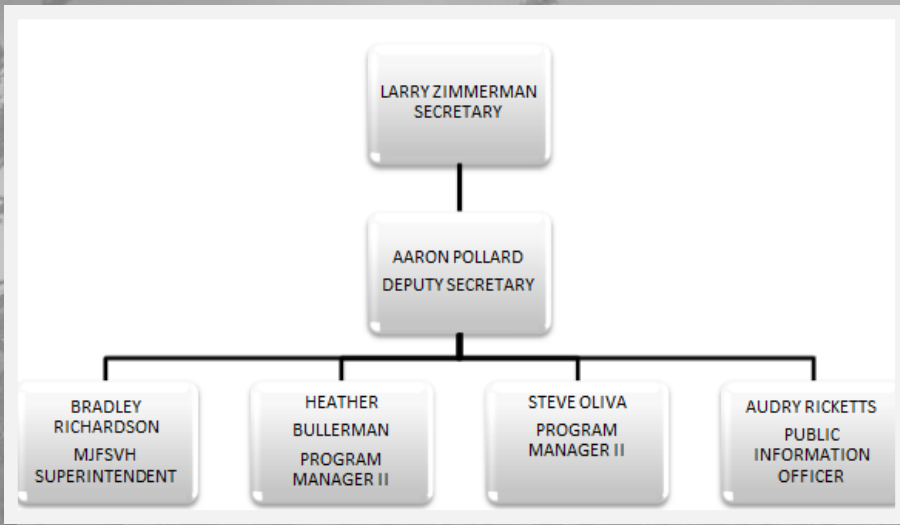
The Role of the Office of the Secretary

The Office of the Secretary drives the Department's overall strategy and long-range planning initiatives and oversees the operation of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA).

The Secretary works closely with the Governor's Office, other heads of South Dakota State agencies, the regional directors of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, South Dakota's Congressional delegation, and state legislators to ensure the Department's overall mission and goals provide value to South Dakota's veterans. The Secretary oversees the state veterans home, the claims office, the benefits service and education office, and many other programs and services for our state's veterans.

The Deputy Secretary serves as a surrogate for the Secretary and is responsible for the day-to-day internal operations of the department including the department's budget, resolution of all critical issues and oversight of major contracts.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS



BUDGET AND FINANCE

The Office of Budget and Finance work develops, monitors, and manages the Department's annual budget. This team is responsible for maintaining effective working relationships with the Bureau of Finance and Management, Legislative Audit and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

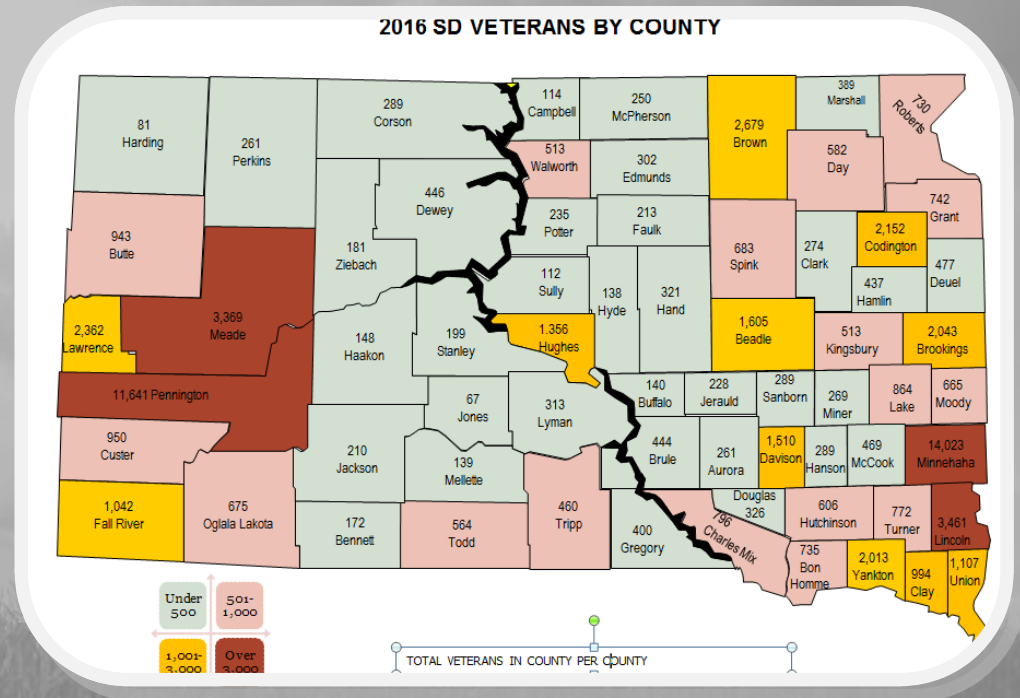
Connie Hohn serves as the Budget/Finance Manager for the Department.

Department of Veterans Affairs	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	Change from Prior Fiscal Year
Personal Services	\$4,737,731	\$5,103,609	\$5,747,485	12.62%
Operating Expenses	\$4,784,911	\$3,321,049	\$4,782,654	44.01%
Headstone & Burial Grants	\$32,495	\$36,764	\$44,600	21.31%
Grants to Regental & Tech Schools	\$600,000			
Costs new construction	\$1,611,214	\$24,714	\$51,724	109.29%
Special Funds				
Bonus Claims	\$213,610	\$172,460	\$152,220	-11.74%
Receipts				
Medicaid Collections	\$682,912	\$676,124	\$911,495	34.81%
VA Per Diem	\$2,276,952	\$2,726,197	\$2,828,801	3.76%
Resident Rents	\$2,224,250	\$2,048,187	\$2,255,214	10.11%

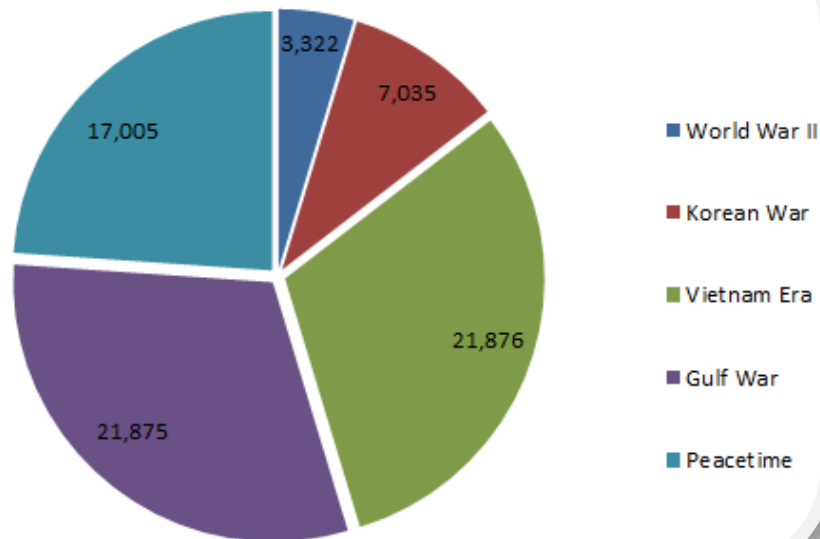
VETERAN COUNT

South Dakota's efforts to honor and support our Nation's veterans are a testament to its commitment to the men and women who served in uniform.

Veterans are one of this country's most valuable assets and SDDVA is on the front line of providing assistance to over 70,000 veterans and their families.



Who We Serve



LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs monitored and supported many pieces of legislation this year. In a state founded on values, ethics, and dedication, it is only fitting that we work with our legislators to improve the lives of our Veterans. Working together we do make a difference.

HB 1056: Purpose: revise certain provisions relating to the veterans' preference in employment.

HB 1163: Purpose: revise the periods of time during which veterans may use tuition benefits at institutions under the control of the Board of Regents.

HB 1203: Purpose: pay off bonds and make certain other changes necessary to effectuate a tuition freeze by the Board of Regents and the technical institutes, to make an appropriation therefor, and to declare an emergency.

HB 1226: Purpose: make a special appropriation to continue funding the military funeral honors stipend.

HC 1005: Purpose: Honoring the fifth anniversary of Operation Black Hills Cabin, and recognizing the board of directors, volunteers, and community leaders as outstanding caretakers of those who served.

SB 48: Purpose: revise the General Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2016.

SB 71: Purpose: revise the provisions regarding the issuance of small game licenses and fishing licenses to certain veterans at reduced fees and to authorize certain nonresident veterans to get nonresident small game licenses at a reduced fee.

SB 122: Purpose: require that fees collected for military specialty license plates be distributed to county veterans' service officers.

SB 148: Purpose: authorize additional nursing facility beds for the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home and to declare an emergency.

SB 149: Purpose: provide for certain reduced state park entrance fees for veterans.

BENEFIT SERVICES

Benefit Services is comprised of a program manager II, four field service officers, one veterans bonus claims examiner, education program manager, education representative, and an executive assistant.

The Benefits Services team provides professional assistance to South Dakota's veterans and their dependents in an effort to obtain veteran's benefits and health care treatment from the USDVA. Success is measured by the number of veterans the department assists and the number of issues resolved for those veterans. It is estimated that for every state dollar expended for Benefits Services, more than \$440 of federal monies are brought into South Dakota.

The Field Officers are trained in the myriad of issues facing veterans who served in World War II through today's conflicts, with each era having unique issues and challenges. Each day finds field officers assisting South Dakota's veterans in gaining access to the benefits to which they are entitled through their service and sacrifice. Among these benefits and services are compensation for service-connected disability or death, income-based pensions, medical care, educational benefits, and the VA home loan guaranty program.

Outreach is conducted at job fairs, stand downs, home shows, congressional forums, Veteran's Day programs, Vocational Rehab conferences, SD Coalition of Military Family symposiums, South Dakota State Fair, Memorial Day programs, Yellow Ribbon events, South Dakota County Officials and Commissioners conferences, Department of Social Services Adult and Aging conference and numerous veteran-related events around the state.

Our outreach team works actively to inform veterans about employment opportunities and educates employers on the benefits of hiring veterans. During the past two years South Dakota has rewritten veterans preference laws and is in the process of educating employers about those changes.

SDDVA currently holds Power of Attorney (POA) for over 50,000 veterans in South Dakota, which authorizes our team to represent and provide necessary assistance and advocacy to veterans and their families.

CLAIMS SERVICES

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) Claims Office is located within the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Office on the VA Medical Center campus in Sioux Falls. The Claims Office is staffed with the following professionals: two claims examiners, five state veterans service officers, a program manager I and a program manager II. The Deputy Secretary also maintains his office on the VA campus in Sioux Falls.

The Sioux Falls Claims Office is responsible for all claims that fall under one of the seven Veterans Service Organizations that SDDVA is accredited through to represent and advocate for veterans and their families before the VA.

- South Dakota Dept. of Veterans Affairs
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- American Legion
- The Retired Enlisted Association
- Non-Commissioned Officers Association
- American Ex-Prisoners of War
- Military Order of the Purple Heart

Our Department's goal is to obtain the maximum benefits that are earned by veterans and their eligible family members earned through service to our country. These benefits range from monthly monetary payments for disabilities incurred in or caused by the veteran's military service, monthly non-service connected pension payments for lower income veterans/widows/widowers/dependent children or helpless children, dependency and indemnity compensation payments for widows/widowers/dependent or helpless children of veterans whose death was related to their military service, etc. The range of benefits available to eligible veterans and their families is vast.

The Claims Office personnel works directly with the decision resources in the USDVA Regional Office to expedite claims and to influence, through proactive advocacy, the most positive outcome. To this end, SDDVA Claims Services provides a quality control function by reviewing completed USDVA benefits rating decisions.

Both the Claims Services and Benefits Services are charged by statute to train and certify county and tribal veterans service officers. To maintain proficiency with the rapid changes in veterans' programs, the Department provides training opportunities at least three times a year.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Through the efforts of the employees within the Department of Veterans Affairs and with our County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers and other partners, the Department has seen significant gains in the amount of benefits that clients whom we've assisted and represented receive.

As of December 31, 2015, total awards for CY15 exceeded \$166,821,732. It is easily assumed that the federal monetary benefits received by South Dakota residents are being largely spent within the boundaries of South Dakota helping to support our strong economy.

Our employees work diligently to insure that their clients receive excellent customer service and the maximum benefits that they have earned through their military service.

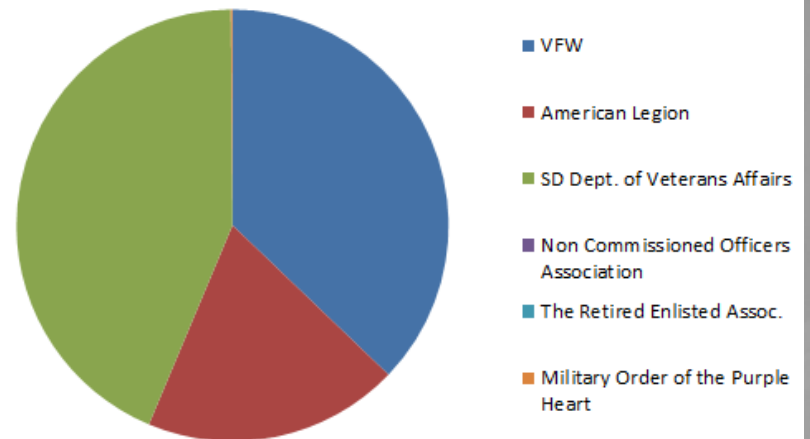
There are many variables that can and do affect the monetary awards that are reported above. If the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs has slow production months this will affect how sharply our monetary numbers increase.

The Federal VA has vowed to reduce and eliminate the backlog of compensation claims that were pending within the VA. To accomplish this, the VA brokered claims from Regional Offices with backlogs to Regional Offices that did not have backlogs and could support an increased workload. The Sioux Falls VA Regional Office was one of these offices that were identified to broker claims.

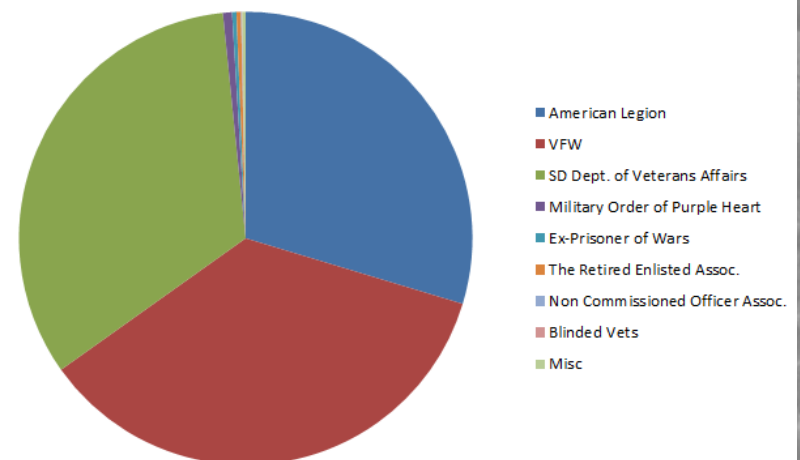
The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs vowed to treat and provide the same excellent level of customer service and expertise to these claims as well as maintaining our existing workload.

During CY15, staff brokered a total of 1,739 out-of-state claims.

CY15 One Time Retro Awards by Organization - Total \$8,592,415.56



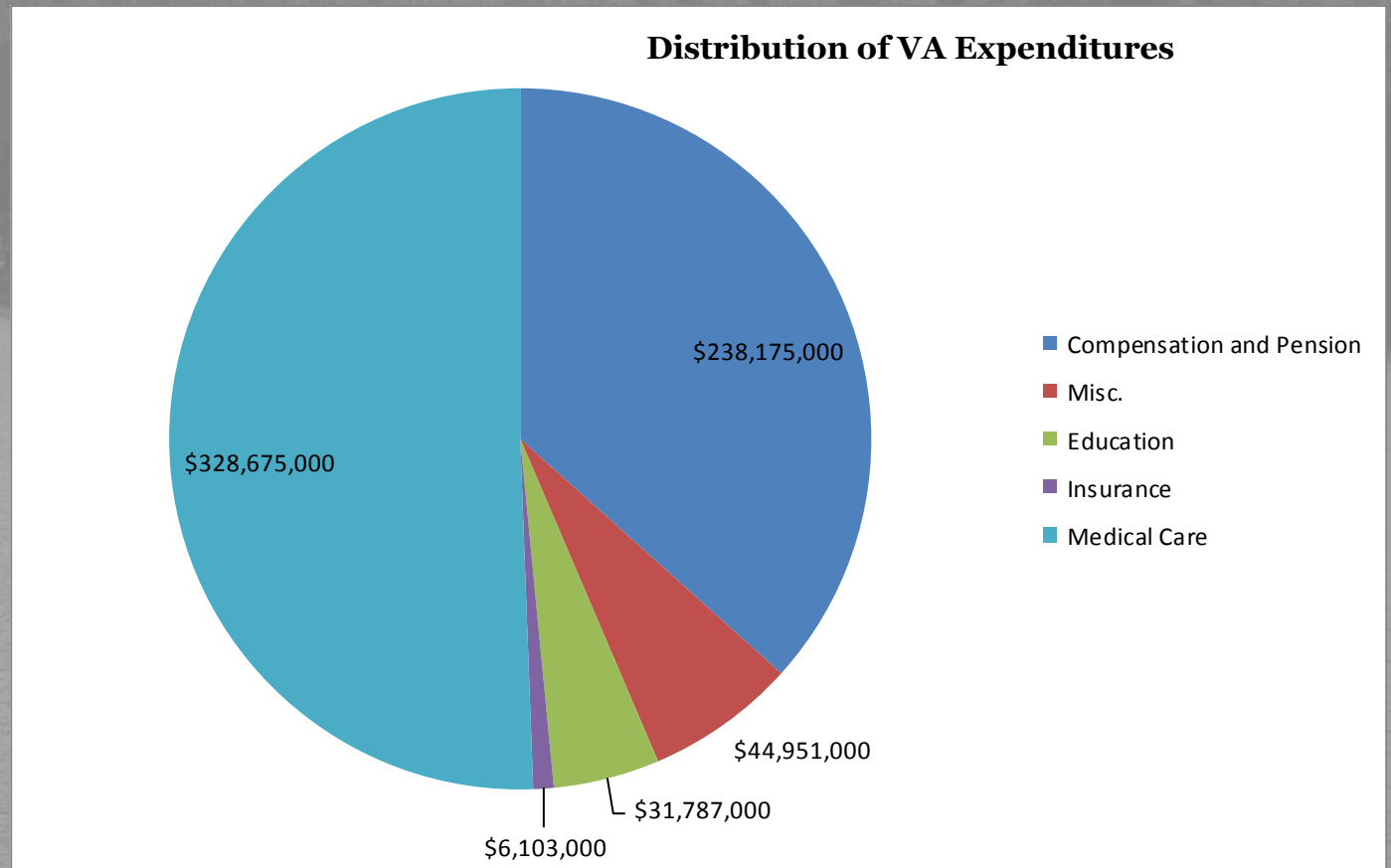
CY15 Total Running Monetary Awards (By Service Organization) - Total \$158,284,400.51



ECONOMIC IMPACT

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers a wide variety of programs and services. Many Veterans use VA education programs, obtain VA guaranteed home loans, and receive VA disability payments. The chart below shows the 2015 estimated dollar expenditures South Dakota's 72,000 veterans and their families received for compensation and pension; education and vocational rehabilitation & employment; insurance and indemnities; construction; general operating expenses and medical care; with a total estimated impact of benefits to South Dakota of \$619,864,000.

South Dakota has three VA Hospitals, 14 community-based outpatient clinics, and two Vet Centers.



APPEALS

Another facet of our staff's duties is their participation in the VA Appeals Process. The appeals process within the VA is complex and comes with its own set of laws, rules, regulations and processes.

Our staff assists veterans in preparing their appeal, as well as arguing their case all the way through the process up to, and including, the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA). Throughout this process, our staff researches complex VA laws and compiles legal briefs to aid in the likelihood of getting veterans and their eligible dependents the benefits sought.

During this process our clients have the opportunity to have two hearings, one at the local level with a Decision Review Officer and one at the national level with a BVA Law Judge. BVA Law Judges are located in Washington D.C. and either travel to our jurisdiction or participate in video teleconference hearings held at the Sioux Falls VA Regional Office. Both types of hearings are official proceedings that become a matter of record within the veteran's VA Claims File.

The prosecution of veterans' disagreements with, and appeals of, U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs rating decisions may result in retroactive benefits, compensation, and debt relief to veterans. The dollar amounts awarded to veterans, their dependents, and survivors are tracked as a performance measure of successful client claim resolutions. The date of claim for a veteran's disability claim is the date the claim is submitted and accepted by the US Department of Veterans Affairs. A decision is usually made several months or even years later, and the veteran is awarded a monthly monetary benefit from the date of the claim, until the receipt of the benefit, resulting in a retroactive benefit. Retroactive benefits and monthly compensation represent dollars that are directly infused into South Dakota's economy.

In 2015, SDDVA staff worked on 172 appeals.

BONUS AND HOMELESS PROGRAMS

Veterans Bonus

South Dakota has a history of thanking residents of this state who serve on active duty during a wartime period with a veteran's bonus payment. This tradition goes back nearly 100 years beginning with payment to those who honorably served during the Spanish American War, the Philippine Insurrection and World War I. It continued with bonus payments to those who served during World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and Desert Shield/Storm.

In 2004, the South Dakota legislature re-opened the Veterans Bonus program providing payment to those with honorable service during the current War on Terrorism. In 2005 the South Dakota legislature decided to give a second chance for those Veterans from the Desert Storm time of service who did not get the bonus or who were eligible for an additional bonus payment. As with previous programs those who serve in a war zone or area of hostilities are eligible for a higher bonus payment than those whose entire period of service was in non-hostile areas. Under the current program, hostile area service qualifies for a payment of up to \$500 and non-hostile area service qualifies for a payment of up to \$240. Individuals with a service connected disability rated at 10%, or more, disabling automatically qualify for the maximum payment of \$500. Rates of pay are the same for both programs.

Through the end of March 2016 – 9,700 South Dakota service men and women have received bonus payments totaling \$4,392,970 under the current bonus program.

Homeless Veterans

SDDVA is an active member of the South Dakota Homeless Consortium. The South Dakota Housing for the Homeless Consortium was formed in 2000. It is a state wide organization consisting of service providers, individuals, city/county governments, faith-based organizations and state government all working together to address homelessness in our state. The Consortium believes that housing and other basic human needs should be within everyone's reach in an affordable and dignified manner. Their vision is to empower homeless individuals and families to regain self-sufficiency to the maximum extent possible. The Consortium has also expanded its efforts and knowledge of homelessness. One of the goals of the Consortium is to end homelessness among veterans in five years.

Information sharing is a key to helping those veterans who are homeless or about to become homeless. The success of our efforts to help veterans depends on this. The South Dakota Department Of Veterans Affairs web site [\[www.vetaffairs.sd.gov\]](http://www.vetaffairs.sd.gov) is one of those keys. This web site provides veterans and their families with a complete list of County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers in South Dakota.

A complete list of homeless shelters and facilities available for veterans in South Dakota can be found on our website:

<http://vetaffairs.sd.gov/resources/homelessshelters.aspx>

HEADSTONES AND MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS PROGRAMS

Under SDCL 33A-5-4, the Department will pay \$100 towards the cost of setting a government issued headstone or marker at the grave of a veteran who was a resident of the State of South Dakota for one year immediately prior to entering military service or one year immediately prior to death. The grave must be located within the borders of South Dakota. In CY2015 the Department paid out \$47,000 in headstone setting fees.



SDDVA provides a \$50 military funeral honors reimbursement stipend to congressionally chartered veterans service organizations for their services in conducting military funeral honors. Forms must be submitted, by the veterans service organization, after services have been performed. Reimbursement is paid quarterly. Funds were provided after July 1, 2015, and with six months of claims filed, a total disbursement of \$8,700 was paid for the last half of CY 2015.

Don Reconnu

EDUCATION

The primary responsibility and focus of the South Dakota State Approving Agency (SAA) is to review, evaluate and approve quality programs of education and training to ensure that our veterans are getting quality education and training while using their GI BILL benefits.

Our SAA staff continue to conduct on-site supervisory visits to approved institutions and schools seeking approval. They continue to provide technical assistance to all interested parties and are engaged in outreach activities to foster the usage of the GI Bill.

SAA staff serves as advocates for quality education and training for veterans and their families. They have become educational partners with the institutions themselves, facilitating even greater and more diverse educational opportunities for our veterans.

The Department currently has a federal contract with the VA, which averages about \$150,000 in reimbursement to the Department per year.

2015 Stats at a glance —

- * Approved over 144 new Institute of Higher Learning (IHL), Non-College Degree (NCD) and Flight programs at colleges, tech schools ,and flight schools across the state and approved two new Vocational Flight Schools for Veterans Flight Training
- * Approved and enrolled 111 new veterans into OJT/APP programs
- * Conducted compliance audits at 16 schools
- * Conducted compliance audits at 20 employers
- * Have 48 active colleges, high schools, and technical schools providing education to GI BILL recipients
- * Have 17 other approved schools that did not have any GI BILL recipients, but retained approval
- * Approved 32 new employers for GI BILL use for OJT/APP
- * Currently have 2,069 GI BILL recipients enrolled in OJT/APP programs
- * Currently there are 2,139 GI BILL recipients enrolled in schools across South Dakota

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The office of Public Affairs is responsible for overseeing and managing the SDDVA public information activities and media relations. It is responsible for developing and implementing communications and public relations strategies with regard to priorities of the department.

The Office is also responsible for planning statewide public events such as press conferences, listening sessions, and special ceremonies.

The Department's website (<http://www.vetaffairs.sd.gov>) is designed to offer veterans a centralized clearinghouse of valuable resources accessible from anywhere in the world. The Department has a mobile website, making it easier for veterans to access information from their smartphones or tablets.

The Department continues to disseminate a weekly newsletter electronically to all within our veteran network as well as post it on our website. The newsletter and job postings can be found at: <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov/publicaffairs/News%20Updates.aspx>.

We distribute a monthly column to the media on timely issues relating to veterans and the benefits and services available to enhance their lives.

The Department maintains a master calendar of events throughout the state relating to veterans. This list can be found at: <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov/publicaffairs/upcomingevents.aspx>.

STATE VETERANS HOME

The mission of the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home is to honor and serve our South Dakota military veterans, their spouses, widows, or widowers now and for generations to come. The Michael J Fitzmaurice Veterans Home will consistently provide high quality resident directed long term care by maintaining excellence in personal services and treatment through professional collaboration, innovation, dedication and respect, in a setting that promotes dignity, independence and a home-like environment.

The values utilized by the staff are: compassion for all, unending accountability, absolute integrity, outstanding communication, dignity for everyone, and unconditional honesty.

In the day-to-day operation of the Home, the staff targets these goals:

- Provide superior long-term care and enhanced quality of life for all residents.
- Provide quality advocacy and benefit assistance for all South Dakota veterans and their families.
- Attract and retain excellent, compassionate staff and volunteers.
- Operate with efficiency, innovation and adaptability.
- Increase the accessibility and utilization of benefits and services through advocacy and education.

The Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home in Hot Springs serves only veterans and veterans' spouses, creating a unique atmosphere for our heroes. Residents enjoy camaraderie with other veterans and respect from staff and volunteers, who value the contributions these service men, women and their families have made to our country.

The new State Veterans Home was completed on time, under budget and debt free. Furniture and supplies were moved into our new home in December and January with the veterans being moved in mid-January and the dedication ceremony held on March 30, 2016.

We have transformed from institutional care to a vibrant community where the focus is on resident-centered care and a homelike environment.

The new 133,000-square-foot facility contains 76 nursing care beds, 24 residential beds, and is home to World War II, Korean War, Vietnam and peace time veterans. The residential areas of the veterans home are divided into eight neighborhoods—NASA, Veterans Lane, South Pacific, Joe Foss, Old Glory, Stars and Stripes, JASCO and Custer.

Each neighborhood has its own laundry room, living room, dining room, kitchen and whirlpool suite. Outside of the neighborhoods, residents have an in house library, mini mart, barber shop and beauty salon, post office, pharmacy, Bistro and chapel.

STATE VETERANS HOME

As a resident centered care facility, many FTE job classifications were changed from support services and buildings and grounds to direct healthcare. Staff have all received the culture change training to assist them in our new environment of care.

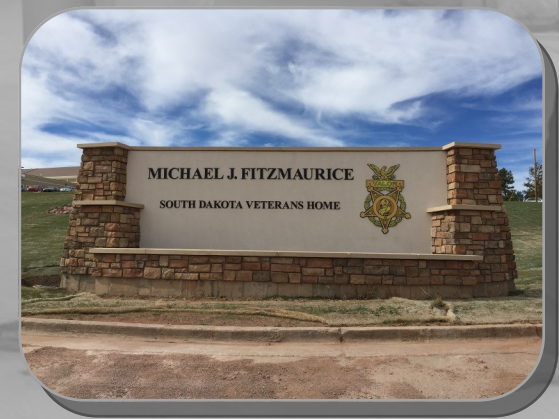
This is exactly the kind of first-class facility our veterans deserve. The layout of the building will give residents more privacy and control over their lives.

Services Provided by our team of professionals include: complete medical care, pharmacy, physical and occupational therapy, 24-hour professional nursing care, meals, social services, spiritual guidance, transportation services, nutrition, and planned, supervised recreational programs and activities.

Our new Home is Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified. Currently this project is at LEED Silver. LEED Silver is 50 – 59 points. Categories include water efficiency, energy, atmosphere, materials, resources, indoor environmental quality, innovation and design process.

The new home has a Biomass Plant that burns wood chips from the Black Hills Forest instead of fuel oil for the heating and cooling. This reduces emissions and provides an estimated cost savings up to 50% over fuel oil.

Every year, many generous individuals and organizations continue to volunteer at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home. These generous individuals sponsor activities or special occasion meals that enhance the home-like environment. We encourage this interaction and partnering to continue within the veteran community and the local community of Hot Springs. In 2015 we had 121 volunteers that donated 5,952 volunteer hours to assist our veterans and our staff.



PARTNERS

Air Force Sergeants Association
American Legion
American Legion Auxiliary
28th Bomb Wing Retiree Activity Office
Disabled American Veterans
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary
14th Flight, Order of Daedalians
Korean War Veterans Association
Marine Corps League
Military Officers Association of America
Military Order of the Purple Heart
National American Indian Veterans Inc.
National Guard Association of South Dakota
Paralyzed Veterans of America
South Dakota National Guard Enlisted Association
South Dakota National Guard Enlisted Association Auxiliary
South Dakota National Guard Officers Association
The Retired Enlisted Association
U.S. Submarine Veterans Inc.
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary
Vietnam Veterans of America
World War I Auxiliary

South Dakota is fortunate to have a large group of heroes that have dedicated their energies to improving the lives of veterans and their families. These heroes are the veterans service organizations. Veterans Service Organizations are the backbone of veterans rights for our state and nation. They strive tirelessly to improve the lives of veterans and their families.”

Collectively they provide advocacy, educate veterans on benefits, lobby congress and legislators and provide a network for veterans.

PARTNERS

South Dakota Veterans Commission

The South Dakota Veterans Commission consists of six members appointed by the Governor. Members of the commission shall be citizens of the United States and of South Dakota, and shall be veterans who have been discharged from the armed forces honorably or under honorable conditions. Annual appointments shall be made for terms of six years.

Commissioners have the responsibility of communicating the Governor's veteran-related public policy positions to the veterans of South Dakota and returning to the Governor those concerns and viewpoints of the veteran constituency

2015-2016 members of the Veterans Commission:

James Ross, Whitewood (Chairman)
Helen Parr, Sioux Falls (Vice Chairman)
Mike Birnbaum, Rapid City
Daryl (KC) Russell, Aberdeen
Lori Vosika, Hot Springs
Kella With Horn, Aberdeen

South Dakota Veterans Council

The purpose and objectives of the South Dakota Veterans Council are to develop a statewide, intelligent, aggressive and serviceable Council for the purpose of promoting all activities found to be for the good of all veterans and their dependents and to provide a practical means by which veterans service organizations throughout the state can effectively contribute to the betterment of all veterans.

The South Dakota Veterans Council is comprised of congressionally chartered veterans' service organizations which include: American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Heart, North Central Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Vietnam Veterans of America. Membership consists of three members from each veterans service organization.

Council leadership:

President—Terry Paulsen (PVA)
Vice President—Gary Henle (American Legion)
Secretary/Treasurer—Ken Laughlin (DAV)
Judge Advocate—Terry Hawk (VVA)

PARTNERS

The Department maintains a statewide partnership with counties and tribes. Our County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers serve as the store front for the Department and have the local contact with veterans and their families. Today it is an effective network of 62 trained VSOs. The VSOs ensure veterans have access to the benefits they have earned. VSOs are not supervised by the Department however, the Department provides training, certification, accreditation, counseling and outreach to the VSOs. The Department holds initial onsite training for all new VSOs, as well as annual conferences and two mini-conferences a year. The Department has four field officers that visit the VSOs on a monthly basis.

Aurora—Ron Falor

Beadle—Michael Lueck

Bennett—Don Larson

Bon Homme—Eric Elsberry

Brookings—Michael Holzhauser

Brown—Aaron Walberg

Brule—Ron Falor

Buffalo—Nancy Falor

Butte—Robert Wagner

Campbell—Lester Goehring

Charles Mix—Roy Farabee

Cheyenne River Sioux—Robert Dunsmore

Clark—Larry Jones

Clay—Cindy Aden

Codington—Alvin Janzen

Corson—Loyson Carda

Crow Creek Sioux—Nancy Falor

Custer—Kenneth Irwin

Davison—Jessica Davidson

Day—Mike Wiley

Deuel—Dennis Evenson

Dewey—Robert Dunsmore

Douglas—Fred Kuil

Edmunds—Ron Hoffer

Fall River—Dan Cullen

Faulk—David Huss

Grant—Scott Malimanek

Gregory—Roy Farabee

Haakon—Terry Deuter

Hamlin—David Schaefer

Hand—Dave Johnson

Hanson—Harry Huffman

Harding—Milton Douglas

Hughes—Charles Quinn

Hutchinson—Glenn Hartman

Hyde—Bob Sheffield

Jackson—Terry Deuter

Jerauld—Roger Dwyer

Jones—Gary Sletto

Kingsbury—Gary Schumacher

Lake—Douglas Huntrods

Lawrence—Bill Locken

Lincoln—Susan Irons

Lyman—Gary Sletto

Marshall—David Daberkow

McCook—Keith Aden

McPherson—Darrell Pfeifle & Harvey Schaible

Meade—Angela Sutton

Mellette—Gary Sletto

Miner—Terrance Lee

Minnehaha—Patricia Kroupa

Moody—Jim DeLay

Oglala Lakota—Denver American Horse

Oglala Sioux—Jerlene Arredondo

Pennington—Matthew Adams

Perkins—Loyson Carda

Potter—Harlen Shaw

Roberts—Larry Goette

Rosebud Sioux—Orlando Morrison

Sanborn—Michael Lueck

Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate—Geri Opsal

Spink—Gordon Richard

Stanley—Charles Quinn

Standing Rock Sioux—Manaja Hill

Sully—Charles Quinn

Todd—Ronald Valandra

Tripp—Terry Cousins

Turner—Thomas Sparrow

Union—Susan Irons

Walworth—Leo Rookey

Yankton—Michael McDonald

Yankton Sioux—Dennis Rucker

Ziebach—Harold Veit

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Construction of the new Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home.
- Worked with the Republic of Korea Consulate to secure Ambassador of Peace Medals for South Dakota's Korean War Veterans who served in Korea's land, air and sea from June 25, 1950 through October 25, 1954. These heroes were honored in 2016.
- Due to the international connection made with the Republic of Korea, South Dakota history teachers have now been invited to participate in an all-expense paid trip to Florida to participate in the Korean War Digital History Conference.
- Due to the international connection with the Republic of Korea, delegates from the Republic of Korea will travel to SD during the summer of 2016 to interview Korean War Veterans.
- Secured funding to reimburse congressionally chartered veterans service organizations for their services in conducting military funeral honors.
- Saw significant gains in the amount of benefits that clients whom we've assisted and represented received. Total awards for CY15 exceeded \$160 million. It is easily assumed that the federal monetary benefits received by South Dakota residents are being largely spent within the boundaries of South Dakota helping to support our strong economy.
- Expanded the state's definition of veteran to include members of the National Guard and Reserve who complete the full obligation of service in the military, or received an early discharge for a medical condition, hardship, reduction in force, or at the convenience of the military and have been separated or discharged from such service honorably or under honorable conditions. This allows eligible individuals to receive veteran license plates, veteran identification on their driver's license, veteran's employment preference and burial assistance if they meet income requirements.
- Added school districts to the list of entities required to provide veterans a preference in employment and promotion.
- Extended resident tuition eligibility to the spouses and children of active duty military personnel and of qualifying veterans.
- Serve on committees/panels for Veterans Courts.
- Working with DOC to assist incarcerated veterans.
- Meet quarterly with Tribal VSOs to address issues that are specific to tribal veterans, such as housing and employment.
- Working with Tribal Affairs and South Dakota's nine tribes to secure a Code Talker Memorial.
- Working with tribal leaders to secure housing for Native American Veterans.
- Assisting veterans through the new hurdles of the federal Veterans Choice Act.



South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

425 E. Capitol

Pierre, SD 57501

605-773-3269