

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION

Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado

Chairman

Mario Marquez, California

Director

The following report covers the activities of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission and Division during the program year from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021.

Resolutions

The 2020 National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The fall 2020 and spring 2021 meetings of the National Executive Committee in Indianapolis approved positions expressed in resolutions submitted to those bodies through the national Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission. The approved resolutions are as follows:

2020 National Executive Committee Meeting

Virtual

Oct. 14-15, 2020

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
3	Accuracy in Reporting Survivor Benefits and COVID-19	NY
4	Appropriate Procedures for Compensation & Pension Exams	VA&R
5	Engraving Military Insignia on Government-Furnished Headstones	VA&R
6	Minority Veterans	VA&R
7	Restore Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQ) to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Website	VA&R
8	Department of Veterans Affairs Revise the Definition of "Vietnam Era"	VA&R
9	Support Walkway in Arlington National Cemetery on Chaplains Hill	NC
10	Stellate Ganglion Block (SGB) Research for Treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	CA
11	Mare Island Naval Cemetery	CA

2021 National Executive Committee Meeting
Virtual
 May 5-6, 2021

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
9	Expand Use of Virtual Hearings by the Board of Veterans Appeals	VA&R
10	Increased Use of Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE) Examinations as an Alternative to Compensation and Pension (C&P Examinations	VA&R
11	Lethal Means and Suicide Prevention	VA&R
12	Enhance Ability of the National Personnel Records Center to Respond to Records Requests from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	MN
13	Newborn Care Through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	VA&R
14	Quality Assurance for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Contracted Compensation and Pension (C&P) Examinations	VA&R
15	Recognizing Presumptive Conditions for Toxic Exposure at Karshi-Khanabad (K2) Base in Uzbekistan	VA&R
16	Reproductive Assistance and Pregnancy Counseling	VA&R
17	Updates to Chaplains Hill Monuments at Arlington National Cemetery	VA
18	Veteran Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Claims Training	VA&R

Commission/Committee Meetings

VA&R Commission Meetings

The VA&R Commission met once during this program year. The meeting was held virtually on March 2, 2021, in conjunction with the 61st Annual Washington Conference. It was the 98th consecutive year the VA&R Commission met.

The following officials addressed the Commission: Denis McDonough, Secretary, United States Department of Veterans Affairs; Dr. Richard Stone, Acting Undersecretary, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs; Thomas J. Murphy, Acting Undersecretary for Benefits, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs; Ronald E. Walters, Acting Undersecretary for Memorial Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs; and Dr. Kenneth W. Kizer, MD, MPH, Chief Healthcare Transformation Officer and Senior Executive Vice President, Atlas Research, LLC.

Health Administration Committee Meetings

Members of the Health Administration Committee met once during this program year during the virtual 61st Annual Washington Conference on March 2, 2021. The following official addressed the Committee: Andrea N. Goldstein, MALD, Senior Policy Adviser, Women Veterans Task Force, House of Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United States House of Representatives.

National Cemetery Committee Meetings

National Cemetery Committee members met once during this program year. The meeting was held virtually, in conjunction with the Washington Conference on Monday, March 2, 2021. Renea Yates, Director, Office of Army Cemeteries, Arlington National Cemetery, addressed the committee.

TBI/PTSD Committee Meetings

Members of the TBI/PTSD Suicide Prevention Committee met once virtually during this program year on March 3, 2021. This year's meeting had a record-breaking number of Legionnaires in attendance, at 87. The guest speakers included Matt Wetenkamp, Veteran Suicide Prevention Coordinator, and Kelley Tubbs, Acting Transition and Care Management Program Manager at the Washington DC VA Medical Center.

Veterans Benefits Committee Meetings

Members of the Veterans Benefits Committee met once during this program year. The meeting was held virtually, in conjunction with the Washington Conference on Monday, March 2, 2021. William J. Smith, Chairman, Veterans Benefits Committee, addressed the committee.

Awards

William F. Lenker National Service Trophy

National Executive Committee 2006, Resolution No. 2, *Revised Rules Governing The Award Of The William F. Lenker National Service Trophy*, established the current rules governing the National Service Trophy. This award is presented annually to a department of The American Legion that excelled in the welfare and rehabilitation work for war veterans and their dependents. The Department of Pennsylvania received the award for 2020-2021.

Department of Veterans Affairs Health-Care Provider and Physician of the Year

National Executive Committee 2017, Resolution No. 7, *Department of Veterans Affairs Health-care Provider of the Year*, and Resolution No. 8, *Department of Veterans Affairs Physician of the Year*, established awards presented by The American Legion. These awards recognize the contributions that VA health-care providers and physicians have made to the veterans they serve.

For 2020, The American Legion honored all VA health-care providers and physicians for their distinguished public service and commitment to the care of America's veterans during the 2020

COVID-19 global pandemic. Past National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford and National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Chairman Ralph P. Bozella presented these awards to United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough.

VA Voluntary Service Award

National Executive Committee 2015, Resolution No. 21, *Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Award*, established the award presented by the National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission. This award is presented to the outstanding volunteer hospital worker by the national commander at the Washington Conference. As a result of VA facilities restricting volunteer visits due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no award was presented for 2020.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division

Who We Serve

We serve veterans and their families directly or indirectly through the VA&R Commission, its committees and subcommittees.

Our Services

We assist veterans with:

- Access to high-quality and timely health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs
- Processing service-connected disability claims and appeals
- Certifying, training and tracking American Legion-accredited service officers and representatives
- Assisting with representation before Veterans Law Judges, Veterans Law Courts and Decision Review Officers located at VA regional offices
- Coordinating and organizing VA volunteer hours
- Access to debt management services when resulting from VA overpayments
- Assistance and representation before Military Evaluation Boards, Military Discharge Review Boards and Physical Evaluation Boards
- Access to combat veteran pensions for indigent veterans
- Assistance with insurance and pension programs through VA
- Assistance with burial benefits, memorials and services provided by VA’s National Cemetery Administration
- On-site representation and site visits at VA medical centers and regional offices around the country and abroad

Additional Duties

While our primary duties involve direct veteran representation, the VA&R Division supports the VA&R Commission and its committees administratively at all meetings and gatherings of The American Legion, to include National Executive Committee meetings, the national convention, the Washington Conference and as required.

The division staff also participate in congressional research and testimony; evaluation of policy in relation to veterans’ law; and attendance at professional briefings, seminars, workgroups and similar types of sessions at both the national and local levels.

We conduct regular visits to Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities and regional offices to analyze their strengths and weaknesses. We also host one resident service officer training course and two virtual courses annually that teach and refresh a range of advanced skills for claims processors.

The division director oversees and manages a contractual relationship with the law firm Bergmann & Moore, LLC, one of the nation’s foremost authorities on veterans’ law. Services range from training to legal representation of our veteran claimants, to amicus and Supreme Court briefs written and submitted on behalf of The American Legion.

Personnel and Organization

National Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

Director	1
Deputy Director for Veterans Benefits	1
Deputy Director for Health Policy	1
Veterans Program Manager	1
Senior Veterans Disability Claims Specialist	2
Claims Service Coordinator	2
Health Policy Coordinator	5
Administrative Assistant	1

VA Board of Veterans Appeals, Washington D.C.

Team Leader, BVA	1
Team Trainer, BVA	2
Veterans Disability Claims Specialist	8
Claims Administrative Coordinator	2

John H. Geiger Operations Center, Indianapolis, Indiana

Team Leader, BVA	1
Team Trainer, BVA	2
Veterans Disability Claims Specialist	8

VA Regional Office, St. Paul, MN

Team Leader, PMC	1
Veterans Benefits Specialist	2

VA Regional Office, Philadelphia, PA

Veterans Benefits Specialist	1
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Total VA&R Division Staff	42
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Legislative Activities

The VA&R Division staff participated in a total of eleven (11) hearings:

Date	Committee/Subcommittee	Testimony	Subject
22-Jul-20	House Veterans Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations	Katie Purswell	Safety for All: Ending Sexual Harassment in the Department of Veterans Affairs
23-Jul-20	House Veterans Affairs Committee	Katie Purswell	Pending and Draft Legislation
9-Sep-20	Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs	Katie Purswell	Examining S.785 - To Improve VA Mental Health Care
10-Sep-20	House Veterans Affairs Committee	SFR	Pending and Draft Legislation
2-Dec-20	House Veterans Affairs Committee	Jeffrey Steele	Assessing Need to Modernize VHA's Veteran Eligibility Criteria
9 Dec-20	House Veterans Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Disability Assistance & Memorial Affairs	Statement for the Record	Assessing The Process for Determining Presumptive Conditions
18-Mar-21	House Veterans Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Health	Statement for the Record	Improving Healthcare for America's Women Veterans
28-Apr-21	Senate Veterans Affairs Committee	Marty Callaghan	Pending Veterans Health Care and Benefits Legislation
5-May-21	House Veterans Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight, and Investigations	Marty Callaghan	Pending Toxic Exposure Legislation
12-May-21	House Veterans Affairs Committee	Marty Callaghan	Supporting Disabled Veterans: The State of Claims Processing During and After COVID-19
23-Jun-21	Senate Veterans Affairs Committee	Mario Marquez	Pending and Draft Legislation

Informational Services and Distribution

The American Legion has several pamphlets and brochures available upon request to veterans and organizations in need. The VA&R Division offers the following publications:

- *System Worth Saving Annual Report*
- *Agent Orange Benefits & Programs*
- *From Crisis To Confidence*
- *Gulf War Era Benefits & Programs*
- *Know Your Benefits*
- *Longman-Gordon Report – VA Healthcare: A System Worth Saving*
- *Missing In America Project Brochure*
- *Post Service Officer Guide*
- *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*
- *Service Officer Code of Procedure*
- *The Road Home – Treatment of TBI and PTSD*
- *The War Within – Treatment of Traumatic Brain Injury and Post-Traumatic Stress*
- *Veteran Suicide White Paper*
- *Veterans Affairs Service Brochure*
- *Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Handbook*
- *What To Do Before a Veteran Dies*

Claims Services

The Claims Services staff assist veterans, servicemembers and their families on issues pertaining to the filing of disability and pension claims to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the appeal of denied claims to the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA), burial benefits and memorial affairs, the Department of Defense (DoD) Medical Evaluation Process, and Discharge Review and Correction of Military Records.

Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA)

Veterans Disability Claims Specialists represent veterans before the BVA. They review VA claim files, interview claimants in preparation for personal or virtual hearings, write informal hearing presentation (IHPs), and act as counsel on behalf of claimants at their BVA hearings.

During this program year, The American Legion's Board (BVA) Unit prepared nearly 15,000 informal hearing presentations (IHPs) on behalf of veterans' claims appeals, for a monthly average of about 1,250. For the 10,705 appeals that received BVA dispositions during the program year, about 29 percent of them were granted, 45 percent were remanded to agencies of jurisdiction for further development and 21 percent were denied.

As of June 30, 2021, there were 3,357 legacy cases and 2,419 AMA cases assigned to the Legion's Board Unit (20 claims specialists, 2 team leaders and 2 administrative staff).

The American Legion has found that VA regional offices continue to develop veterans' claims inadequately and deny them without good cause. The VBA's lack of proper claim development initially results in further adjudication of those claims, thus extending the time veterans must wait before final decisions are made.

Through continuous professional training and thorough knowledge of VA laws and regulations, American Legion staff achieve more favorable outcomes in their advocacy efforts. The American Legion's legal and training partner, Bergmann & Moore, LLC, provides critical

training to new claims specialists so they may successfully represent claimants. Additionally, Bergmann & Moore’s legal team provides unit and individual training that covers significant changes to federal law or regulations and recent court decisions that influence veterans’ law.

Memorial Affairs

Claims Services staff ensure that veterans and dependents are honored at their final resting places in VA national cemeteries, Arlington National Cemetery, state, tribal or private cemeteries. They provide assistance on National Cemetery Administration (NCA) burial benefits, including headstones, markers, medallions, Presidential Memorial Certificates, military honors, burial flags, burial allowances and survivor benefits.

Discharge Review and Correction of Military Records

Title 10, United States Code, sections 1552 and 1553, provide statutory authority for the existence and operation of the Military Discharge Review Boards and the Boards for Correction of Military Records. The American Legion was instrumental in the creation of these boards shortly after World War II and since then has represented veterans who petition them for relief.

Assistance is provided by representing applicants before such boards, educating veterans on their due process and how to apply, review and submit applications, and conducting outreach to veterans with “bad paper” discharges. The American Legion is the only major veterans service organization that still helps with applications for discharge upgrades.

Applications for upgrades involve a variety of issues, including character of service upgrades, narrative reason for discharge changes, entitlement or amendment of physical disability severance or retirement, issuance or reissuance of military decorations, requests for military personnel files and service medical records, and administrative corrections to official military records.

Claims Services has two Senior Veterans Disability Claims Specialists (SVDCSs) in its Washington, D.C., office who help veterans with discharge upgrades, disability claims, appeals and other matters related to veterans’ benefits. From July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021, these senior service officers helped 470 veterans with discharge upgrade applications and/or correction of military records. They also assisted 1,726 veterans with their VA Compensation & Pension claims.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, VA regional offices (VAROs) were closed to the public on March 19, 2020, and many of them remained closed – at least partially – through June 2021. As most of The American Legion’s department service officers (DSOs) are co-located at VAROs, their offices were closed as well. Subsequently, many veterans who contacted our SVDCSs in Washington were calling from all parts of the country seeking assistance when they were unable to reach their Legion DSOs.

Before the pandemic, our SVDCs mainly assisted veterans within D.C.’s greater metro area, usually referring out-of-area callers to their respective Legion departments for assistance. The prolonged lack of local/regional assistance meant that more veterans had to contact our Washington, D.C., office for help.

Health Policy

The Health Policy staff ensures the VA health-care system remains the health-care system of choice for veterans. The Health Policy portfolio includes: Cancer, Cannabis, Caregivers, Dental, Electronic Health Record Modernization, Geriatric and Extended Care, Infrastructure, Insurance,

Mental Health, Minority Health, Military Sexual Trauma, Peer Support, Pharmacy, Post Traumatic Stress, Recruitment and Retention, Rehabilitation and Prosthetics, Rural Health, Spinal Cord Injury and Disease, Substance Use Disorder, Suicide Awareness and Prevention, Traumatic Brain Injury, Telehealth, Toxic Exposure and Women’s Health.

System Worth Saving (SWS)

In 2003, then-National Commander Ron Conley visited and assessed the delivery of health care at more than 60 Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities across the country. Commander Conley assessed the delivery of health care delivered to the nation’s veterans to determine if the VA health-care system was a “System Worth Saving.”

The following year, The American Legion passed a resolution making System Worth Saving a permanent program under the national commander. The American Legion’s National Executive Committee later realigned the program under the VA&R Commission.

Annually, commission members and staff conduct a series of site visits to VA medical facilities and regional offices. While on site, they meet with veterans, their families, and VA administrators and employees to discuss successes, challenges and limitations. Each site visit culminates with a report that informs the members of The American Legion and provides additional insight to the president of the United States, members of Congress, and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. After nearly two decades, The American Legion has conducted more than 150 System Worth Saving visits to VA facilities in the United States, its territories and the Philippines.

The American Legion remains true to one of its original purposes stated in the original chartering documentation in 1919, “to consecrate the efforts of its members to mutual helpfulness and service to the country.” Since then, The American Legion remains committed to mutual helpfulness by ensuring that VA continues intact and properly funded to achieve President Abraham Lincoln’s charge, “To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan.” The American Legion believes in the quality of care at VA facilities, and we stand behind our mantra that it’s a “System Worth Saving.”

Health Policy Coordinators conduct SWS site visits in Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISN) managed by the VA Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The purpose of SWS site visits is to understand what works best at medical centers, identify challenges and make recommendations to help overcome them. Health Policy staff selects VA/VHA sites through a ranked selection process and recommendations to the VA&R Commission. Health Policy staff ranks and recommends visits to VA/VHA health facilities based on requests from American Legion departments, reports from the VA Office of the Inspector General (VAOIG) and Government Accountability Office (GAO), VA’s Nationwide Access Reports, Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) model, and the media. A SWS site visit covers two and a half days: it consists of a veteran-focused town hall meeting, a visit to the local VA health-care facility, and a meeting with the medical center executive leadership team. At the end of each SWS site visit, a report is issued and shared with the medical center, the VA secretary and undersecretary of health, members of Congress, and the president of the United States.

The VA&R Division was unable to conduct SWS visits during the period covered in this report due to COVID-19 restrictions. The American Legion intends to commence these visits as soon as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and it is safe for all parties involved to conduct such visits. The Department of Veterans Affairs requested that all remaining 2021 visits that were on the schedule be delayed until 2022.

Proposed SWS site visits for 2022:

- January 2022 – Hot Springs, AR
- February 2022 – San Juan, PR
- March 2022 – Sacramento, CA
- April 2022 – Leavenworth, KS
- May 2022 – Bronx, NY
- June 2022 - Chicago, IL

TBI and PTSD Suicide Prevention Programs

In 2020, The American Legion declared suicide prevention one of its top priorities. Increasingly concerned by the number of veterans taking their own lives, The American Legion established a Suicide Prevention Program and aligned the program under the TBI/PTSD Suicide Prevention Committee. This committee reviews methods, programs and strategies that can be used to treat TBI and PTSD. To reduce veteran suicide, this committee seeks to influence legislation and operational policies that can facilitate quality health care for veterans - regardless of their era of wartime service.

To stay informed on suicide prevention issues, the Health Policy Coordinators attended 35 summits and events, including the 2021 Suicide Prevention Summit, which covered topics such as: Innovation in Men’s Mental Health; Using Humor, Media and Digital Engagement to Promote Mental Health and Prevent Suicide for High-Risk Men; A Strengths-Based Approach to Suicide Assessment and Treatment; and Planning for Safety and Post-traumatic Growth.

Additionally, Health Policy Coordinators attended Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program listening sessions, and discussion of critical issues impacting veterans and associated VA budget recommendations for fiscal 2022 and 2023.

VA Voluntary Services

The American Legion’s Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) program continues to support VA initiatives that support the care and treatment of veteran patients in VA medical facilities. Unfortunately, due to VA’s limitations on volunteers visiting their local facilities as a precaution against the spread of COVID-19, many Legionnaires could not volunteer at the normal rates to which the organization is accustomed. The past program year saw a significant decrease in hours volunteered by Legionnaires at VA facilities, which include VA medical centers, community clinics, vet centers, Fisher Houses, state veteran’s homes and national cemeteries.

A total of 2,244 regularly scheduled volunteers contributed 206,013 hours, and 3,340 occasional visits contributed an additional 17,372 hours, for a grand total of 223,385 hours volunteered by Legionnaires – saving VA over \$6 million in 2020-2021.

Also, in early 2021, the VAVS Program Office was realigned to the VA’s Assistant Undersecretary for Health for Operations (AUSHO) to more accurately reflect the scope of its services. To further support this clarification of mission and scope, VAVS also underwent a name change to become the VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE). This name change allows for the maintaining of the core mission established in 1946, to “integrate volunteers, donations and community partners into VA operations so that they may supplement and sustain the care and services provided to America’s veterans, their families and caregivers.”

The bottom line for all Legionnaires is that this name change has no fundamental operational change to volunteering, and the VAVS name and current logos can and will still be used by volunteers, VA facilities and partnering organizations.

Veterans Benefits

The Veterans Benefits staff improves the quality of veterans' lives by developing policy and activities relative to the VA's benefits programs, as well as providing input to VA's Debt Management Center, Pension Management Center and Life Insurance program.

During the early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of General Counsel (OGC) staff responsible for processing VA Form 21s (Application for Accreditation as Service Organization Representative) resigned from their positions. A new employee was hired and spent several weeks in training. During this staffing changeover, The American Legion's veterans benefit coordinators were informed by OGC that an IT issue caused many accreditation applications to be lost. After rectifying the email issue, OGC staff then informed The American Legion that they had another project that took precedent over the approval of accreditation applications and the recertification of accredited representatives. OGC had only one full-time employee responsible for processing VA Form 21s for not only The American Legion, but for all veterans service organizations. Eventually, OGC hired more staff members to assist with the accreditations. Subsequently, the average length of time spent for the approval process was reduced from several weeks to approximately seven business days.

During the program year, the Veterans Benefits team has certified the applications of 500 Legion-accredited representatives and forwarded them to OGC for approval.

Regional Office Action Review (ROAR)

Scheduled ROAR site visits were not carried out during the program year because of the continuing pandemic, which included the spread of a COVID-19 Delta variant that caused an infection "spike" across the country.

Proposed ROAR site visits for 2022:

- January 2022 – Little Rock, AR
- February 2022 – San Juan, PR
- March 2022 – Oakland, CA
- April 2022 – St. Petersburg, FL
- May 2022 – Huntington, WV
- June 2022 – Chicago, IL

Department Service Officers (DSO) School

Since 1985, The American Legion has authorized the VA&R Commission to conduct Department Service Officer (DSO) schools twice a year for accredited representatives of The American Legion. This bi-annual school represents the organization's ongoing commitment to developing a network of highly trained and experienced service officers to effectively advocate for veterans and their families. During the 2020-2021 year, DSO school was modified due to COVID-19 and virtual courses were conducted for the first time in the course's history.

The purpose of the DSO school is to provide current information about changes in veterans law, VA regulations and VA adjudication policies. The DSO school enables American Legion service officers and other accredited representatives to improve their advocacy skills.

The program of instruction includes training suitable for new service officers and advanced training on issues relating to claims processing, disability ratings, personal hearings, development of appeals, and the interpretation and application of precedential decisions by the U.S Court of Appeals for Veterans' Claims and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

The American Legion conducted two online sessions of DSO School:

- Summer 2020: An online DSO School was conducted Aug. 5-31, which included 29 lessons plus a course evaluation and final exam. A total of 201 students graduated from the course, completing all lessons and passing the final examination.
- Spring 2021: A second online school (with 26 lessons) was conducted March 8-26; an additional "overflow" session was held April 5-23. For the March session 180 students graduated, and another 179 graduated in April.
- A grand total of 560 Legion-accredited representatives graduated from DSO School during the program year.

Pension Management Center (PMC)

The VA PMC processes adjustments of benefits for individuals in receipt of nonservice-connected disability pension, death pension and dependency indemnity compensation. Nonservice-connected pension is a need-based benefit available for "most at need" wartime service veterans and their dependents. The American Legion's Veterans Benefits Specialists are in St. Paul, Minn., and Philadelphia, Pa. They expedite the delivery of benefits when beneficiaries meet the criteria for receipt to reduce a financial hardship. This is accomplished by reviewing all claims for accuracy, ensuring that supporting material is included, acting as the counsel, presenting verbal arguments on behalf of a claimant before VA, and preparing claimants for their hearings. This program year, the following activities were reported: 3,531 new pension claims and 179 appeals.

Debt Management Center (DMC)

The VA DMC assists veterans and dependents facing collection actions or garnishment of VA benefits for debts owed to VA. Assistance is provided by acting as the point of contact between the beneficiary and DMC, submitting documentation to stop garnishment of funds, establishing payment plans when appropriate, requesting waivers of debt, and reviewing all casework presented to DMC to ensure accuracy and completeness. The St. Paul office assisted in 600 cases where waiver grants were approved.

Restricted Access Claim Center (RACC)

Sensitive files belonging to current and former senior government officials, VA employees and veterans service organization representatives are handled at the St. Paul Restricted Access Claim Center. This program year, 244 restricted access compensation claims were processed.

VA Life Insurance

VA life insurance, including Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (S-DVI), Veterans Group Life Insurance and Family SGLI, TSGLI, and Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance, are handled at the VA Insurance Center in Philadelphia, Pa. The American Legion's Veterans Benefits Specialists assist surviving beneficiaries to file for disbursement of policy at the time of need and ensure that veterans are aware of eligibility windows for enrollment. This program year, the Legion assisted 966 insurance beneficiaries.

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