

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION

Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado
Chairman

Katie Purswell, Maryland
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, 2021, to June 30, 2022.

Resolutions

The 102nd National Convention in Phoenix, and Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 meetings of the National Executive Committee in Indianapolis, approved positions expressed in resolutions submitted to those bodies through the Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and the National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission, respectively. The approved resolutions are as follows:

2021 National Convention
Phoenix, Arizona
Aug. 31, Sept. 1, 2, 2021

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
8	Child Care at Vet Centers	CA
20	Veterans Health Administration Include Medical Emergency Transportation to the Episode of Care	MN
21	Extend the Presumptive Period For Service Connection For Gulf War Veterans with Undiagnosed Illnesses	MN
22	Department of Veterans Affairs Update Locator Tool to Include In-Network Community Emergency Care Providers	MN
24	Awarding the Purple Heart for Traumatic Brain Injury	NY
25	Reconciliation of Traumatic Memories Protocol for Treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	NY
31	Expansion of the Central Missouri National Cemetery	MO
34	Department of Veterans Affairs Generate Reminder Letters for Expiring Claims Submissions	IL
36	Prevent Gold Star Spouses Loss of Benefits	IL
38	Predatory Claims Companies	VA&R

2021 National Executive Committee Meeting
Indianapolis, Indiana
Oct. 6-7, 2021

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
18	Quality of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supplied Veterans' Casket Flags	OK
19	Improving Telehealth Access	VA&R
20	Home and Community-Based Services and Veteran Choice To Age In Place	VA&R
21	Expanding Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) Coverage	VA&R
22	Classified Incidents for Department of Veterans Affairs Claims Purposes	VA&R

2022 National Executive Committee Meeting
Indianapolis, Indiana
May 4-5, 2022

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
10	Care for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, + (LGBTQ+) Veteran Community	VA&R
11	Automatic Enrollment into Veterans Health Care System	VA&R
12	Appointment of Judges with Veterans Law Expertise to the U. S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Court	VA&R
13	Standards and Training for Community Care Providers	VA&R
14	Department of Veterans Affairs Suicide Prevention Programs	VA&R
15	Department of Veterans Affairs Prosthetic Program	VA&R
16	Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protections	VA&R
17	Continuum of Care and Mental Health Supports	VA&R
18	Comprehensive Supports for Caregiver Support Program	VA&R

Commission/Committee Meetings

VA&R Commission Meetings

The VA&R Commission met twice during this program year. The first meeting was held on Aug. 27, 2021, during the 102nd National Convention in Phoenix. The second meeting took place virtually in conjunction with the 62nd Annual Washington Conference on March 5, 2022.

The first meeting was held in the Phoenix Convention Center, South Building, Ballroom on Saturday, Aug. 28, 2021. The following officials addressed the commission's morning session: Dr. Carolyn M. Clancy, assistant undersecretary for health, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs; Michael J. Frueh, principal deputy undersecretary for benefits, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs; Army Maj. Gen. Matthew T. Quinn (ret.), undersecretary for memorial affairs, National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs.

The second meeting was held virtually on Monday, March 5, 2022. The following officials addressed the commission: The Hon. Denis McDonough, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs; Dr. Carolyn Clancy, assistant undersecretary for health for Discovery, Education, and Affiliate Networks, Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Department of Veterans Affairs; Michael Frueh, principal deputy undersecretary for benefits, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), Department of Veterans Affairs; and The Hon. Matthew Quinn, undersecretary for memorial affairs, National Cemetery Administration (NCA), Department of Veterans Affairs.

Health Administration Committee Meetings

Members of the Health Administration Committee met twice during this program year. The first meeting was held on Aug. 28, 2021, during the 102nd National Convention in Phoenix. The second meeting took place in conjunction with the virtual 62nd Annual Washington Conference on March 5, 2022.

The first annual meeting was held in the Phoenix Convention Center, South Building, Room 160-167 on Saturday, Aug. 28, 2021. The following official addressed the committee: Dr. Ronald Rutherford, lead for Whole Health Outreach, Veterans Affairs Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation, Department of Veteran Affairs.

The second annual meeting was held virtually, hosted by American Legion Headquarters in Washington, D.C. on Saturday, March 5, 2022 via Zoom. The following officials addressed the committee: Daniel Abrahamson and Mr. Kaufman, Mobile Prosthetics and Orthotics Care Unit, Veterans Affairs Office of Rural Health, Department of Veterans Affairs.

National Cemetery Committee Meetings

Members of the National Cemetery Committee met twice during this program year. The first meeting was held on Aug. 28, 2021, during the 102nd National Convention in Phoenix. The second meeting took place in conjunction with the 62nd Annual Washington Conference on March 5, 2022.

The first meeting was held in the Phoenix Convention Center, South Building, 150-159, on Saturday, Aug. 28, 2021. Glenn Powers, the deputy undersecretary for field programs and cemetery operations, National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, addressed the committee.

The second meeting was held virtually, via Zoom, on Saturday, March 5, 2022. The following officials addressed the committee: James LaPaglia, digital services chief, National Cemetery Administration; and Gerardo Avila, executive assistant to the undersecretary for memorial affairs, National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs.

TBI/PTSD/Suicide Prevention Committee Meetings

Members of the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)/Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)/Suicide Prevention Committee met twice during this program year. The first meeting was held on Aug. 27, 2021, during the 102nd National Convention in Phoenix. The second meeting took place in conjunction with the virtual 62nd Annual Washington Conference on March 5, 2022.

The first annual meeting was held in the Phoenix Convention Center, North Building, 2nd Floor, Room 225 on Friday, Aug. 27, 2021. The following official addressed the committee: Dr. David Rudd, president of the University of Memphis, Distinguished University Professor of Psychology; Dean Kessel, chief marketing officer, The American Legion; and Dr. Jeanne Stellman, professor emerita and special lecturer, Department of Health Policy & Management, School of Public Health, Columbia University.

The second annual meeting was held virtually, hosted by American Legion Headquarters in Washington, D.C. on Saturday, March 5, 2022. The following officials addressed the committee: Scott Wert, military program manager, Concussion Legacy Foundation; and Dr. Christopher Nowinski, co-founder and chief executive officer, Concussion Legacy Foundation.

Veterans Benefits Committee Meetings

Members of the Veterans Benefits Committee met twice during this program year. The first meeting was held in August 2021 during the 102nd National Convention in Phoenix. The second meeting took place in conjunction with the 62nd Annual Washington Conference in March 2022.

The first annual meeting was held in the Phoenix Convention Center, South Building, Ballroom on Saturday, Aug. 28. The guest speaker was Julie Lawrence, chief of operations for the Treasury, Education and External Relations Division at VA's Debt Management Center. She provided detailed information on the resumption in October of VA-related debt collection from veterans, which had been suspended in 2020 because of the COVID pandemic.

The second annual meeting was held virtually as part of this year's Washington Conference on March 5. The guest speaker was Paul Sullivan, director of veteran outreach for the law firm Bergmann & Moore, LLC. He explained to committee members the rising threat of predatory claims companies to our country's veteran community and provided updates on our semi-annual Department Service Officer School and a new Department Service Officer. A symposium is planned for October 2024.

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. At the 102nd National Convention in Phoenix, the Department of Pennsylvania received the award for 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 VA health-care providers and physicians have made to the veterans they serve.

At the 2022 Washington Conference, Registered Nurse Kim Stewart of the Sebring, Fla., VA Community Based Outpatient Center and Dr. Joel N. Syvrud of the St. Cloud, Minn., VA Medical Center received these awards, respectively, for 2021.

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 annually to the outstanding volunteer hospital worker from the department of the national commander at the Washington Conference. The in-person 2022 Washington Conference was canceled by the national commander due to COVID-19 considerations and the limited number of VA facilities that allowed volunteers to return to their sites. Therefore, no award was presented for 2021.

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 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.

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 two resident service officer training 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 Claims Services	1
Deputy Director for Health Policy	1
Senior Veterans Disability Claims Specialist	2
TBI & PTSD Programs Coordinator	1
Veterans Benefits Coordinator	2
Health Policy Coordinator	3
Administrative Assistant	1

American Legion Board of Veterans’ Appeals (BVA) Unit

Team Leader	2
Team Trainer	4
Veterans Disability Claims Specialist	16
Administrative Staff	2

American Legion Pension Management Center

Team Leader	1
Veterans Benefits Specialist	2

Total VA&R Division Staff **39**

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 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), the Department of Defense (DoD) Medical Evaluation Process, military discharge upgrades and the correction of military records.

Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) Unit

Veterans disability claims specialists represent veterans and surviving spouses before the BVA. They review VA electronic claims files, interview appellants in preparation for in-person or virtual board hearings before veterans' law judges, write informal hearing presentations (IHPs), and act as counsel on behalf of appellants at their hearings.

During this program year, The American Legion's Board (BVA) Unit prepared more than 16,000 IHPs for a monthly average of about 1,365. In addition, veterans disability claims specialists assisted appellants with a total of 84 hearings. For the 12,424 appeals that received BVA dispositions, over 31 percent were granted, 46 percent were remanded to the agency of original jurisdiction for further development, and less than 18 percent were denied. For BVA appeals decided during the program year – that resulted in favorable decisions following our submission of IHPs – the efforts of our Board Unit helped in the granting of retroactive benefits that totaled nearly \$83,000,000.

As of June 30, 2022, there were 1,036 legacy cases and 778 AMA cases assigned to the Legion's Board Unit (20 claims specialists, two team leaders and two administrative staff).

The American Legion continues to find that some claims adjudicators at VA regional offices fail to develop veterans' claims adequately and deny them without good cause. We note that at BVA, lay evidence is routinely given appropriate consideration, often leading to a favorable decision. The U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims has held in several decisions that lay statements must be properly considered when determining service connection for injuries and illnesses.

However, many VA medical examiners and claims adjudicators fail to adequately consider lay evidence when rendering medical opinions or rating decisions. The lack of proper claim development and failure to give probative value to lay evidence results in unfair denials that must be addressed with appeals, 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 Legion's legal and training partner, Bergmann & Moore, LLC, provides critical training to new claims specialists so they may successfully represent appellants. 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 affect veterans' law as well as refresher training on key topics.

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 Upgrades 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 veterans with their applications for discharge upgrades.

Such applications 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, 2021, through June 30, 2022, these veterans service officers helped 1,156 veterans or dependents with filing for VA benefits, including

825 with disability claims. The Legion also helped veterans with applying for burial benefits, GI Bill benefits and enrolling in VA health care.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many VA regional offices (VAROs) remained closed to the public through June 2022. 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.

Health Policy

The Health Policy staff ensures that VA remains the health-care system of choice for veterans. The Health Policy portfolio includes: Hospitals, Clinics and Vet Centers, Caregivers, Telehealth Services, VA Voluntary Service, Mental Health, Suicide Prevention, Substance Abuse, Military Sexual Trauma, PTSD, Polytrauma/TBI, Women Veterans Health Care, Vaccines and Immunization, Seniors (Geriatrics and Extended Care), Minority Health, Rural Health, Spinal Cord Injuries and Disorders, Rehabilitation and Prosthetic Services (Amputation, Audiology & Speech Pathology, Automobile Adaptive Equipment, Blind Rehabilitation, Chiropractic Care, Home Improvements and Structural Alterations, Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service, and Recreation Therapy).

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 truly worth saving.

The following year, The American Legion passed a resolution making System Worth Saving (SWS) 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 its original charter of 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 as an intact and properly funded entity to care for veterans and their families. The American Legion believes in the quality of care at VA facilities, and we stand behind our commitment to a "System Worth Saving."

Health Policy Coordinators conduct SWS site visits to VA medical centers managed by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The purpose of SWS site visits is to identify best practices 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 via 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 VA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and Government Accountability Office (GAO), VA's Nationwide Access Reports, Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) model and the media.

A site visit consists of a veterans town hall meeting, a visit to the local VA medical center, and a meeting with the facility's executive leadership. At the end of each SWS site visit, a report is issued that is shared with the medical center, VA's secretary and undersecretary of health, members of Congress and the president of the United States.

An SWS site visit usually lasts two-and-a-half days, beginning with a veterans town hall meeting on the evening of the first day. The second and third days consist of visits to the local VA health-care facility, and meetings with the executive leadership and departmental staff to discuss challenges and best practices.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the continued restrictions, the first SWS site visit since 2019 was conducted on July 11-13, 2022. Though COVID restrictions in VA facilities continue to fluctuate, SWS site visits have resumed and will continue as long as permitted in regards to medical safety.

TBI and PTSD Programs

In 2019, The American Legion declared suicide prevention as 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 Committee. This committee reviews methods, programs and strategies that can be used to treat TBI and PTSD. In order 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 TBI, PTSD and suicide prevention issues, the assigned Health Policy Analyst attended in-person meetings, webinars and roundtable discussions on improved and new research approaches, treatment protocols and prevention programs for TBI, PTSD and suicide prevention. Connections were made between The American Legion and other organizations specializing in brain donation, alternative medicine research and mitigation programs surrounding veteran suicide and the effects on families.

Additionally, the TBI/PTSD/Suicide Prevention staff is working to produce user-friendly products, such as a tri-fold pamphlet and other digital resources, to increase the connection between veterans and mental health resources.

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. During the past program year, Legionnaires volunteered at 195 VA facilities, which included VA medical centers, community clinics, Vet Centers, Fisher Houses, state veteran's homes and national cemeteries.

A total of 2,487 regularly scheduled volunteers contributed 297,631.50 hours, and 4,474 occasional visits contributed an additional 22,185.50 hours, for a grand total of 319,817 hours volunteered by Legionnaires – saving VA more than \$9.5 million in 2021.

Veterans Benefits

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

During the program year, the Veterans Benefits team certified the applications of 450 Legion-accredited representatives and forwarded them to VA's Office of General Counsel for approval.

Regional Office Action Review (ROAR)

ROAR site visits were not scheduled during the program year because of the continuing pandemic, which included the spread of a new, more contagious variant: Omicron. The original Omicron strain (BA.1) was first identified in Botswana and South Africa in late November 2021, and cases quickly began to surface and multiply in other countries. By December, Omicron was causing daily case numbers in the United States to skyrocket to over a million. However, plans are underway to resume the ROAR program this year, sometime after July 1.

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 semi-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 dependents.

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 on issues relating to claims processing, disability ratings, development of appeals, representing appellants at BVA hearings, 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 sessions of DSO School during this program year:

- Sept. 7-24, 2021: An online DSO School was conducted that included lessons on 27 topics, plus a course evaluation and final exam. A total of 248 students were registered, with 205 completing the course successfully.
- March 7-27, 2022: A second online DSO School was conducted with a total of 225 students registering; 198 of them completed the course successfully.

Thus, a grand total of 473 Legion-accredited representatives registered for DSO School during the program year, with 403 successfully completing the course (85.2 percent).

Pension Management Center (PMC)

The American Legion's Pension Management Center processes adjustments of benefits for individuals in receipt of non-service-connected disability pension, death pension and dependency indemnity compensation. Non-service-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 located in St. Paul, Minn., and Philadelphia. They expedite the delivery of benefits when beneficiaries meet the criteria for receipt in order to reduce a financial hardship. This is accomplished by reviewing all claims for accuracy, ensuring that supporting material is included, acting as the counsel and presenting verbal arguments on behalf of a claimant before VA, and preparing claimants for their hearings. This program year, the following activities were reported: 2,080 new pension claims and 191 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 665 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, 222 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. The American Legion’s Veterans Benefits Specialist assigned there assists surviving beneficiaries to file for disbursement of policy at the time of need and ensures that veterans are aware of eligibility windows for enrollment. This program year, the Legion assisted 1,669 insurance beneficiaries.

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