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Executive Director

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Rick Scott
Governor
Pam Bondi
Attorney General
Jeff Atwater
Chief Financial Officer
Adam Putnam
Commissioner of Agriculture

November 25, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Rick Scott
Honorable Pam Bondi
Honorable Jeff Atwater
Honorable Adam Putnam

FROM: Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs
Mike Prendergast, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Agenda – Cabinet Meeting of December 8, 2015

The next public meeting of the Governor and Cabinet to transact the business of the Department of Veterans' Affairs will be at 9:00 a.m. (EST), December 8, 2015 in Tallahassee, Florida.

The Agenda and all required back-up materials are attached for your review.

If you have any questions, please call my Acting Cabinet Affairs Officer Jessica Kraynak, at (850) 487-1533 x7712.

cc: Monica Russell, Director of Cabinet Affairs
Executive Office of the Governor

Cynthia Kelly, Director
Governor's Office of Policy and Budget

Attachments

AGENDA
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS
Meeting materials for the following items are available on the web at:
<http://floridavets.org/2015-public-notice/>

MEMBERS

Governor Rick Scott
Attorney General Pam Bondi
Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater
Commissioner Adam Putnam

December 8, 2015
9:00 A.M. (EST)
LL-03, The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida

Contact: Jessica Kraynak, Acting Director, Legislative & Cabinet Affairs
(850) 487-1533

ITEM	SUBJECT	RECOMMENDATION
1.	Respectfully request approval of the minutes of the November 10, 2015 meeting. (ATTACHMENT 1)	RECOMMEND APPROVAL
2.	Respectfully submit the Agency's Performance Measures. (ATTACHMENT 2)	RECOMMEND APPROVAL
3.	Respectfully submit the Agency's Annual Report. (ATTACHMENT 3)	RECOMMEND APPROVAL

1 DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

2

3 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Next I'd like to
4 recognize Mike Prendergast with the Department
5 of Veterans Affairs.

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PRENDERGAST: Good
7 morning, again, Governor Scott, Attorney
8 General Bondi, CFO Atwater and Commissioner
9 Putnam.

10 With tomorrow being Veterans Day, it's
11 appropriate that we get up and talk about the
12 veteran's issues across the state. We've got a
13 couple of items on the agenda, but I'd like to
14 come back to what our colleague, Jesse Panuccio
15 was talking about.

16 Florida has done a remarkable job in
17 helping veterans find employment in the
18 Sunshine State over the past four years. And
19 it's been due in partnership to us working very
20 closely with the Department of Economic
21 Opportunity and being a participant in
22 Paychecks for Patriots, but also working with
23 our colleagues like Secretary Ken Lawson at the
24 Department of Business and Professional
25 Regulation, who's worked tirelessly to make

1 sure that our veterans and their family
2 members, who'd like to get a business license
3 in Florida, have a streamlined process to go
4 and get a business license in Florida and join
5 the workforce that way.

6 In addition, folks like our Surgeon
7 General, Dr. John Armstrong, has worked as well
8 tirelessly to ensure that those veterans who
9 come back with medical licenses and other
10 licenses to practice medicine in the state or
11 nursing in the state, they found an opportunity
12 to get into the workforce very quickly. And
13 what's one of the reasons why our unemployment
14 rate in the veterans community is lower than
15 overall state population's unemployment rate,
16 with us also, that we're one out of the leaders
17 in the state.

18 And we are coming close to eclipsing
19 taxes, Governor Scott, when it comes to veteran
20 unemployment and we look forward to coming back
21 at a future cabinet meeting and telling you
22 about that as well.

23 The Department of Veterans Affairs has
24 three agenda items for your attention today.
25 Agenda Item 1, is the minutes of the

1 September 29th, 2015 cabinet meeting. We
2 respectfully request approval.

3 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Is there a motion on the
4 item?

5 **ATTORNEY GENERAL BONDI:** So moved.

6 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Is there a second?

7 **COMMISSIONER PUTNAM:** Second.

8 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Any comments or
9 objections?

10 (NO RESPONSE):

11 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Hearing none, the motion
12 carries.

13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PRENDERGAST:** Thank
14 you. Agenda Item 2 is the agency's first
15 quarter report for fiscal year 2015/2016. And
16 I'd like to just provide a couple of highlights
17 for you next.

18 Last quarter the agency was hosting the
19 National Association of State Directors of
20 Veterans Affairs Conference in Orlando. Many
21 of our nation's 55 state and territory Veterans
22 Affairs agency heads, along with some other key
23 leaders from other states, attended the
24 conference to provide a forum to discuss
25 nationwide issues that are confronting our

1 veterans and their family members. And also to
2 have a forum with our colleagues at the US
3 Department of Veterans Affairs to share the
4 cutting edge practices that they're using, but
5 also share some of the best practices that our
6 state colleagues are embracing or actually
7 learning from.

8 Like the outreach and branding campaign
9 that our own agency did, that won a national
10 award this year where Allan and Steve were up
11 in Washington DC for the meeting with Secretary
12 McDonald.

13 That forum has been around since 1947 and
14 it's been a real opportunity for our leaders in
15 the Veterans Affairs community to participate
16 in that. And we look forward to more
17 opportunities to learn and grow and develop
18 professionally from future conferences with our
19 colleagues.

20 In our Homes Divisions, we continue to
21 meet many positive milestones this quarter with
22 respect to the Ardie R. Copas State Veterans
23 Nursing Home, our Seventh State Veterans
24 Nursing Home, which will be located in Port St.
25 Lucie. This includes the approval of the

1 Historical Preservation and the Phase 1
2 Environmental Survey, which will take us into
3 the Phase 2 Environmental Assessment.

4 Turning now to our Homes Division overall.
5 Our nursing home occupancy trends remain steady
6 at 98 percent or greater. And occupancy rates
7 across the board for our homes show a great
8 trend and an opportunity to provide more bed
9 space into the communities around the state
10 that they are presently unserved by our nursing
11 home capacity.

12 We remain a leader in providing great
13 quality care for our veterans. And to continue
14 to better serve our veterans and our staff, we
15 briefed you last August that we're in the
16 requisition process for a grant to obtain the
17 safety lift systems in the amount of just over
18 \$6 million. 4 million in a federal matching
19 grant and 2.1 million from our own Operations
20 and Maintenance Trust Fund.

21 These systems will increase the safe and
22 efficient lifting and transfer of residents
23 from their beds to a wheelchair, while reducing
24 the risk of injury to residents and staff. And
25 we're just in the final elements of the

1 negotiation for the contract and we look
2 forward to announcing that in the not too
3 distant future.

4 In our Division of Benefits and
5 Assistance, our claims examiners advocated for
6 over 70,000 veterans and their families. And
7 at the same time they reviewed and processed
8 over 4,000 claims for disability benefits.
9 Overall dollars and retroactive compensation
10 for the year totaled \$134 million last year for
11 veterans. And we look forward to our report on
12 additional dollars in the quarters ahead.

13 We will continue to meet the high
14 operational temple of supporting our veterans.
15 And although we've had some loss of experienced
16 claims examiners in the field, which places a
17 heavier burden on some of our remaining claims
18 examiners. However, we've brought on five new
19 claims examiners in September, beginning their
20 one year period of probationary training, so
21 that they can be the world class pentathletes
22 that help us whenever they've completed their
23 training in probationary period.

24 In other news regarding customer service
25 to our veterans. The Benefits and Assistance

1 Division has transitioned to a new VetraSpec
2 veterans benefits software package starting in
3 mid-August. And we were able to successfully
4 transfer more than 600,000 records over from
5 our legacy system onto the new system since
6 that time.

7 And from this new system, we anticipate a
8 greater reporting ability pertaining to
9 veterans, once the agency is fully transitioned
10 into the new VetraSpec system.

11 One of our bureaus assisted nearly 18,200
12 veterans who walked across the agency's doors
13 and supported of the 149 veterans outreach
14 events, including Two Governors Record Service
15 Board Ceremonies for the quarter and
16 disseminated over 6,000 packets of information
17 to veterans and their families at these events
18 when they attended them.

19 The Division also conducted another
20 statutorily mandated certification course to
21 allow our county veterans service officers in
22 our 67 counties to assist veterans with getting
23 the access to their own services and benefits.
24 We respectfully request approval of the
25 agency's third quarter report.

1 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Any questions?

2 (NO RESPONSE):

3 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** All right. Is there a
4 motion to accept?

5 **ATTORNEY GENERAL BONDI:** So moved.

6 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Is there a second?

7 **COMMISSIONER PUTNAM:** Second.

8 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Any comments or
9 objections?

10 (NO RESPONSE):

11 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Hearing none, the motion
12 carries.

13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PRENDERGAST:** Thank
14 you. Agenda Item 3 is the agency's State
15 Veterans Nursing Home Site Selection workshop
16 results.

17 I will now turn the microphone over to Al
18 Carter, our Deputy Executive Director and also
19 the chair of the Site Selection Workshop
20 Committee to present the workshop results.

21 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Good morning, Al.

22 **DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARTER:** Good
23 morning, sir. Governor Scott, General Bondi,
24 CFO Atwater and Commissioner Putnam.

25 Thank you for your leadership and the

1 opportunity to brief agenda Item No. 3. Agenda
2 Item No. 3 is a report on the results and
3 recommendation of the State Veterans Nursing
4 Home Site Selection Workshop.

5 Following last years selection of
6 Port St. Lucie as the site for the Seventh
7 State Veteran Nursing Home and taking into
8 account the Governor's January 2015 budget
9 recommendation to fund the development of
10 nursing home No. 8 and 9, the Florida
11 Department of Veteran Affairs held a Site
12 Selection Process Workshop on February 19th,
13 2015, at our headquarters in the Mary Grizzle
14 building in Largo.

15 The purpose of the workshop was to analyze
16 and assess the existing State Veteran Nursing
17 Home Site Selection Process, to ensure our
18 current criteria is, in fact, valid and useful
19 for future nursing home site selections.

20 The current criteria was used to select
21 our network of seven State Veteran Nursing
22 Homes, including our newest, the Ardie R. Copas
23 Home in Port St. Lucie, which is under
24 development.

25 Our workshop, which was publicly noticed

1 and attended by Florida legislators, county and
2 state agencies and public participants. And we
3 appreciate their insights and support.

4 Attendees were afforded the opportunity to
5 attend in person or via teleconference and
6 supporting documents were provided at the
7 workshop and available on our website.

8 The workshop discussions centered around
9 four key issues; selection of counties,
10 selection of site, selection of committee
11 members, site selection criteria and
12 application, and finally, proposal scoring
13 methodology.

14 The main takeaway from the workshop was
15 that the attendees did not seek to change the
16 application or the process itself, but mainly
17 focused on the inclusion of under-represented
18 counties and the clarification of the scoring.
19 Let's quickly review the four key issues and
20 review the administrative changes for
21 consideration.

22 The first key issue centered on the
23 process of including more counties in the
24 application process. The US Department of
25 Veterans Affairs will not approve projects that

1 do not have a high population of veterans. A
2 concern of workshop participants was the
3 exclusion of counties due to the local veteran
4 population and size and distance to
5 infrastructure and services, which is an
6 application criteria.

7 The workshop recommendation was to allow
8 adjoining counties to combine and submit a
9 single application, a solution which is
10 feasible.

11 Another concern of the committee was that
12 criteria waiting excluded smaller counties,
13 based on population and income. Here the
14 workshop recommendation was to revise the
15 waiting of the application criteria to account
16 for the large spread-out areas without nursing
17 homes currently.

18 Part 2 of this issue was to outline
19 weighted factors in the application, so
20 counties can determine the best site to submit
21 an application. FDVA has already revised the
22 score sheet criteria and we'll hear a little
23 more about that in few moments.

24 The final issue under the selection
25 counties area focused on counties submitting of

1 multiple proposals. Allowing counties to
2 submit multiple proposals limits their
3 abilities to apply resources to put their best
4 location forward. And it was recommended that
5 only one application per county be accepted.

6 The second of four key issues discussed
7 during the workshop, concerned the makeup of
8 the site selection committee. Essentially,
9 whether to change the selection committee
10 members.

11 Each committee member was selected based
12 on their expertise and experience in the
13 respective areas needed to build and operate a
14 State Veteran Nursing Home and their expertise
15 in veteran advocacy.

16 The workshop recommendation was to keep
17 the committee as is, but change the public's
18 point of contact on the committee to nonvoting
19 member. The impact of this change is
20 negligible and easily accomplished by casting
21 that member as a nonvoting member when future
22 selection committees are established. FDVA can
23 easily institute this recommendation.

24 The third key issue involved the site
25 selection criteria and the online application.

1 The previous application, online application,
2 was a word document that applicants had to
3 cut-and-paste information into, and add
4 supporting annexes and addendums.

5 The workshop recommendation was to
6 redesign the application form and make it more
7 user-friendly by supporting online submission
8 of the narrative and instituting a fill in the
9 blank form structure. This new process -- I
10 should say, in this new process, attachments
11 will still have to be added by the counties to
12 support the narrative inserted into the
13 fillable form, but it will make the process
14 much more streamlined and efficient.

15 The fourth and final area issue discussed
16 the scoring methodology. There were two items
17 of note in this area. The first centered on
18 scoring itself.

19 In short, the workshop attendees indicated
20 that the scoring by voting members varied and
21 that a more detailed scoring criteria sheet
22 would help them better understand the overall
23 scoring. Also, the additional training of the
24 committee members on the scoring criteria would
25 decrease the disparity in the scoring.

1 The workshop recommendation was that the
2 scoresheet needed to be further defined in
3 detail, such as implementing a scoring scale
4 within each category. As a result, FDVA has
5 revised that scoresheet to create a scale
6 scoresheet within each category, based on the
7 current application. FDVA will implement also,
8 additional training of the site selection
9 committee members at the onset of each site
10 selection process. We consider the
11 recommendation feasible and the revised
12 scoresheet has been provided for your review.

13 Workshop attendees also discussed the
14 scoring results. They wanted to allow
15 top-rated sites to be used as automatic
16 alternates in the event that the primary
17 selectee was disqualified for some reason.

18 The workshop recommendation was to allow
19 the runner-up sites to become alternates, if
20 funding was available. This means the awarding
21 of subsequent nursing homes as funding becomes
22 approved and available to runner-up sites in
23 scoring priority. For example, Site No. 1
24 would be awarded the first home, which will be
25 home No. 8. Site No. 2 in priority, Site No. 9

1 and so on.

2 The workshop recommendation was to rank
3 order sites from one through four for the next
4 three homes, following the next site selection
5 process. The fourth home, however, is only an
6 alternate if the No. 3 site is disqualified for
7 acceptance by the State of Florida or the US
8 Department of Veteran Affairs. This course of
9 action would allow the results of next site
10 selection process to designate recipient
11 counties for homes No. 8, No. 9 and No. 10 and
12 eliminate the need for yearly site selection
13 process.

14 Important, is that the counties would be
15 advised as part of the application process,
16 that their land could be tied up for up to
17 seven years by the current time line of five
18 years, while awaiting the US Department of
19 Veterans Affairs and/or legislative funding.

20 Awarding sites in this manner provides
21 realistic limits to the amount of time that
22 county land is unavailable while awaiting
23 approval of VA funding. And FDVA, of course,
24 sees this as a feasible solution as long as
25 funding is available.

1 So in summary, the need for additional
2 State Veteran Nursing Homes has been
3 well-documented and discussions in previous
4 cabinet meeting have gone on unnoticed that the
5 need is very great. Improving our process will
6 move us further along on the path to meeting
7 those needs. Thank you for your time and
8 consideration of these changes to the Site
9 Selection Process and I standby for any
10 questions.

11 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Are there any questions?
12 Commissioner?

13 **COMMISSIONER PUTNAM:** Thank you Governor.
14 I remember this issue well and so we get
15 another shot at doing it better. The friction,
16 as I recall, was that the site selection study
17 recommendations and the committee
18 recommendations did not align. So we
19 commissioned the study, the study recommended
20 the sites. Obviously the sites that were
21 No. 1 according to that study through a pep
22 rally got excited about having the next
23 veterans nursing home and then through the
24 committee process, there was a different
25 outcome. So that was one thing that sticks out

1 in my mind. It seems to me that with your
2 recommended changes that we are exacerbating
3 that problem.

4 And I also recall that those cities and
5 counties around the state that were not ranked
6 No. 1, specifically asked us to reopen the
7 process every time, because they're going to
8 get better at making their application, they're
9 going to learn from that process and be able to
10 refine their application.

11 And so, I say all of that to say that, my
12 concern with your recommended changes, would be
13 that we've not yet received funding for home
14 No. 7, but we're committing through this
15 process 8, 9 and 10. So we're committing many,
16 many years into the future. And given the
17 rapid growth of our state, the shifting
18 demographics of our state, potential future
19 Federal VA Hospitals or new populations that
20 may be veteran heavy, I would be reluctant to
21 adopt your recommendation No. 8, which would
22 commit this cabinet for years into the future
23 on unfunded homes.

24 The other recommendations I think are
25 solid recommendations. But out of fairness to

1 the communities who are applying, out of
2 recognition that there's going to be a big
3 change in demographics in our state in the
4 near-term, much less the medium and long-term
5 and my reluctance to commit us to four future
6 homes, when we haven't even gotten the funding
7 for the one we've already identified the site
8 for. So, could you walk me through or could
9 you respond to my concerns on No. 8?

10 **DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARTER:** Yes,
11 Commissioner Putnam. The challenge with the
12 site selection process is always timing. We're
13 always at the liberty of the US Department of
14 Veterans Affairs for funding and their time
15 line is something that, again, we have no
16 control over. So whether we do a selection
17 process up-front and commit those counties or
18 we do one each year and commit those counties,
19 we still follow -- we still have the same
20 challenge of those properties being tied up for
21 a five-year period of time.

22 As we've done selection processes in the
23 past and this last one to be no exception,
24 we've had the same counties submit the same
25 properties, because they're not growing any

1 more new land. So in allowing the counties
2 more opportunities to provide additional land,
3 will not help us when the actual population is
4 driven by the US Department of Veterans Affairs
5 for approval of the sites.

6 We can make a recommendation to the US
7 Department Of Veteran Affairs on any sites.
8 However, if it does not meet their criteria
9 they will not approve it. So our alignment of
10 our needs and allowing the homes to do a
11 repetitive -- or allowing the counties to do a
12 repetitive submission of applications, will not
13 fix our challenge, which is falling in line
14 with the department of -- the US Department of
15 Veteran Affairs requirements.

16 **COMMISSIONER PUTNAM:** Yeah, that was very
17 diplomatic. I don't like counting on Congress
18 either. But if you're a -- the last time this
19 was in front of us, I vividly remember Marion
20 County came in second and there was some
21 conversation about do you lock them in as the
22 next home. And we, as a matter of policy,
23 pointedly said, we're not doing that. We're
24 going to give everybody the opportunity to come
25 back and reapply. Because the difference

1 between being the 8th nursing home and 10th
2 nursing home is maybe a decade or more.

3 And I think that those applicants ought to
4 have the opportunity to learn from the process
5 and improve upon it. And frankly, if they want
6 to move up, to be able to be come back and
7 sweeten the pot.

8 They may have -- the county may decide
9 that they're going to make greater local
10 contribution or they may have a donor that
11 offers a different parcel of land.

12 A lot's going to change in the number of
13 years that we're talking about this process
14 stretching out. And so for us at this meeting
15 to lock in the next four homes, I'm not
16 comfortable with that.

17 I'm very comfortable with us proceeding
18 with using the 2014 study to determine home
19 No. 8. Let's keep pressuring DC to get us the
20 money for home No. 7 that you and your folks
21 have already sited and then let's -- there's
22 legislation by Representative Magor to direct
23 the legislature to conduct another study, which
24 I think is the recognition of shifting
25 demographics.

1 And so, I think awarding another home
2 based on the '14 data is appropriate. I don't
3 think that much has changed since '14. But I
4 think for future homes, it would make sense to
5 have those determined by the most recent data
6 that guides the decision-making about where
7 those homes are, so.

8 Governor, I mean -- you know, I don't want
9 to dominate the conversation here, but I think
10 they put a lot of work into this and I very
11 much appreciate the workshop that they held. I
12 think that all of their changes make a lot of
13 sense except for recommended change No. 8.

14 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** If the cabinet votes on
15 this and said yes to everything, but we change
16 that. Would that -- you think that would have
17 a dramatic impact?

18 **DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARTER:** Governor
19 Scott, I don't think it will have a huge
20 impact. It just means that as Commissioner
21 Putnam indicates, we'll do a site selection
22 process each year and we would go forth and
23 allow all the counties to participate,
24 regardless how they came out on the site
25 selection study, which is what we did in the

1 previous home. Just the site selection study
2 as you all know, gives them a higher priority,
3 because that is -- that comes from the
4 information or partially from the information
5 that US Department of Veteran Affairs provides.

6 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** So we would need to do
7 one every year, even though we're still waiting
8 on the Feds to fund seven?

9 **DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARTER:** Yes,
10 sir. The Federal Government or the US
11 Department of Veteran Affairs, we anticipate
12 the funding to come out in November or December
13 of this year. We're just waiting on the
14 priority list to drop. Once that list drops
15 and our homes are on that list, our successive
16 homes, then the funding becomes allocated and
17 then, of course, once we meet their
18 requirements, the funding is provided to us as
19 actual dollars.

20 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** All right. Thank you.
21 Any other questions? Does anyone want to make
22 a motion then?

23 **COMMISSIONER PUTNAM:** Well, if --
24 Governor, with your indulgence, I would move
25 that we accept FDVA's recommended changes to

1 the site selection process with the exception
2 of recommendation No. 8.

3 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Okay. And the result of
4 that, is that you would do an annual survey?

5 **DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARTER:** Yes,
6 sir.

7 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Right. Okay. And that's
8 all doable?

9 **DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARTER:** Yes,
10 sir, it is.

11 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** All right. So that's the
12 motion. Is there a second?

13 **ATTORNEY GENERAL BONDI:** Second.

14 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Okay. Any comments or
15 objections?

16 (NO RESPONSE):

17 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Hearing none, the motion
18 carries.

19 **DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARTER:** Thank
20 you.

21 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Thanks, Al.

22 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PRENDERGAST:** Thank you
23 all.

24 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Thanks, Colonel.

25 * * * * *

Proposed FDVA Performance Measures

Number	Division	Objective	Weight	Range	Result	Score	Weighted Score	Objective Description
1	B&A	Retroactive Compensation	10%	5 = 95 - 100% 4 = 90 - 94% 3 = 80 - 89% 2 = 70 - 79% 1 = 69% - below	\$135,511,693	5	0.50	Baseline number is \$125,510,722 (based on the median for annual data from FY 05/06 through FY 14/15). Refers to a bulk award given to a veteran for those months when the claim was in process and dates back to the date of original claim. Year to year results can vary significantly depending on new VA legislation for disabilities (ex. Nehmer cases for Agent Orange)
2	B&A	Issue Resolutions	7.5%	5 = 95 - 100% 4 = 90 - 94% 3 = 80 - 89% 2 = 70 - 79% 1 = 69% - below	\$62,226,090	5	0.375	Baseline number is \$42,767,480 (based on the median for annual data from FY 05/06 through FY 14/15). Issue resolutions are based on services provided to veterans that can result in monthly monetary benefits or obtaining eligibility for medical treatment and equipment (e.g. wheelchairs). There were 21,946 veterans served for issue resolutions.
3	B&A	Number of Veterans Served	10%	5 = 95 - 100% 4 = 90 - 94% 3 = 80 - 89% 2 = 70 - 79% 1 = 69% - below	105,839	5	0.50	Baseline number is 102,190 (based on the median for annual data from FY 05/06 through FY 14/15). Measure is pulled from agency's database that captures veterans visiting FDVA's office for the first time during a given fiscal year. Otherwise termed "Unique Veterans."
4	B&A	Number of Claims Processed	10%	5 = 95 - 100% 4 = 90 - 94% 3 = 80 - 89% 2 = 70 - 79% 1 = 69% - below	32,816	5	0.50	Baseline number is 27,521 (based on the median for annual data from FY 05/06 through FY 14/15). Veterans Claims Examiners work with veterans to file a claim which is entered into V-BOLTS (Veterans Benefits On Line Tracking System). The claim is forwarded to the USDVA which gathers supporting documentation as needed. VA sends result to VCE and claimant.
5	B&A	Number of Services to Veterans	10%	5 = 95 - 100% 4 = 90 - 94% 3 = 80 - 89% 2 = 70 - 79% 1 = 69% - below	696,679	5	0.50	Baseline number is 552,561 (based on the median for annual data from FY 05/06 through FY 14/15). Total is tallied by adding the total number of all activity processes performed in support of a veteran. Includes phone calls, correspondence, etc.
6	B&A	SAA Programs Certified	7.50%	5 = 95 - 100% 4 = 90 - 94% 3 = 80 - 89% 2 = 70 - 79% 1 = 69% - below	120	5	0.375	Goal: 120 programs certified annually per VA Contract. Programs can vary annually and the number is determined by the USDVA. Ramifications for non compliance include a decrease in federal funding and staffing to state SAA programs. SAAs approve schools to participate in VA education programs, ensure compliance with state and federal laws, and are integral to the process for USDVA payment of benefits to student veterans.
7	Homes	Occupancy rate for homes in operation 2 years or longer	10%	5 = 95 - 100% 4 = 90 - 94% 3 = 80 - 89% 2 = 70 - 79% 1 = 69% - below	98%	5	0.50	The agency's ability to operate the SVNHs in a revenue-neutral capacity is dependent largely upon occupancy. Residents are charged daily rates. Therefore, empty beds generate no revenue.
8	Homes	Compliance with Quality of Care Regulations	7.5%	5 = No Class I or II deficiencies 4 = No more than 2 Class I or II deficiencies during inspection yr/home 3 = No more than 3 2 = No more than 4 1 = 5 or more deficiencies	5	5	0.375	FDVA facilities are inspected at four levels: Federal, State, local and internal. <i>Measures are based on AHCA's severity & scope deficiency ratings.</i>
9	EDSS	Percentage of qualifying invoices delivered to the Department of Financial Services for payment within 20 days of receipt of a valid invoice.	7.5%	5 = 99-100% 4 = 97.5-98.99% 3 = 96.0 - 97.49% 2 = 95.0 - 95.99% 1 = 94.99 % and below	99%	5	0.375	Agencies are required to comply with Florida Statutes Section 215.422 (1) – (3) which states that an agency has 20 days after receipt of a valid invoice to deliver qualifying invoices to the CFO for payment. Impact: Timely and consistent compliance with procurement operations support services to veterans and the agency's ability to support veterans.
		Total	80%				4.00	

Number	Division	Objective	Weight	Range	Result	Score	Weighted Score	Objective Description
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Note: B&A performance measures are now taken from a new database. Establishing baselines may require reconciliation over the next one to two reporting periods.

Subjective Leadership Assessment			
Number		Measure	Ranking 1-5
1		How do you define success in your agency?	
2		What services does your agency provide that are most undervalued?	
3		What outcomes do you plan to accomplish as agency head as it relates to your short	
		a. Do your resources align with your priorities in order to achieve these outcomes?	
		b. How do your priorities align with the agency's legislative proposals and legislative	
		c. What are the drivers and resistors that will help or hinder you from meeting these	
		d. How does the agency organizational structure support these priorities?	
		e. How are you measuring progress toward outcomes?	
4		What program areas of your agency face challenges in achieving desired outcomes?	
		a. What major issues are contributing to each area's weaknesses?	
		b. What internal or external threats exist?	
		c. What are the strategies you have planned to address these issues?	
		d. What major changes need to occur to achieve the desired outcomes?	
5		What do you view as the greatest risk in the next fiscal year or calendar year?	
		a. How do you plan to mitigate the risk and address this issue?	
6		What current agency responsibilities do you consider unnecessary or obsolete, or	
7		Stakeholders:	
		a. Identify your stakeholder groups and opportunities for stakeholders to	
		b. What are the top issues communicated by stakeholders, and what plans are in place	
		c. How do you assess whether or not your stakeholder needs are met?	
Total Average of Rankings (20% Weight)			

Florida Department of Law Enforcement	Weight	Score	Weighted Score
Objective Performance Measures Score	80%		
Subjective Leadership Assessment Score	20%		
TOTAL			

Subjective Leadership Assessment Score Breakdown	
Governor	
Attorney General	
Chief Financial Officer	
Agriculture	
Governor & Cabinet Scores Added/4	
Total Score	

Weighted Average Scale	
Significantly Exceeds Expectations	4.6 and above
Exceeds Expectations	3.6 - 4.5
Meets Expectations	2.6 - 3.5
Does Not Meet Expectations	1.6 - 2.5
Fails Expectations	1.5 and below

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2014-15



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Honoring those who served U.S.

Mike Prendergast, Colonel, U.S. Army, Retired, Executive Director

Salute to Excellence



Mark (AJ) Johnson
Supervisor
of the Year



Mike Fontenot
Staff Assistant of
the Year



Sherrel Pinson
Veterans' Claims
Examiner of the
Year
Claims Bureau



Louis Morales
Veterans' Claims
Examiner of the
Year
Field Services

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November 11, 2015

To: The Governor of the State of Florida, Members of the Cabinet, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives

I am deeply honored to submit the 2015 annual report for the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. The report showcases the dedication, commitment and hard work of our stellar team of steadfast FDVA professionals and the unparalleled support we received from our partners at the federal level for Fiscal Year 2014 – 2015.



As I look back on the events of 2015, I am especially proud of our state's efforts to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II.

During the war, 16 million Americans served in uniform, including 248,000 from Florida. Many more Floridians served on the home front, from shipyards and factories to local USOs.

We partnered this year in an initiative called *Victory Florida*, to honor the selfless service of the nearly 100,000 World War II veterans who currently reside in the Sunshine State. We were happy to participate and add our agency's contribution to the historic narrative of the period.

With an initial budget of \$150,000, the State of Florida in 1945 recognized the need to provide services to returning service members and created a division within state government to connect veterans with their earned federal and state benefits. To better serve veterans and their families, Florida voters in 1988 overwhelmingly approved a Constitutional Amendment to create a Cabinet Agency to "Honor Those Who Served U.S."

Today, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs is the premier point of entry for Florida veterans to access earned services, benefits and support. We serve the nation's third largest veterans' population with more than 1.5 million veterans residing in the Sunshine State.

FDVA plays a significant role in the direct infusion of more than \$15.7 billion annually for veterans into Florida's economy through federal compensation, education and pension benefits, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' medical services and military retired pay.

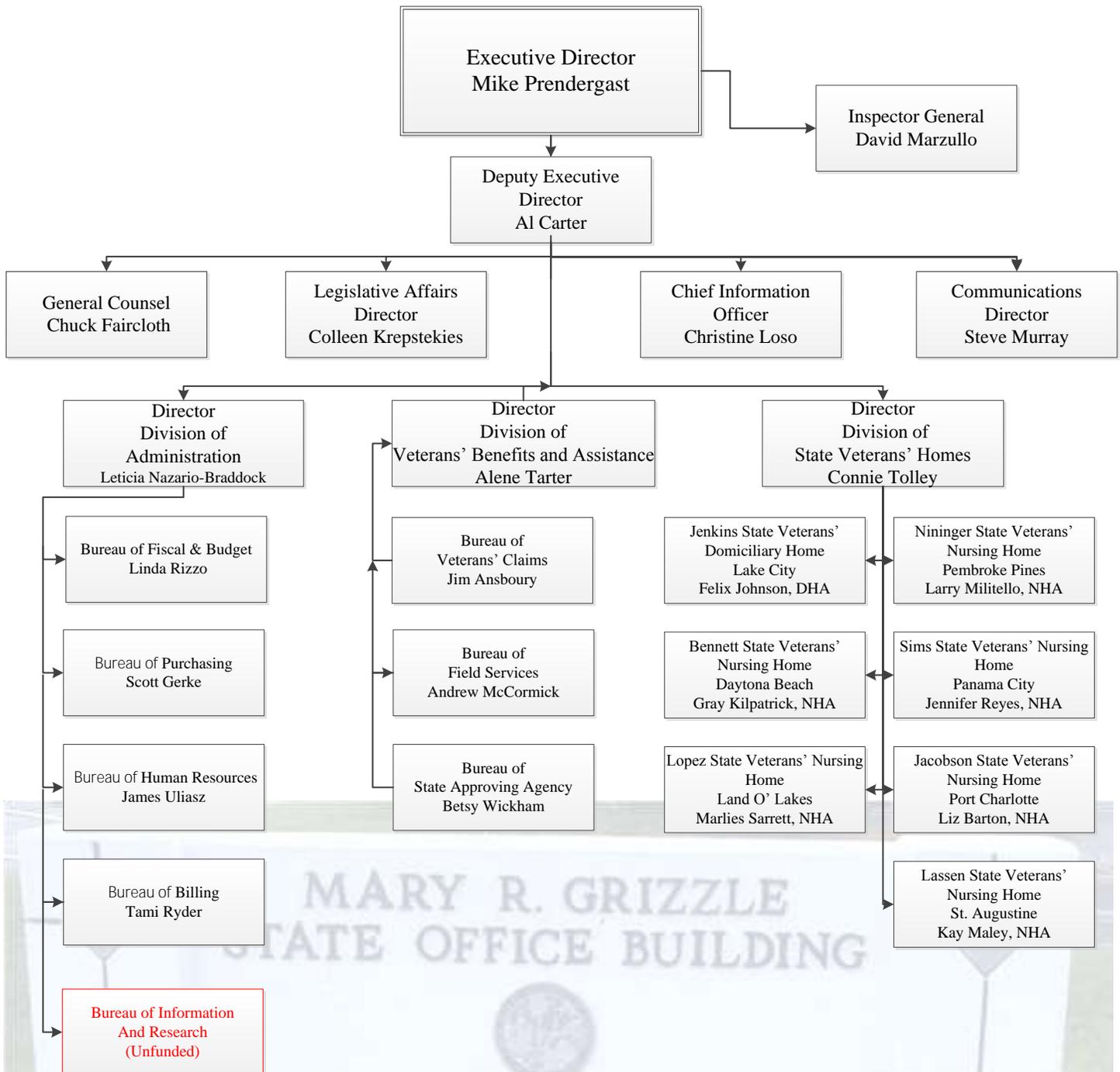
We believe increasing the quality of life for our veterans and their families through superior services, benefits and support is the noblest of callings. Florida offers unique benefits such as in-state tuition rates for veterans and their families using the Post-9/11 GI Bill, several layers of property tax exemptions, expanded veterans' preference, and extensive benefits, licensure and fee waivers for many activities and occupations.

Let us never forget our veterans, and their families, through whose selfless service and sacrifice we enjoy freedom and liberty. We honor their service.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Prendergast".

Mike Prendergast
Colonel, United States Army, Retired
Executive Director

Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs



Our Mission: To advocate with purpose and passion for Florida veterans and link them to superior services, benefits and support.

Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) Veterans' Assistance Locations

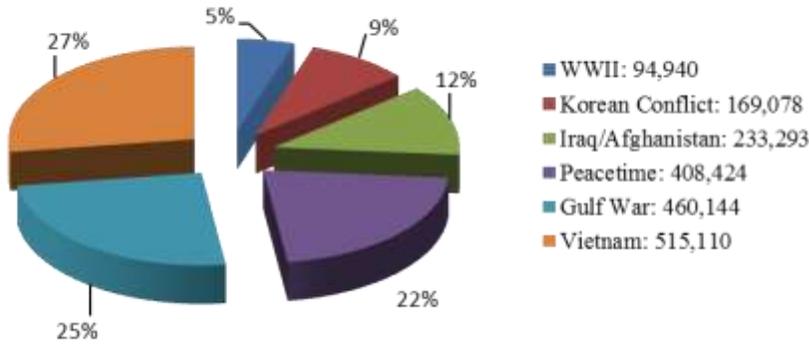


The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) is a Cabinet agency responsible for assisting Florida veterans, their families and survivors in improving their health and economic well-being through quality benefit information, advocacy, education and long-term health care.

FDVA's main administrative office is in Largo, with a satellite office in Tallahassee, and its two primary program areas are located throughout the state:

- **The Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance**, providing professional assistance to Florida veterans and their dependents in obtaining financial benefits and health care treatments from the VA;
- **The State Veterans' Homes**, providing comprehensive, high-quality health care to eligible veterans in need of long-term skilled or assisted living care.

Florida Veterans by Service Era



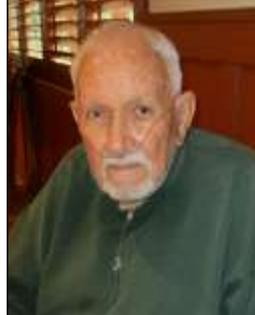
Note: Includes veterans who served in more than one conflict.

Who We Serve



1LT Ruby Fischer
(Lassen SVNH)
WWII 94,940 (5%)

In the 1940's WWII veterans were among the nation's first to participate in modern warfare. Their service also coincided with major advances in modern medicine, resulting in a then extraordinary survival rate.



SFC William Probst
(Bennett SVNH)
Korean 169,078 (9%)

As these veterans have aged, benefits and services that address a variety of issues unique to their demographic, including the changing health risks and long neglected mental health needs, financial challenges and long-term care needs are being implemented.



Capt. Colleen Krepstekies
Legislative/Cabinet Affairs Director
Iraq/Afghanistan 233,293 (12%)

While more veterans are returning home from battle, that also means that more veterans are learning to live with catastrophic conditions that previous generations never before had to face. Research suggests that 10% to 18% of these troops are likely to have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after they return.



1LT Lois Jones
(Lopez SVNH)
Peacetime 408,424 (22%)

Almost a quarter of the Florida's veteran population served honorably during a very unique and relatively conflict free time in our history. Many of these veterans do not seek benefits, mistakenly believing that if they did not serve in combat, then they must not qualify for veteran benefits and programs.



SMSgt Erik Dupree
FDVA Veterans' Claim Examiner
Gulf War I 460,144 (25%)

Urban warfare has changed not only the face of war, but also what our veterans face after the war. With advances in technology and medicine, more service members are surviving injuries incurred in war that would have killed them in previous eras.



MSgt John Milam
(Sims SVNH)
Vietnam 515,110 (27%)

Forty years after the end of the Vietnam War, the agency has seen a heavy increase in disability claims filed on behalf of Vietnam veterans due to triggered responses to the current wars and the manifestation of acute diseases brought on by exposure to Agent Orange.

Performance Measures

MEASURE	2013-14 Actual	2014-15 Actual	2014-15 Standard
<i>Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance: Provide information and advocacy to Florida veterans, their families and survivors, and assist them in obtaining all federal and state benefits due to them.</i>			
1. Value of cost avoidance because of retroactive compensation.	\$174,022,538	\$134,633,014	\$84,992,852
2. Value of cost avoidance because of issue resolution.	\$56,445,394	\$62,226,091	\$20,423,288
3. Number of veterans served.	110,405	105,839	91,559
4. Number of claims processed.	28,597	32,816	20,959
5. Number of services to veterans.	620,808	696,679	455,993

MEASURE	2013-14 Actual	2014-15 Actual	2014-15 Standard
<i>Division of State Veterans' Homes: Provide quality long-term healthcare services to eligible Florida veterans.</i>			
1. Occupancy rate for homes in operation 2 years or longer.	97.8%	98.9%	90%
2. Percent of state veterans' homes in compliance with quality of care health care regulations.	100%	100%	100%
3. Number of state veterans' homes beds available.	869	870	869

MEASURE	2013-14 Actual	2014-15 Actual	2014-15 Standard
<i>Division of Executive Direction and Support Services: Provide effective and responsive management to support the divisions and programs serving veterans.</i>			
1. Administration costs as a percent of total agency costs.	4.64%	3.37%	6.8%
2. Administrative positions as a percent of total agency positions.	2.4%	2.5%	4.4%

Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance

The Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance provides professional assistance to Florida's veterans and their dependents in an effort to obtain financial 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. "Assistance" is seen in a variety of components, including medical treatment, prescriptions, prosthetic devices, benefit checks, school program approval, veterans' preference investigations and determinations, voter registration, and disseminating veteran data to the public.

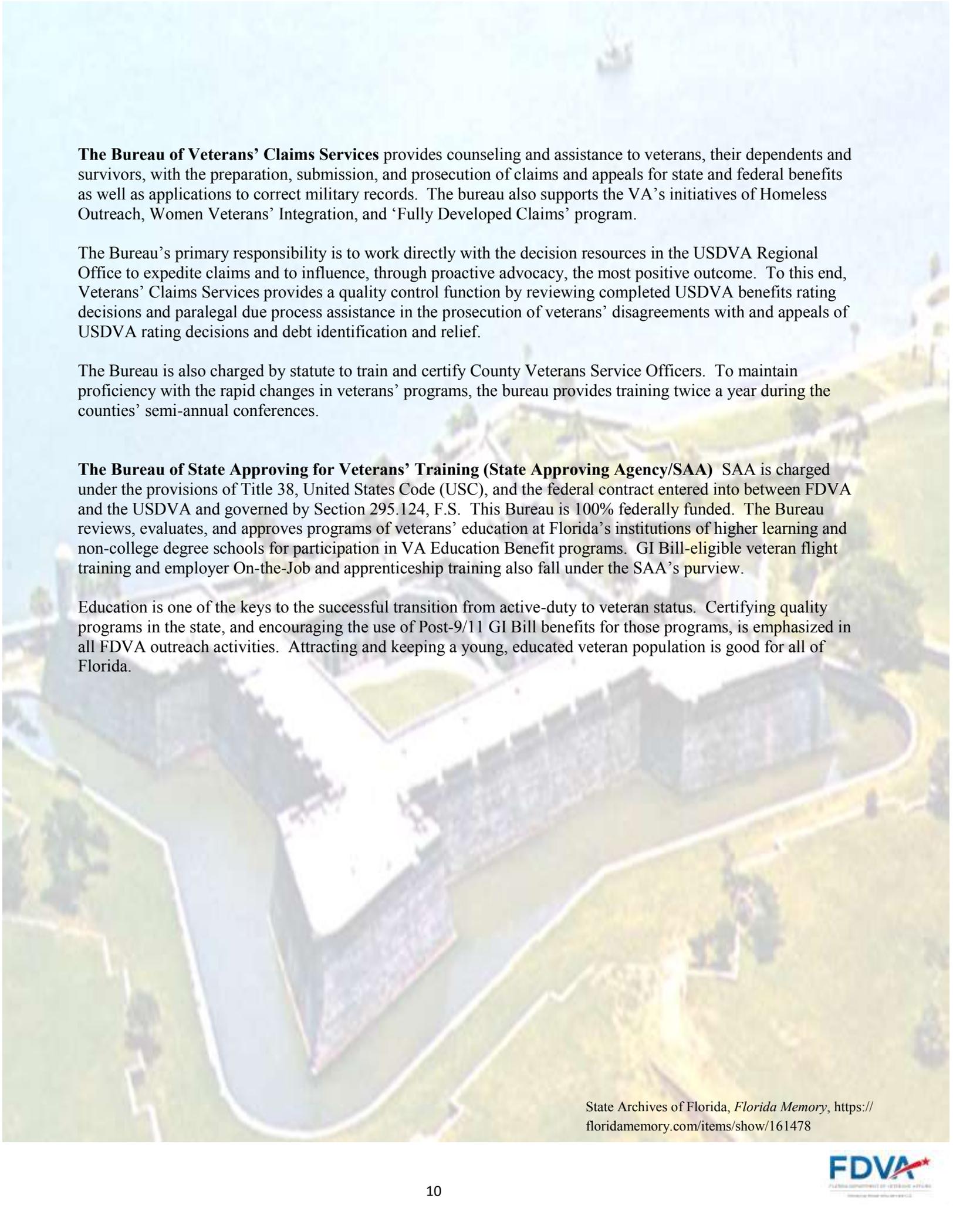
The Division is comprised of a Division Director, support staff, and three Bureaus: Bureau of Veterans' Claims and Assistance, Bureau of Field Services and Bureau of State Approving Agency. Also, included within the Bureau of Veterans' Claims is Veterans' Preference.

The Division's Veterans' Claims Examiners (VCEs) 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 VCEs offering assistance and guidance at Transition Assistance Program briefings for separating service members, congressional veterans' appreciation days, Homeless Veteran Stand Downs, and veteran service organization gatherings. We are proactive in our services to Florida's veterans, yet of the 1.5 million veterans in Florida, fewer than 300,000 currently receive VA service-connected compensation and pension benefits (not to be confused with military retirement benefits.) Efforts to reach these veterans, counsel them regarding benefits they may have earned, and assist them in garnering those benefits are expanding. For every state dollar expended for this division, more than \$128 of federal monies are brought into Florida.

The Bureau of Veterans' Field Services provides benefits counseling services to inpatients and outpatients in 31 of the USDVA's medical facilities in Florida and State Veterans' Homes, as well as outreach activities for FDVA throughout the state. Field Services also assists in staffing the state's Disaster Recovery Centers when established by the Division of Emergency Management. The Bureau's primary responsibility is to help veterans initiate, develop, submit, and prosecute claims and appeals for state and federal veteran benefits. The focus of Field Services is face-to-face contact with the client and the resolution of any number of issues related to the submission of claims for compensation, pension, or medical care.

The VCEs of the Bureau of Veterans' Field Services work closely with patient advocates in VA Medical Centers. They also perform extensive outreach, and help veterans navigate the confusing and cumbersome process to obtain benefits from the USDVA. The services can result in monetary benefits, but often result in determining, verifying, and obtaining eligibility for medical treatments, medications, wheelchairs, hearing aids, ambulance bill reimbursements, lost check replacements prosthetics, and other, non-monetary--yet valuable--benefits within the VA system. This service provides Florida veterans with significant economic value.

State Archives of Florida, *Florida Memory*,
<https://floridamemory.com/items/show/161478>



The Bureau of Veterans' Claims Services provides counseling and assistance to veterans, their dependents and survivors, with the preparation, submission, and prosecution of claims and appeals for state and federal benefits as well as applications to correct military records. The bureau also supports the VA's initiatives of Homeless Outreach, Women Veterans' Integration, and 'Fully Developed Claims' program.

The Bureau's primary responsibility is to work 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, Veterans' Claims Services provides a quality control function by reviewing completed USDVA benefits rating decisions and paralegal due process assistance in the prosecution of veterans' disagreements with and appeals of USDVA rating decisions and debt identification and relief.

The Bureau is also charged by statute to train and certify County Veterans Service Officers. To maintain proficiency with the rapid changes in veterans' programs, the bureau provides training twice a year during the counties' semi-annual conferences.

The Bureau of State Approving for Veterans' Training (State Approving Agency/SAA) SAA is charged under the provisions of Title 38, United States Code (USC), and the federal contract entered into between FDVA and the USDVA and governed by Section 295.124, F.S. This Bureau is 100% federally funded. The Bureau reviews, evaluates, and approves programs of veterans' education at Florida's institutions of higher learning and non-college degree schools for participation in VA Education Benefit programs. GI Bill-eligible veteran flight training and employer On-the-Job and apprenticeship training also fall under the SAA's purview.

Education is one of the keys to the successful transition from active-duty to veteran status. Certifying quality programs in the state, and encouraging the use of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits for those programs, is emphasized in all FDVA outreach activities. Attracting and keeping a young, educated veteran population is good for all of Florida.

State Archives of Florida, *Florida Memory*, <https://floridamemory.com/items/show/161478>

Division of State Veterans' Homes

The State Veterans' Homes Program provides comprehensive, high-quality health care on a cost-effective basis to eligible veterans in need of either long-term skilled nursing care or assisted living services. Care is provided to veterans with qualifying war or peacetime service, who are residents of Florida preceding admission, and who require skilled care as certified by a USDVA physician. Admission criteria are based on the need to maintain a safe environment for all residents. The skilled nursing and assisted living homes only admit those veterans whose needs can be met within the accommodations and services it provides with consideration for all residents.



A touching moment on 4th of July.

Assisted Living level care is provided at the Robert H. Jenkins Jr. State Veterans' Domiciliary Home in Lake City, and includes rehabilitative assistance and other therapeutic measures to eligible ambulatory veterans who are not in need of hospitalization or skilled nursing services. The focus of care in the Domiciliary Home is preparing veterans to function at their highest level of independence. A multidisciplinary approach is followed with the veterans participating in the established care plan.

Skilled nursing home care provides full-service, long-term residential nursing care to eligible veterans in the six State Veterans' Nursing Homes. The homes are supervised 24-hours daily by registered and licensed nurses. Five of the six skilled nursing facilities operated by FDVA have dementia-specific wings. FDVA operates nursing homes in Daytona Beach, Land O' Lakes, Pembroke Pines, Panama City, Port Charlotte and St. Augustine.

Comprehensive services and a deep concern for all veterans go hand in hand at our FDVA nursing homes. Around-the-clock medical and nursing care is provided by a full-time staff of registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and certified nursing assistants. Rehabilitative services, such as occupational and physical therapies, speech therapy, and recreational activities are provided under the direct supervision of licensed therapists. A variety of on- and off-site recreational and social activities are provided to encourage active minds, bodies, and spirits, and slow the process of physical and mental decline. A wide range of other medical services is also offered. These include dental, podiatric, and dermatological care. In spacious dining rooms, residents are provided with wholesome meals prepared under the supervision of licensed dietitians. The State Veterans' Home Program has a proud tradition of concern and commitment to the veterans. We remain at the forefront in ensuring that the level of care and services provided to our veterans meets or exceeds the highest standards in an environment that enhances the quality of life of each veteran.



Governor Rick Scott with Executive Director Mike Prendergast presenting the Governor's Veterans Service Medal Award to each resident in their home. Residents look forward to this special honor with the Governor.

Note: Detailed individual facility reports are included as Appendices.

State Veterans' Homes Program Occupancy Rates

During Fiscal Year 2014-2015 the average occupancy rate for State Veterans' Homes in operation two years or longer was 98.7%. Assisted living facilities traditionally operate at a lower occupancy than skilled nursing facilities, and the department is proud to announce the Robert H. Jenkins Jr. State Veterans' Domiciliary Home in Lake City brought their occupancy rate above the 90% performance measure goal for the first time since they opened in 1990.

Quality of Care

CMS enhanced its Nursing Home Compare public reporting site to include a set of quality ratings for each nursing home that participates in Medicare or Medicaid. The ratings take the form of several individual ratings and one overall comprehensive rating for each home, five stars being the highest and one star being the lowest. Overall ratings of five stars place a facility at the top ten percent of all rated facilities in their state. The primary goal of the rating system is to provide residents and their families with an easy way to understand the assessment of nursing home quality, making meaningful distinctions between high and low performing nursing homes.

FDVA is excited to announce that five of our six skilled nursing facilities have been recognized with this five star rating (Pembroke Pines, Panama City, Port Charlotte, Land O' Lakes, and St. Augustine.) The remaining one has been rated at three stars (Daytona Beach.) We are proud of the quality of care provided to our residents, in a warm, caring home-like atmosphere.

The State Veterans' Homes have made significant progress in standardizing clinical standards and procedures, resulting in residents receiving thorough consistent care. Continuity of care is of the utmost importance when caring for the elderly. At each of the Homes there is an emphasis on providing the same care givers (RNs, LPNs, and CNAs) on a daily basis. Providing consistent caregivers affords the resident and caregiver the opportunity to establish a strong bond, resulting in outstanding outcomes. The relationships between caregiver and resident become very special over a period of time.



Residents participate in the Annual Fishing Trip on the St. John's River sponsored by the Elk's Lodge



Residents enjoy the Summer Bash Blast Off party complete with 400 water balloons, squirt guns and lots of laughter!

Department Recognitions



The department's outreach and branding campaign received the Abraham Lincoln Pillar of Excellence Award from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in February 2015. (See image) The award for best state practice was presented by VA Secretary Bob McDonald to FDVA Communications Director Steve Murray and FDVA Deputy Executive Director Al Carter at the 2015 Mid-Winter Conference of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs in Washington, D.C.



The Prudential Productivity Awards are made possible through the generosity of Prudential, and the vision of the late J. E. Davis and A. D. Davis, co-founders of Florida TaxWatch. Since 1989 Florida TaxWatch has publically recognized and rewarded state employees and work units whose work significantly and measurably increases productivity and promotes innovation to improve the delivery of state services and save money for Florida taxpayers and businesses.

In Fiscal Year 2014-15, FDVA was honored to be recognized by the awards committee, with two work units being recognized as Prudential Productivity Award winners:

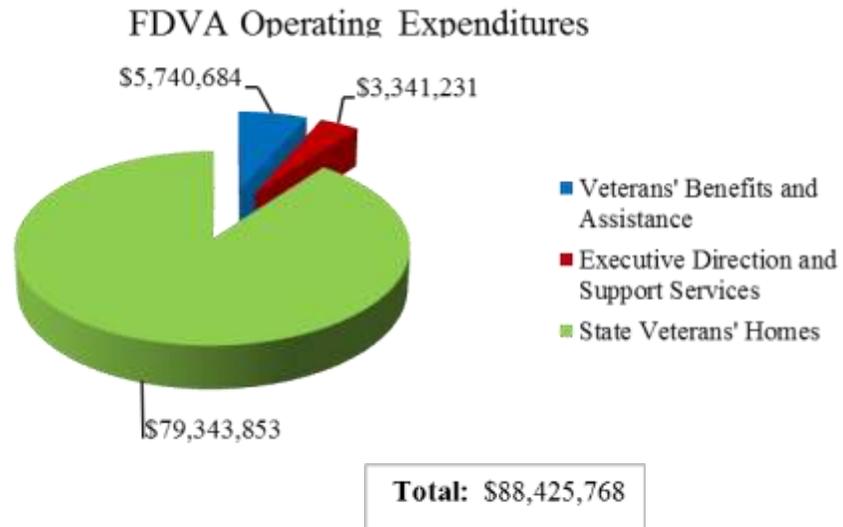
- ⇒ **FDVA Governor's Veterans Service Award Team**
- ⇒ **FDVA Homes Program-Activities Volunteers**



The Governor's Gold Seal Award program was established in 2002, and developed and implemented by the Governor's Panel on Excellence in Long-Term Care, composed of persons appointed by the Governor's Office, Agency for Health Care Administration, Department of Health, Department of Elder Affairs, Florida Association of Homes for the Aging, Florida Health Care Association, Florida Life Care Residents Association, and the State Long Term Care Ombudsman. Gold Seal recipients must demonstrate a long standing quality of excellence, with over 30 months of data and surveys scrutinized. They must meet a quality of care scoring and ranking placing them in the top ten percent of their region or top fifteen percent in the state as well as be a 5-star facility in the CMS Nursing Home Guide. The Clifford Chester Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home in Panama City has been recognized as such a home of distinction. FDVA is proud that the care we offer our veteran residents, and the caring environment we provide. Our homes are truly 'home' for these men and women.



Our Fiscal Impact



See Appendix VII for detailed fiscal information.



Actions Taken Relevant to Florida Statutes

§ 292.05(4), F.S. *The Department may apply for and accept funds, grants, gifts, and services from the state, the United States Government or any of its agencies, or any other public or private source and may use funds derived from these sources to defray clerical and administrative costs as may be necessary for carrying out its duties.*

State Approving for Veterans' Training

FDVA maintains a contract with the USDVA to provide for State Approving for Veterans' Training. Costs are reimbursed 100% by the USDVA and include coverage of clerical and administrative expenses of the Bureau.

State Veterans' Homes

The State Veterans' Domiciliary and Nursing Homes operated by this department apply for and receive federal funds from the USDVA for per diem as well as construction and renovation grants. The Homes also accept funds from Medicare/Medicaid, Hospice, private insurance, and individual residents in the form of co-payments for services rendered. The Homes also accept cash donations as well as gifted items and services for the benefit of the residents.

§ 292.05(5), F.S. *The Department shall conduct an ongoing study on the problems and needs of those residents of this state who are veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States and the problems and needs of their dependents. The study shall include but not be limited to:*

- *A survey of existing state and federal programs available for such persons that specifies the extent to which such programs presently are being implemented, with recommendations for the improved implementation, extension or improvement of such programs.*
- *A survey of the needs of such persons in the areas of social services, health care, education and employment, and any other areas of determined need, with recommendations regarding federal, state and community services that would meet those needs.*
- *A survey of federal, state, public and private moneys available that could be used to defray the costs of state or community services needed for such persons.*

FDVA continually surveys its constituency through feedback garnered while counseling thousands of veterans, receipt of training critiques, participation on numerous veteran-related governmental committees, regular meetings with veterans' organizations and their leadership, and as possible analyses of official USDVA data and reports. The Bureau of Information and Research, intended by the legislature to perform this task full time, has never been funded. FDVA regularly attends Florida Veterans Council meetings with veteran service organization representatives throughout the state as a best-effort to not only gather information on veterans and their needs, but to disseminate information on available benefits to as many veterans as we can reach.

§ 292.05(7), F.S. *The Department shall administer this chapter and shall have the authority and responsibility to apply for and administer any federal programs and develop and coordinate such state programs as may be beneficial to the particular interests of the veterans of this state.*

State Approving for Veterans’ Training

Under the provisions of Title 38 USC, and the contract maintained between the FDVA and the USDVA, State Approving for Veterans’ Training is charged with inspecting, approving and supervising programs and courses offered by accredited and non-accredited educational institutions (public and private). A list of such educational institutions and specific courses which it has approved is furnished to the USDVA Regional Office at Bay Pines so that eligible veterans or other eligible persons enrolled in such courses may receive veterans’ education benefits.

State Veterans’ Homes Program

The Department operates the State Veterans’ Domiciliary Home in Lake City, and State Veterans’ Nursing Homes in Daytona Beach, Land O’ Lakes, Pembroke Pines, Panama City, Port Charlotte, and St. Augustine. The Homes’ Program may apply to receive federal funds that provide for the needed facility renovations and monthly per diem for eligible residents for the cost of care.

The total number of beds currently available in the State Veterans’ Homes Program is 870. Of those, 720 are nursing home beds. The veteran population over 65 years old in Florida is estimated to be 785,255 according to USDVA National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. Florida’s Agency for Health Care Administration reported Florida has a total of 83,395 nursing home beds and an over-65 population total of more than 3.5 million. Florida Department of Elder Affairs estimates more than half a million Alzheimer’s or related dementias patients in Florida. The current population demonstrates a on going need for more beds. The construction of new State Veterans’ Nursing Homes is subject to approval by the Governor and Cabinet, with 35% of the funding provided by the Florida legislature and 65% of construction costs matched by the USDVA.

Veterans’ Preference in Hiring and Retention

§ 295.07, F.S. provide that the state and political subdivisions accord preferences in appointment, retention, and promotion to eligible veterans. § 295.11, F.S. tasks FDVA, upon written request of any eligible person, to investigate complaints alleging violation of veterans’ preference rights.

FDVA continues to evaluate the trends and conditions that are evolving in our state. Adjustments to FDVA’s long-range plans are made to better meet the needs of Florida’s veteran population.



County Population and Federal Benefit Distributions

FY14 Summary of Expenditures by State						
Expenditures in \$000s						
County/ Congressional District	Veteran Population*	Total Expenditure	Compensation & Pension	Education & Vocational Rehabilitation/ Employment	Insurance & Indemnities	Medical Care
ALACHUA	18,537	\$ 222,473	\$ 66,753	\$ 14,202	\$ 1,465	\$ 140,053
BAKER	2,756	\$ 14,958	\$ 6,166	\$ 589	\$ 63	\$ 8,141
BAY	23,335	\$ 152,469	\$ 108,009	\$ 13,532	\$ 1,762	\$ 29,166
BRADFORD	4,112	\$ 24,575	\$ 8,374	\$ 721	\$ 91	\$ 15,388
BREVARD	67,059	\$ 500,433	\$ 296,321	\$ 40,034	\$ 7,845	\$ 156,232
BROWARD	86,935	\$ 609,052	\$ 288,950	\$ 74,674	\$ 8,198	\$ 237,230
CALHOUN	1,265	\$ 7,636	\$ 4,162	\$ 293	\$ 43	\$ 3,138
CHARLOTTE	20,878	\$ 125,209	\$ 73,986	\$ 3,821	\$ 1,674	\$ 45,728
CITRUS	27,757	\$ 140,042	\$ 68,667	\$ 3,709	\$ 1,047	\$ 66,619
CLAY	30,076	\$ 189,904	\$ 107,188	\$ 31,256	\$ 2,478	\$ 48,982
COLLIER	28,996	\$ 98,537	\$ 59,030	\$ 5,711	\$ 3,628	\$ 30,167
COLUMBIA	8,157	\$ 113,386	\$ 34,409	\$ 1,967	\$ 622	\$ 76,387
DE SOTO	2,492	\$ 14,313	\$ 7,774	\$ 310	\$ 56	\$ 6,174
DIXIE	1,655	\$ 20,101	\$ 6,539	\$ 129	\$ 40	\$ 13,393
DUVAL	98,861	\$ 581,943	\$ 293,264	\$ 111,248	\$ 6,418	\$ 171,013
ESCAMBIA	41,789	\$ 279,726	\$ 176,837	\$ 29,330	\$ 3,847	\$ 69,712
FLAGLER	12,537	\$ 67,535	\$ 37,290	\$ 5,580	\$ 966	\$ 23,698
FRANKLIN	1,507	\$ 6,605	\$ 3,613	\$ 115	\$ 18	\$ 2,859
GADSDEN	3,898	\$ 25,744	\$ 12,312	\$ 1,577	\$ 219	\$ 11,635
GILCHRIST	1,655	\$ 16,292	\$ 6,504	\$ 458	\$ 42	\$ 9,287
GLADES	1,069	\$ 5,638	\$ 1,841	\$ 128	\$ 43	\$ 3,627
GULF	1,791	\$ 9,301	\$ 6,049	\$ 415	\$ 52	\$ 2,785
HAMILTON	1,287	\$ 11,618	\$ 5,157	\$ 348	\$ 76	\$ 6,038
HARDEE	1,587	\$ 9,463	\$ 4,300	\$ 314	\$ 149	\$ 4,700
HENDRY	1,935	\$ 13,293	\$ 6,847	\$ 656	\$ 68	\$ 5,723
HERNANDO	22,672	\$ 171,283	\$ 91,193	\$ 7,685	\$ 1,082	\$ 71,323
HIGHLANDS	10,615	\$ 71,803	\$ 38,320	\$ 2,033	\$ 841	\$ 30,609
HILLSBOROUGH	94,474	\$ 998,161	\$ 413,160	\$ 116,344	\$ 7,431	\$ 461,226
HOLMES	2,071	\$ 17,498	\$ 13,273	\$ 440	\$ 229	\$ 3,556
INDIAN RIVER	15,207	\$ 82,748	\$ 49,698	\$ 3,125	\$ 2,159	\$ 27,765
JACKSON	5,037	\$ 33,303	\$ 20,151	\$ 1,415	\$ 147	\$ 11,590
JEFFERSON	1,471	\$ 8,357	\$ 4,679	\$ 319	\$ 55	\$ 3,303
LAFAYETTE	742	\$ 4,141	\$ 1,403	\$ 87	\$ 4	\$ 2,647
LAKE	34,463	\$ 215,858	\$ 117,234	\$ 9,675	\$ 2,932	\$ 86,017
LEE	57,501	\$ 311,448	\$ 164,470	\$ 18,186	\$ 5,163	\$ 123,629
LEON	19,304	\$ 106,432	\$ 49,068	\$ 16,027	\$ 2,191	\$ 39,146
LEVY	4,605	\$ 49,861	\$ 15,631	\$ 987	\$ 103	\$ 33,140
LIBERTY	655	\$ 2,828	\$ 1,827	\$ 127	\$ 1	\$ 873

Florida Veterans Foundation

The Florida Veterans Foundation (FVF) was created by the 2008 Legislature as a Direct Support Organization of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. As a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, all donations to the Foundation go to support Florida veterans and their families. Information is available at www.FloridaVeteransFoundation.org.

Foundation highlights this fiscal year:

- ⇒ The Foundation received 380 direct requests for financial assistance in Tallahassee and approved 202.
- ⇒ The Foundation provided direct financial assistance to veterans totaling \$210,402 (Ref. 2015 Audit), covering, but not limited to, items such as housing, emergency housing, utilities, identification documents, and transportation.
- ⇒ The Foundation raised \$222,381 (Ref. 2015 Audit) for general revenue and \$105,942 (Ref. 2015 Audit) for two Homeless Veterans Stand Down events. The events offer a variety of services to area homeless veterans, including medical and dental care, hygiene, stand down courts/legal services, employment services, clothing, permanent/temporary housing, claims preparation/processing services and transportation.
 - ◇ In April the North Florida Homeless Veterans Stand Down in Tallahassee assisted 250 veterans and utilized more than 650 volunteers from 75 Federal/State/County/City agencies.
 - ◇ In May more than 800 volunteers from 124 agencies assisted 255 veterans at the South Florida Homeless Veterans Stand Down in Miami.
 - ◇ The Foundation also provided \$5,000 in financial support to the Ocala Homeless Veterans Stand Down and provided tents/lights/cots to the Pasco County Homeless Veterans Stand Down.
 - ◇ The main goal of each of these events was to provide desperately needed services and support to homeless veterans with respect and dignity.
- ⇒ The Foundation provides funding (\$20,000) for the printing of the FDVA Veterans Benefits Guide, distributed by all FDVA Veterans' Benefits personnel as well as County Veterans Service Offices, VA Hospitals and clinics, military bases, as well as other public and private entities throughout the state. More than \$8,500 was provided to support the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame.

Col. Washington J. Sanchez Jr.
U.S. Army, Retired
Chairman

(850) 488 – 4181
Suite 2107, The Capitol
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399



Appendix IV



Florida is for Veterans, Inc. (d/b/a Veterans Florida) was established by the State in 2014 as part of the Florida GI Bill. Veterans Florida's mission is to attract and retain veterans and their families by connecting them to employment, training, and educational opportunities, strengthen Florida businesses by educating them on the value and skillsets Veterans bring to the workforce and providing training resources for their Veteran hires, and enhance the entrepreneurial skills of Veterans. The Governor, Speaker of the House, and Senate President appointed the Board of Directors in October 2014.

Veterans Florida staff made their headquarters in Tallahassee in March 2015 and received approval from the Legislative Budget Commission in September 2015 to launch two veterans programs. The **FL VETS Business Training Grants Program** expecting to begin in November 2015 will provide Florida businesses with grants to train and educate full-time, military veteran employees. In addition, Veterans Florida's Board of Directors will select five State Universities to participate in the **FL VETS Entrepreneurship Program**, which will give veterans who are seeking to start their own business the opportunity to connect with local businesses and resources and provide them with assistance through peer-to-peer learning sessions, mentoring, technical assistance, business round tables, networking opportunities, support of student organizations, speaker series, or other tools within a live and virtual environment.



Executive Director Bobby Carbonell presenting at the 2015 Military, Defense and Veterans Opportunities Summit on The Changing Face of Florida Veterans.

For the future, Veterans Florida is aligning partners to create a statewide network where agencies, public-private partnerships, businesses and service providers will collaborate to ensure Florida veterans and veterans seeking to relocate to the state can attain the resources they need. Veterans Florida's website went live at veteransflorida.org in July 2015 and a national marketing campaign is scheduled to begin in early 2016. Veterans Florida efforts uphold Florida's reputation as the most veteran friendly state.

-  VeteransFlorida.org
-  [Linkedin.com/company/veterans-florida](https://www.linkedin.com/company/veterans-florida)
-  [Facebook.com/veteransflorida](https://www.facebook.com/veteransflorida)
-  [Twitter.com/vetsfl](https://twitter.com/vetsfl)



Left: Executive Director Bobby Carbonell and Veterans Florida Board of Directors, Tom Rice, Captain (Ret.) Joe O'Connor, James Sampey, Jamee Graff, Jim Bagby, Councilwoman Prebble Ramswell, Brig. Gen. (Ret.) John Adams, Courtney Heidelberg, and LtGen Martin Steele.

Associated Veteran Service Organizations

As the accredited representative of 10 veterans' organizations, FDVA has the opportunity to prosecute claims before the USDVA on behalf of veterans who have placed their trust in these organizations by completing an "Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant's Representative" designation. There are no fees charged to veterans for FDVA services.

Listed below are the Veterans' Service Organizations which this department represents in claims processing with the USDVA:

-  American Ex Prisoners of War
-  American Legion
-  American Red Cross
-  Blinded Veterans Association
-  Fleet Reserve Association
-  Jewish War Veterans
-  Marine Corps League
-  Non-Commissioned Officers Association
-  The Retired Enlisted Association
-  Veterans of World War I (Family Members)

Appendix VI

Certified Veterans Service Officers

In rendering assistance to the veterans of Florida, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs works closely with all county and city veterans service officers. A listing of each county veterans service officer, their location, phone number and e-mail address are available at <http://floridavets.org/locations/>. If you are reading the FDVA Annual Report online your computer will let you go directly to the site by pressing and holding down the Ctrl key on your keyboard and left clicking your mouse on the link.

The FDVA website <http://floridavets.org/> provides many references and programs that can assist veterans and their families at the federal, state, and county level. All agencies work together in assisting Florida's veterans, their families and survivors to improve their health and economic well-being.



Robert H. Jenkins Jr. State Veterans' Domiciliary Home Lake City (Columbia County)

2014-15 Occupancy Rate: 97.4% (75 Admissions, 71 Discharges)

The facility is the very first Veterans' Home in Florida and the only Assisted Living Facility, having opened in May 1990. With ongoing maintenance and energy-saving and quality of life renovations, the home is in excellent condition.

Home Life: *Set on a quiet property with deer and wild turkey observed nearly every evening, Jenkins residents enjoy diverse outings and multiple activities on the grounds, in the local community, and across north-central and north-east Florida. The Domiciliary Home prides itself of providing excellent customer service in a home-like environment. We don't just look after residents' essential needs: we integrate opportunities to participate in lectures, book and special interest clubs, celebrations, socials, and other programs that promote healthy, vibrant lifestyles.*



Residents visit the Wings of Dreams Museum.



Residents enjoy a day out to the old ball game to watch the Gator Baseball Team! Here they join the National Anthem.



Residents get creative in making Christmas wreaths to decorate the Holiday festivities.



Residents proudly posing with the Gator Baseball Mascot.

Emory L. Bennett State Veterans' Nursing Home Daytona Beach (Volusia County)



2014-15 Occupancy Rate: 98.2% (82 Admissions, 85 Discharges)

The facility, opened in December 1993, has undergone \$7 million in renovations since 2010. The facility is in excellent condition. Ongoing maintenance ensures a high level of safety as well as appearance.

Home Life: *At Emory L. Bennett we are a tight-knit family of residents and staff. We enjoy great support from our volunteer organizations. Every day we focus on serving our residents with compassion, sharing their lives, and providing peace of mind for their families.*



Residents enjoy attending Race Week at the nearby Daytona Beach International Speedway.



“Sammy Davis Jr. and the Rat Pack” entertain residents at Christmas with Sammy’s “Minnie Me”!



Residents receive frequent visits by the Seminole Harley Davidson Motorcycle Club that bring gifts and entertainment.



Residents participate in Memorial Day Events.

Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home Land O' Lakes (Pasco County)

2014-15 Occupancy Rate: 99.6% (48 Admissions, 49 Discharges)



The facility recently completed an exterior renovation that is not only lovely, but provides additional strength in the event of a hurricane, and interior upgrades that included a new fire panel and monitoring system. Interior improvements include upgraded safety handrails, flooring, and new resident room furniture. The facility marked the passing of its fifteenth anniversary this year, having opened in April 1999, and remains in excellent condition.

Home Life: *Set on a quiet property, veteran residents enjoy diverse outings and activities. The Home prides itself on incorporating family and community members into our events, and fostering deep friendships among the residents. We encourage resident driven choices, including the adoption of two cats and adding an aviary to the Baldomero Lopez family.*



Residents selected to participate in Honor Flight, a program enabling World War II veterans to visit Washington, D.C., and see 'their' memorial.



No one is ever too old to enjoy a good Easter Egg Hunt! Residents work hard on decorating eggs.



Residents enjoy being given VIP treatment in local baseball games.



Air Shows give residents time for reminiscing inside an airplane and looking around.

**Alexander “Sandy” Nininger Jr. State Veterans’ Nursing Home
Pembroke Pines (Broward County)
2014-15 Occupancy Rate: 98.0% (77 Admissions, 74 Discharges)**



The home is in excellent condition, with several updates including new flooring installed this past year. The facility opened in June 2001 and has weathered several strong storms, yet vigilant monitoring and upkeep ensure continued safe operation and beautiful appearance.

Home Life: *Residents gather around the salt water fish tank for coffee in the morning...the daily domino game usually begins after the morning workout...social gatherings on new patio furniture in fountained court-yards...life in the Nininger Home is anything but sedentary. Frequent outings provide the residents with an open forum to the surrounding community, and volunteers provide a highly popular Friday afternoon Happy Hour.*



U.S. Marines visit the facility during Fleet Week and interact with residents sharing their stories.



A visit to the Pumpkin Patch for Halloween is a favorite of many residents who pick out a pumpkin.



Residents love getting outdoors, especially watching the baseball game at Marlin’s Park.



Residents participate in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade proudly representing their Home facility!

**Clifford Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home
Panama City (Bay County)
2014-15 Occupancy Rate: 99.9%
(68 Admissions, 25 Discharges)**



The Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home opened in October 2003, and recently upgraded their flooring, resident room furniture, and dining chairs. The secured patios have all been freshly landscaped, providing a beautiful area for residents and visiting family members. The home remains in excellent condition.

Home Life: *The Clifford Chester Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home is located in a beautiful, wooded setting, surrounded by wildlife and nature. The veteran residents regular outdoor activities and frequent offsite events such as ballgames, movies, restaurants, and shopping. There is always something fun and interesting happening for our residents at Sims.*



Excited residents celebrate Fourth of July festivities, enjoying activities, great food and fun during barbecue cookouts.



Residents are truly treated first class during Memorial Day in honor of their Patriotic service to their country.



Residents get serious and have fun when it comes down to the popular Miracle League baseball game!



Music and dancing during social parties are enjoyed by residents.

**Douglas T. Jacobson State Veterans' Nursing Home
 Port Charlotte (Charlotte County)
 2014-15 Occupancy Rate: 99.1% (56 Admissions, 43 Discharges)**



The Jacobson Home celebrated its tenth anniversary this year, having opened in March 2004. In a continuing effort to present a home that is comfortable and dignified, the Jacobson State Veterans' Nursing Home has installed new flooring, upgraded all bedroom suites, overhauled the landscaping and is in overall excellent condition.

Home Life: *A modern facility surrounded by an involved community of supportive public and civic organizations. Douglas T. Jacobson actively celebrates and honors veteran service and memory with interactive community events both on the secluded grounds and within the historical neighboring cities.*



Many motorcycle clubs keep the residents rocking and rolling, especially during the Holidays. Here a resident receives full attention from the Latin American Biker's Club.



Every year a few residents are chosen for "Honor Flight" and fly to Washington D.C. to see the WWII Memorial and more.



Air Shows give residents the opportunity to share memories.



Residents from Honor Flight pose with smiles in front of the Lincoln Memorial.

Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home
St. Augustine (St. Johns County)
2014-15 Occupancy Rate: 99.8%
(43 Admissions, 43 Discharges)



This is FDVA's newest State Veterans' Home, a LEED-certified gold facility, that respects the environment while providing a warm, caring atmosphere for its residents. The Lassen Home opened in September 2010 and remains in excellent condition.

Home Life: *The Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home, situated in a lodge-like setting, prides itself in customer care and services. Residents enjoy a wide variety of special events and diverse activities designed to appeal to individual interests.*



Residents pose with the owner of the Jacksonville Suns Baseball organization prior to a summer game.



Dressed to the 9's residents toast to the Annual Black and White Ball! The residents enjoy dressing formally for this elegant event!



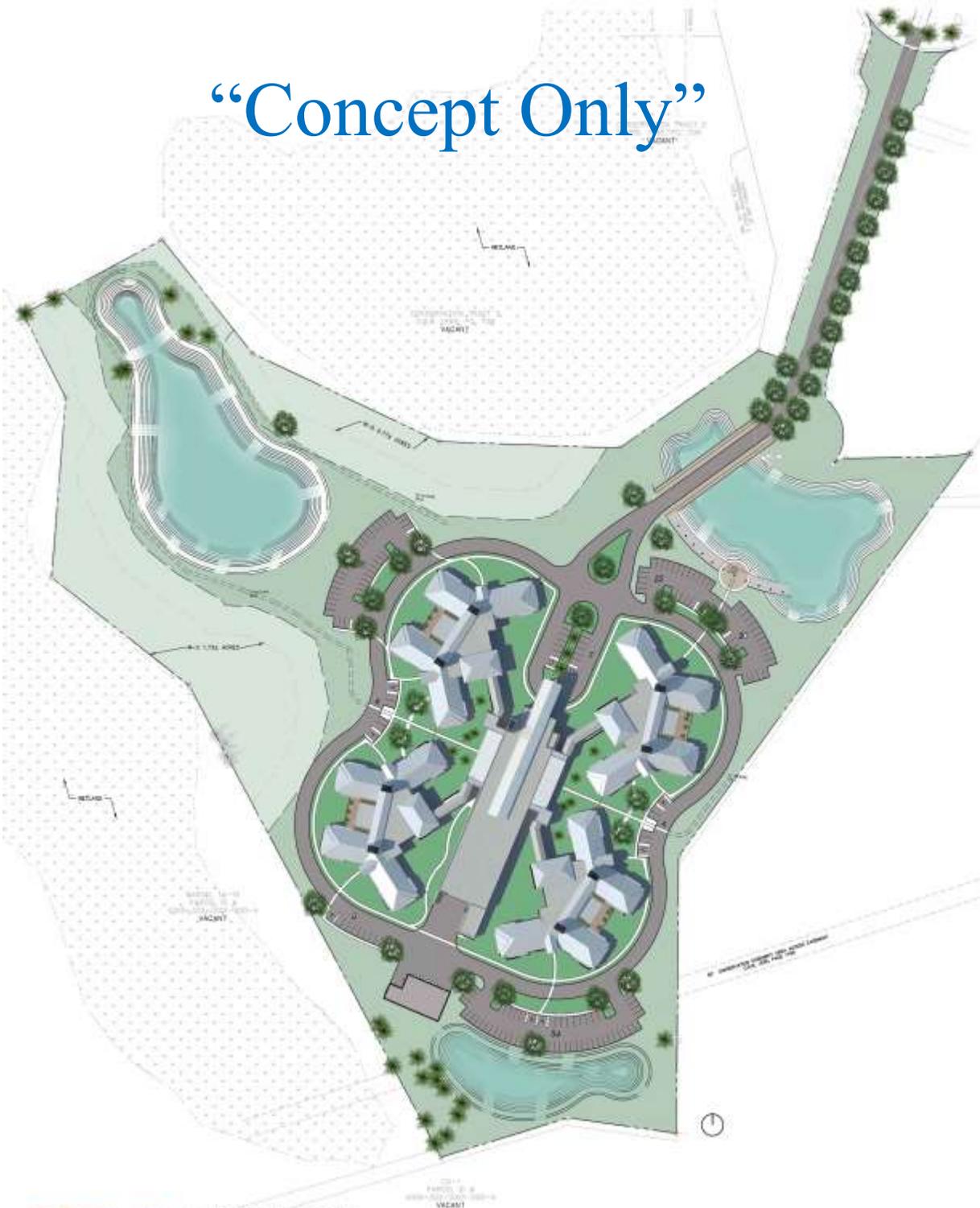
Residents participate during the Memorial Day ceremonies. This is a very touching and important event that defines their lives, and for their patriotic service to their country.



Residents exercise their right to vote and are very patriotic in casting their ballot!

**Ardie R. Copas State Veterans' Nursing Home
Port St. Lucie (St. Lucie County)
2014-15 Occupancy Rate: N/A**

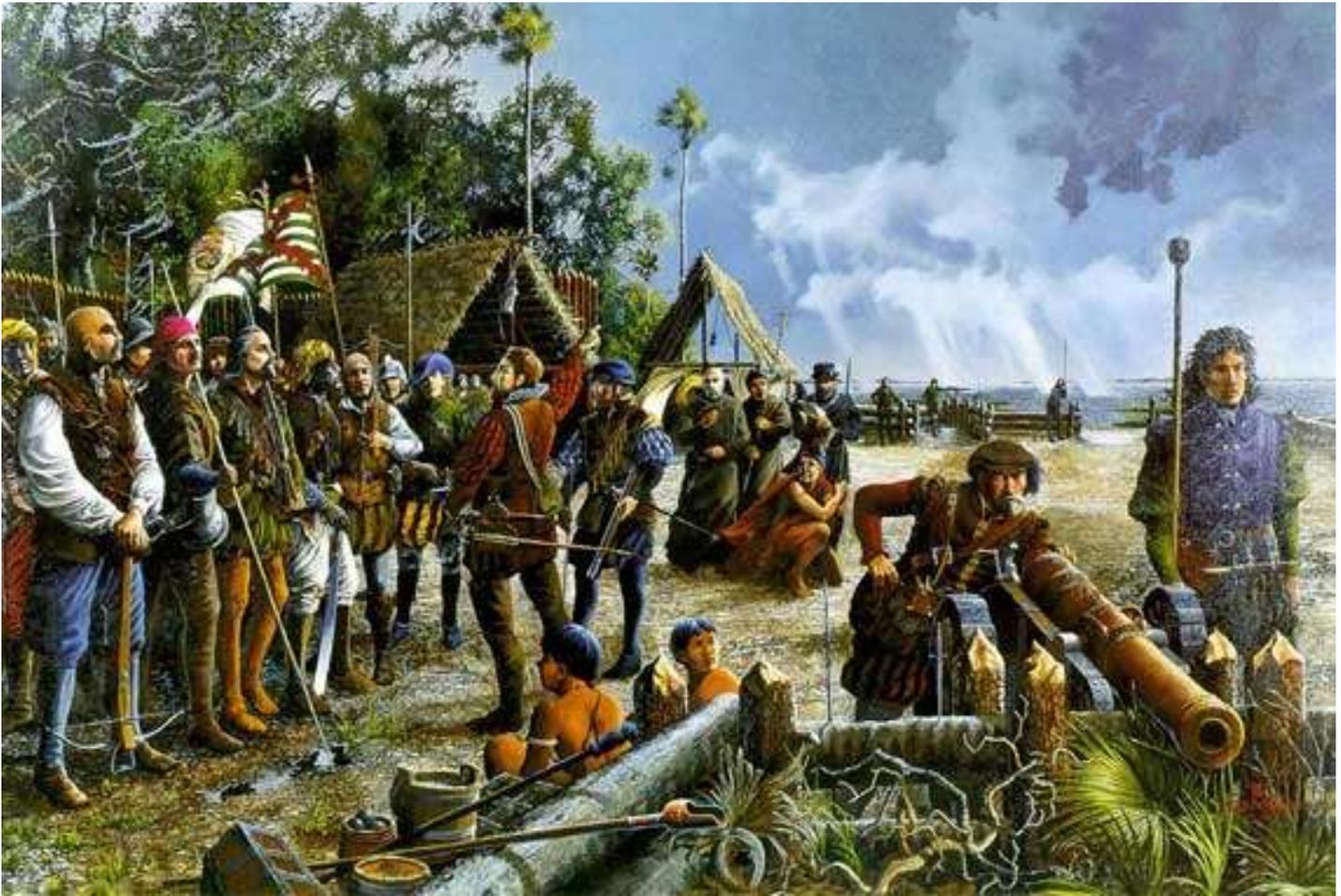
“Concept Only”



Our Fiscal Impact

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS
ANNUAL REPORT INFORMATION
July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015

	State Veterans' Homes Program	Veterans' Benefits and Assistance	Executive Direction and Support Services
Operating Expenditures			
Salaries and Benefits	\$ 45,268,707	\$ 5,235,186	\$ 2,141,086
OPS	\$ 2,339,082	\$ 9,599	\$ 27,873
Expenses	\$ 15,332,805	\$ 292,800	\$ 736,234
Other Capital Outlay	\$ 667,575	\$ 3,488	\$ 121,020
Food Products	\$ 3,198,303	\$ -	\$ -
Vehicle	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Contracted Services	\$ 9,468,631	\$ 143,243	\$ 285,720
Recreational Equip. Supplies	\$ 76,121	\$ -	\$ -
Risk Management Insurance	\$ 2,639,487	\$ 21,545	\$ 9,466
Human Resources Assessment	\$ 353,143	\$ 34,823	\$ 9,793
Data Processing Svc SRC	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,040
Total Operating Expenditures	\$ 79,343,853	\$ 5,740,684	\$ 3,341,231
Non-Operating Expenditures			
Service Charge to General Revenue	\$ 261,341	\$ -	\$ -
Refunds-State Revenues	\$ 941,316	\$ -	\$ -
Investment Cost	\$ 49,902	\$ -	\$ -
Payment Sales Tax	\$ 3,113	\$ -	\$ -
Statewide Cost Allocation Plan	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Non-Operating Expenditures	\$ 1,255,673		
Fixed Capital Outlay			
New Home Construction	\$ 273,134	\$ -	\$ -
Add & Improvements to State Veterans' Homes	\$ 5,179	\$ -	\$ -
Maintenance/Repair	\$ 1,919,552	\$ -	\$ -
Total Fixed Capital Outlay	\$ 2,197,865		
Total	\$ 82,797,391	\$ 5,740,684	\$ 3,341,231



FIRST MUSTER AT SAINT AUGUSTINE - A Florida National Guard Painting by Jackson Walker, 1992

The “first muster” of militia troops took place in St. Augustine on Sept. 16, 1565, when Pedro Menendez de Aviles gathered around him the soldiers of his small Spanish army, as well as the civilian settlers who had accompanied him to the newly established presidio town of St. Augustine. Florida’s veterans trace their legacy of service back to this important milestone in the nation’s history and the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs is proud to serve the generations of veterans who have followed in their footsteps.



FDVA Annual Report