



Georgia Department of Veterans Service

Cultivating community connections – empowering Georgia’s veterans and their families to flourish.

April 2024

GOVERNOR KEMP SIGNS VETERAN LEGISLATION

GDVS Commissioner Ross was proud to join Governor Kemp on April 24, 2024 to celebrate the passage and signing of new legislation for Georgia’s military service members, veterans, and their families.

We are thankful for the hard work of Georgia’s legislators and Governor Kemp’s support in making Georgia a great place to live, work, and raise a family for our military and veteran communities.

Bills signed include:

- HB 880 - which allows spouses of military service members to start working under a license from another state with supervision from a Georgia entity after applying for an expedited license.
- SB 449 - which creates a 12-month provisional practice allowance for military medical personnel with a pending license application, creates a new Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) license, and establishes a new licensing system for APRN licenses.
- HB 995 - which clarifies that K-12 schools are able to administer the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) during school hours.
- SB 389 - which removes a requirement to annually print and distribute the military code to save taxpayer dollars and protect the identities of military officers.



REMEMBERING COL. RALPH PUCKETT: A GEORGIAN HERO



The story of the bravery and heroics Colonel Ralph Puckett will be shared for decades in remembrance of his remarkable courage and valor during battle in the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Puckett passed away peacefully at his home in Columbus on April 5, 2024. He was the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient for the Korean War.

In 1950, Puckett led the 8th Army Ranger Company in an assault in Unsan, North Korea, where they were outnumbered 9 to 1.

During the battle for Hill 205, Puckett was wounded by mortar fire. He told his troops to leave him behind while he continued to call in artillery attacks. They refused. Under his command, the 8th Ranger Company made a stand in a perimeter around the city and held their ground until additional troops intervened.

Puckett refused a medical discharge and joined the 101st Airborne division during the Vietnam War. He later retired from the Army in 1971, but continued to volunteer and assist his fellow service members and veterans. He was often found helping others around Fort Moore in Columbus.

One of the most decorated soldiers in Army history, Puckett received two Distinguished Service Crosses, two Silver Stars, two Bronze Star Medals with V device, and five Purple Hearts.

Puckett was originally awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation’s second highest honor, for his actions during the battle for Hill 205. It was upgraded to the Medal of Honor on May 21, 2021.

VIETNAM VETERAN MEMORIAL IN GEORGIA RENOVATED

A sacred granite wall containing the names of Vietnam War service members who gave the ultimate sacrifice is not only located in Washington, DC, but in Columbus, Georgia.

The Dignity Wall, a replica of the national Vietnam War Memorial, has traveled throughout the country for over 20 years.

It is now permanently located in Columbus and was recently renovated to withstand Georgia’s hot summer weather.

The monument stands eight feet high and stretches more than 200 feet. It has a black faux granite reflective surface with the names of the more than 58,000 servicemen and women who died or went missing during the Vietnam War.



GEORGIA SCHOOLS NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED FOR SERVICES FOR MILITARY AND VETERAN STUDENTS

For Veterans in Georgia who want to further their education, there are opportunities available at both community colleges and universities.

With scholarship opportunities, fee waivers, and support services for military-affiliated students, Georgia Southern University (GSU) has been marked as a “gold level” designation in the large public-school category and is listed as a Military Friendly® school for the 12th year in a row.

GSU also offers courses and support for military-connected students pursuing graduate level degrees or certifications. These courses are offered at Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield’s Education Center, so students can take classes while remaining on base.

The Technical College System was also recognized for their services for veteran and military-connected students. Central Georgia Technical College (CGTC) was ranked number 3 among the top 10 Military Friendly® large community colleges in the nation.

CGTC has an array of programs targeted to serve the military and veteran community, including the GA VECTR Center, in Warner Robins. As one of the largest two-year colleges in Georgia, they operate three campuses and five centers in Central Georgia who serve over 30,000 individuals every year.

CGTC is focused on connecting graduates with careers, which can be seen through their high-quality educational services and continued support for students entering the work force.



You are invited to

2024 LET'S CONNECT Summit

Join us for the second consecutive year of this impactful summit, where we will extend the important work of the Georgia Suicide Prevention Task Force to enhance suicide prevention efforts for Georgia’s military service members, veterans, and their families (SMVF).

CALLAWAY RESORT & GARDENS

4500 Southern Pine Dr.,
Pine Mountain, GA 31822

24th & 25th June, 2024
8:00 AM - 2:30 PM

Please RSVP [Here!](#)

Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox
SUICIDE PREVENTION
GRANT RECIPIENT



SENATE HEARING ADDRESSES BARRIERS TO WOMENS HEALTHCARE

As more women are joining the U.S. military, that means more women veterans are turning to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) for healthcare services.

VA’s research reports the number of women veterans using VA health care has more than tripled since 2001. Georgia is home to more than 100,000 women veterans and they are the fastest growing veteran population in the state.

A recent Senate Veteran Affairs committee hearing focused on the barriers to health care for women veterans at VA facilities.

VA reported to the committee of their intention to prioritize the kinds of health care offered to women veterans, including medical providers with specialized training, preventative care, and a focus on mental health care resources.

GET TO KNOW YOUR VSO: CHRIS PARRISH



Seymour “Chris” Parrish, manager of the GDVVS Waycross office and a district manager in South Georgia, wants veterans and their families to know they can trust him to fight at 100% for their benefits.

Georgia native and Army veteran Parrish, who has been with GDVVS for 12 years, says his favorite thing about working with the department is meeting veterans from all walks of life and who served in different wars.

Parrish is motivated not only by having his sense of duty and patriotism, but by the knowledge that what he does for veterans on a daily basis can change their lives for the better.

When he is not serving veterans, Parrish is coaching youth basketball or riding his motorcycle. His advice to new and future VSOs is to make sure the advice you give to veterans is true and accurate. “If you don’t know the answer, call for help, or look it up. We have a lot of great references to assist us as VSOs. Make sure you give the best and correct answer.”

COMING SOON: WE CARE VET FAIR IN ROME



On May 16, 2024, federal, state, and local agencies, nonprofits, and local resources from sixteen Northwest Georgia counties will gather at the Rome Forum River Center for a one-stop benefits and resource fair for veterans and service members of all ages and backgrounds.

Veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors are encouraged to take advantage of the numerous resources on hand.

Find more information and register for legal and grocery assistance at <https://www.wecarevetfair.com/>.