

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Present Mr. Joshua Kopsie, Chair
Mr. Steve Mendez, Secretary
Mr. Tim Paslawski, Vice Chair
Mr. John Kubinec, Member
Mr. Pete Peterson, Member
Ms. Patricia Ross, Commissioner

Visitors Present: Mr. Kerry Dyer, Deputy Commissioner, Chief Operations Officer, GDVS
Mr. Mark Demers, Chief Development Officer, Chief Finance Officer, GDVS
Mr. Russell Feagin, Executive Director Health, Contracting & Facilities, GDVS
Mr. Ernie Cowart, Executive Director Veterans Cemeteries, GDVS
Ms. Amy Sillmon, Assistant Attorney General, Attorney General's Office
Ms. Kathryn Wright, Governor's Office of Planning & Budget
Mr. Lou Zayas, Sr. Vice Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart
Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW Service Officer, Appeals Division, GDVS
Mr. Joe Higgins, Veterans Service Foundation Board
Mr. Carlton Deese, Executive Director GWVNH, Augusta, GA
Ms. Linda Lavender, Director, Milledgeville Cemetery, GDVS
Ms. Lily Snyder, Director, Veterans Education & Training, GDVS
Ms. Shareka Monday-Robinson, Director, Human Resources, GDVS
Mr. Steven Fay, Director, Training Division, GDVS
Ms. Sherri Whitfield, Director, Veterans Benefits South Region, GDVS
Mr. Ken Childre, Director, Veterans Benefits North Region, GDVS
Mr. Edwin Berry, Director, Appeals Division, GDVS
Mr. DeMario Rucker, Assistant Director, Appeals Division, GDVS
Ms. Veda Brooks, Coordinator, Women & Minority Veterans, GDVS
Ms. Calandra Ferguson, Coordinator, Suicide Prevention & Outreach, GDVS
Mr. William Wilson, Network Administrator, GDVS
Ms. Raven Holstick, Transition and Employment Coordinator, GDVS
Ms. Jarelle Thompson, Homeless Coordinator, GDVS
Ms. Camala Ball, Budget Analyst, GDVS
Ms. Monica Dorsey, Communications & Outreach Specialist, GDVS
Ms. Irene Mackson, Business Support Analyst, GDVS
Ms. Julie Hammond, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, GDVS

On Friday, February 27, 2026, the Veterans Service Board meeting was held in person and by video/tele-conference.

Mr. Paslawski called the meeting to order at 11:38 a.m. Mr. Paslawski gave the invocation. Mr. Paslawski led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Mr. Paslawski made a motion to approve the February Agenda. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Mr. Paslawski made a motion to approve the January minutes, which were previously distributed for members to review. Mr. Mendez seconded the motion. There were no objections. The motion passed.

The following reports were submitted for the Board meeting:

Ms. Belinda Boldoe, GDVS, VFW Service Officer

- The Department Service Officer attended a virtual Quarterly Center for Development and Civic Engagement CDCE/VAVS meeting hosted by Gwendolyn Ramos, and the staff was held on January 14, 2026, at 1 PM. The following issues were briefed:
 - Introduction to Ms. Amy Whiter, Chairman, the newly appointed Chief of Experience Officer for the Atlanta VAMC.
 - **Medical Center Updates:**
 - CofE vision is to improve Veteran Care.
 - Atlanta VAMC is the largest VA medical center in the nation, serving approximately 169,000 veterans.
 - Atlanta is the fastest-growing female veteran population in the country.
 - Gwendolyn Ramos, Chief, Voluntary Service (CDCE), seeking a formal invite to the VSOs' conventions, conferences, and events.
 - CDCD hosted National Salute Veteran week February 08-14, 2026.
 - Pay tribute and express their appreciation to the Veteran patients.
 - We also aim to raise community awareness of the role of VA medical centers.
 - Encourage organizations to volunteer at their local VA facilities by distributing gifts and cards to Veteran patients.
 - A streamlined intake process providing a consistent experience for Veterans and visitors across locations.
 - Support Summer Student Program
 - Seeking sponsorship for a Summer Student attending the program.
 - Donation of \$75.00 per attending the program.

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- The Department Service Officer participated in the VFW Hats on the Hill. The event was held on January 21, 2026, at 11 AM, located at Liberty Plaza, Georgia State Capitol.
 - The purpose of the event is to support policies that directly impact on the lives of those who have served.

- The Department Service Officer participated in the South Georgia Veterans Benefits Summit, hosted by Heather Stephens, North Florida/South Georgia Veteran Health Care System, and the staff. The summit was held on January 24, 2026, from 9 AM – 4 PM.
 - A guest presenter for the summit presented information virtually on the following topics:
 - Claim Processing
 - Appeals Processing
 - Life Legacy

- The Department Service Officer attended a virtual training session - VSO Coffee Talk, hosted by the GDVS Training Team. We received a presentation from the GDVS Appeals Director on the appeals process part 2. The virtual training session was held on February 02, 2026, at 8 AM.

- The Department Service Officer attended an Atlanta VA HCS VSO Update meeting hosted by Kai D. Mentzer and his team. The virtual meeting was held on February 02, 2026.

- The Department Service Officer attended a virtual training session - VSO Coffee Talk, hosted by the GDVS Training Team. We received a presentation from the GDVS Training Director on the POA, Fox Grant Mental Health Screening, and Unite Us briefing. The virtual training session was held on February 17, 2026, at 8 AM.

- The Department Service Officer attended a monthly VSO VSC Vet Talk hosted by Lateisha Howard, Atlanta Regional Office AVSCM (Quality & Training), the staff held on February 18, 2026, at 10 AM, at 1700 Clairmont Road, Decatur, GA 30033. The purpose was:
 - To conduct a monthly roundtable informational session in collaboration with Veteran Service Officers (VSOs).
 - This meeting aims to foster an inclusive environment and provide current guidance on administering Compensation Benefits.
 - The primary topic: Compensation and Pension Exams

Mr. Bill Miles, VFW State Commander & Mr. Dwayne Kilbourne, VFW State Chief of Staff

2026 Hats on the Hill After Action Report

1. Executive Summary

The inaugural 2026 Hats on the Hill event was successfully conducted at the Liberty Plaza (rally) and in the Georgia State Capitol (legislative meetings) with approximately 200 veterans and supporters in attendance. The event brought together multiple Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), Community Veteran Engagement Boards (CVEBs), veteran community thought leaders, community influencers, media representatives, and state legislators to advocate for key legislative priorities impacting Georgia's veteran community.

Primary Legislative Priorities:

- STOP Georgia House Bill 108
- Increase the Number of State Veterans Homes
- Fully Fund the Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS)

Overall, the event achieved its core objectives of awareness, engagement, and legislative visibility, while also identifying opportunities for growth and operational refinement in future years.

2. Event Purpose & Objectives

Purpose: To unite Georgia's veteran community at the State Capitol to advocate for legislative priorities and demonstrate visible, organized support for policies that strengthen services for veterans and their families.

Objectives:

- Demonstrate unified veteran presence at the Capitol.
- Engage directly with legislators and staff regarding priority issues.
- Generate media coverage to broaden public awareness.
- Build collaboration among participating veteran organizations.
- Establish Hats on the Hill as an annual advocacy event.

3. Planning & Coordination Overview

Planning began approximately three (3) months prior to the event and involved coordination among multiple VSOs, volunteers, and partners.

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- Applying for and securing event space at Liberty Plaza
- Legislative outreach and scheduling meetings
- Speaker coordination
- Media outreach
- Volunteer mobilization
- Social media promotion
- On-site logistics (signage, staging, rally flow)

4. Attendance & Participation

Approximate Attendance: 200 veterans and supporters

Participating Organizations (at event): Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion, American Veterans (AMVETS), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), VFW Auxiliary, Georgia Veterans Network (GVN), VETLANTA, Student Veterans of America (SVA), Georgia Military Women

Additional Organizations (during planning phases): Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), The Warrior Alliance, Georgia Veterans Day Association, Cherokee County Homeless Veterans Project, and HERO Agriculture.

Legislative Meetings Held (Day Of): Two (2) – impromptu meeting with Georgia House Representative Josh Bonner and scheduled meeting with State Senator Jason Dickerson

Media Outlets Present: Fox 5 News (TV/online), Georgia Now (TV/online), and WSB 95.5 FM (radio)

5. Legislative Impact & Advocacy Outcomes

Priority 1: STOP Georgia House Bill 108

Summary of engagement and legislator response: Attendees agree with the need to stop the bill, Rep Bonner appeared to be unable to move towards an amendment, but Senators Wicks, McLaurin, and Dickerson all told us on the event day that they are with us.

Priority 2: Increase State Veterans Homes

Summary of engagement and legislator response: Attendees all agreed, and we have overwhelming support by all legislators we spoke to that day. The sticking point is how the \$35 million investment is covered. Currently, it is not in Governor Kemp's budget request.

Priority 3: Fully Fund GDVS

Summary of engagement and legislator response: Overwhelming support by audience in attendance. No pushback; the only big note came from lawmakers who indicated that funding for GDVS is made based on the requests of the Commissioner. If we need more employees, the Commissioner needs to make that request when it comes time for the budget.

6. Media & Public Engagement

Social Media Reach: 22,000+ reach/views with over 13,000 impressions and 270 engagements organically on the Georgia VFW social channels.

Media Coverage Summary: Fox 5 Atlanta news spot on the evening news and posted online.

Opportunities for Growth: Increased ad spending, expanded event sponsorship, earlier planning and promotion of this annual event, and more developed media engagement one month and one week ahead of the event.

7. Operational Review

What Worked Well:

- HB 108 ignited fire within alliance organizations; joint signed letter was a major step forward.
- Event Pin was a hit by attendees.
- Talking points were good (both from the podium and within the legislative meetings).
- Good communication for a first-time event.
- Promotion within some of the alliance groups (out to network went well).
- Location and timing were good.
- Mid-week event timing aligned with legislative calendar, allowing for added exposure within the halls of the State Capitol.
- Outdoor rally location allowed for visibility and exposure.

Challenges Encountered:

- Mid-week event timing meant that some people wanting to attend could not due to their work schedule and increased Atlanta traffic.
- Some difficulty getting active event planning leadership from alliance organizations.
- Weather almost was a challenge (it was cold, but no rain).
- Outdoor risked participation because of potential weather conditions.

Recommendations for 2027:

- Piggyback additional advocacy events in the lead up to the legislative session to build additional momentum and event exposure (i.e. potential joint committee testimony by VSOs during the fall months – something that Chairman Bonner thinks is possible).
- Better leverage the networking capabilities of ALL alliance members (event promotional materials NEEDS to be distributed from all alliance and partner organizations to their followers and members).
- Potentially consider later rally date during the odd years (maybe right before Crossover Day) but keep first or second week of Legislative Session the timing during even years.
 - This allows rally to focus on bills that are actively being considered. During odd years, a bill has to pass both chambers, and crossover day is when each chamber sends their passed legislation over to the other chamber.
 - Even years act as the second of the two-year legislative cycle. That both chambers to continue working on any bill that was left pending from the previous year.
- Consider event sponsorships and partnerships from apolitical, like-minded organizations, brands, and companies.
- Encourage each Georgia VOH alliance organization to provide at least one person to take a leading role on event execution.

8. Financial Overview (If Applicable)

Revenue Sources: Not Applicable

Expenses: <\$500 spent (covering 3 Porta Potties and 20 advocacy signs (against HB108))

Overall Financial Assessment: Event was executed within inaugural year's budget.

9. Strategic Growth Opportunities

- Increase attendance goal to 400–500 participants.
- Formalize and expand alliance partnerships.
- Introduce more pre-event promotional opportunities.
- Provide legislators with structured issue packets.
- Expanded event presence on social media.
- Increased on-site (day of) media presence / participation to 7 to 10 outlets.
- Consider adding additional speakers and including highly influential keynote speakers who draw a crowd.
- Expand statewide transportation coordination.
- Refine annual legislative scorecard follow-up.

10. Conclusion

The 2026 inaugural Hats on the Hill event successfully established a visible and unified veteran advocacy presence at the Georgia State Capitol. With strong turnout and direct engagement with legislators on three critical priorities, the event demonstrated both organizational strength and growth potential. With structured follow-up and earlier coordination, Hats on the Hill is well-positioned to become a flagship annual advocacy event for Georgia's veteran community.

Commissioner Patricia Ross

On Thursday, January 22, 2026, Commissioner Ross hosted the Korean delegation, led by Ms. Chunghee Park. In attendance was Jason Park, who was given a recommendation letter from the Commissioner to add to his application to the U.S. Naval Academy. She then attended the Veterans Service Board Meeting. She later met with OPB Analyst, Kathryn Wright and Mark Demers to discuss the budget.

On Friday, January 23, 2026, Commissioner Ross attended the Leadership Institute's Session Six, "The Legislative Process." She then addressed the Human Resources Appropriations Subcommittee. Later in the day she had her bi-weekly meeting with Jeff Bell, Chief Operating Officer of STG International.

On Monday, January 26, 2026, Commissioner Ross held a Director's Meeting. She then met with DBHDD for the Behavioral Health Coordinating Committee's (BHCC) Nominating Committee Meeting. She later spoke with Jason Jordan of Gratitude America and attended the Unite Us bi-weekly meeting.

On Tuesday, January 27, 2026, Commissioner Ross hosted the Korean Delegation, led by Mr. Alexander Song. She also had a quarterly meeting with Chandra Miller, CVVAMC Director (Dublin). She then attended the meeting of the House Veterans Affairs and Defense Committee.

On Wednesday, January 28, 2026, Commissioner Ross attended the NASDVA EXCOM meeting and spoke about data sharing with the VA.

On Thursday, January 29, 2026, Commissioner Ross attended the GDVS and Unite Us Implementation Meeting. She also spoke with an organization that builds skilled nursing homes. Later she met with Michael Kappaz and Luke Allard from Stanford to discuss VSO best practices.

On Friday, January 30, 2026, Commissioner Ross held an Open Forum for the Department. She discussed the upcoming legislative and budget process. She then attended the retirement luncheon for Randy Brown in Griffin.

On Monday, February 2, 2026, Commissioner Ross attended the VSO Coffee Talk featuring Ed Berry, Director of Appeals. She was then interviewed by Brandee Paisano in preparation for the International

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Women's Day Celebration with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. She later attended the meeting on HB 632 – Occupational Tax. She then attended the Fox Grant Update Meeting.

On Tuesday, February 3, 2026, Commissioner Ross attended the VSMR Monthly Meeting. She then spoke with Smoke with the US Military Veteran Motorcycle Club. She also attended the House Veterans Affairs and Defense Committee Meeting.

On Wednesday, February 4, 2026, Commissioner Ross had a meeting regarding family councils at state veterans nursing homes. She then attended the meeting with Bridge My Return regarding the GA White Label MVP.

On Thursday, February 5, 2026, Commissioner Ross joined the VFW group at the Capitol to support HB 985 (burial equity). She also attended the hearing regarding HB 979 (concurrent jurisdiction). She then attended the BHCC Meeting.

On Friday, February 6, 2026, Commissioner Ross had her bi-weekly meeting with Jeff Bell, Chief Operating Officer of STG International.

On Monday, February 9, 2026, Commissioner Ross held a Director's Meeting. She also met with Congressman Collins. She later attended the Unite Us/GVDS bi-weekly meeting.

On Tuesday, February 10, 2026, Commissioner Ross addressed the Senate Health and Human Development Subcommittee.

On Wednesday, February 11, 2026, Commissioner Ross spoke at the Government Innovation Showcase Georgia live event. She also attended a meeting regarding the Augusta Cemetery. She later attended the House Committee meeting at the Capitol.

On Thursday, February 12, 2026, Commissioner Ross met with Mike Couch. She also met with Shelley Seinberg and Amy Sillmon from the AG's office. She later had a meeting regarding the Augusta Cemetery and worked on her House Appropriations briefing slides. She then attended the Veterans Grant Discussions with leaders from Dekalb County.

On Friday, February 13, 2026, Commissioner Ross met with Commissioner Tanner.

On Monday, February 16, 2026, Commissioner Ross held a Director's Meeting. She also attended the Fox Grant Update Meeting.

On Tuesday, February 17, 2026, Commissioner Ross attended the VSO Coffee Talk featuring Steven Fay, Director of the Veterans Training Division. She also attended the Fox Grant meeting.

**Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia**

On Wednesday, February 18, 2026, Commissioner Ross briefed the House Human Resources Appropriations Subcommittee.

On Thursday, February 19, 2026, Commissioner Ross attended the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) Meeting. She also briefed the joint House and Senate Veteran subcommittees at the Capitol.

On Friday, February 20, 2026, Commissioner Ross attended the Quarter 1 GVN Leadership Board Meeting. She also had her bi-weekly meeting with Jeff Bell, Chief Operating Officer of STG International.

On Monday, February 23, 2026, Commissioner Ross held a Director's Meeting. She also attended the GDVS Grant Tracking Training.

On Tuesday, February 24, 2026, Commissioner Ross went to Milledgeville as part of the Shepherd Center's SHARE initiative visit.

On Wednesday, February 25, 2026, Commissioner Ross attended the Birthday Celebration of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan.

On Thursday, February 26, 2026, Commissioner Ross attended the GDVS/Unite Us Implementation Meeting.

Ms. Shelly-Ann Simpson, Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals

GENERAL

- On February 11th I attended the monthly Veterans Roundtable at the Decatur Goodwill Resource Center.
- **DD 214's and Welcome Home Letters: 42** Welcome Home Letters were mailed out in January 2026.

Projected Positions:

- 2 Openings in Appeals

Mr. Steven Fay, Director of Training Division

- Charles Isaac- Conducted VA systems for new PIV users in Brunswick and Dublin Field Offices.
- Steven Fay conducted new hire training at the VA Regional Office Appeals Division. New hire training Introduces new VSOs to the accredited training processes and procedures to assist

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

veterans and claimants. Refresher training is required to train and evaluate the proficiency of VA systems after issuance of their PIV card. The Absorb Learning Portal is also introduced. The portal has classes and quizzes to help navigate the vast subjects of filing VA claims.

- Sandra Bennett- VSO Coffee Talk - Let's Talk About It, January 23. Retro \$4243.

Upcoming Events:

- D.R.O.P. class for February
- Fox Grant suicide awareness training/POA training/VSO Coffee talk February 16th
- Continued ongoing support to the Regional Directors and Veteran Field Service Offices including Central Office personnel
- Continuation of performing duties as VSO's
- Provide new hire training in North Georgia, VA Regional Office Appeals new hires, Newnan new hire and Zebulon (Griffin location) new hire
- Annual Training Planning 2026

Mr. Edwin Berry, Director of Appeals Division

- The total number of hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for **January 2026** was **52 with 10 reschedules for a later date.**
- As of **January 31, 2025**, the Isakson VA Regional Office processed benefits as follows for GDVS and the Service Organizations represented by GDVS during the month of January 2026:

Types of Claims	Number of Awards	Benefits paid
Compensation	112,945 (+126)	\$288,415,727 (+1,409,786)
DIC	4,773 (+29)	\$8,632,706 (+50,681)
Survivor Pension	611 (-7)	\$627,619 (-7,846)
<u>Veteran Pension</u>	<u>1,184 (-29)</u>	<u>\$1,438,823 (-24,186)</u>
Grand Total	119,513 (+119)	\$299,114,874 (+1,428,434)

** The numbers inside the parentheses represent the change from the previous month.*

Mr. Kenneth Childre, Director Veterans Benefits North Region

NORTH REGION:

Retro Awards: \$1,789,134.30

Director Site Visits/Inspections: 21 (Dropped off supplies to 29 of 30 offices)

Community Involvement:

01/11/2026-Christine Collins (Blairsville)-Attended a memorial service to honor the life of James Hoyt. He was the Commander of VFW Post #23 for 8 years.

01/21/2026-Tanya Rogers (Gainesville)-Spoke at a Blue Star family breakfast and briefed 15 individuals on VA benefits.

01/21/2026-Christine Collins and Eddie Fontaine (Blairsville)-Worked with Union County Sheriff's Department to get a Veteran who had been living without electricity, water and sewer to a local hotel before the winter storm came that affected much of North Georgia. They are also working with local government to set up some sort of warming center for this type of emergency.

01/27/2026-Christine Collins (Blairsville)-Attended an awards banquet for VFW Post #7394 in Blairsville. Passed out several cards, made new contacts and answered many questions. She also met a Vietnam BOG Veteran who had never filed for anything. She scheduled him for an appointment to see what benefits he is entitled to.

01/30/2026-Rico Johnson (Gainesville)-Setup a table at the Region 2 Family Connection Resource Fair in Gainesville, GA. Informed 40+ veterans, family members and organizations in the community of GDVS resources and how to receive our assistance.

North Area Gains/Losses:

- Roger McDonald-Newnan-Transferred to SAA 5 Jan 26
- Ronshayvia Barfield-Newnan-New Hire 5 Jan 26
- Randy Brown-Griffin-Retired 31 Jan 26
- Danny Moreno-Zebulon-Transferred to Griffin-2 Feb 26
- Zebulon Office is currently closed until the new hire for that office is trained and ready to be in that office solo.

**Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia**

Average Visits Per VFSO							
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO							
Region:		North					
Month:		January-26					
A	B	C	D	E	D / E	G	G / E
					F	Total	Average
			Total	Work	Office	Claims	Claims
	Veterans' Field		Monthly	Days	Visits	Submitted	Submitted
	Service Officer (VFSO)		Office	In	Per	To	By VFSOS
Office Name	Last Name	#	Visits	Month	Day	VA	To VA
			Month	Day	Day	Monthly	Daily
	Number of VFSOs:	54	6,177	20	308.85	2,163	108.15
Number of Offices:	30	Average Visits/Office:		205.90	Average Claims/Office		72.1

*Total monthly office visits include: 2,100 In-person and 4,177 phone calls/emails.

Ms. Sherri Whitfield, Director Veterans Benefits South Region

SOUTH REGION

- On February 2nd, interviews were conducted for a new Veteran Service Officer for the Waycross field office. Ms. Michelle Brown Love was selected as the new VSO and reported on February 16th.
- On February 7th, Mark Holmes from the VECTR office gave a benefits presentation at the Bibb County Zion Baptist Church. There were 20 veterans in attendance.
- On February 21st, Ms. Debra Thomas from the Columbus office attended the Veterans Affairs Symposium at Ft. Benning. This event was sponsored by the Military Ministry and is designed to provide helpful resources, information, and a supportive community for veterans.
- Since the last board meeting, South region offices reported lump sum payments totaling \$1,368,368.65, including a single award of \$186,210.95 reported by the Milledgeville office.
- South Georgia Region Veterans Population: 232,245.

Average Visits Per VFSO
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO

Region: SOUTH

Month: JANUARY - 2026

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

# of Offices	# of VFOS	Total Monthly Office Visits	Workdays in Month	Average Office Visits Per Day	Total Claims Submitted to VA Monthly	Average Claims Submitted by VFOS to VA Daily
26	41	1,978	20	98.90	1,243	62.15

Average Visits/Office	76.08
Average Claims/Office	47.81

Ms. Veda Brooks, Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC)

- January 26, 2026, Ms. Brooks participated in the Bi-Monthly Fox Grant Meeting with AMES.
- January 28, 2026, Ms. Brooks participated and co facilitated, the Women Veteran Monthly Meet up at the American Legion “Menopause and Munchies.” Ms. Brooks met with the COO of “The Spoon,” at the Third Space Restaurant to talk about building a partnership.
- February 2, 2026, Ms. Brooks attended the Fox Grant Bi-Weely meeting with AMES/KSU.
- February 3, 2026, Ms. Brooks attended VSMR quarterly meeting.
- February 4, 2026, Ms. Brooks attended Unite-US meeting in association with the Fox Grant.
- February 5, 2026, Ms. Brooks signed a MOU with Women Veteran Initiative, as the Sr. Vice President of NASWVC.
- February 9, 2026, Ms. Brooks held the Fox Grant Case Management Review Meeting.
- February 11, 2026, Ms. Brooks participated in and led the NASWVC Coffee Talk. Ms. Brooks attended the Atlanta Monthly Woman Veterans Health Committee Monthly Meeting.
- February 12, 2026, Ms. Brooks attended the NASWVC Exicutive Board Meeting.
- February 13, 2026, Ms. Brooks participated in the Women’s Veterans Think Tank regroup meeting.
- February 18, 2026, Ms. Brooks held the Women Veterans Advisory Meeting where officers were appointed.

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Current committees:

- Violence Prevention Task Force
- VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Georgia Team
- Sr. Vice President of the National Association of State Women Veteran Coordinators (NASWVC)
- Planning Committee for the annual NASWVC Annual Training Conference

Ms. Calandra Ferguson, Suicide Prevention and Outreach Coordinator

- January 16, 2026, Ms. Ferguson attended the Women Veterans Advisory Board initial meeting.
- January 16, 2026, Ms. Ferguson attended an outreach event in the lobby of VA Arcadia Clinic.
- January 22, 2026, Ms. Ferguson attended the Veterans Service Board Meeting.
- January 26, 2026, Ms. Ferguson attending the Bi-Monthly Fox Grant Meeting with AMES.
- January 26, 2026, Ms. Ferguson attended the Unite US (Georgia) bi-weekly meeting.
- January 27, 2026, Ms. Ferguson attended the Georgia Virtual Coffee Break.
- February 2, 2026, Ms. Ferguson conducted the Fox Grant Bi-Weekly meeting with AMES/KSU.
- February 3, 2026, Ms. Ferguson attended VSMR quarterly meeting.
- February 4, 2026, Ms. Ferguson attended Unite-US meeting in association with the Fox Grant.
- February 9, 2026, Ms. Ferguson attended GA@WORK training.
- February 9, 2026, Ms. Ferguson attended Lunch & Learn, Menopause & Munchies.
- February 18, 2026, Ms. Ferguson's Suicide Prevention Specialists attended Mental Health Day @ the Capitol.

Ms. Raven Holstick, Transition and Employment Coordinator

- February 4, 2026, Attended the CWT (Compensated Work Therapy) Seminar as Transition & Employment Coordinator to strengthen collaboration with VA partners, enhance understanding of

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

therapeutic employment pathways, and identify opportunities to better align state workforce initiatives with veterans participating in CWT programs.

- February 6-11 Participated in the NASAA Conference in Washington, D.C., gaining insight into federal guidance, risk-based survey methodologies, and emerging compliance trends to enhance program integrity and service delivery within the State Approving Agency.
- CWT Job Readiness Seminar – “New Year, New Job” GDVS Transition and Employment Coordinator served as a featured presenter at the Joseph Maxwell Cleland Atlanta VA Medical Center alongside workforce and community partners, providing job seeking Veterans with motivation strategies, local employment insights, and information on GDVS employment services in support of VA Compensated Work Therapy requirements and collaborative workforce development efforts.
- Trinity House Outreach Visit – Reoccurring GDVS Transition and Employment Coordinator conducted an onsite visit to Trinity House to engage Veterans who were previously incarcerated, providing education on available benefits, discussing reentry challenges, and offering employment assistance and workforce resources to support successful reintegration and long-term stability.

Upcoming events:

- Transition and Employment Case Vision board event
- CWT Seminar
- VECTR center visit
- UGA Visit
- Clark Atlanta Visit
- Women Luncheon

Mr. Mendez asked Ms. Holstick if there were any challenges that she sees now or foresees in keeping veterans employed and healthy, as we know that mental health is affected when veterans are jobless. Mr. Holstick noted that the new generation of veterans are focused on the dollar amount they will make, and not where they will work or what type of employment they will find. Mr. Mendez noted that affordability is a concern and mentioned the possibility of creating a program with transition assistance.

Ms. Jarelle Thompson, Homelessness Coordinator

- January 28-29- Participated in the Grant Management Training
- February 5- Participated in GDVS Foundation Board meeting
- February 11- Attended Ga. Innovation Conference

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- February 12- Attended WAHN housing Luncheon

Upcoming Events/Highlights:

- Highlights- Helped 6 veterans with housing resources

Mr. Mark Demers, Chief Development Officer/Chief Financial Officer

Accounting/Procurement/Compliance:

- Routine operations are continuing. We are continuously working to improve all accounts payable processing/procurement processing, to apply proper coding, accountability, organization of purchase orders, on-time payments and reconciliations.
- We are continuing to work with the SAO Shared Services to prepare the procurement and accounting data in Team Works for migration to GA@Work.
- Kirsten Dennis processed 11 purchase orders totaling \$552,624.94 as well as 35 invoices and 9 quotes.
- Kirsten Dennis has been active in the meetings regarding the GVWH-Milledgeville Request for Proposal (RFP) for the coming year. Graders for the RFP have been assigned.
- Mark Demers attended the GA@Work Procurement Huddle on January 28, 2026.
- Irene Mackson attended the P-Card Administrator Roundtable on January 29, 2026.

GA@Work/NextGen Updates

- Mark Demers and Camala Ball attended the NCN Halftime Report on February 13, 2026.
- Camala Ball and Mark Demers attended the Cash Conversion meeting on January 27, 2026.
- Mark Demers attended the Cash Conversion Office hours on January 29, 2026, and February 11, 2026.
- Mark Demers attended the NextGen Change Network Meeting on January 27, 2026.
- Mark Demers attended the NextGen POC Only meeting on January 29, 2026.
- Mark Demers attended the NextGen Weekly Grant Reporting Review on February 9, 2026, and February 16, 2026.
- Camala Ball and Mark Demers attended the NextGen Budget Sessions on February 13, 2026.

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- Mark Demers attended the GA@Work Monthly CFO meeting on February 20, 2026.
- The GO-Live date for GA@Work was pushed back to July 1, 2026.

Budget/Travel:

- Camala Ball continued daily monitoring of general ledgers, purchase orders, and budget projection updates.
- Camala Ball has reviewed budget projections (Augusta cemetery, plot allowance funds, budget projections for AFY2026 funds with program managers as of the January closing and discussed plans for remaining funds.
- Camala Ball met with OPB analyst on multiple occasions this month to discuss budget amendments and projections prior to approval.
- Camala Ball stated that as of January 31, 2026, we have expended 56.64% of the total FY 2026 budget allocated to GDVS. The breakdown is as follows:

Fund	Total Allotment	Expenditures	Remaining Balance	% Spent
State	\$ 33,144,535.00	\$ 17,617,903.39	\$ 15,526,631,.61	53.15%
State- Prior Yr Res Funds- Unite Us	\$ 1,750,204.00	\$ 1,750,204.00	\$ 0	100%
Federal	\$ 30,588,378.00	\$ 17,065,305.68	\$ 13,523,072.32	55.79%
ARPA- Unite Us	\$ 1,729,222.34	\$ 1,729,222.34	\$ 0	100%
Other	\$ 4,537,757.00	\$ 2,478,684.25	\$ 2,059,072.75	54.62%
Total Funds	\$ 71,750,096.00	\$ 40,641,319.66	\$ 31,108,776.34	56.64%

AFY 2026 Budget (HB 973)

Descriptions	Governor's	House	Senate	CC
Baseline Budget (State/Federal)	\$60,820,272	\$60,820,272	\$60,820,272	\$60,820,272
Increase for one time salary supplement \$2k	\$747,091	\$747,091	\$448,094	\$747,091
Reduce funds to reflect employer contribution rate from 29.454% to 20.264%	\$ 0	(\$ 51,064)	(\$51,064)	(\$102,128)

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Transfer funds from GVWH due to delayed implementation of 40 new beds to Augusta Cemetery	\$800,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Redirect funds from GVWH to Augusta Cemetery	(\$800,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0
Recognize savings from delayed opening of new beds.	\$0	(\$ 360,000)	(\$360,000)	(\$360,000)
Provide funds for technology platform (Unite Us)-ask was \$3.4m	\$1,729,196	\$ 2,614,598	\$2,614,598	\$2,614,598
Increase funds to provide rehab services for service members with TBI (pass through)	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$0	\$250,000
Increase funds for additional staffing for Milledgeville Home	\$0	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Funds to create new Augusta veteran's cemetery	\$0	\$ 1,000,000	\$800,000	\$800,000
Increase funds for the Cohen Clinic (pass through)	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$500,000
Increase funds to eliminate veteran homelessness	\$0	\$0	\$15,000,000	\$5,000,000
Total Budget (State/Federal)	\$ 63,296,559	\$ 65,770,897	\$80,790,739	\$71,254,762

FY 2027 Budget (HB 974)

Descriptions	Governor's	House	Senate
Baseline Budget (State/Federal)	\$60,820,272		
Adjustment telecom (GTA)	(\$21,473)		
Adjustment DOAS Insurance programs	\$16,088		
Reduce funds to reflect employer contribution rate from 29.454% to 20.264%	(\$612,769)		
Adjustment for GA@Work Billings	\$5,237		
Increase to TRS (GVWNH-Augusta)	\$25,780		
Increase to match increased fed funds to maintain existing bed count at homes	\$455,159		
Increase in funds for FO and Appeals positions to meet minimum salary guidelines	\$258,776		
Increase funds for 1 position at Savannah VECTR	\$60,986		
Total Budget (State/Federal)	\$ 61,008,056		

Note: Not included in the governor's budget is the \$35m for the new War Home in Albany, GA.

Strategic Plan/Legislation:

- The 2026 Regular session of the Georgia Assembly will be in session from January 12, 2026, to April 2, 2026.

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- Kaitlin Little attended the Human Resources appropriations subcommittee hearing on January 23, 2026, at 406 CLOB.
- Kaitlin Little attended the House Defense and Veterans Affairs subcommittee hearing on January 27, 2026, and February 3, 2026, at 506 CLOB.
- Kaitlin Little attended the Senate Health and Human Development subcommittee on February 10, 2026.
- Kaitlin Little attended the Human Resources Appropriations subcommittee hearing on February 18, 2026, at 341 CAP.
- Mark Demers and Kaitlin Little attended the Joint Hearing (Senate and House) on February 19, 2026, at 341 CAP.

Grant Program:

- SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program- (\$722,747 year 4)
 - We were awarded the grant for a 4th Year.
 - Mark Demers and Irene Mackson attended all Fox Grant Update Meetings.
 - Kaitlin Little, Irene Mackson and Mark Demers working on the Fox Grant Data Conversion Project (approx. 50,000 files).
 - Mark Demers attended the Fox Grant Leadership call on February 18, 2026.
- Veterans Mental Health Services Program Grant (HB 414)-
 - FY2025- \$1,000,000 (competitive grant)
 - The grant was awarded to 3 vendors:
 - Cohen Veterans Network- \$776,132
 - KSU-AMES-\$173,868
 - About Face USA- \$40,000
 - All funds for this grant year have been distributed.
 - The second quarterly report was completed on January 15, 2026. Next quarterly report will be due in April 2026.
 - FY2026- \$1,000,000 (competitive grant)
 - The grant was awarded to the following:
 - Cohen Veterans Network (Centerstone) -\$806,578
 - Selectees are pending for remaining funds.
- PTSD study- Emory (HB 68, line 94.12). \$1,000,000
 - To increase funds for research on treatment of PTSD and wraparound services for veterans and their families.
 - Contract was signed and monies were distributed to Emory on September 30, 2025.

**Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia**

- First quarterly report was completed on January 15, 2026. The next quarterly report will be due in April 2026.
- Irene Mackson and Kaitlin Little participated in GDVS Grant Writing Team meetings on February 2, 2026, to discuss writing a grant purchase 8 raised beds and completely renovate the Putt-Putt Golf area for the residents. and February 16, 2026.
- The Grant Writing Team reviewed a congressional grant for a transitional center for submission on February 9, 2026.
- Irene Mackson attended the Grant Management- Managing Subawards workshop at the Fulton County Board of Health on January 30, 2026.

Events/Other:

- Leadership Institute conducted via Teams on January 23, 2026, subject: The Legislative Process— Instructor was Kaitlin Little. Next session will be conducted in person on February 19-20, 2026, at the VECTR Center in Warner Robins, GA.
- Irene Mackson attended the leadership institute session as a facilitator.
- Kaitlin Little and Mark Demers attended the VSO Coffee Talk on February 17, 2026, on Fox Grant MH Screening and Policy Changes: Power of Attorney Assignment with a Private Attorney.
- Irene Mackson attended the Georgia Innovation Showcase on February 11, 2026.

Mr. Russell Feagin, Executive Director, Health, Contracting & Facilities, GDVS

State Veterans Homes

State Veterans Homes Census (January 31, 2026) +

Current Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	92	113	205
Service Connected	34	55	89
Total Patients	126	168	294

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Last Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	94	115	209
Service Connected	34	57	91
Total Patients	128	172	300

+ The numbers reported to the VSB are the total numbers as of January 31, 2026.

Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home

Activated Insights has named Georgia War a Best-in-Class facility in Long Term Care for 2026. Scoring in the top 15% nationwide in 15/16 categories earning the Customer Experience Award for each category. This is an exceptional achievement and another great year for GW! Please know that this achievement serves as validation of their continued efforts and commitment to provide excellent care to our nation's heroes. Congratulations on a remarkable year!

Normal operations continue.



February 12, 2026

To whom it may concern,

Activated Insights, a nationally recognized customer satisfaction firm, conducted interviews with Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home customers over the past year, assessing satisfaction across multiple service aspects.

From the results of these interviews, Activated Insights has determined that Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home has qualified for a **Customer Experience Award™** in the following areas:

Overall Satisfaction

Nursing Care
Quality of Food
Cleanliness
Individual Needs
Laundry Service
Communication from Facility
Response to Problems
Dignity and Respect
Recommend to Others
Activities
Professional Therapy Services
Admission Process
Safety and Security
Overall Customer Experience

Earning the Customer Experience Award shows that Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home consistently ranks among the top 15% of care providers nationally. This reflects their strong dedication to continuous improvement and exceptional care, securing their position among the top care providers nationwide.

Activated Insights congratulates the staff of Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home for this well-deserved honor.

Bud Meadows

CEO

Activated Insights

Georgia War Veterans Home

Normal operations continue.

The VA Recognition Survey took place as scheduled December 17-19. We received a report that there were deficiencies, and a new recognition survey will be required. We are requesting the survey be conducted in March. We currently have four veterans residing in the facility.

The Request for Proposal for the Nursing Home Operations contract was posted on December 23rd, 2025. The Bid Closing date was February 9th, 2026. Bids were received and are now being reviewed.

The budget includes \$1 million for improvements and staff retention.

Mr. Ernie Cowart, Executive Director Veterans Cemeteries, GDVS

State Veterans Cemeteries

Burial Statistics - Through January 31, 2026

State Veterans Cemeteries	Cumulative Through Current Month	Current Month	Year to Date FY2026
Glennville	2,921	19	139
Milledgeville	6,108	37	228
Combined Totals	9,029	56	367

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville

Cemetery operations continue as normal.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville

Cemetery operations continue as normal. Currently there are two open Cemetery Tech positions.

Augusta Cemetery Project

Cemetery planning is ongoing with building and cemetery layout design being the current focus. The site survey work and site testing have started for the project.

Mr. Feagin announced that \$800,000 has been approved for matching funds. The City of Augusta is looking to purchase property adjacent and gifting it to the Department.

Mr. Kerry Dyer, Deputy Commissioner, Chief Operations Officer

On Friday, January 23, 2026, Kerry Dyer attended the Claims Management System RFP meeting along with Barbara Burns, DOAS Procurement Manager. He also posted Zebulon office vacancy externally and internally. Later that day he processed 1 new hire packet for the Appeals Division.

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

On Monday, January 26, 2026, Kerry Dyer attended the weekly Directors Meeting. He also met with Ken Childre, Charles Isaac, Dennis Boothe, Sherri Whitfield and Rico Johnson to discuss the duties as an evaluator for the Claims Management System RFP. Later that day he spoke with Barbara Burns regarding the Claims Management Validation meeting.

On Tuesday, January 27, 2026, Kerry Dyer along with Mark Meeks, DOAS Procurement Manager, Russell Feagin, Tonya Jarrett and Jenelle Coleman met virtually to discuss the War Home RFP. He also met Alexander Song and the New Korean Delegation Committee along with Commissioner Ross and ShellyAnn Simpson. Later that day, along with Charlotte May and Katilin Little attending the House Veterans Affairs & Defense Committee brief given by Commissioner Ross.

On Wednesday, January 28, 2026, Kerry Dyer submitted the Annual Lease Renewal Report to State Properties. He also contacted Russell Feagin and Ernie Cowart to discuss the Augusta Cemetery Resolution and Survey. Later that day he attended DOAS monthly Procurement Huddle for the latest updates.

On Thursday, January 29, 2026, Kerry Dyer attended the monthly P-Card training session along with Mark Demers and Julie Hammond. He also attended Joyce Auld, DOAS Procurement Trainer Retirement Ceremony. Later that day he attended the HCM Security NextGen Session along with Shareka Monday-Robinson and Will Wilson.

On Friday, January 30, 2026, Kerry Dyer attended monthly Open Forum given by Commissioner Ross and employees in the Department. He also met with Barbara Burns to discuss the Claims Management RFP. Later that day he attended Randy Brown, Griffin Field Office Veterans Service Officer Retirement Ceremony.

On Monday, February 2, 2026, Kerry Dyer contacted DOAS Fleet Management to discuss Data Extractions for the new Vendor System. He also contacted Leslie Davis, State Property Leasing Specialist, to discuss the utilities of the Cedartown Field Office. Later that day he spoke to Marlon Benjamin, GBA Project Manager about 9th floor Suite Renovation Project.

On Tuesday, February 3, 2026, Kerry Dyer along with Barbara Burns, Ken Childre, Rico Johnson, Dennis Boothe Sherri Whitfield, ShellyAnn Simpson and Charles Isaac attended the Claims Management RFP Validation Meeting.

On Wednesday, February 4, 2026, Kerry Dyer processed two new hire packets. He also submitted the weekly Fleet Management Report to DOAS. Later that day along with Julie Hammond he spoke with Becky Smith, Rome Field Office Purchasing Director, regarding the billing of the utilities.

On Thursday, February 5, 2026, Kerry Dyer attended the monthly Foundation Meeting along with Julie Hammond, Jarelle Thompson, Charlotte May and Raven Holstick. He also processed 1 termination packet. Later that day he distributed the monthly Alpha Roster to the Senior Leadership.

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

On Friday, February 6, 2026, Kerry Dyer along with ShellyAnn Simpson, Mark Meeks and Barbara Burns, met virtually to discuss the Claims Management System RFP. He also posted the Milledgeville Cemetery Tech 1 vacancy externally. Later that day he spoke with Rick White, GMVOF Director regarding the Medal Honor Recipients that's posted on the plaza level in Floyd Veterans Memorial Building.

On Monday, February 9, 2026, Kerry Dyer attended the weekly Director Meeting. He also spoke with Hazel Lacanienta, Research Analyst for Voiced IQ regarding the evaluation phase of the Claims Management RFP. Later that day he submitted his non-disclosure form to Mark Meeks for the War Home RFP.

On Tuesday, February 10, 2026, Kerry Dyer contacted Mike Johnson, Director, Facilities Management Coweta County Government to discuss panic buttons and side door access into the facility. He also processed 1 termination packet. Later that day he sent DOR a copy of Panoramic Tax Compliance Form for approval.

On Wednesday, February 11, 2026, Kerry Dyer along with ShellyAnn Simpson, Steve Fay, Sean Seader and Sherri Whitfield attended the Reframe Solutions Electronic Scheduling System kick off meeting. He also delivered office supplies to Regional Office. Later that day he emailed the Intent to Award notification and contract to Panoramic Software CEO for signature.

On Thursday, February 12, 2026, Kerry Dyer processed 1 resignation packet. He also posted the Appeals Officer vacancy externally and internally. Later that day he contacted Mark Meeks and Barbara Burns to discuss the Panoramic CEO response to the Claims Management scope of work.

On Friday, February 13, 2026, Kerry Dyer contacted Marlon Benjamin, GBA Project Manager, to discuss the 9th floor renovation. He also submitted a Space Action Form to State Properties for Atlanta Technical College.

On Monday, February 16, 2026, Kerry Dyer attended the weekly Directors Meeting. He also attended the War Home Evaluation Committee meeting along with Mark Demers, Carlton Deese, Tony Jarrett and Mark Meeks. Later that day he emailed Ed Berry 15 resumes for the VACO 1 vacancy in the Appeals Division.

On Tuesday, February 17, 2026, Kerry Dyer along with Mark Meeks, ShellyAnn Simpson and Barbara Burns met virtually to discuss the Claims Management Notice of Intent Award response from Panoramic Software. He also evaluated one of the Suppliers Mandatory Scored Questionnaires for War Home RFP. Later that day he attended the Small Business Liaison Meeting.

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

On Wednesday, February 18, 2026, Kerry Dyer evaluated one of the Mandatory Scored Questionnaires for the War Home RFP. He also attended the GAP Session (electronic scheduling system) meeting along with ShellyAnn Simpson, Sherri Whitfield, Sean Seader and Steven Fay.

On Thursday, February 19, 2026, Kerry Dyer attended the renovation kick-off meeting along with Marlon Benjamin, GBA Project Manager. He also attended the Joint Hearing-Senate and House along with Commissioner Ross and Kaitlin Little. Later that day he attended the Claims Management RFP meeting along with ShellyAnn Simpson and Mark Meeks.

Below are the Personnel Actions Kerry Dyer and Shareka Monday-Robinson processed from January 22, 2026 – February 19, 2026.

Location	Position	Status	Name	Date
Appeals Division	VACO 1	New Hire	James Watson	02/02/26
Milledgeville	Cemetery Tech 1	New Hire	Tyler, Eady	02/02/26
Waycross	VFSO 1	New Hire	Michell Love	02/16/26
Zebulon	Office Manager (VFSO 2)	New Hire	Cortez Robinson	02/16/26
Appeals Division	VACO 1	Resigned	James Watson	02/13/26

Ms. Lily Snyder, Director, Veterans Education and Training Division (State Approving Agency)

- The approval, risk-based surveys, and supervisory visits of educational institutions, training establishments and training programs approved for veterans training is continuing with no significant problems in any area being noted.
- Approval of new veteran's On-The-Job training sites (OJT) continues to increase. As of this date the State Approving Agency (SAA) has granted approval to 2,244 educational institutions and training establishments where Georgia veterans may attend school or job training and utilize their GI Bill® educational benefits.

Item *	Number
Approved Educational Institutions	525
Approved Training Establishments	1,719
Ch. 35 VA Education Beneficiaries for FY26 Q1	14,586

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

VA Education Beneficiaries for January 2026 CH 33 ONLY*	10,098
VA Education Beneficiaries for December 2025 CH 33 ONLY*	10,547
VA Education Beneficiaries for November 2025 CH 33 ONLY*	11,177
VA Education Beneficiaries for October 2025 *CH 33 ONLY*	11,376
VA Education Beneficiaries for September 2025 *CH 33 ONLY*	11,052
VA Education Beneficiaries for August 2025 *CH 33 ONLY*	10,110
VA Education Beneficiaries for July 2025	10,798
VA Education Beneficiaries for June 2025	11,419
VA Education Beneficiaries for May 2025	21,878
VA Education Beneficiaries for April 2025	20,972
VA Education Beneficiaries for March 2025	21,867
VA Education Beneficiaries for February 2025	20,289
VA Education Beneficiaries for January 2025	17,775

* Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Education Division, WEAMS, Salesforce, Oracle BI CH33 Enrollment

Ms. Charlotte May, Director, External Affairs & Communications

INFORMATION OUTREACH

Division Updates

1. GDVS Newsletter – The department’s monthly e-newsletter features top stories from the month at <https://veterans.georgia.gov/newsletter>. The January edition celebrated the selection of the department’s Employee of the Year for 2025 and Q4 Employee of the Quarter. The newsletter also spotlighted the excellent holiday care and celebrations GWVH-Milledgeville hosted with staff and community volunteers for veteran residents, a request for nominations for the Georgia Woman Veteran of the Year, and information on a community gathering for veterans in the Rabun County area.
2. Attended a meeting of the House Human Resources Appropriations Subcommittee on January 23 with Commissioner Ross, Deputy Commissioner Dyer, and Kaitlin Little. EAC assisted Commissioner Ross in the development of slides and infographics to share with members of the legislature.

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

3. Attended a meeting with Bridge My Return on February 4. Discussions focused on the continuation of a white label build for Georgia veterans and their spouses to use the Bridge My Return service at no cost. Bridge My Return is an online, military and veteran focused, career matching service which helps service members transitioning to the civilian workforce describe their military service as soft and hard job skills.
4. Attended a meeting of the Georgia Veterans Service Foundation on February 5.
5. Attended the Georgia Government Innovation Showcase on February 11. EAC assisted Commissioner Ross with the development of slides for her featured speaking role. The conference focused on cyber awareness and security, as well as the innovative ways agencies are using AI to benefit their constituents.
6. Attended a joint House and Senate Defense and Veterans Affairs committee meeting on February 19. EAC assisted Commissioner Ross in developing slides for the presentation.
7. Benefits outreach – External Affairs and Communications continues to work with GDVS staff and partners to educate Georgia’s veterans and families on the availability of benefits and resources.
 - a. Woman Veteran of the Year – EAC is working with the Women and Minority Veteran Coordinator to share information about the upcoming Woman Veteran of the Year Awards in March, as well as requesting nominations for a robust selection process.
 - b. Suicide prevention – EAC shares federal and state resources on a regular basis to help spread the awareness of resources for those who may be in crisis or know someone who needs assistance.

Seeking Nominations

Georgia’s Woman Veteran of the Year

Submit your nominations by Monday, February 23, 2026!

Nominations are now open for Georgia’s exceptional women veterans to be recognized as the Woman Veteran of the Year!

A public event recognizing Georgia’s women veterans and the Woman Veteran of the Year will be held on March 18, 2026.

For more information, contact Latoya McCallum at latoya.mccallum@vs.ga.gov.



SCAN TO APPLY



JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE GEORGIA’S

WOMAN VETERAN OF THE YEAR

March 13, 2026 • 11:00 a.m. - 2 p.m.

One Family Resource
5903 Stewart Pkwy
Douglasville, GA 31035

Tickets \$30

All proceeds benefit the
Georgia Veterans Service Foundation



SCAN ME

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- c. Cold weather and disaster assistance – EAC shared timely updates for Georgians during the cold weather snap and inclement weather weekends. Resources include warming shelters, foodbanks, and more.

OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business to discuss.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Childre announced a We Care Fair at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta on March 21.

Ms. Whitfield announced that a team of 18 VSO's will be assisting The Warrior Alliance on March 20 at Savannah State university, and again in September.

Mr. Zayas announced that Pine Mountain is now a Purple Heart City and Saint Frances is now a Purple Heart Hospital.

NEW BUSINESS:

Commissioner Ross discussed the AFY 2026 Budget. There was a one-time salary supplement of \$2,000 for all state employees. The Augusta Cemetery received the \$800,000 needed to accept the grant. We need the additional \$200,000 to clear the hurricane debris. We received a portion of the requested funds for Unite Us. Funds totaling \$250,000 were provided for the Shepherd Center. Funds totaling \$500,000 were provided for the Cohen Clinic. Funds totaling \$1 million were provided for additional staffing for the Milledgeville Home. Funds totaling \$5 million were provided to eliminate veteran homelessness. We are requesting for FY 2027 the \$200,000 for debris removal, funding for a cemetery director, \$35 million for a new veteran's home, and funds for Unite Us. The Governor's recommended budget includes a position at the Savannah VECTR and a raise for VSOs in a particular job code to raise them to the minimum.

Mr. Mendez asked if we could request the funds for a new home in stages, with construction being the first year ask and equipment coming after that. Mr. Feagin explained why the funds have to be requested in total, with the VA portion of the process requiring it.

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 11:30 a.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Mr. Kopsie called for a vote to accept the land being given to GDVS by DBHDD for the Augusta Cemetery. The Board unanimously voted to accept the land.

Mr. Peterson made a motion to re-appoint Wyatt Batchelor, John Phillips, and Joe Higgins to the Veterans Service Foundation Board for 2-year terms. Mr. Mendez seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The next Board meeting was scheduled for March 19 at 12:30pm. It will be a virtual meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:46 p.m.

SIGNED:



Joshua Kopsie, Chair

ATTEST:



Steve Mendez, Secretary