

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Present Mr. Shawn Hanley, Chair
 Ms. Takosha Swan, Vice-Chair
 Mr. Joshua Kopsie, Secretary
 Mr. John Kubinec, Member
 Mr. Tim Paslawski, Member
 Mr. Pete Peterson, Member
 Ms. Patricia Ross, Commissioner

Visitors: Mr. George Canavaggio, Executive Director, Field Operations & Appeals, GDVS
Present Mr. Mark Bannister, Executive Dir., Health, Memorials, Finance & Development, GDVS
 Mr. Kerry Dyer, Chief Operations Officer, GDVS
 Mr. Matthew O'Brien, Assistant Attorney General, Attorney General's Office
 Ms. Amber Mack, House Budget and Research Office
 Mr. Doug Middleton, Chair of the Veterans Service Foundation Board
 Mr. Mark Shreve, State Commander, The American Legion
 Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW Service Officer, Appeals Division, GDVS
 Mr. Vince Pritchett, Director, Veterans Benefits South Region, GDVS
 Mr. Ken Childre, Director, Veterans Benefits North Region, GDVS
 Ms. Ramona Roper, Director, Training and Professional Development, GDVS
 Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information and External Affairs, GDVS
 Ms. Shelly Ann Simpson, Director, Appeals Division, GDVS
 Mr. Ernie Cowart, Director, Glennville Cemetery
 Mr. Carlton Deese, Executive Director GWVH, Milledgeville, GA
 Mr. Russell Feagin, Director, Health & Memorials Division, GDVS
 Ms. Tonya Jarrett, Clinical Director, GWVH, Milledgeville, GA
 Mr. William Wilson, Network Administrator, GDVS
 Ms. Camala Ball, Budget Analyst, GDVS
 Ms. Veda Brooks, Coordinator, Women & Minority Veterans, GDVS
 Mr. Bobby Davis, Director, Veterans Education & Training, GDVS
 Ms. Shareka Monday-Robinson, Director, Human Resources, GDVS
 Ms. Debbie Gregory, Administrative Specialist, GDVS
 Ms. Barbara Beedles, Records Management, GDVS
 Ms. Julie Hammond, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, GDVS

On Wednesday, May 25, 2022, the Veterans Service Board meeting was held in person and by video/tele-conference.

Mr. Hanley called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. Ms. Swan gave the invocation. Mr. Paslawski led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

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Mr. Kopsie made a motion to approve the May Agenda. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Mr. Paslawski made a motion to approve the March minutes, which were previously distributed for members to review. Ms. Swan seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The following reports were submitted from the Veteran Service Organizations:

Mr. Mark Shreve, State Commander, The American Legion

Mr. Shreve stated in the meeting that The American Legion has had a successful month. The National Commander visited from Texas. They hosted a successful fundraiser in Augusta for the War Veterans Homes. Mr. Shreve has visited 100 American Legion posts in Georgia throughout his tenure as Commander. Membership is poised to grow for the first time in many years. Georgia membership is currently at #11 in the nation and #1 in the southeast.

Report for April 2022

1. American Legion Department of Georgia membership is number two in the southeastern region and ranks 15 out of the 55 Departments nationally.
2. The Blood Donor program has exceeded the stated goal and the American Legion has donated over 1,500 pints to date which is up 300 from last month.
3. Augusta will host American Legion Family Day in April to support the Commander's Project. The banquet is sold out.
4. Commander Shreve has completed 84 of 100 Post visits throughout the State in 2022 which is up 8 since last month. There are 223 American Legion Posts in Georgia.
5. The American Legion Department of Georgia held its Spring Conference highlighted by presentations by GDVS Commissioner Ross and VA Directors from four major locations in Georgia. Also, presentations were given on:
 - Female Veterans Access
 - Medical Research
 - Veterans Employment and Education
 - American Legion Baseball
 - American Legion Boys State
 - Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
 - Mylegion.org by Personify
 - Fundraising

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- Adjutant Seminar
- Leadership 101

6. The American Legion Department of Georgia hosted the Leading Candidate for National Commander Jim Troiola from New York.

Report for May 2022

Top 10 Activities

- 1) American Legion National Commander Visit to Georgia.
- 2) American Legion Fundraiser for Georgia War (Augusta & Milledgeville).
- 3) Commander Shreve visited his 100 and 101st American Legion Post in Georgia.
- 4) All 12 Districts held their annual elections.
- 5) American Legion Post 50 Peachtree City 5K & 10K Race .
- 6) American Legion Post 15 Griffin sponsored a family day at Indian Springs State Park for the local National Guard unit.
- 7) Participated in the National American Legion May Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana.
- 8) National Executive Committeeman Charlie Wessinger retired; new NEC is Phil Youngblood with Randy Goodman as the Alternate NEC.
- 9) American Legion Department of Georgia is 12th in Nation for membership and number 1 in the Southeast as of May 23rd.
- 10) Held the National Oratorical contest; our representative (a freshman in High School) was sponsored by the Georgia Legion and participated in the National Contest.

Mr. Mark Demers, Training Team, GDVS, American Legion Service Officer

- The Department Service Officer attended the American Legion Department Adjutant Teleconference on March 17, 2022, at 1900 and provided a short briefing on VA changes.
- The Department Service Officer attended the American Legion Department of Georgia Spring Conference on March 25-26, 2022, at the Sonesta Gwinnett Place, 1775 Pleasant Hill Road, Duluth, Georgia. Gave a VA&R update presentation on the following subjects:
 - Georgia Military Retirement Exemptions.
 - Veterans Drivers Licenses.
 - New Agent Orange Presumptive Conditions.

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- New Particulate Matter/Burn Pit Presumptive Conditions.
- Proposed additional Particulate Matter/Burn Pit Presumptive Conditions.
- Proposed changes in Disability Rating Schedules.
- VA Asset Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission Report.
- Updates from American Legion Washington Conference on March 5, 2022.
- The Department Service Officer completed the American Legion Department Service Officer School via online format presented by Bergmann & Moore on March 21, 2022.
- The Assistant Department Service Officer (Ed Kent) assisted 22 veterans with VA benefits related inquiries in April.
- Upcoming event: American Legion Department of Georgia Convention on June 24-26, 2022, at the Sonesta Gwinnett Place, 1775 Pleasant Hill Road, Duluth, Georgia.
- The Department Service Officer attended Governor Kemp's bill signing ceremony for HB1064, HR 884, SB96, and SB87 on April 18, 2022, at 1600 at the National Infantry Museum, 1775 Legacy Way, Columbus, GA 31903.
- The Department Service Officer attended the Luella High School NJROTC Awards Ceremony at Luella High School, 603 Walker Drive, Locust Grove, GA 30248 and presented medals to outstanding cadets.
- The Department Service Officer attended the Atlanta VA Health Care System VSO Stakeholders Meeting on May 17, 2022, at 1300.
- The Assistant Department Service Officer (Ed Kent) assisted 22 veterans with VA benefits related inquiries in May.
- Upcoming event: The Department Service Officer will conduct American Legion Post Service Officer Training for PSO's in the South Region at American Legion Post 168, 1121 W Oglethorpe Hwy, Hinesville, GA 31313 on June 4, 2022, from 1000-1500.

Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW

- The Department Service Officer hosted a VFW GA Post Service Officer training course via Zoom to the VFW GA Post Service Officers on March 21, 2021, from 6PM-8PM.
- The Department Service Officer attended an Atlanta VBA Regional Office VSO/CMA meeting with Brian Morgan, Assistance CMA and Adrienne Becnel-Taylor, SCM, brainstorming ideas for the Atlanta RO podcast for GA Veterans held on March 23, 2022, at 1:30PM.

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- The Department Service Officer/GDVS Appeals Officer attended the DeKalb County Women Wellness Celebration hosted by Lorraine Cochran-Johnson, Commissioner, DeKalb – District 7 at the Community Achievement Center, 4522 Flat Shoals Parkway, Decatur, GA 30034 on March 25, 2022, at 6-8PM. During the event women were awarded and recognized for their outstanding service in the Veteran community.
- The Department Service Officer attended an Atlanta Vet Center Vietnam Appreciation event at Flat Shoals Park, 1915 Flat Shoals Road, Riverdale, GA 30296 held on March 29, 2022, from 12-2PM. The Vet Center hosted a Welcome Home/Appreciation Day for Vietnam Veterans at the park that consisted of food, music, goodie bags, and homemade ice cream.
- The Department Service Officer attended a reception for the American Legion National Commander, Paul E. Dillard held on April 16, 2022, at 11AM. The event was hosted by the GA American Legion Post 516, held at the Jason Harper Center, 95 Lake Dow Road, McDonough, GA 30252.
- The Department Service Officer attended a Webinar hosted by the FDIC. The speakers presented information on how to help consumers establish and re-establish a suitable personal financial foundation. The webinar meeting was held April 26, 2022, from 1:30PM – 3:30PM. Provide the information to veterans requesting assistance with financial management.
- The Department Service Officer hosted a VFW GA Post Service Officer training course via Zoom to the VFW GA Post Service Officers on April 28 and 29, 2022, from 6PM-8PM. The purpose of the training was to provide information on the duties and responsibilities of a Post Service Officer.
- The Department Service Officer attended VFW Annual Proficiency Training Conference held at the Westin Riverwalk Hotel, 420 W Market Street, San Antonio, TX 78205. The VFW annual recertification training provided updated information on VBA matters. The training was held from May 10–13, 2022.
- The Department Service Officer attended an Atlanta VAHCS VSO/Stakeholder virtual meeting with Director Brown and Staff held on May 17, 2022, at 1PM. The meeting provided an update to VAHC system. The information will be forward to the GA VFW Commander and Staff.

Ms. Amy Stevens, Georgia Military Women and VETLANTA

Another very busy month for Georgia Military Women (GMW). We are experiencing a small growth spurt as we have been recognized by Facebook as a Power Admin group and they are directing new people to our group. We cleaned out some of the inactive membership list but are well on our way to matching our numbers again. A great enhancement of our outreach is the introduction of new

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“Branding Kits” for our group leaders in outlying areas of Georgia. These were made possible by a small grant from Kaiser Permanente. They include a branded tablecloth, Pop-up Display, postcards and business cards, pins, pens and buttons with the GMW logo. Now our volunteer leaders will have a professional vendor table display for events in their areas.

Our big event this past month was the 5th time we have participated in the North Georgia Crappie Anglers Heroes Tournament. That was April 23rd. Our ladies made off with top prizes! It was a lot of fun! We also had numerous small events all over the state. We are starting to grow in the Augusta area with a new group leader there. Plus, we collaborated with other organizations such as the Institute for Veterans and Military Families for their two-day veteran entrepreneur conference in Atlanta.

Interesting opportunities are emerging for GMW for more involvement in the arts community. Much of this is through virtual non-profits offering creative writing, improv, poetry and craft project programming. We currently have CAVARTS (Colorado) and PATH with Art (Seattle) accepting Georgia women into their programs. A new connection with the Atlanta Museum of Design is in progress to offer local arts in person.

Upcoming events of interest include collaboration with the VA and GDVS on Women’s events.

- May 10th GA Governor’s Taskforce on Suicide Prevention.
- May 17th VA Women’s Health Re-Engagement Focus Group in Augusta, GA
- May 18th VA Women’s Health Re-Engagement Focus Group in Smyrna, GA
- May 21st Women’s Military Day. St Phillip AME Church, Atlanta, GA
- May 24th Genesis Joy House Grand Opening, Macon, GA

For VETLANTA, the Q2 Summit in Atlanta was fabulous including GDVS Commissioner Patricia Ross as one of the keynote speakers. The rescheduled event was May 10th at the Georgia College Football Hall of Fame. We had a great turnout.

Mr. Doug Middleton, Chair of the Veterans Service Foundation Board

The Foundation currently has \$525.00 in their account. A \$100.00 donation will be added to that today. There are four donors so far. The address to send donations to is PO Box 72444, Marietta, GA 30007-2444. Donations need to flow through the Foundation to receive the tax advantage. When donations are made, the money is then sent directly out to the designee.

Mr. Hanley asked if there were any type of campaign or strategy to raise funds, or if it is just by word of mouth. Mr. Middleton stated that new officers will be elected at next month’s Board meeting and then a strategy will be developed. Commissioner Ross added that we need to identify areas of need and how we will use the donations, which will aid in the development of the fundraising strategy. Mr. Kopsie added that we are waiting for the study committee’s report to aid us in determining which areas we will direct the funds to.

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There was a discussion of the Foundation's bylaws and reporting structure. Mr. O'Brien will take a look at the bylaws and laws and report on this at the June Board meeting.

Commissioner Patricia Ross

Commissioner Ross reported that the \$6.1 million grant for UniteUs was approved. This system will allow for electronic referrals across the state. We are working to get the terms and conditions approved. This will add a person to the GDVS staff, as well as a position at VECTR and one at the Technical College System of Georgia. The UniteUs program will change how we support and assist our veterans.

Commissioner Ross mentioned the suicide prevention grant that we are working on in coordination with Kennesaw State. This could amount to \$750,000 per year.

Commissioner Ross went over the changes in the organizational realignment (see attached).

Commissioner Ross briefly touched on the survey results (see attached). The 90-day snapshot shows a 92.6% approval rating.

On Wednesday, March 16, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the Cobb Collaborative Veterans Strategy Team meeting at American Legion Post 160 in Smyrna. She then attended the Governor's AFY22 Budget Signing Ceremony. Afterwards, she attended a Unite Us Demo via Zoom.

On Thursday, March 17, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the We CARE Veterans Resource Fair Meeting at the Cobb County Civic Center in Marietta. She later attended the Board of Veterans' Appeals Quarterly VSO call via MS Teams.

On Friday, March 18, 2022, Commissioner Ross met with Rep. Terry England, Chair of the Appropriations Committee. She then attended a demo meeting with the staff of Salesforce, a company that works to approve processes with streamlining, grants, asset management, lease management, modernizing functions, and automating workflows. Also in attendance for this meeting were Mark Bannister, Kerry Dyer, Jerry Lahr and Will Wilson. In the afternoon, Commissioner Ross met with Tonya Jarrett regarding a suicide prevention grant. She also met with Bobby Davis regarding employee raises.

On Monday, March 21, 2022, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting.

On Tuesday, March 22, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended a VIP breakfast with The Warrior Alliance Home Base at The Battery Atlanta. The Warrior Alliance is a 501(c)3 nonprofit with a mission to help warriors and their families achieve a fulfilling civilian life by promoting collaboration between the

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organizations that can support them during transition from military service. In the afternoon, she visited the Jasper CBOC, where a new field office will be opening in April.

On Wednesday, March 23, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the Returning Veterans Task Force Meeting. She then met with George Canavaggio and Veda Brooks regarding the Women Veterans Department.

On Thursday, March 24, 2022, Commissioner Ross had a MS Teams meeting with Dr. Brian Moore and Veda Brooks regarding the suicide prevention grant. A meeting with Dr. Brian Moore and Tonya Jarrett followed, also regarding the grant. She later listened in to the 988 Readiness meeting and also took part in a Veteran Engagement Team meeting regarding a PTSD Coach App.

On Saturday, March 26, 2022, Commissioner Ross spoke at the General Assembly meeting of the American Legion Spring Conference. She had lunch with the leading candidate for National Commander and then attended the Female Access/Women Veterans meeting.

On Monday, March 28, 2022, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting. She then attended the Birthday Celebration of the Emperor of Japan at the Buckhead Club.

On Tuesday, March 29, 2022, Commissioner Ross visited the Marietta, Cartersville, Rome and LaFayette field offices. She then spoke at the Chattooga County Vietnam Veterans Celebration in Summerville.

On Wednesday, March 30, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended a demo of the Tyler Veterans' Benefits product. Tyler Technologies acquired Vetraspec, a software used by GDVS. She then went to the Capitol for a Veteran Coordination Circle-Up. In the afternoon, the Commissioner met with Tony Alexander and Curtis Williams from the Cobb Veterans Memorial. She finished the day in a meeting with the Miner Agency and Charlotte May regarding branding and marketing for GDVS.

On Thursday, March 31, 2022, Commissioner Ross had 90-day follow up meetings with George Canavaggio, Kerry Dyer, Mark Bannister and Veda Brooks.

On Friday, April 1, 2022, Commissioner Ross had follow up meetings with Shareka Monday-Robinson and Bobby Davis. She attended a demo of the MyPruittHealth app via MS Teams and the VEO Veterans Women Building Ribbon Cutting Ceremony in Atlanta.

On Monday, April 4, 2022, through Thursday, April 7, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the Workforce Board Conference.

On Friday, April 8, 2022, Commissioner Ross had follow up meetings with Russell Feagin, Charlotte May and Tonya Jarrett. She also hosted an Open Forum with all the field offices.

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On Saturday, April 9, 2022, Commissioner Ross spoke at the Blinded Veterans Association State Convention in Atlanta.

On Monday, April 11, 2022, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting. She also had follow up meetings with Vince Pritchett and Ken Childre.

On Tuesday, April 12, 2022, Commissioner Ross had follow up meetings with Ramona Roper, Camala Ball and Ernie Cowart. She also met with Commissioner Mark Williams from the Department of Natural Resources.

On Monday, April 18, 2022, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting. Afterwards, she joined Governor Brian Kemp at the "Military and Veterans Bill Signing" at the National Infantry Museum in Columbus. Gov. Kemp signed legislation: to create a military retirement income tax exemption for the first time in Georgia history (HB 1064), to require that expedited licenses for military spouses are issued within 90 days of applying (HB 884), to allow veterans to use their Veterans Health Identification Card from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs when they seek the service of a public notary (SB 96), and to provide taxpayers an opportunity to donate all or a portion of their annual tax refund to scholarships through the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) for disabled veterans (SB 87).

On Tuesday, April 19, 2022, Commissioner Ross held follow-up meetings with the following GDVS Directors: Will Wilson, Carlton Deese and Linda Lavender. She also attended the Georgia Suicide Prevention Task Force Monthly Meeting.

On Wednesday, April 20, 2022, Commissioner Ross had a follow-up meeting with Director Shelly-Ann Simpson. She also met with the two new Regional Appeals Officers: Denoris Lane and Courtney Cleare. Commissioner Ross attended via Zoom a NASDVA conference call and via MS Teams a Debt Management Center VSO Stakeholder call.

On Thursday, April 21, 2022, Commissioner Ross took part in a discussion regarding the suicide grant with Veda Brooks and Dr. Moore's team from Kennesaw State. Afterwards, she spoke at the Veteran Entrepreneurship Forum, sponsored by Fiserv and the Institute for Veteran and Military Families. She also served as a Panelist for the session titled "Navigating Local Resources."

On Friday, April 22, 2022, Commissioner Ross held follow-up meetings with the following GDVS Directors: Dennis Mize and Chris Hambright. She also had an MS Teams meeting with Dr. James Tsai and his team. Dr. Tsai is a Professor at Georgia Tech. Research they are working on includes Sidewalk Assessment Methodology to encourage mobility through walking for Seniors, Fall Prediction and Prevention using eye tracking technologies, which includes outdoor falls risk assessment as well as muscle strengthening techniques with activities such as Yoga and Tai-Chi. His team comprises of multidisciplinary professionals throughout the nation in the fields of Safety Engineering, Design, Asset Management, Policy, Nursing, Professional Therapy, Logistics and Psychology, Physicians, Public

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Health, Data Science, Policy, Transportation, Robotics, Assistive Technology, etc. They want to collaborate with GDVS to address the needs for veterans in our community.

On Tuesday, April 26, 2022, Commissioner Ross was the keynote speaker at the TCSG Leadership Conference.

On Thursday, April 28, 2022, Commissioner Ross took part in a meeting regarding the SSG Fox Grant with Veda Brooks and Dr. Moore's team from Kennesaw State. Later in the day she met with Russell Feagin, Ernie Cowart and Mark Bannister regarding the CRP Final Report and Scorecard on the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Glennville.

On Friday, April 29, 2022, Commissioner Ross took part in the "Days of Remembrance" Ceremony hosted by the Georgia Commission on the Holocaust, leading the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

On Monday, May 2, 2022, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting.

On Tuesday, May 3, 2022, Commissioner Ross spoke at the Atlanta Vietnam Veterans Business Association (AVVBA) Lunch. She will return to the AVVBA group for a more formal presentation in September. She also met with Newton County Commissioner Alana Sanders. Ms. Sanders wanted information that would help her to better serve veterans in her community. The Commissioner ended the day meeting with Pruitt Health regarding the Sub Acute Program Development.

On Wednesday, May 4, 2022, Commissioner Ross and other members of GDVS met with the Department of Corrections Inmate Services to discuss the services that inmates might access prior to release and how best to work together to maximize efforts to assist veterans with re-entry.

On Wednesday, May 4, 2022, and Thursday, May 5, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the Georgia Joint Defense Commission (JDC) Spring 2022 meeting at the Marine Corps Logistics Base (MCLB) in Albany. She, along with the JDC learned about the capabilities of the MCLB Albany.

On Friday, May 6, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the Atlanta VA Women Veterans Program Baby Shower. Twenty women were provided with supplies to assist with their new babies. She then met with Commander Bill Miles from the VFW and ended the day with a Unite Georgia/UniteUs meeting.

On Monday, May 9, 2022, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting. She then attended the NASDVA SE District Virtual Meeting from 1100-1330. She also attended the Boots to Business Instructor of the Year Ceremony via MS Teams. Commissioner Ross ended the day with a Fox Grant Follow-Up Meeting.

On Tuesday, May 10, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the Re-Launch meeting of the VA/SAMHSA Georgia State Task Force. She also attended and was the keynote speaker for the VETLANTA Veteran Supermarket at the College Football Hall of Fame.

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On Wednesday, May 11, 2022, Commissioner Ross was a speaker at the Memorial Day Ceremony at the Capitol. She also had a conversation with the Blank Foundation concerning the UniteUS grant and interoperability across states.

On Thursday, May 12, 2022, Commissioner Ross, along with Charlotte May and Monica Dorsey, met with the Miner Agency regarding the re-branding and marketing of GDVS.

On Friday, May 13, 2022, Commissioner Ross held an Open Forum with the Field Offices. She also attended the We Care Veterans Fair at the Cobb Civic Center, which lasted through Saturday, May 14. The event drew over 2,000 participants over the two days and GDVS saw 400 veterans and processed claims on site.

On Monday, May 16, 2022, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting. The grant approvals through the state were released and GDVS with partners TCSG and the VECTR Centers will receive \$6.1M to build the UniteUs platform across the entire state to provide referral services to veterans. She also had a follow-up conversation with the UniteUS team.

On Tuesday, May 17, Commissioner Ross was the guest speaker for Retiree Appreciation Day at Clay National Guard Center in Marietta. She also had a meeting with the Sub Acute Program Development Workgroup.

On Wednesday, May 18, Commissioner Ross met with Lynn Schultz, the State Coordinator of Building Healthy Military Communities, to discuss the challenges of our military and their families, an inter-service family assistance committee for Georgia, and the Governor's Challenge for suicide prevention. She then met with the Coalition of ONE Partners regarding how we can best combine efforts to reach every veteran in Georgia. That evening she presented the veteran spouse of the year award at the Veteran Impact Awards ceremony hosted by the Warrior Alliance at the Battery.

On Thursday, May 19, Commissioner Ross accompanied the Georgia Guard to a Retiree Appreciation Day at Robins AFB in Warner Robins and served as the key-note speaker. That evening, she was one of the guest speakers at the Veteran Empowerment Organization (VEO) gala at the Atlanta History Center.

On Friday, May 20, Commissioner Ross visited field offices in Conyers, Griffin, and Newnan.

On Saturday, May 21, Commissioner Ross accompanied the Georgia Guard to Savannah and spoke at their last annual Retiree Affairs Day.

Highlights:

- Survey Results – Increase from an overall score in June 2021 of 73.8% to 92.6% in Mar 2022 (see attached)

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- Reorganization into a standard organizational structure (see attached)

On the horizon:

- Embracing technology:
 - o June transition to state time and labor system
 - o July transition to state performance management system
 - o August transition to Veterans Benefits system (Tyler technologies)
- UniteUS grant and execution
- SSG Fox suicide prevention grant (up to \$750,000K)
- Hiring of the Suicide Prevention and Outreach Coordinator (new position)
- Replacing Executive Director Canavaggio in July; He anticipates retiring on 1 August

Executive Director George Canavaggio, Field Operations and Appeals

Mr. Canavaggio discussed how we shift personnel and how we man VA clinics. He went over the recent additions of Appeals staff in South Georgia (Valdosta and Macon) and how it has benefitted our veterans. We will soon be able to add one in North Georgia as well. A discussion followed regarding how we look at the veteran population numbers in deciding which counties to have offices in and which clinics to have space in.

Report Dated April 14, 2022

GENERAL

- March 17, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio along with Commissioner Trish Ross, Director of Training Ramona Roper and Jerry Lahr of our IT department attended a We Care Veterans Resource Fair breakfast meeting in Cobb County. They discussed the upcoming Fair and the different resources that will be available and how they can help veterans. We checked out the space that was given to us for the Fair. The Fair will be held May 13-14, 2022, at the Cobb County Civic Center.
- March 22, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio, Commissioner Ross, Director of Operations Kerry Dyer visited the Jasper CBOC. We looked at the space the clinic offered us and talked to the clinic director.
- March 23, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio conducted a WebEx meeting of the Returning Veterans Task Force. Topics that were discussed: Mr. Timothy Craig Program Manager covered the Veterans Business Outreach Center. Mr. Robert Keown Executive Director GVTC/Military Affairs Office of Technical Education covered The Technical College System of Georgia. Mr. Bobby Davis Director of the State Approving Agency covered the OJT program and what the State Approving Agency can do to help veterans with using their education benefits

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- April 07, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio attended a Zoom meeting with Kim Scofi President of the United Military Care. She discussed the upcoming We Care Veterans Resource Fair. The Veterans Resource Fair will be held on May 13-14, 2022, at the Cobb County Civic Center.
- DD 214's and Welcome Home Letters:
 - 1,004 Welcome Home Letters were mailed out in March 2022.
- Department Electronic Claim's Assistance Processing System (Vetra Spec) currently 311,086 entries; this is an increase of 557 from March 16, 2022.

PROJECTED POSITIONS

- Current openings in Appeals, Waycross, Decatur CBOC, Columbus, Statesboro, and Albany.

Veda Brooks, Coordinator, Women & Minority Veterans

Ms. Brooks announced that the Women's Health Committee announced the addition of mammograms to be funded. She offered a "thank you" to the field offices that gave her space for MST hearings and to Barbara Serrano of the Newnan field office for her assistance with Ms. Pope, a veteran who served during the Vietnam and Korea eras. She also announced that the Women Veterans Conference will be on June 25, with 100 slots available. The sign up link will go live May 25.

- March 23, 2022, Ms. Brooks presented at the Veteran Initiative Program for the CDC.
- March 24, 2022, Ms. Brooks in partnership with Kaiser Permanente and Emory co-hosted a Military Women's Appreciation Luncheon in College Park, GA.
- March 25 and 26, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in the American Legion Spring Conference in Duluth, GA. The Task Force presented a suicide prevention class, as well as passed out Gun safety kits for two days.
- March 25, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in the Dekalb County Women Veterans Celebration.
- March 29, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in and attended the 2022 Recovery Symposium.
- March 30, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in a virtual Health and Wellness small group.
- March 30, 2021, Ms. Brooks spoke at the Women's History Month Virtual Conference.
- March 31, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in BVA Hearings.
- April 2, 2022, Ms. Brooks attended a Breast Cancer event to bring awareness and education to veterans and family members.
- April 4, 2022, Ms. Brooks attended a meeting with Commissioner Knight about several events to be held in Clayton County to support Suicided Prevention.
- April 5, 2022, Ms. Brooks attended the Kaiser Permanente Partnership Meeting.

Current Committees

- Women's Veterans Health Committee (monthly meetings and joint outreach events)
- Georgia State VFW Homeless Committee
- VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Georgia Team
- Atlanta Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans
- The Birdwell Foundation Board Member
- Coweta County Race, Equity, and Justice Committee
- Unite Georgia Community Advisory Committee

Ramona Roper, Training and Professional Development Division:

Ms. Roper discussed the networking that took place at the We Care Fair. She highlighted that Training personnel also file claims and had brought in around \$99,000 in retro awards.

- March 10, 2022, Steven Fay conducted in-person training at the Decatur VAMC Veterans Field Service Office.
- March 9-10, 2022, Charles Isaac conducted in-person training at the Savannah CBOC Veterans Field Service Office.
- March 16, 2022, Training Division conducted an Annual Training planning session. Annual Training dates are July 18-22, 2022, in Peachtree City, Georgia.
- March 17, 2022, Ramona Roper attended the We CARE Veterans Resource Fair meeting in Marietta, Georgia.
- March 23, 2022, Mark Demers assisted Ken Childre (North Region Director) with interviews for Athens Veterans Field Service Office.
- March 24, 2022, Ramona Roper, and Steven Fay conducted in-person training with new hire, Nicholas Treadway, Decatur VAMC Veterans Field Service Office.
- March 25-26, 2022, Mark Demers attended the American Legion Conference in Duluth, Georgia.
- March 21-22, 2022, Charles Isaac conducted in-person training at the Savannah CBOC Veterans Field Service Office with new hire, Shari Shellman.
- March 29-30, 2022, Charles Isaac conducted in-person training in the Brunswick Veterans Field Service Office.
- March 28-30, 2022, Steven Fay conducted in-person training in the Rome Veterans Service Office with new hire, Tomeika Johnson.
- March 30, 2022, the Training and Professional Development Division attended the MS Teams meeting with Tyler Technologies about possible migration of Vetraspec to Veterans Benefits.
- April 1, 2022, the new Drop Class, "Accrued Benefits" training was dropped into the Absorb Training Portal.

Upcoming Events:

- Daily continued ongoing support to the Regional Directors and Veteran Field Service Offices.
- Planning and class development for the 2022 Annual Training event.
- Next Drop Class to be available April 18, 2022.

Shelly-Ann Simpson, Director Appeals Division

Ms. Simpson discussed the positive benefit of having Appeals Officers throughout the state, rather than in Atlanta only. They currently have two in South Georgia and will soon have one in North Georgia.

- The total number of actual hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for March 2022 was **171**.
- The total number of pre-hearing actions for March 2022 was **378**. Post-hearing actions was **37**.
- The total number of correspondence conducted by the Appeals Division (with veterans, BVA/VA employees, and VSO field offices) for the month of March was **2,209**.
- As of March 1, 2022, the Atlanta VA Regional Office completed the following claims for the Service Organizations represented by GDVS:

Types of Claims	Number of Awards	Benefits paid out
Compensation	100,216	\$183,520,634
DIC	3125	\$4,772,228
Survivor Pension	830	\$688,669
Veteran Pension	1,796	\$1,960,627
Grand Total	106,003	\$190,942,158

NORTH GA, Ken Childre, North Area Director

Mr. Childre added to his report the following: Five of 14 candidates will be interviewed on June 1 for Decatur; pictures from the We Care Fair are in his report below; there has been a resignation from the Newnan office.

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March 2022 total retro awards reported by the North Georgia offices: \$3,013,532. Included in that amount are single awards reported by:

Rita Barnhart (Canton)-\$135,441
Beth Humble (Dalton)-\$144,875
Glenn Massey (Gainesville)-\$259,268 and \$136,255
Rico Johnson (Gainesville)-\$466,265 and \$111,087

Director Site Visits/Inspections: 1

Traveled to Pickens County VA Clinic to view new office for VSO. VSO is expected to begin work in that office @ 1 May.

17 Mar-Marie Lundquist (Oakwood)

Spoke at VFW Breakfast event. Spoke with 23 Veterans/Spouses about new Agent Orange Presumptive Illnesses, answered questions about Parkinsons and Coronary Artery Disease and finally discussed the differences between Compensation and Pension.

17 Mar-Ian Ketterer (Augusta VAMC) and Tomika Nicholas (Augusta VAMC)

Spoke at "VA Benefits Night" hosted by First Command Financial Services-28 people in attendance

23 Mar-Ian Ketterer (Augusta VAMC) and Tomika Nicholas (Augusta VAMC)

Spoke to 20 State Technicians during the National Guard Career Planning and Retirement Briefing hosted by the 878th Engineer Battalion.

26 Mar-Ken Childre (Region Director), Steven Hungarter (Cartersville) and Chandreas Barkley (Cartersville)

Participated in Cobb County Community Engagement Event-Spoke with 10 potential clients about benefits that they or their families may be eligible for.

30 Mar-Mark Churning (Greensboro)

Attended VA Health Care Town Hall Meeting at the Athens VFW.

North Georgia Gains/Losses:

Decatur VAMC-Nicholas Treadway (Gain-16 Mar)

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	Average Visits Per VFSO						
	Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO						
	Region:		North				
	Month:		March-22				
		</					

*Total Monthly Office Visits include: 2,894 In-Person Visits and 11,538 phone calls/emails.

Vincent Pritchett, Director Veterans Benefits South Region

Mr. Pritchett added the following to his report: On May 18 he will hold 7 interviews for Hinesville. On May 21, Miguel Rivera taught a workshop in Savannah for the National Guard.

- On March 18, 2022, Chris Parrish (district manager), Joi Smith-Antoine (Hinesville field office), and Vincent Pritchett conducted interviews for the empty Veterans Field Service Officer (VFSO) 1 position at the Hinesville field office. This position was vacated when Charles Isaac was transferred to the Training and Professional Development team and Ms. Smith-Antoine was promoted to manager.
- On March 21, 2022, Vincent Pritchett and Stosh Bennett from the State Properties office completed a walk-through of the Douglas field office, officially closing that office.
- On March 25, 2022, Vincent Pritchett attended a Career Day event hosted by the Memorial Park Community Center in Macon.
- On March 29, 2022, Joycelyn Jones (Moultrie field office) attended a Vietnam Veterans Certificate and Pin ceremony in Moultrie. The event was hosted by the John Benning Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.
- On March 31, 2022, Sherri Whitfield (Albany field office) and Vince Pritchett conducted interviews to fill the empty VFSO 1 position in Albany. This position was vacated when Tequila McCoy was promoted to manager and transferred to our Tifton field office. Unfortunately, we did not select either of the candidates.

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- On April 1, 2022, Priscilla Prescott (Glennville field office) and Kevin Gibbs (Statesboro field office) provided claims assistance at a benefits jamboree hosted by American Legion Post 209 in Springfield, GA.
- On April 6, 2022, Vincent Pritchett and Michael Head, Swainsboro facility manager completed a walk-through of the Swainsboro field office, officially closing that office.
- On April 10, 2022, Vincent Pritchett provided a benefits briefing to members of the 421st at their Soldier Readiness Processing event in Fort Valley.
- On April 14, 2022, Vershawn Moses, and Christine Jones (Warner Robins field office) participated in an outreach event at Antebellum Grove assisted living facility in Warner Robins.
- South Region offices reported retroactive payments since the last board meeting totaling \$76,205.00 with the highest single payment of \$20,016.00 reported by our Warner Robins field office.
- South Region Gains/Losses: On April 1, 2022, Marquita Deadwyler-Jackson joined our Hinesville field office.
- South Georgia Region Veterans Population: 242,136
- Office Visits for March: South Georgia offices handled 6,358 phone calls and emails.

	Average Visits Per VFSO					
	Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO					
	Region:		South Region			
	Month:		March-22			
A	B	C	D	E	D / E	G / E
					F	H
					Average	Total
			Total	Work	Office	Claims
	Veterans' Field		Monthly	Days	Visits	Submitted
	Service Officer (VFSO)		Office	In	Per	To
			Visits	Month	Day	VA
Office Name	Last Name	#	Visits	Month	Day	Monthly
	Number of VFSOs:	40	2,733	856	3.19	2,103
Number of Offices:	24		Average Visits/Office:		113.88	Average Claims/Office:
						87.63

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Report Dated May 25, 2022

GENERAL

- April 26, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio attended a Teams Meeting with Tyler Tech. They gave a Veterans Benefit Demonstration. The Veterans Benefit System will be replacing the current VetraSpec System we are using.
- May 04, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio attended a meeting with Assistant Commissioner Jay Sanders, Inmate Services Division, Dr. Heather Corbett, Tech & Higher Education and Ms. Angelia Williams, Reentry Services. We discussed how we can work together to help veteran inmates when it's time for them to leave prison.
- May 10, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio attended a Zoom meeting with the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service Members and their Families.
- May 11, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio attended the Governor's Memorial Day program at the State Capitol.
- May 12, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio along with Commissioner Ross, Director of Veterans Training and Professional Development Ramona Roper, Training Team member Steven Fay and Jerry Lahr of our IT department went to the Cobb Civic Center to set-up our area for the We Care Veterans Resource Fair being held at the Cobb County Civic Center May 12, 13, 2022.
- May 12,13, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio attended the We Care Veterans Resource Fair at the Cobb County Civic Center.
- May 17, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio attended a Monthly Zoom meeting with the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service Members and their Families team members.
- May 17, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio attended the Atlanta VA Health Care System VSO Stakeholder Update teams meeting.
- May 18, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio and Commissioner Ross attended a Building Healthy Military Communities briefing at the Governor's Office. Ms. Lynn Schultz gave the briefing.
- DD 214's and Welcome Home Letters:

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- 741 Welcome Home Letters were mailed out in April 2022.
- Department Electronic Claim's Assistance Processing System (Vetra Spec) currently 311,086 entries, this is an increase of 792 from April 14, 2022.

PROJECTED POSITIONS

- Current openings in Appeals, Waycross, Statesboro, Columbus, Hinesville CBOC, and Decatur CBOC.

Veda Brooks, Coordinator, Women & Minority Veterans

- April 8, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in Suicide Prevention Movie Night "Inside Out" at the Arthur Blank Family YMCA.
- April 12, 2022, Ms. Brooks in partnership with Kaiser Permanente and Emory co-hosted a Mental Health Virtual Event. Ms. Brooks also gave a Compensation and Pension Briefing to the Coweta County Marine Corp League.
- April 13, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in the Women Veterans Health Committee Meeting.
- April 19, 2022, Ms. Brooks facilitated the Georgia Suicide Prevention Task Force Monthly meeting; the meeting was hybrid.
- April 20, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in and attended the Dublin VA Women Veteran Event.
- April 22, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in partnership with Kaiser Permanente and Emory to co-hosted Mental Health Improv Night.
- April 28, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated in the Fox Grant discussion.
- April 29, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in Inclusivity TA Orientation Call.
- May 3, 2022, Ms. Brooks attended a briefing with the Cherokee County Suicide Prevention Coalition briefing.
- May 10, 2022, Ms. Brooks hosted and participated in the Governor's Challenge: Georgia Sustainability Site Visit. Thank you, American Legion Post 291 for donating the space. Ms. Brooks participated in the VETLANTA Q2 Summit.
- May 12, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in the Coweta County Veteran Expo.
- May 13-14, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in the multi-day, We CARE Veteran Resource Fair, sponsored by the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation and Kaiser Permanente.
- May 17, 2022, Ms. Brooks facilitated the Georgia Suicide Prevention Task Force Monthly meeting; the meeting was hybrid.
- May 24, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in an Honor Ceremony for Mrs. Pope. A big thank you to Barbra Serrano from the Newnan Field Office for hosting this wonderful event.

Current committees

- Women's Veterans Health Committee (monthly meetings and joint outreach events)

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- Georgia State VFW Homeless Committee
- VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Georgia Team
- Atlanta Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans
- The Birdwell Foundation Board Member
- Coweta County Race, Equity, and Justice Committee
- Unite Georgia Community Advisory Committee

Ramona Roper, Training and Professional Development Division:

- April 12, 2022, Charles Isaac conducted in-person training at the Valdosta CBOC Veterans Field Service Office.
- April 14, 2022, Ramona Roper conducted in-person training at the Cartersville Veterans Field Service Office.
- April 18, 2022, Mark Demers attended the Governor's bill signing for military retiree tax exemption at Fort Benning.
- April 18, 2022, Steven Fay conducted an office visit to the Oakwood CBOC Veterans Field Office.
- April 19, 2022, Charles Isaac conducted in-person training with the St. Mary's Veterans Field Service Office.
- April 19, 2022, Charles Isaac conducted in-person training at the Hinesville CBOC Veterans Field Service Office.
- April 22, 2022, Mark Demers conducted an office visit to the Griffin Veterans Field Service Office.
- April 27, 2022, Mark Demers attended the Luella High School JROTC awards ceremony in Locust Grove, Georgia.
- May 5, 2022, Ramona Roper, and Steven Fay attended the We CARE Veterans Resource Fair meeting in Marietta, Georgia.
- May 3-4, 2022, Charles Isaac conducted in-person training in the Savannah CBOC Veterans Field Service Office.
- May 10, 2022, Mark Demers attended the Vetlanta Event at the College Football Hall of Fame in Atlanta, Georgia.
- May 13-14, 2022, Ramona Roper and Steven Fay attended the We CARE Resource Fair in Marietta, Georgia.
- May 18, 2022, the Training and Professional Development Division attended a training webinar from Tyler Technologies (Veterans' Benefits User Forum).
- May 21, 2022, Ramona Roper attended a benefit briefing on VA benefits, conducted by Lambda Sigma fraternity via Zoom.
- April – May 2022, the Training and Professional Development Division had VA retro payment awards to veterans/claimants in the amount of \$99,566.76

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Upcoming Events:

- Daily continued ongoing support to the Regional Directors and Veteran Field Service Offices.
- Planning and class development for the 2022 Annual Training event.
- Next Drop Class to be available May 23, 2022 (Establishing POA).

Shelly-Ann Simpson, Director Appeals Division

- The total number of actual hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for April 2022 was **90**.
- The total number of pre-hearing actions for April 2022 was **262**. Post-hearing actions was **35**.
- The total number of correspondence conducted by the Appeals Division (with veterans, BVA/VA employees, and VSO field offices) for the month of April was **1,567**.
- As of May 1, 2022, the Atlanta VA Regional Office completed the following claims for the Service Organizations represented by GDVS:

Types of Claims	Number of Awards	Benefits paid out
Compensation	100,388	\$184,420,628
DIC	3,160	\$4,830,819
Survivor Pension	819	\$679,982
Veteran Pension	1,757	\$1,939,895
Grand Total	106,124	\$191,871,324

NORTH GA, Ken Childre, North Area Director

April 2022 total retro awards reported by the North Georgia offices: \$3,362,778.97. Included in that amount are single awards reported by:

Rico Johnson (Gainesville)
\$835,426.72-Nehmer
\$225,698.41-BVA
\$223,289.56-Nehmer
\$126,213.15-Remand

Ron Cason (Athens)
\$401,885.80-Nehmer

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Director Site Visits/Inspections: 1

Traveled to Conyers Office for some additional training.

5 April-Rob Johnson/Randy Brown (Griffin)

Attended a Round Table Conference that was hosted by a local Veterans Support Group. The conference was put on in order for organizations to come together and provide support for Veterans from around the Southern Atlanta Area. Rob/Randy provided a brief overview of the services that Georgia Department of Veterans Service provides. In attendance were 36 people to include Board Member, Pete Peterson.

11 May-Decatur VAMC Interviews (See Gain/Loss at bottom of report for reason for interviews)

14 Candidates were selected for interviews.

5 Candidates were actually interviewed.

13-14 May-WE CARE Veterans Fair (Kyle Hungarter/Raven Holstick-Marietta; Glenn Massey/Rico Johnson-Gainesville; Roderica Stewart-Decatur CBOC; Cedric Brant/Kareem Reddick-Decatur VAMC)
Assisted 105 Veterans/Family Members

Filed 41 Electronic Submissions (Claims, Intents to File, Appeals, Supplemental Claims)



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North Georgia Gains/Losses:

Jasper Clinic-Marie Lundquist transferred from Oakwood Clinic (May 2nd)

Oakwood Clinic-Nicholas Treadway transferred from Decatur VAMC (May 2nd)

	Average Visits Per VFSO						
	Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO						
	Region:		North				
	Month:		April-22				
A	B	C	D	E	D / E F	G / E G	H
					Average	Total Claims	Average Claims
	Veterans' Field Service Officer (VFSO)		Total Monthly Office	Work Days In Month	Office Visits Per Day	Submitted To VA Monthly	Submitted By VFSOS To VA Daily
Office Name	Last Name	#	Visits	Month	Day	Monthly	Daily
	Number of VFSOs:	49	13,121	867	15.13	2,397	2.76
Number of Offices:	25		Average Visits/Office:		524.84	Average Claims/Office:	95.88

*Total Monthly Office Visits include: 2900 In-Person Visits and 10,221 phone calls/emails.

Vincent M. Pritchett, Director Veterans Benefits South Region

- On April 18, 2022, Sandra Bennett and Willie Greene (Columbus field office), and Vincent Pritchett attended the signing ceremony for House Bill 1604 at the National Infantry Museum in Columbus, GA.

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- On April 19, 2022, Vincent Pritchett briefed the incoming Veterans Education Career Transition Resource Center (VECTR) Chief Operating Officer, Col. Don Lane, about the Georgia Department of Veterans Service and how we fit in with the other agencies operating within VECTR.
- On April 20, 2022, Debbie O'Neal (Lyons field office) attended the Sexual Assault Awareness conference hosted by the Dublin VAMC. Debbie provided claims assistance to several of the veterans in attendance.
- On April 29, 2022, Melissa Ingle and Vincent Pritchett cleared out the Cordele field office and returned the keys to the property manager. This officially closed the last itinerant office in the South Region.
- On May 14, 2022, Chris Parrish (Waycross field office/District Manager) was the guest speaker for an American Legion Post 311 event held at the Jesup Fairgrounds.
- On May 19, 2022, Vincent Pritchett taped a segment of "The Middle Georgia Spotlight" television program, hosted by C. Jack Ellis, former Macon mayor. The interview topics were Memorial Day and Veterans benefits.
- South Region offices reported retroactive payments since the last board meeting totaling \$611,890 with the highest single payment of \$219,684 reported by our Warner Robins field office.
- South Region Gains/Losses: On April 1, 2022, Marquita Deadwyler-Jackson joined our Hinesville field office. On April 28, 2022, Ms. Deadwyler-Jackson resigned her position.
- South Georgia Region Veterans Population: 242,136
- Office Visits for April: South Georgia Offices handled 5,997 phone calls and emails.

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Average Visits Per VFSO							
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO							
Region:		South Region					
Month:		April-22					
A	B	C	D	E	D / E F	G	G / E H
					Average	Total Claims Submitted To VA Monthly	Average Claims Submitted By VFSOS To VA Daily
Office Name	Veterans' Field Service Officer (VFSO) Last Name	#	Total Monthly Office Visits	Work Days In Month	Office Visits Per Day		
	Number of VFSOs:	39	2,553	768	3.32	1,978	2.58
Number of Offices:	23	Average Visits/Office:		111.00	Average Claims/Office:		86.00

Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information & External Affairs

Ms. May highlighted the launch of a GDVS newsletter (see attached). She also stated that they met with the Miner Agency, a PR/marketing firm, to assist with the re-branding of GDVS.

Report Dated April 6, 2022

GENERAL

Personnel

- Charlotte May, Director (Speeches, Major News Release Announcements, Digital Media, Websites [External & Internal])
- Monica Dorsey, Communications Specialist (Administrative support in all aspects of the GDVS Public Information mission/function [External & Internal])

INFORMATION OUTREACH

Division Updates

1. Returning Veterans Task Force – the GDVS hosted the first quarter 2022 meeting of the RVTF. The group discussed the potential impacts on veteran and military families as the legislative session progressed and how agencies were continuing to provide support throughout the pandemic. The group also focused on how OJT programs provide opportunities to keep veterans and families in Georgia with presentations from VECTR, TCSG, and Bobby Davis from SAA.

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2. Women Veterans Certificates – PID supported the Women Veterans Office to provide certificates to over 30 women veterans at the American Legion Convention in Duluth and a post in Columbus. Ms. Brooks also worked with the Legion to provide lapel pins celebrating the service of our women veterans. PID is working on a design for a department pin honoring women veterans for future ceremonies.
3. HB 1064 – shared information on the passage of a tax break for Georgia's military retirees. The bill exempts up to \$17,500 in military pension from state income taxes for veterans under the age of 62. It also exempts up to \$17,500 in other income. Veterans on a military pension who work could exempt up to \$35,000 from state income taxes.
4. Veterans Benefits Outreach –
 - a. Fort Benning MOAA monthly meeting – PID provided information and resources to the Columbus GDVS office to share at a local MOAA meeting.
 - b. Guardsmen for Life Retiree Appreciation Days – shared information from the Georgia National Guard on several upcoming events for guardsmen, families, and dependents to engage with retirement services.
 - c. VA informational events – shared information on a GI Bill Summit for veterans to engage online with VA with GI Bill questions and information on an upcoming Virtual Claims Clinic hosted by the Atlanta VAMC.
 - d. Hope Fund for Critical Financial Assistance – shared information on a new grant program for caretakers of veterans in financial need, administered by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation.
 - e. We Care Veterans Resource Fair – shared information on an upcoming 2-day information and resource fair being held in Cobb County in May.
5. National Vietnam War Veterans Day – celebrated the 5th annual national celebration of the Vietnam War era veteran. PID provided information to veterans in Chattooga County for an upcoming ceremony, as well as veterans at the Marietta Vet Center. PID also mailed certificates and pins to veterans. The day was celebrated online with posts from the Department of Defense, VA, and official Vietnam War Commemoration in addition to reminding veterans of the GDVS certificate of honor program.
6. Veterans Drivers Licenses – shared information reminding veterans and families of the new, easier process to receive a veteran driver's license. The post was shared 168 times and reached over 27,600 views organically. Veterans and their families were highly engaged with the reminder, leaving comments acknowledging the change's positive impact.

Public Information Division Contacts (Since December 10, 2021)

- Replies to VA eBenefits Messages = 360
- Replies to General Questions = approximately 275

- Individual Request for the State Certificate of Honor = approximately 45

GOVERNOR'S (VIETNAM VETERAN) CERTIFICATE of HONOR PROGRAM-

- The latest and most accurate totals (since March 2015) –

State Certificates of Honor issued via GDVS – An estimated 29,325
(Honors Ceremonies and Central Office Mail Outs)

DoD Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins presented via GDVS – An estimated 23,345

Honors Ceremonies supported/coordinated by GDVS – 353

Defense Department's Vietnam Veteran Surviving Spouse CoH – 285

Report Dated May 18, 2022

GENERAL

Personnel

- Charlotte May, Director (Speeches, Major News Release Announcements, Digital Media, Websites [External & Internal])
- Monica Dorsey, Communications Specialist (Administrative support in all aspects of the GDVS Public Information mission/function [External & Internal])

INFORMATION OUTREACH

Division Updates

1. GDVS Launches Newsletter (see attached) – PID published the first monthly GDVS newsletter on Monday, May 2. The newsletter features information on veteran issues, significant developments in veteran-related legislation, a spotlight on GDVS employees, and more. The newsletter is available online at <https://veterans.georgia.gov/press-releases/newsletter>. New issues are announced on social media and through email notifications to department staff and veterans service organizations.
2. Veterans Benefits Outreach –
 - a. We Care Veterans Resource Fair – shared information on an upcoming 2-day information and resource fair being held in Cobb County in May. During the fair, PID shared photos of the event and GDVS staff at work assisting veterans on social media. PID also developed new flyers and information cards for veterans seeking assistance during the event.

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- b. New Clinic in Zebulon – shared information on the development and progress of the new VA CBOC in Zebulon, as well as how to begin registering for care at the new clinic.
- c. Dublin Women’s Health Clinic Groundbreaking – shared information on the new clinic for women veterans in Dublin which is currently projected to open by April 2023. PID also shared information on the newly refreshed VA women’s health website at <https://womenshealth.va.gov/>.
- d. VA Adds 9 Respiratory Cancers to Presumptive List for Burn Pit Exposure – shared news article on the new cancers added to the list of presumptive conditions for toxic burn pits. PID also featured the article in the department’s May newsletter.

3. Memorial Day –

- a. Shared a livestream of Governor Kemp’s Memorial Day Recognition Ceremony on May 11. Commissioner Ross welcomed guests to the ceremony and was joined by Governor Kemp, AG Tom Carden, and members of the Georgia legislature to recognize the service of Georgia’s military sons and daughters.
- b. PID worked with GVMC Milledgeville and Glennville on programs for their annual Memorial Day ceremonies to be held on May 30, 2022. The programs feature a recognition of service members from Georgia or attached to Georgia military installations who have passed since last Memorial Day.

Public Information Division Contacts (Since December 10, 2021)

- Replies to VA eBenefits Messages = 460
- Replies to General Questions = approximately 335
- Individual Request for the State Certificate of Honor = approximately 70

GOVERNOR’S (VIETNAM VETERAN) CERTIFICATE of HONOR PROGRAM-

- The latest and most accurate totals (since March 2015) –

State Certificates of Honor issued via GDVS – An estimated 29,350
(Honors Ceremonies and Central Office Mail Outs)

DoD Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins presented via GDVS – An estimated 23,370

Honors Ceremonies supported/coordinated by GDVS – 353

Defense Department’s Vietnam Veteran Surviving Spouse CoH – 285

Mr. Bobby Davis, Director, Veterans Education and Training Division (State Approving Agency)

Mr. Davis highlighted that the Covid-19 protocols will end June 1st and all schools will be back to normal.

VETERANS STATE APPROVING AGENCY

- The approval and compliance surveys 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 1,792 educational institutions and training establishments where Georgia veterans may attend school or job training and utilize their GI Bill® educational benefits.
- Extension of COVID-19 protocols for schools was signed into law on December 21, 2021, extending protocols until June 1, 2022.

Item *	Number
Approved Educational Institutions	389
Approved Training Establishments	1,404
Veteran Students Enrolled in Educational Institutions	19,087

* Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Education Division, March 2022

Item *	Number
Approved Educational Institutions	388
Approved Training Establishments	1,404
Veteran Students Enrolled in Educational Institutions	18,814

* Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Education Division, April 2022.

Mr. Russell Feagin, Director, Health & Memorials Division

Mr. Feagin discussed the construction/renovation efforts which continue. They are awaiting deliveries of supplies and equipment, which has been affected by the recent supply chain issues. The cemeteries will have Memorial Day ceremonies for the first time in two years.

Georgia War Veterans Home Milledgeville

- Construction on Phase III of the Sub-Acute Unit is now complete.

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- Fixtures, Furniture, and Equipment (FFE) is being received and put in place. This includes FF&E for the Transitional Support Unit, Food Service Facility, 3rd floor Wheeler Building therapy and office equipment, and the Russell Building. There have been some delays in receipt of equipment due to external shortages, but equipment is still coming in.
- Contracts have been requested to paint the inside of the Russell Building, caulk and seal around the inside and outside of the windows and address other issues to the exterior.
- Work continues to install the necessary communication equipment for Electronic Medical Records and improve the internal IT operations on the campus.
- Work is on-going to replace wardrobes in the Wood Building, repair bathrooms, and replace the nurse call light system. Two of the three floors affected have been completed.
- Work is underway in the Vinson Building to improve heating and cooling in the patient rooms, replace flooring on the first floor, and other needed repairs.
- Installation of equipment to reduce negative effects of COVID-19 is on-going. Automatic thermal scanners have been installed in all buildings. Additional enhancements are being put in place.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemeteries

- Both cemeteries have now completed their Triennial Audit by the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) and are in compliance with NCA Standards

Tonya Jarrett, Clinical Director, Health & Memorials Division

1. Ongoing meetings have been established with the contract vendor, PruittHealth, to develop the clinical pathways and staffing matrix for the sub-acute unit at the Georgia War Veterans Home.
2. No COVID positive patients or staff at the GWVH during March 2022.

Georgia War Veterans Home - Milledgeville, GA										
Thursday, March 31, 2022										
Category	Population	Positive Cases	Positives % of Population	Deaths	Deaths % of Positives	Deaths % of Population	Recovered	Recovered % of Positives	Currently In Isolation	Positive for current month
Patients	325	128	39.38%	28	21.88%	8.62%	100	78.13%	0	0
Staff	523	159	30.40%	0	0.00%	0.00%	159	100.00%	0	0

Cumulative figures since March 1, 2020.

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Georgia War Veterans Home - Milledgeville, GA										
Saturday, April 30, 2022										
Category	Population	Positive Cases	Positives % of Population	Deaths	Deaths % of Positives	Deaths % of Population	Recovered	Recovered % of Positives	Currently In Isolation	Positive for current month
Patients	329	128	38.91%	28	21.88%	8.51%	100	78.13%	0	0
Staff	523	159	30.40%	0	0.00%	0.00%	159	100.00%	0	0

Cumulative figures since March 1, 2020.

Recovered category includes patients/staff who tested positive and subsequently tested negative twice. In December 2021, the CDC changed their time-based criteria again. Patients with no symptoms after 10 days are presumed to have recovered from the virus.

In Isolation category includes either self-quarantined, hospital, or COVID-19 unit at GWVH.

Positive for current month includes the number of veterans/staff who have tested COVID positive for the current month.

Mr. Carlton Deese, Executive Director, Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home

Mr. Deese announced that the War Veterans Nursing Home has received Joint Commission Gold Seal of Approval. Also, there are no restrictions with visitation at the Home.

Executive Director Mark Bannister, Health, Memorials, Finance & Development

Mr. Bannister highlighted that FY22 will be closed out at the end of June, Strategic Plan Development will take place in July, and Budget Development will take place in August.

Report Dated April 7, 2022

FINANCE

Accounting

Routine operations are continuing.

Budget and the General Assembly

On Wednesday, March 16, 2022, Governor Kemp signed the HB 910, Amended FY 2022 appropriations and budget as passed.

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Fund Source	Amount (\$\$)
State General Funds	23,976,636
Other (Daily Fees at war veterans homes and construction funds)	3,215,491
Federal Funds	24,210,246
Total Funds	51,402,373

The 2022 General Assembly legislative session was completed on April 4, 2022, and passed the FY 2023 appropriations and budget law; however, the Governor has not, as of this writing, signed it into law. Most likely it will be the middle of May 2022 before it is signed.

FY 2023

The table on page 2 provides a summary of HB 911, (FY 2023G) appropriations and budget for the GDVS awaiting final approval by the Governor.

Approved House & Senate Versions

Fiscal Program	State/Total Funding	Notes
Administration (DVS)	<div style="text-align: right;">\$1,849,338</div> <div style="text-align: right;">\$109,274</div> <div style="text-align: right;">\$15,291</div> <div style="text-align: right;">\$72,633</div> <div style="text-align: right;">(\$15,095)</div> <div style="text-align: right;">(\$376)</div> <div style="text-align: right;">\$2,031,065</div>	State General funds. Adds: \$5,000 COLA adjustment July 1, 2022. Annual leave withdrawal. ERSGA employer contribution. Reduces: DOAS insurance agency premium. Adjustment in TeamWorks billing. Total State Funds.
Cemeteries	<div style="text-align: right;">\$2,079,884</div> <div style="text-align: right;">\$117,680</div> <div style="text-align: right;">\$7,878</div> <div style="text-align: right;">\$34,089</div> <div style="text-align: right;">\$51,520</div>	State General funds. Adds: \$5,000 COLA adjustment July 1, 2022. Annual leave withdrawal. ERSGA employer contribution. Grounds maintenance worker at Glennville Cemetery.

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

	\$2,291,051	Total State Funds.
Nursing Homes	\$12,032,400 \$23,128,424 <u>\$3,215,491</u> \$38,376,315 \$1,289,917* \$10,389 \$7,670 \$39,684,291	State General funds. Federal funds. Fees, bonds, and services. Adds: Funds for retention and recruitment needs. *(Includes Augusta University). ERSGA employer contribution. Reflect change in teachers' retirement system. Total State Funds.
Veterans Benefits	\$7,319,749 <u>\$753,926</u> \$8,073,675 \$847,295 \$63,467 \$259,651 \$114,500 (\$4,634) \$9,353,954	State General funds. Federal funds (VETD). Adds: Funds for retention and recruitment needs. Annual leave withdrawal. ERSGA employer contribution. Director, Suicide Prevention and Outreach. Reduces: DOAS insurance agency premium. Total State Funds.

Total recommended FY 2023 budget = **\$53,360,361 dollars.**

House Resolution 77 - The General Assembly approved as part of the appropriation and budget legislation, state funds in the amount of \$1,000,000.00 dollars to create a state veterans cemetery in Augusta, Richmond County. Although approval of the initial funding for the proposed cemetery paves the way for architectural planning, surveying of the property and purchasing of the land, the next phase in the process will involve securing funding (an annual federal grant) from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and state supported dollars for the purposes of construction of the cemetery, purchasing of equipment, and future hiring of personnel to operate the proposed cemetery.

\$1,000,000 dollars removed (HB 910) in the AFY 2022 budget will be added to the FY 2023 budget into the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemeteries program on July 1, 2022.

HEALTH AND MEMORIALS

State Veterans Homes

State Veterans Homes Census (Through April 1, 2022) +

Current Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	96	114	210
Service Connected *	22	41	63
Total Patients	118	155	273
Last Month			
Regular Patients	97	118	215
Service Connected *	23	40	63
Total Patients	120	158	278

* One hundred percent of the cost of these services is paid by the VA. No state funds are involved.

+ The report to the VSB are the total numbers from March 4, 2022, through April 1, 2022.

Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home – Augusta

Routine operations are continuing.

Georgia War Veterans Home – Milledgeville

Routine operations are continuing.

State Veterans Cemeteries,

Burial Statistics (Through April 1, 2022) +

State Veterans Cemetery	Cumulative Last Month	Cumulative Current Month	Increase
Glennville	2,047	2,068	21
Milledgeville	4,691	4,718	27
Total	6,738	6,786	48

+ The report to the VSB are the total numbers from March 4, 2022, through April 1, 2022.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville

Routine operations are continuing.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville

Routine operations are continuing.

OPERATIONS

Human Resources

Personnel Actions (Gains / Losses)

(March 16, 2022 – April 1, 2022)

Location	Position	Status	Name	Date
Savannah	VFSO-1	New Hire	<i>Sheri Shellman</i>	03/16/2022
Milledgeville Cemetery	Grounds Maint Tech 1	New Hire	<i>Robert Sparks</i>	03/16/2022
Tifton	Office Manager/VFSO 2	Resignation	<i>Shaun Amy</i>	03/16/2022
Hinesville	VFSO-1	New Hire	<i>Marquita Deadwyler</i>	04/01/2022
Milledgeville	Groundskeeper Supv	Retired	<i>William Lester</i>	04/01/2022

Properties

Routine operations are continuing.

Information Technology

Routine operations are continuing.

Records Management

Routine operations are continuing.

Vehicle Management

Routine service and maintenance are performed as required.

Veterans Service Foundation Board

It is with great pleasure to announce that we have received approval of our IRS 501(c)(3) application! This means we are now able to legally receive donations from corporations and foundations and allow them to receive the favorable tax implications of our 501(c)(3) status. Thank you, Mr. Doug Middleton, Chairman of the Veterans Service Foundation Board. The effective date of the exemption is January 3, 2022.

Report Dated May 2, 2022

FINANCE

Accounting

Routine operations are continuing.

Budget and the General Assembly

The 2022 General Assembly legislative session was completed on April 4, 2022, and passed the FY 2023 appropriations and budget law; however, the Governor has not, as of this writing, signed it into law. Most likely it will be the middle of May 2022 before it is signed.

FY 2023

The table on page 2 provides a summary of HB 911, (FY 2023G) appropriations and budget for the GDVS awaiting final approval by the Governor.

Approved House & Senate Versions

Fiscal Program	State/Total Funding	Notes
Administration (DVS)	\$1,849,338	State General funds.
	\$109,274	Adds:
	\$15,291	\$5,000 COLA adjustment July 1, 2022.
	\$72,633	Annual leave withdrawal.
		ERSGA employer contribution.
	(\$15,095)	Reduces:
	(\$376)	DOAS insurance agency premium.
		Adjustment in TeamWorks billing.
	\$2,031,065	Total State Funds.

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Cemeteries	<p>\$2,079,884</p> <p>\$117,680 \$7,878 \$34,089 \$51,520</p> <p>\$2,291,051</p>	<p>State General funds.</p> <p>Adds: \$5,000 COLA adjustment July 1, 2022. Annual leave withdrawal. ERSGA employer contribution. Grounds maintenance worker at Glennville Cemetery.</p> <p>Total State Funds.</p>
Nursing Homes	<p>\$12,032,400 \$23,128,424 <u>\$3,215,491</u> \$38,376,315</p> <p>\$1,289,917*</p> <p>\$10,389 \$7,670</p> <p>\$39,684,291</p>	<p>State General funds. Federal funds. Fees, bonds, and services.</p> <p>Adds: Funds for retention and recruitment needs. *(Includes Augusta University). ERSGA employer contribution. Reflect change in teachers' retirement system.</p> <p>Total State Funds.</p>
Veterans Benefits	<p>\$7,319,749 <u>\$753,926</u> \$8,073,675</p> <p>\$847,295 \$63,467 \$259,651 \$114,500</p> <p>(\$4,634)</p> <p>\$9,353,954</p>	<p>State General funds. Federal funds (VETD).</p> <p>Adds: Funds for retention and recruitment needs. Annual leave withdrawal. ERSGA employer contribution. Director, Suicide Prevention and Outreach.</p> <p>Reduces: DOAS insurance agency premium.</p> <p>Total State Funds.</p>

Total recommended FY 2023 budget = \$53,360,361 dollars.

House Resolution 77 - The General Assembly approved as part of the appropriation and budget legislation, state funds in the amount of \$1,000,000.00 dollars to create a state veterans cemetery in Augusta, Richmond County. Although approval of the initial funding for the proposed cemetery paves the way for architectural planning, surveying of the property and purchasing of the land, the next phase in the process will involve securing funding (an annual

federal grant) from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and state supported dollars for the purposes of construction of the cemetery, purchasing of equipment, and future hiring of personnel to operate the proposed cemetery.

\$1,000,000 dollars removed (HB 910) in the AFY 2022 budget will be added to the FY 2023 budget into the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemeteries program on July 1, 2022.

HEALTH AND MEMORIALS

State Veterans Homes

State Veterans Homes Census (Through April 29, 2022) +

Current Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	98	116	214
Service Connected *	22	41	63
Total Patients	120	157	277
Last Month			
Regular Patients	96	114	210
Service Connected *	22	41	63
Total Patients	118	155	273

* One hundred percent of the cost of these services is paid by the VA. No state funds are involved.

+ The report to the VSB are the total numbers from April 1, 2022, through April 29, 2022.

Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home – Augusta

Routine operations are continuing.

Georgia War Veterans Home – Milledgeville

Routine operations are continuing.

State Veterans Cemeteries,

Burial Statistics (Through April 29, 2022) +

State Veterans Cemetery	Cumulative Last Month	Cumulative Current Month	Increase
Glennville	2,068	2,087	19
Milledgeville	4,718	4,747	29
Total	6,786	6,834	48

+ The report to the VSB are the total numbers from April 1, 2022, through April 29, 2022.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville

Routine operations are continuing.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville

Routine operations are continuing.

OPERATIONS

Human Resources

Personnel Actions (Gains / Losses)

(April 15, 2022 – May 16, 2022)

Location	Position	Status	Name	Date
Athens	VFSO-1	New Hire	<i>Matthew Williamson</i>	04/16/2022
Decatur VAMC	VFSO-1	Resignation	<i>Rebecca Moran</i>	05/01/2022
Albany	VFSO-1	Resignation	<i>Corey Ware</i>	05/16/2022

Properties

Routine operations are continuing.

Information Technology

Routine operations are continuing.

Records Management

Routine operations are continuing.

Vehicle Management

Routine service and maintenance are performed as required.

Veterans Service Foundation Board

Mr. Doug Middleton, Chairman of the Veterans Service Foundation Board will provide an update.

OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS:

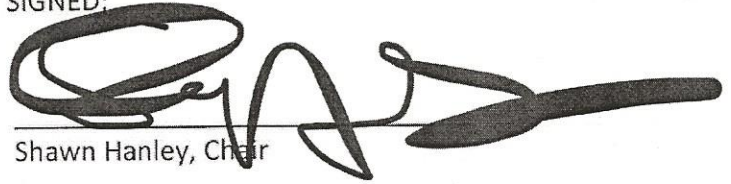
The General Obligation Bond Resolution was discussed. A motion to approve the selling of the bonds by the State of Georgia for construction at the Milledgeville Home and the cemeteries was made by Ms. Swan. Mr. Kopsie seconded the motion. There were no objections. The motion passed unanimously.

The June 28 board meeting was scheduled. It will be a combination virtual and in-person meeting, set up at the GDVS. Mr. Hanley made a motion for this and there were no objections. The motion passed.

Mr. Kopsie made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. There were no objections and the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:38 p.m.

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

SIGNED:



Shawn Hanley, Chair

ATTEST:



Joshua Kopsie, Secretary

The next Veterans Service Board meeting will be held in person at GDVS but will also be available via video/telephone conference call on Tuesday, June 28, 2022, at 12:30 p.m. The Webex link is:
<https://georgiadepartmentofveteransservice.webex.com/georgiadepartmentofveteransservice/j.php?MTID=m012b612d858b2e8c4651569b109238c5>

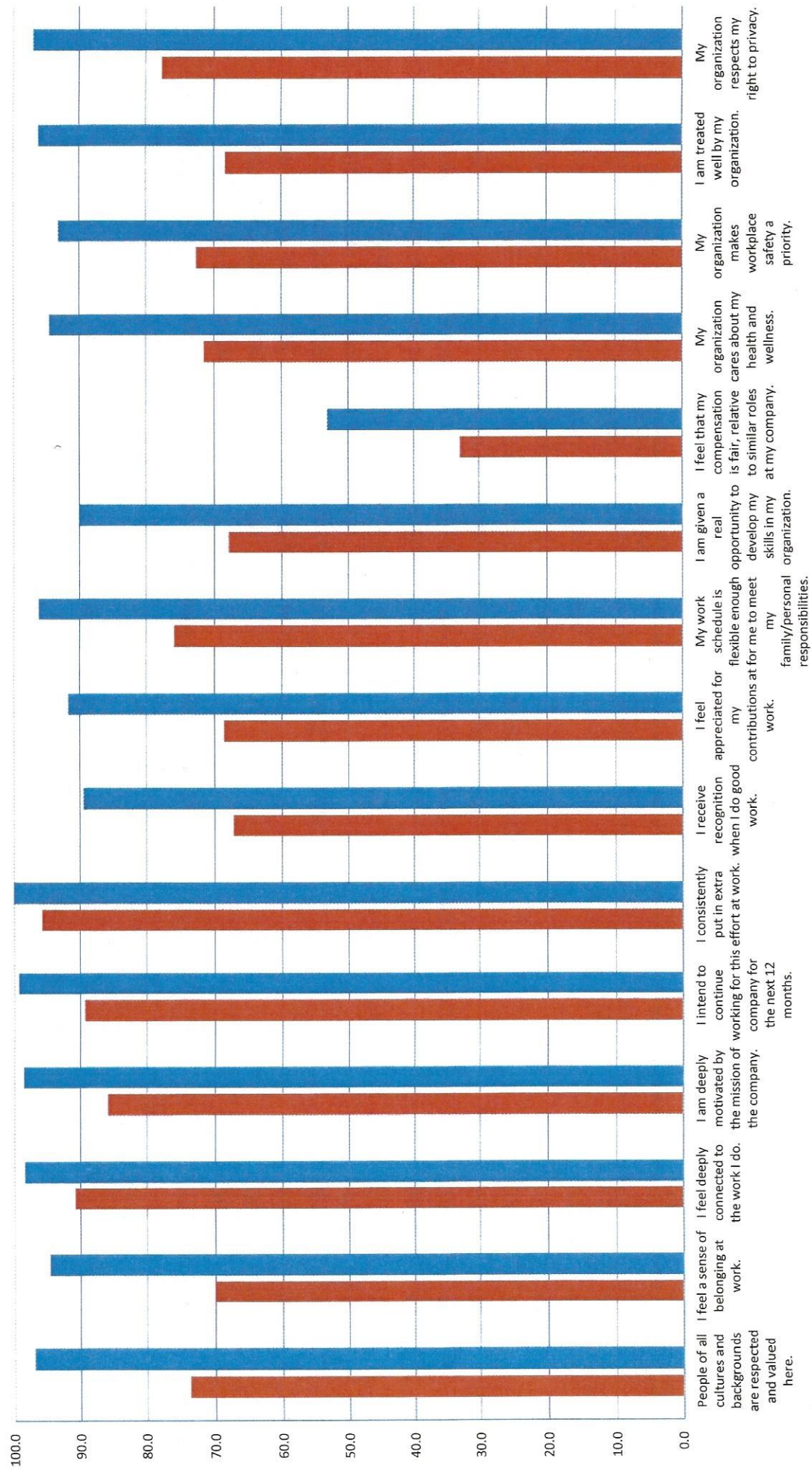
Meeting password: uU7hCa4vFd4 (88742248 from video systems)

Or you can call: 1-844-621-3956

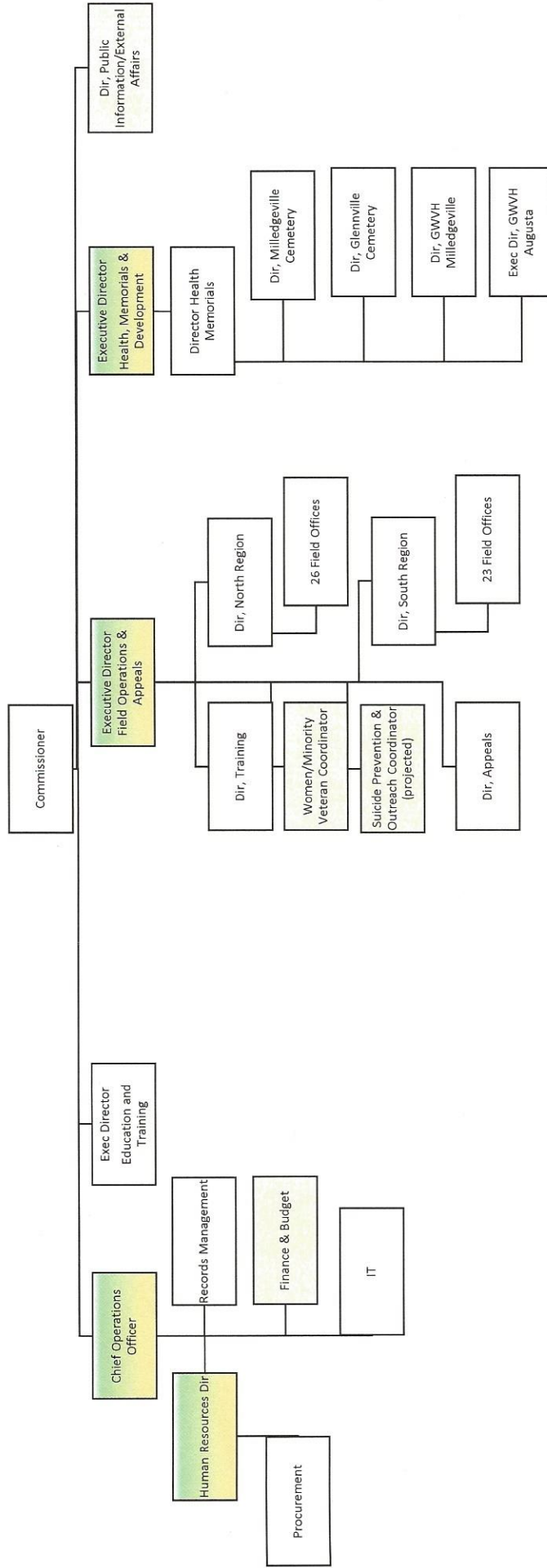
Access Code: 2346 637 6719

June 2021 & March 2022 Survey Results

Question	Score
People of all cultures and backgrounds are respected and valued here.	73.6 96.9
I feel a sense of belonging at work.	70.0 94.6
I feel deeply connected to the work I do.	90.7 98.4
I am deeply motivated by the mission of the company.	85.7 98.5
I intend to continue working for this company for the next 12 months.	89.2 99.3
I consistently put in extra effort at work.	95.7 100.0
I receive recognition when I do good work.	67.1 89.4
I feel appreciated for my contributions at work.	68.6 91.7
My work schedule is flexible enough for me to meet my family/personal responsibilities.	75.9 96.2
I am given a real opportunity to develop my skills in my organization.	67.9 90.0
I feel that my compensation is fair, relative to similar roles at my company.	32.9 53.1
My organization cares about my health and wellness.	71.4 94.5
My organization makes workplace safety a priority.	72.6 93.1
I am treated well by my organization.	68.4 96.1
My organization respects my right to privacy.	77.7 96.9
Overall	73.8 92.6



Organizational Structure – GDVS 5/1/2022



Change in position
Organizational change



**Georgia Department
of Veterans Service**
Serving Those Who Served!
May 2022

COMMISSIONER'S CORNER

I'm excited to kick off our monthly newsletter to help share information throughout the department and highlight the great work of our team! We'll also provide feature stories and highlight upcoming events, especially those that correspond with military/veteran related holidays.

This month, I'm highlighting the legislative session and some of the bills the department provided input on, resulting in their passage into law.

The first is truly a piece of landmark legislation. House Bill 1064 exempts a portion of military retirement from state income tax beginning in 2023. A similar bill has been introduced every year for several decades and it has finally passed with bi-partisan effort and the Governor's support.

Senate Bill 358 also passed with support from the GDVS. The bill allows transitioning military or honorably discharged veterans to receive reimbursement when attending basic law enforcement training.

Senate Bill 87, or the Senator Jack Hill Veterans' Act, allows Georgians to provide all or a portion of their state income tax refund to provide scholarships to service-disabled veterans enrolled the Technical College System of Georgia.

Senate Bill 96 lets veterans use their VA Health ID card as valid proof for notary services in the state.

We can't forget to support our military spouses. House Bill 884 provides a pathway for them to get expedited professional licenses.

Thank you for all you do in support of our veterans. I am honored to be a part of such a great team!



Patricia Ross
- Patricia Ross
Commissioner of Veterans Service



An airman tosses unserviceable uniform items into a burn pit at Balad Air Base, Iraq, on March 10, 2008. (Julianne Showalter/U.S. Air Force)

VA ADDS 9 RESPIRATORY CANCERS TO LIST OF PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS

The VA is adding nine rare respiratory cancers to their list of presumptive conditions for veterans exposed to toxic burn pits in an Interim Final Rule published to the Federal Register on April 26, 2022.

The cancers to be added to the list are squamous cell carcinoma of the larynx, squamous cell carcinoma of the trachea, adenocarcinoma of the trachea, adenosquamous carcinoma of the lung, large cell carcinoma of the lung, salivary gland-type tumors of the lung, sarcomatoid carcinoma of the lung, and typical and atypical carcinoid of the lung.

According to the VA, about 100 veterans who suffer from one of the conditions previously applied for veterans benefits

and were denied.

In a recent statement from the VA, it has been determined that there was a "biological plausibility" between airborne hazards and the respiratory cancers.

The presumption applies to veterans who served in Southwest Asia sometime between Aug. 2, 1990, and the present, or in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Syria or Djibouti sometime after Sept. 19, 2001. The department said it would begin contacting affected veterans and family members about how to apply for benefits.

For more information, please visit <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/includes/viewPDF.cfm?id=5786>.



NOTES OF GRATITUDE

"A life changing event!" Is how a Vietnam veteran described his experience with Commissioner Patricia Ross and **SGM and Trainer Mark Demers** after they traveled to his home to assist him with paperwork he needed for his claim for Agent Orange benefits.

He has lung cancer and was too weak to travel to a field office. The veteran said it was one of the kindest things anyone has ever done for him.

In an email to the governor's office, he stated, "you could not have finer representatives on your staff ... I will hold them in the highest esteem."

Thank you for supporting Georgia's veterans, Mark!

NEW OFFICE IN JASPER

On May 2, the GDVS will open a new office in the Jasper VA CBOC. The new office is located at 934 East Church Street, Jasper GA 30143.

Marie Lundquist will manage the office. Veterans in need of assistance can call Marie at 706-301-5720 ext. 504712 or via email at

mlundquist@vs.state.ga.us.

Nicholas Treadway will move from the Atlanta VAMC GDVS office to manage the Oakwood office.

UPCOMING EVENTS

We CARE Veterans Resource Fair

The GDVS will be participating in the We Care Veterans Resource Fair on **May 13-14** at the Cobb County Civic Center.

Over 100 professional agencies will provide assistance to veterans in need of physical wellness, employment, financial wellness, food and nutrition, legal guidance and much more.

The fair is FREE and open to ALL VETERANS regardless of when you served, your discharge status, or whether or not you are enrolled in the VA.

Visit <https://www.wecarevetfair.com/> for more information.



The Governor's Taskforce to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families recently held an Improv Comedy Night on Friday, April 22.

GDVS's Veda Brooks helped organize and run the event with help from Imarii Poindexter with Emory Healthcare's Veteran Program.



Guests played several improv games, started building new relationships, and enjoyed an evening of group support and laughter.

VETLANTA

Commissioner Ross will be the featured speaker at the VETLANTA 2022 Q2 Summit on May 10th. The summit's focus is on health and wellness and will be held at the College Football Hall of Fame.

VETLANTA is a club that operates exclusively for veteran social and business networking and community service purposes.

For more information and to register for the event, visit <https://vetlanta.org/events/>.

**RESOLUTION
OF THE
VETERANS SERVICE BOARD**

I. WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Service (the "Department") was created as a department of the State of Georgia (the "State"), in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 38-4-1;

II. WHEREAS FURTHER, the Department is administered by the commissioner of veterans service (the "Commissioner") and the Veterans Service Board (the "Board"), in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 38-4-1;

III. WHEREAS FURTHER, the Department and the Board are authorized, in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 38-4-2 (4), to construct and operate hospitals, nursing homes and other facilities for the use and care of war veterans;

IV. WHEREAS FURTHER, the Board is authorized to administer the facilities of the Georgia State War Veterans' Home, in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 38-4-52;

V. WHEREAS FURTHER, pursuant to Article VII, Section IV of the Constitution of the State of Georgia (the "Georgia Constitution"), the State may finance certain capital needs directly through the issuance of general obligation debt;

VI. WHEREAS FURTHER, pursuant to Article VII, Section IV, Paragraph VII(a) of the Georgia Constitution, and the "Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission Act", O.C.G.A. § § 50-17-20 through 50-17-30, as amended (the "Commission Act"), the Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission (the "Commission") is the agency and instrumentality of the State charged with issuing debt of the State and ensuring the proper application, as provided by law, of the proceeds of such debt to the purposes for which the debt is incurred;

VII. WHEREAS FURTHER, Article VII, Section IV, Paragraph I (c) of the Georgia Constitution, and the Commission Act provide that certain general obligation debt (as defined by O.C.G.A. § 50-17-21 (5) and hereinafter "General Obligation Debt") may be incurred to acquire, construct, develop, extend, enlarge, or improve land, waters, property, highways, buildings, structures, equipment, or facilities of the State, its agencies, departments, institutions, and of those State authorities which were created and activated prior to November 8, 1960;

VIII. WHEREAS FURTHER, as set forth in **ATTACHMENT 1** attached hereto and incorporated herein, the General Assembly of the State of Georgia (the "General Assembly") has passed various appropriations acts authorizing amounts from state general funds to be appropriated for the purpose of financing certain capital projects through the issuance of General Obligation Debt, and such appropriations are more fully set forth in such **ATTACHMENT 1**;

IX. WHEREAS FURTHER, the Board finds an immediate need for certain project funding for the purposes of financing some or all of the projects and facilities associated with the appropriations set forth in **ATTACHMENT 1** hereto (the "Projects") in the aggregate principal amount of \$3,020,000;

X. WHEREAS FURTHER, the Board therefore desires to request the issuance of \$3,020,000 in aggregate principal amount of State of Georgia General Obligation Bonds, the instruments of which shall have maturities not in excess of the respective appropriations set forth in **ATTACHMENT 1** hereto (the "General Obligation Bonds"), for the purpose of financing some or all of the Projects;

XI. WHEREAS FURTHER, the Board is aware that the Projects shall be completed with proceeds derived from the sale of the General Obligation Bonds with the intent that interest on such General Obligation Bonds be excludable from gross income for federal income tax purposes pursuant to Section 103 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the "Code");

XII. WHEREAS FURTHER, the Board is aware of the provisions and requirements of the Code and the regulations issued thereunder respecting arbitrage bonds and private activity bonds, and is aware that the Projects must proceed with due diligence and be timely completed following receipt of the proceeds derived from the sale of the General Obligation Bonds (the "Bond Proceeds");

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE VETERANS SERVICE BOARD THAT:

SECTION 1.

The Board hereby approves and authorizes the Projects.

SECTION 2.

The Board hereby requests the Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission to undertake to issue \$3,020,000 in aggregate principal amount of State of Georgia General Obligation Bonds, the instruments of which shall have maturities not in excess of the respective appropriations set forth in **ATTACHMENT 1** hereto, for the purpose of financing some or all of the Projects.

SECTION 3.

The Board hereby determines and agrees that:

- (a) the plans for the Projects are sufficiently complete such that substantial binding obligations to a third party or parties (as defined in the regulations issued under the Code), involving the expenditure of at least five percent (5%) of the Bond Proceeds herein requested, to commence or acquire the Projects will be incurred within six (6) months after the issuance of such General Obligation Bonds;

- (b) eighty-five percent (85%) of the Bond Proceeds herein requested will be expended within three (3) years after the issuance of such General Obligation Bonds;
- (c) the Bond Proceeds herein requested, and anticipated investment proceeds (net of interest on such General Obligation Bonds during the estimated period of construction), will not exceed the amount necessary for the governmental purposes of financing the Projects;
- (d) during the time the General Obligation Bonds herein requested are outstanding, the Department will not take, permit to be taken, or fail to take, any action which would cause such General Obligation Bonds to be deemed private activity bonds or arbitrage bonds under the Code;
- (e) the Department will not use the Bond Proceeds herein requested, or the Projects financed with such Bond Proceeds, for any non-governmental purpose, or any purpose that would give rise to private business use within the meaning of the Code, except for those specific instances in which the Department has previously consulted with the Commission;
- (f) the term of the General Obligation Bonds related to the Projects will not be longer than 120% of the reasonably expected economic life of the Projects financed thereunder;
- (g) no Bond Proceeds herein requested will be used for reimbursement of any Project expenditures which were made before the anticipated delivery date of such General Obligation Bonds, except in situations where, prior to any such expenditure, the Department has obtained a declaration of "Official Intent" (as defined by the Code) from the Commission, or the Department has been otherwise advised in writing by the Commission that such reimbursement will be permitted, it being the intention of the Department to comply in all respects with Section 1.150-2 of the regulations under the Code;
- (h) all of the expenditures of the Bond Proceeds for the Projects will constitute capital expenditures (as defined in Section 1.150-1(b) of the regulations under the Code);
- (i) with respect to the Projects, all of the Bond Proceeds will be allocated to Project expenditures no later than the earlier of: (i) eighteen (18) months after the date such Project is placed in service, or (ii) five (5) years after the issuance of such General Obligation Bonds; any unallocated Bond Proceeds remaining after the earlier of such dates shall be transferred to the Commission and used to redeem outstanding tax-exempt General Obligation Debt of the applicable issue.

SECTION 4.

The Board hereby determines and agrees that with respect to any Department project previously financed with proceeds of General Obligation Debt issued by the State with the intent that:

- (a) the interest on such bonds be excludable from gross income for federal income tax purposes pursuant to Section 103 of the Code; or
- (b) such bonds at the time of their issuance were designated by the State as Build America Bonds under Section 54AA of the Code;

and where any such bonds remain outstanding (including any refunding bonds), the Board certifies that such project(s) are not now being used for any private business use within the meaning of pertinent provisions of the Code, except for those specific instances in which the Department has identified to the Commission such use of the project(s) and (i) provision was made so as to retire, redeem or defease any and all then-remaining outstanding bonds for the project(s) concurrent with such use, or (ii) the Commission has determined that the aforementioned retirement, redemption or defeasance is not required to maintain the tax-exempt or Build America Bond status of such bonds.

SECTION 5.

The Commissioner, the Chairman of the Board, the Secretary of the Board, and their valid delegates each are hereby authorized and directed to execute any instruments and take whatever action which may be necessary in connection with the issuance of the General Obligation Bonds by the Commission, including, but not limited to, the preparation and execution of answers in connection with any legal proceeding as to the validity of any action by the Board with respect to the issuance of the General Obligation Bonds by the Commission. The Attorney General or any Assistant Attorney General of the State are authorized to execute Acknowledgment of Service and Waiver of Process in such legal proceedings.

SECTION 6.

All attachments, exhibits and schedules attached hereto or referenced in this resolution (the "Resolution") are hereby incorporated herein and made a part hereof.

[Remainder of page intentionally left blank]

This Resolution is hereby adopted this 25th day of May, 2022.



CHAIRMAN
VETERANS SERVICE BOARD

ATTEST:



SECRETARY
VETERANS SERVICE BOARD

ATTACHMENT 1

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICE APPROPRIATIONS

Pursuant to Paragraphs I through III of Section IV of Article VII of the Georgia Constitution, the General Assembly has passed various appropriations acts set forth in this Attachment 1, so as to make certain appropriations to the State of Georgia General Obligation Debt Sinking Fund for the purpose of financing certain capital projects through the issuance of General Obligation Debt.

H.B. 911, State Fiscal Year 2022-2023:

The General Appropriations Act for State Fiscal Year 2022-2023 (commencing at p. 1 of 168, 2022 Regular Session, H.B. 911).

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H.B.	Bond	Appropriation	General Obligation Debt Authorized	General Obligation Debt Previously Issued	General Obligation Debt Available	General Obligation Debt Requested
911	43	From State General Funds, \$118,014 is specifically appropriated for the purpose of financing projects and facilities for the Department of Veterans Service by means of the acquisition, construction, development, extension, enlargement, or improvement of land, waters, property, highways, buildings, structures, equipment or facilities, both real and personal, necessary or useful in connection therewith, through the issuance of not more than \$510,000 in principal amount of General Obligation Debt, the instruments of which shall have maturities not in excess of sixty months.	\$510,000	\$0	\$510,000	\$510,000
911	44	From State General Funds, \$214,856 is specifically appropriated for the purpose of financing projects and facilities for the Department of Veterans Service by means of the acquisition, construction, development, extension, enlargement, or improvement of land, waters, property, highways, buildings, structures, equipment or facilities, both real and personal, necessary or useful in connection therewith, through the issuance of not more than \$2,510,000 in principal amount of General Obligation Debt, the instruments of which shall have maturities not in excess of two hundred and forty months.	2,510,000	0	2,510,000	2,510,000
Total			\$3,020,000	\$0	\$3,020,000	\$3,020,000