



## Georgia Department of Veterans Service

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

May 2025

### REFLECTING ON SERVICE: MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVANCES IN GEORGIA

Memorial Day is a time for reflection, gratitude, and honoring the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country. Across Georgia, communities come together each year to pay tribute with ceremonies, parades, and special events that recognize the courage and dedication of our fallen heroes.

Governor Brian Kemp and First Lady Marty Kemp hosted the state’s annual Memorial Day Ceremony at the Georgia State Capitol on Wednesday, May 21. Service members, veterans, Gold Star Families, and state officials paid tribute to our fallen heroes.

The threat of rain did not stop over 200 attendees from gathering at the Georgia Veteran Memorial Cemetery–Glennville’s annual Memorial Day ceremony. Glennville Mayor Bernie Weaver and State Representative Bill Werkheiser greeted the crowd before the keynote speaker LTC Peter J. Wetterauer, Commander 385<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion at Fort Stewart delivered a message about the meaning of the holiday.

Georgia Veteran Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville’s Memorial Day ceremony also drew hundreds of visitors who gathered to pay tribute to our fallen heroes. Members of the John Milledge Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution provided a 21-gun salute using muskets in honor of Georgia’s military service members lost over the last year. GDVS Women and Minority Veterans Coordinator Veda Brooks was the keynote speaker.

“Let us never forget that behind every flag – draped coffin is a name, a story, a family, and a legacy,” said Brooks.





### **FINANCIAL EASE FOR MILITARY RETIREES: GEORGIA EXPANDS TAX EXEMPTION**

Beginning in the 2026 tax year, Georgia's retired veterans will pay less in taxes on their retirement income.

Signed into law by Governor Brian Kemp on May 13, 2025, House Bill 266 expands the state's military retirement pay tax exemption to up to \$65,000 for those under the age of 65.

Married couples filing joint returns may both claim the exemption if both receive military retirement pay.

Georgians aged 65 and older are already entitled to an income tax exemption of \$65,000.

Georgia is home to over 102,500 retired veterans, with nearly 92,000 qualifying for military retirement benefits, according to the Department of Defense.

Expanding the exemption provides military families with a valuable benefit as they explore retirement options and transition into civilian life.

### **SHARPENING SKILLS: GDVS TO HOLD ANNUAL TRAINING**

The Georgia Department of Veterans Services will conduct annual accreditation training in early June.

Every year, the GDVS gathers its staff for a weeklong training seminar on all aspects of veterans benefits.

GDVS staff complete 40 hours of training annually with in-person, hybrid, and digital classes offered throughout the year.

"Every year, we enhance the education available to our Veteran Service Officers," said GDVS Training and Professional Development Director, Steven Fay.

"We're excited to include some new courses this year, which will cover more of the unique veterans benefits. Our VSOs will be well poised to serve Georgia's veterans, and their families, caretakers, and survivors."

### **BETTER ACCESS, BETTER HELP: VA UPDATES COMMUNITY CARE**

Veterans will soon find it easier than ever to access community care programs through VA.

VA will remove secondary reviews previously required as part of the referral process to community or non-VA healthcare providers.

Veterans will need only a review and approval from their referring VA physician after determining community care is in the veteran's best medical interest.

Veterans can qualify for community care after meeting certain conditions, including care unavailable through VA, living in a state without a full-service VA medical center, or VA cannot meet wait time or distance standards.

VA anticipates this policy change to increase health care access and flexibility—making care more convenient for veterans.

### **HEALTHCARE TO GO: VIRTUAL RESOURCE CENTER AT DUBLIN VAMC**

Veterans in Central Georgia can now visit their healthcare provider remotely thanks to the new Virtual Health Resource Center at the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center.

While VA has offered virtual care for over two decades, this facility is the first of its kind in a three-state region and will provide a central location to educate and assist veterans with digital tools they can use in their homes.

The center will be particularly helpful for veterans in rural areas and underserved areas, and those who might feel uncomfortable with technology or lack internet services. Veterans can also borrow devices to access services from remote areas.

The Virtual Health Resource Center is open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. VA staff are available throughout the week to assist with telehealth services.

### **GDVS OPENS NEW OFFICE AT KINGS BAY**

Heads up, military service members, veterans and families in St. Marys! The GDVS has opened a Veteran Field Service Office on Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay.

The office is located in Room 248 of Building 1063 (1063 USS Tennessee Ave, Kings Bay, GA 31547).

The office is open to military service members, veterans and their families, caretakers, and survivors seeking help with state and federal benefits.

