

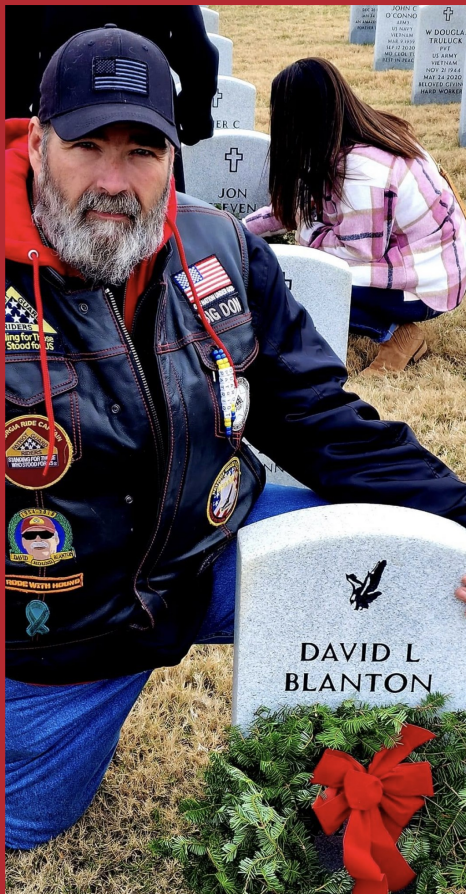


## Georgia Department of Veterans Service

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

December 2022

# WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA CEREMONY RETURNS GDVS HONORS FALLEN HEROES



It was a spectacular sight to behold as thousands of holiday wreaths blanketed Georgia’s cemeteries during annual **Wreaths Across America** events on December 17th. At Georgia’s Milledgeville and Glennville veterans memorial cemeteries, hundreds of volunteers placed over 3,000 sponsored wreaths on the headstones of our fallen veterans.

“Everyone attending will leave knowing the freedoms we enjoy today have not come without a price,” said Linda Lavender, Director of the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville.

**Remember, Honor, Teach**— the motto of *Wreaths Across America*— is a fitting theme for the ceremonies. “We honor them, our living veterans, our current military personnel, and their families for the sacrifices they made and continue to make each day to keep our country safe,” said Lavender.

This year marks the return of in-person ceremonies to commemorate Georgia’s fallen heroes since the COVID pandemic began in 2020. This year, each cemetery hosted over 600 friends and families at their public ceremonies. Participants came together to honor, remember, and celebrate our fallen soldiers, our veterans, and those on active duty before assisting cemetery staff in placing wreaths.

Ernie Cowart, Director of the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery—Glennville, appreciated the great community participation. “Our community does a great job at honoring our veterans. We appreciate their continued support, year after year,” said Cowart.

For Lavender, this is the time to show our gratitude. “For everyone who meets a veteran or those on active duty, take a moment today to say, ‘thank you.’ We owe them our way of life.”



## BILLS TO RENAME ATLANTA VA MEDICAL CENTER AND REGIONAL OFFICE SIGNED INTO LAW



The Atlanta Veteran Affairs Medical Center will soon bear the name of Senator Max Cleland, a Silver and Bronze Star medal recipient, as well as a trailblazing politician for the State of Georgia. On December 9<sup>th</sup>, the bill to name the hospital the **Joseph Maxwell Cleland Atlanta Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center** was signed into law by President Joe Biden.

U.S. Senator Reverend Raphael Warnock sponsored the legislation, which passed the house 356-62 and unanimously passed the Senate. “Max Cleland was an empathetic leader and a passionate patriot with a warrior’s heart for our veterans and for Georgia. His life and legacy will live forever in our hearts, and I’m proud his name will live on as it dons the Atlanta VA Medical Center,” said Senator Reverend Warnock.

Cleland served as an Army Captain in Vietnam before losing three of his limbs. He left the military in 1968 and went on to serve as a Georgia State Senator from 1971-1975. He later became the administrator for the United States Veterans Administration under President Carter and served as Georgia Secretary of State from 1982-1996. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1997 and served until 2003. Cleland passed away on November 9, 2021.

U.S. Senator Jon Ossoff also sponsored a bill signed into law on December 9<sup>th</sup> to rename the VA Regional Office in Decatur as the **Senator Johnny Isakson Department of Veterans Affairs Atlanta Regional Office**. Senator Isakson served in the Georgia Air National Guard from 1966–1972.

The late United States Senator served in both the Georgia House of Representatives and the Georgia State Senate from 1977–1997. He was later elected to serve as U.S. House of Representative in 1999 and U.S. Senator in 2005. During his tenure as Senator, Isakson served as Chair of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. The Isakson family is grateful he is being honored this way.

“He was so dedicated to the livelihood of those who sacrificed so much for this country. This a wonderful tribute to his legacy,” said the Isakson family. Isakson passed away on December 19, 2021.



## VA LAUNCHES NEW LIFE INSURANCE WITH GUARANTEED ACCEPTANCE



A new life insurance program for veterans begins January 1<sup>st</sup> with guaranteed acceptance and no health requirement to apply. “All Veterans deserve to know that their families will have financial support when they pass away,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonogh.

**VALife** provides guaranteed whole life coverage of up to \$40,000 to veterans with service-connected disabilities. According to the VA, all veterans aged 80 and under who have a VA disability rating of 0 to 100 percent are eligible for the program and have no time limit to apply. The premium rate will depend on your age and the amount of coverage you elect.

McDonogh adds, “VALife is a critical step toward making the goal of a financial support a reality for all veterans. The VA will provide more life insurance to more veterans than ever before in our nation’s history.”

For more information visit: [Veterans Affairs Life Insurance \(VALife\) - Life Insurance](#)

## GET TO KNOW YOUR VSO



Terrance Leggon’s favorite thing about working for the Georgia Department of Veterans Services is “seeing veterans’ faces light up once they get their benefits.”

Leggon was stationed in Norfolk, Virginia and served in the Navy as a Sonar Tech from 1995 - 2009.

As a Navy veteran and manager of the GDVS Conyers office, Leggon understands how difficult the benefits and claims process can be. He does his best to “make sure I treat every veteran as if I am in that chair looking for help.”

A native of Blaxley, Georgia, Leggon enjoys basketball, but is most passionate about his family and helping others.

He has been with GDVS for 6 years and shares these words of advice for future or current employees, “If you’re just looking for a job, then you are in the wrong place... what we do not only helps veterans and families get benefits, but helps to change their lives.”