

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 in 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/>.