



## Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs Quarterly Meeting

Wednesday, January 8, 2025 10:00 am

Joint Forces Headquarters, Enhanced Classroom, 6100 NW 78<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Johnston, IA 50131

### Commission of Veteran Affairs members:

Present: Todd Jacobus, Elizabeth Ledvina, Darlene McMartin, Joella Perry, Scott Miller, Robert Suesakul, Becky Dirks Haugsted, George Mosby, Reggie Richardson, Dennis Jones, David Grimm

Absent: Gregory Paulline and Linda Jones

Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs staff members present: Kelley Oetker, Nathan Wilson, Kellie Meyer, Karl Lettow, Ben Dales, Kevin House, John Ralls, Gavin Sandvig, Melissa Miller, Mike Olson.

NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE UNAPPROVED UNTIL ACCEPTED BY THE COMMISSION AT THE NEXT MEETING.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
Darlene McMartin, Chair, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

1. Call to Order: Chairperson McMartin called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.
2. Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence
3. Roll call
4. Welcome and Introduction of Guests
5. Presentation by Secretary of State Paul Pate and Jaime Rutan, Veterans for Voting
  - a. Reflection of the impact the IDVA and counties had on the current presidential election by providing transportation, outreach, and education to Veterans that helped boost numbers at the polls.
  - b. Presentation of plaque to Commandant Todd Jacobus, for IDVA's participation in the Veterans for Voting program.
6. Report from Zak Damrath for Tracie Pinkston, VA Regional (Director Pinkston not in attendance).
  - a. 2024 record year at VA
    - i. \$187 billion in benefits to 6.7 million Veterans across country
    - ii. Processed 2.5 million disability benefit claims, which is a 27% increase from the previous year
    - iii. PACT ACT: 2.1 million received with 1.8 million processed already which resulted in \$8 billion in backpay benefits to Veterans
    - iv. Regional Office in DSM consists of 228 employees, the majority of which work in the service center. Delivered 23,800 benefit decisions which resulted in \$88 million in Iowa
    - v. Public contact team completed 200 outreach events throughout the State



- vi. Partnerships with Iowa CVSO and CBOCs that resulted in reaching over 2900 rural Veterans
      - vii. Veteran Readiness and Employment Program- 1100 Veterans in programs. Developed 385 rehabilitation plans this past year. Achieved 174 positive outcomes.
    - b. Disability Stakeholder Report- restarted program and was sent out in December.
    - c. Claims Clinic-April 10-11 at the Iowa City National Guard Armory
  - 7. Report from Director Judith Johnson-Mekota of VA Medical Center, Iowa City
    - a. New Decorah CBOC ribbon cutting will be April 14<sup>th</sup>
    - b. Suicide Prevention
      - i. Promoting 988 Veterans Crisis Number
      - ii. SAVE training
      - iii. Working with the Federal Prison in Thompson, Illinois, which has a high suicide risk with Veteran employees.
    - c. Women Veterans
      - i. Holding a Veterans Experience Action Center event in June. Four locations in Iowa and in preparation, they will be holding a tele town hall with women Veterans across Iowa on February 18<sup>th</sup>.
    - d. Food Insecurity and Vulnerabilities
      - i. Sean Goodman, CDCE
        - 1. Food insecurity program low funds, looking at ways to improve policies and processes
        - 2. Accepts food, monetary, clothing at more locations
  - 8. Report from Director Lisa Curnes of VA Medical Center, Central Iowa
    - a. My HealtheVet Update
      - i. VA is requiring Veterans who use the MyHealtheVet app to upgrade their logon by January 31. On that date, Veterans will need to log on to all VA apps through id.me or login.gov. Central Iowa only has 7,390 Veterans to update.
      - ii. Conducted training at the ICVA Fall School, attended by all 99 counties.
      - iii. Traveled with the Virtual Mobile Clinic throughout September and October for 16 visits and assisted 334 Veterans.
      - iv. Mailed out 3270 letters and sent 721 secure messages
      - v. Held six open houses at the South Side and Main Campus assisting 167 Veterans.
      - vi. Participated in two VSO coffee events
      - vii. Five CBOCs servicing 105 Veterans
      - viii. In Office assistance of 458 Veterans
    - b. 2024 Highlights
      - i. According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, VA Central Iowa is a five-star rated facility and the highest rated hospital in the DSM metro area.



- ii. VA Central Iowa has permanently housed 167 homeless Veterans, exceeding the goal of 132 Veterans by 26.5%
  - iii. VA Central Iowa received a 91.9% trust rating from the Veterans Satisfaction Survey, which is slightly ahead of the National Trust Score of 91.8%.
  - iv. In June, the Virtual Mobile Clinic was activated that travels three times a week to most rural counties to provide health care.
    1. On Fridays, the VMC is deployed to the CRRC downtown to provide primary care services to homeless Veterans.
  - v. In August, the new CBOC in Marshalltown was opened
  - vi. Renovations to the Carroll CBOC were completed
  - vii. Expansion of the CLC and DOM programs
    1. CLC is up to 73 beds with plans to expand to 80 as staff is onboard
    2. DOM is fully operational and staffed at 60 beds.
  - viii. CBOC specialty services were expanded
    1. Mason City: Cardiology, Echos, Optometry, some Radiology services, Ophthalmology and a VECS provider
    2. Marshalltown: Dermatology, Cardiology, Echos, Podiatry
    3. Knoxville: Dermatology, Cardiology, Echos, Podiatry, Optometry, Chiropractic, and Audiology
    4. Fort Dodge: Oncology, VECS provider, some Radiology services
    5. Telehealth at CBOCs: dermatology, Rheumatology, Sleep, Urology, Neurology for MS and Epilepsy, Pain Care and Primary Care(Mason City)
  - ix. PACT ACT: screened more than 25,000 Veterans in Central Iowa. Nationally, the VA has screened more than 5.8 billion.
  - x. Construction
    1. Renovated ICU will be open on February 24<sup>th</sup>. This is on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the main hospital
      - a. Will consist of 9 single patient rooms with a private bathroom.
    2. Ames CBOC location and terms of lease are still being worked out.
9. Presentation by Dr. Charlene Gooch, Ambassador, Military Women's Memorial
- a. Military Women's Memorial located at Arlington National Cemetery
  - b. Memorial was established in 1997, started by Brigadier General Wilma Vaught
  - c. Dr. Gooch is the ambassador for Iowa whose job is to conduct outreach to women Veterans in Iowa and register them in the Memorial
  - d. 501c.3 organization
  - e. Conducts presentations at NIACC and a series on Women in the Military
  - f. 3 million women have served since the revolutionary war
  - g. In 2025, 400K women will be registered in the memorial
    - i. Over 70 registered in 2024 for Iowa



- ii. 10,875 across the nation registered in 2024.
  - h. Attended the WASP proclamation at the Iowa State Capitol
  - i. <https://womensmemorial.org/>
  - j. Scheduling a presentation date at the Iowa Veterans Home, date will be forwarded when secured.
- 10. Presentation by Mr. Michael Seifer, Military Veterans Caregiver Network, American Red Cross
  - a. Veteran Network Program Network, online platform for Veterans to come together for peer support. Hoping to be up and running by December 2026. Will be in alignment with the Military Veteran Caregiver Network.
  - b. Red Cross deploys with our troops for support
  - c. MVCN (Military and Veteran Caregiver Network)
    - 1. Mission-to provide our nation's military and veteran caregivers offal eras with peer support to reduce isolation and increase connection, engagement, knowledge, skills and hope.
    - 2. Safe and secure online or in person support groups
    - 3. Over 800 resources
    - 4. Training to become peer mentors, peer support group facilitators and online care moderators
    - 5. [https://www.redcross.org/get-help/military-families/services-for-veterans/military-veteran-caregiver-network.html?srsId=AfmBOope2UC8xe4VeqO2HYeaFiG7Y6do\\_Yrs9Us7-awKz216tL0whSKU](https://www.redcross.org/get-help/military-families/services-for-veterans/military-veteran-caregiver-network.html?srsId=AfmBOope2UC8xe4VeqO2HYeaFiG7Y6do_Yrs9Us7-awKz216tL0whSKU)
  - d. Hero Care Network
    - i. Provides emergency communications and critical services to military members, Veterans and their families all over the world 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
    - ii. [https://www.redcross.org/volunteer/volunteer-opportunities/hero-care-network.html?srsId=AfmBOoq9UBJpUjpbs-Ku\\_C3BEhB5XvrT-kiW1YqbRNYtmj37L3ibqlot](https://www.redcross.org/volunteer/volunteer-opportunities/hero-care-network.html?srsId=AfmBOoq9UBJpUjpbs-Ku_C3BEhB5XvrT-kiW1YqbRNYtmj37L3ibqlot)
- 11. Presentation by Captain Doug MacCrea, Chairman, USS Iowa Commissioning Committee
  - a. The new USS Iowa (SSN-797) was delivered to the Navy on December 18, 2024 and will be commissioned on April 5, 2025 at 9:00 am (CST) in Connecticut
  - b. Tickets are required. They may be requested on their website: <https://ssn797.com/>
  - c. Iowa Veterans Home has requested to host a commissioning watch party, details to be sent at a later date



12. Presentation by Mr. Timothy Combs, Americans for Independent Living
  - a. Offer programs assisting with housing, home modifications, household items, clothing and furniture.
  - b. Founded in Waterloo in 2015
  - c. First Veteran housed in 2017 and is still part of the program and living in the house assisting other residents
  - d. Collects furniture for Veterans and carry about \$116,000 worth of used furniture to date
  - e. 2025 game plan is to expand to counties touching Blackhawk
  - f. Requirement to pay it forward either volunteering or helping another Veteran
  - g. With grant money, purchased 30,000 square foot building for Veterans to have a place to come and hangout in a community center setting, allows for VSOs to host meetings and a safe haven for Veterans on nights like 4<sup>th</sup> of July and New Year's Eve.
  - h. Biggest need is monetary donations
  - i. <https://www.afil.org/>
13. Presentation by Mr. Chris Bertrand, Ivory Plains and Alexis Thompson, St. Gregory Recovery Centers
  - a. Ivory Plains Recovery Center in Adair and St. Gregory's in Bayard, Iowa. Both 50 bed facilities that take men and women 18 years and older. Residential and detox programs.
  - b. Ivory Plains residential services encompass: Individual therapy sessions, minimum of 6 hours of group programming per day, 12-step recovery, community-based meetings, early recovery skills development, family counseling, trauma-informed care and addiction services
  - c. St Gregory treats alcohol and drug addiction with a holistic treatment approach. In additions to standard treatment programs, they also offer specialized programs such as tactical recovery for Veterans and first responders, and alternative to the 12-step program and SMART recovery
    - i. Tactical Recovery Program incorporated July 2024. Successful referrals from Iowa City VA and Nebraska VA
      1. Trauma informed care
      2. Equine therapy, equine psychotherapy, art therapy and music therapy



3. Partnered with VA and offer bridge care if awaiting placement.
  4. Work with VAs for aftercare.
  5. Accept service animals and emotional support animals
  6. Integrated mental health treatment
- d. Insurance information
- i. St Gregory: Wellmark BCBS, Cigna, Medical Associates, Mines and Associates, Optum-UHC/UBH/UMR, Preferred Health Choices, Provider Network of America and VACCN
  - ii. Ivory Plains: Wellmark BCBS, Cigna, Medical Associates, Iowa Moline Medicaid, Amerigroup and WellPoint
  - iii. January 1, 2025 will also take Tricare
- e. <https://stgregoryctr.com/>
- f. <https://ivoryplainsrecovery.com/>
14. Presentation by Mr. Lance Henning and Morgan Bennet, GDM Habitat for Humanity and Habitat Iowa
- a. Goal is to raise awareness of Habitat for Humanity services
  - b. Creating, preserving and championing affordable home ownership
    - i. Creating-building houses with volunteers
    - ii. Championing-provides extensive financial counseling, financial education and mortgage counseling services
    - iii. Preserving-through repair program, helps people to stay safely in their home. Provide modifications, critical repairs (ramps, bathrooms, siding, windows, roof).
  - c. Served 3 million people in 2024 in the US. Completed 3500 home ownership opportunities and 12,000 home owner occupied repairs.
  - d. In the GDM area in 2024, GDM Habitat did 203 homeowner occupied repairs with the average investment per household was \$25,000.
    - i. Moved 41 families through home ownership. 36 were houses that were built and 5 that were through financing.
  - e. Habitat Iowa-provide internal assistance for the 20 affiliates across Iowa.
    - i. Provide the grant administration, program support, training and technical support and advocacy, disaster preparedness and response
    - ii. January 29<sup>th</sup>, day at the Iowa State Capitol
    - iii. Fiscal Year 2024: 82 new recycle and rehab houses, 398 repairs and assisted 480 families
  - f. Repair Programs
    - i. 16/20 affiliates provide repair programs throughout the state, primarily focusing on ramp installation
    - ii. Mason City-partnership with Easter Seals program that provides funding and resources for the ramp program
    - iii. Each affiliate has their own unique program
  - g. Income Guidelines



- i. Repair
      - 1. Homeowner occupied
      - 2. GDM area is 60% area median income and 80% for Veterans. Translates to \$72,000 or less for a one-person house for a Veteran in the GDM area
    - ii. Application through each individual habitat area
  - h. <https://gdmhabitat.org/>
  - i. <https://www.iowahabitat.org/>
- 15. Presentation by Mr. Ramses Yebara, QRFup
  - a. QRFup is a free mobile crisis response app dedicated to supporting Service Members, Veterans, First Responders and their Families during critical times.
  - b. User downloads the app, pushes the red button and a SOS goes out in three forms: text message, email and phone call.
    - i. Phone call is answered by a therapist licensed in their state. During the call they are triaging the Veteran or First Responder.
      - 1. 60% of calls are handled by the therapist.
    - ii. GPS locator allows for QRFup to send out crisis team if needed
  - c. Stay with the Veteran throughout their life, contact does not stop after the call
  - d. Launching nationally in May 2025
  - e. Integrated with the VA crisis center. After the crisis event, they will get the Veteran into an appointment in the next day
  - f. Iowans have an 19% higher suicide rate nationally than any other state between the ages of 45-55
  - g. [www.QrfUp.org](http://www.QrfUp.org)
- 16. Presentation by Mr. Jeff Bradford, Veterans Companions
  - a. Place home health aides at no cost through the VA into Veterans homes to help with ADLs and companionship.
  - b. Qualifications
    - i. Veterans with service connected disability automatically qualify
    - ii. Veterans enrolled in VA health care or referred by VSO
    - iii. Military, Naval or Air Service members separated under honorable conditions or former/current Reserves/National Guard activated under federal orders (excluding training) and who completed their gull active duty
    - iv. Veterans needing assistance with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)
    - v. Duty requirements: 24 continuous months of service or completion of active duty call
  - c. <https://www.veterancompanions.com/>
- 17. Operational update by Mike Olson, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs, Legislative Liaison
  - a. Reviewed the Executive Summary, for the IVH, the IVC and the Benefits Bureau
  - b. Rule Changes
    - i. HF259



- ii. HF2663
  - c. Attorney General Office “red tape review” which is the result of Executive Order 10.
    - i. Going forward the rules are made to supplement the Code and the Code will not specifically referenced verbatim in the rules
  - d. IDVA will be running two bills this session
    - i. Trust Fund
      - 1. Request to raise the terminal balance from \$50M to \$75M
      - 2. Imperative to preserve the transfer of the funds used to support the Trust Fund spendable balance
    - ii. Code Revision bill: Reference to NACVSO from the Code and giving the Commandant the ability to outline the accreditation opportunities for the State CVSOs.
18. Operational update by Todd Jacobus, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs, Commandant, Iowa Veterans Home
- a. As we closed out Calendar Year 2024 I am sharing statistics and demographics of our residents at the Iowa Veterans Home. Our Admissions Team, led by Kathy Kopsa and Jason Matteson, and involving many other staff throughout the IVH campus, grew our resident census from 385 on January 1, 2024 to 409 on December 29. The last admission for the year was on December 23, 2024, and this Veteran was resident # **19,533** since the facility opened on December 1, 1887. Amazingly, **110** Veterans and spouses moved in and made the Iowa Veterans Home their new residence during calendar year 2024; Sadly, **96** of our residents passed away during 2024, including six during the last week of the year. As we begin 2025, we have **403** residents, including Veterans from the following wars and conflicts, branches of service, and ages:
    - i. World War II: 3
    - ii. Korean War: 26
    - iii. Vietnam War: 206
    - iv. Gulf War: 20
    - v. Peacetime Veterans: 89
    - vi. Female Veterans: 20
    - vii. Army Veterans: 142
    - viii. Navy Veterans: 95
    - ix. Air Force Veterans: 64
    - x. Marine Corps Veterans: 39
    - xi. Coast Guard Veterans: 0
    - xii. Women’s Auxiliary Corps (WAC): 2
    - xiii. Age 51-60: 19
    - xiv. Age 61-70: 79
    - xv. Age 71-80: 177
    - xvi. Age 81-90: 84



- xvii. Age 91-101: 44
- b. **IDVA Focused on Fulfilling Responsibilities in Iowa Code Chapter 35A.** Included in these quarterly meetings of the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs are a wide range of stakeholders in the Veterans Community here in Iowa and beyond. We see the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the State Department of Veterans Affairs, County Veteran Service Offices, Veteran Service Organizations, other State Agencies, elected officials, trade associations, non-profits, individual Veterans, and advocates. All of us come together to ensure that Iowa Veterans receive the support, care, and compensation they've earned through service. I hope all of us see what we do as working **together** to serve Iowa Veterans. I don't work for the Federal VA, but work with them - for the benefit of Iowa Veterans. County VSOs do **not** work for me - they work for a County Commission and Board of Supervisors - - - but **we work together** to deliver services, benefits and entitlements. The Department is focused on fulfilling our responsibilities outlined in Iowa Code Chapter 35A.
- c. **Legislative Session Begins!** The 91<sup>st</sup> Iowa General Assembly Iowa Legislative Session commences on January 13, 2025. Mike Olson, IDVA Legislative Liaison, has worked diligently to ensure that we are prepared. Our Department is sponsoring two bills during this session; outlined below is a very brief overview. Mike Olson will provide details.
- d. **2025 IDVA Veterans Trust Fund Modernization Bill.** We will ask the Legislature to consider increasing the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund principal limit from \$50 million to \$75 million and continuing to make \$500,000 of the Iowa Lottery's \$2.5 million transfer available annually until the \$75 million limit is reached in a necessary step to ensure Veteran's claims for assistance can continue to be met.
- e. **Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs Code Revision Bill.** We will ask the legislature to consider removing the last reference to the last remaining reference to the National Association of Veterans Service Officers in Iowa Code, found in 35B.6(1)c(2) and replace that reference with the Commandant of the Department of Veterans Affairs. This will ensure that the Department able to fulfill its responsibility of validating that County Veteran Service Offices are properly trained and accredited.
- f. **Veterans Day on the Hill.** Veterans Day on the Hill will take place on Wednesday, January 22, 2025, in the Rotunda of the State Capitol. We are looking forward to a great assembly of elected officials, Veterans community stakeholders, Commissioners, Veteran Service Organizations, and County Veteran Service Officers. Karl Lettow and Mike Olson are developing the speakers list and program. Invitations to the Senate and House Veterans Committee will be mailed to the Senators and Representatives on January 9. Please invite your elected official to attend this event. Timeline for events: 10:15 Commissioners & Veteran Service Organization Leaders & invited leaders meet



- with Governor Reynolds & Lieutenant Governor Cournoyer in Ray Conference Room 10:50 am Photograph of Assembled Participants in Rotunda – Please encourage our elected officials and all others present to participate 11:00 am Program Begins in Rotunda – Please encourage our elected officials to attend!
- g. **Licensed Staffing Process Changes at IVH Effective January 6, 2025.** Over the last four months Sarah Bruner and our Nursing Services Directors have been developing a change to the policy used to ensure that we have adequate staffing available to support the needs of residents at the Iowa Veterans Home. This policy was implemented on Monday and we will be carefully adjusting as we proceed. This policy is the result of listening to our licensed staff, the frustrations that go along with mandated overtime, and suggestions on how we can do better. We listened, we are being responsive, and we will continue to do so. I sent out the details of this policy change to Commissioners. Please let me know if you have any issues or concerns.
- h. **Mental Health Conference at IVH May 1-2, 2025.** Dr. Doug Steenblock, Mental Health Services Bureau Chief at the Iowa Veterans Home, is coordinating with other mental health specialists in Iowa and the Midwest to facilitate a Mental Health Conference on May 1-2, 2025 at Whitehill Auditorium. As America ages there will be a greater demand to address the mental health needs of seniors, especially those who reside in long-term care facilities. This conference will provide additional support to clinicians and administrators who work with this population. Day 1 will include an onsite half-day workshop focused on non-pharmacologic management of dementia-related behaviors. Day 2 will include a full day of didactic presentations – both in-person and virtual – covering a range of topics including: hoarding in seniors, elderly sexuality, management of personality disorders in long term care, finding meaning and purpose later in life, interventional psychiatry for geriatric patients.
- i. **New Licensed Nursing Home Administrator.** Penny Cutler Bermudez culminated 30 years of service at the Iowa Veterans Home and retired on Thursday, January 2, 2025. We are grateful for her service. Effective Friday, January 3, 2025 at 12:01 am Kelley Oetker began her duties as the Iowa Veterans Home Licensed Nursing Home Administrator. While Kelley is new to the position, she is certainly not new to the Iowa Veterans Home, has a great deal of experience as a Nurse, as a Nurse Supervisor, extensive experience with the Department of Inspections Appeals & Licensing, and more than two years as the Iowa Veterans Home Compliance Officer. She is ready to thrive in this capacity. Communication is key so plan on over-communicating with Kelley as we work to continue to achieve excellence in the delivery of care to those we serve.
- j. **Events**
- i. **January 3 10:00 am** State Rep Jason Gearhart, Vice Chair of House Vets Affairs Committee, visits IVH



- ii. **January 6** 10:00 am – IVH Resident Tour of Camp Dodge Joint Maneuver Training Center
- iii. **January 6** 1:15 pm State Rep Brooke Boden, Chair of House Veterans Affairs Committee, visiting IVH
- iv. **January 7** 7:30 am Marshall County Coffee & Camaraderie at VFW Post 839 in Marshalltown
- v. **January 8** 10:00 am – Quarterly Meeting of Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, Iowa National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters, Johnston
- vi. **January 8** 2:00 pm IDVA & Governors Challenge Meeting with Home Base Iowa Coordinator
- vii. **January 10** 2:00 pm IVH Smokin Hot Radio Club Meeting
- viii. **January 10** 8:30 am IDVA Coffee & Camaraderie at Dack LRC (IVH)
- ix. **January 13** 10:00 am Home Base Iowa Quarterly Meeting, Location TBD
- x. **January 15** 1:00 pm VA Central Iowa Health Care System Quarterly Update in Des Moines (Building 3)
- xi. **January 16** 10:00 am Hedrick American Legion Post #83 Visit, Donation, Tour of Iowa Veterans Home
- xii. **January 16** 10:00 am Condition of the Iowa National Guard Address by Major General Steve Osborn
- xiii. **January 17** 3:00 pm Quarterly Resident Town Hall Meeting in Malloy LRC
- xiv. **January 20** 9:00 am-3:00 pm – IDVA Veteran Service Officer John Ralls at Iowa Veterans Home
- xv. **January 22** 10:45 Veterans Day on Hill Photograph of Assembled Participants in Rotunda
- xvi. **January 22** 11:00 am Veterans Day on the Hill Program at Iowa State Capitol Rotunda
- xvii. **January 25** Yellow Ribbon Program for 186<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company & 1034<sup>th</sup> Combat Sustainment Support Battalion Iowa Army National Guard, Time TBD, Location in Des Moines Area
- xviii. **January 31** 11:00 am Penguin Party – A Bow Tie Affair (Black & White Attire) at IVH
- xix. **February 4** 7:30 am Marshall County Coffee & Camaraderie at VFW Post 839 Marshalltown
- xx. **February 9-13** National Association of State Veterans Home NASVH Conference, Arlington, VA
- xxi. **March 1-5** National Assoc of State Directors of Veterans Affairs NASDVA Conference, Arlington, VA
- xxii. **April 2** 10:00 am Quarterly Meeting of Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, Iowa Veterans Home, Malloy Leisure Resource Center, Marshalltown



- xxiii. **April 15-17** Iowa Association of County Veteran Services (IACVS) School, Stoney creek Inn, Johnston
  - xxiv. **May 1-2** Mental Health Conference at Iowa Veterans Home's Whitehill Auditorium
  - xxv. **July 9** 10:00 am Quarterly Meeting of Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, Iowa National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters, Johnston
  - xxvi. **October 1** 10:00 am Quarterly Meeting of Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, Iowa Veterans Home, Malloy Leisure Resource Center, Marshalltown
19. Operational update by Gavin Sandvig, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs, Benefits and Cemetery Bureaus
- a. IVC
    - i. Progress being made to improve grounds
    - ii. New Lead Maintenance Technician-Shane Laycock
    - iii. Fiscal Year to date:
      - 1. Veterans Day Event (Nov)
      - 2. Wreaths Across America (Dec)
    - iv. 6000 Veterans and 2000 spouses interred at IVC
    - v. Columbarium walls filling quickly. 10/12 walls almost filled to capacity
20. Operational update, Patty Hamann, President, IACVS
- a. Education for CVSO
    - i. Working with Director Pinkston to provide more education to the CVSOs
    - ii. Virtual training will be provided the third Wednesday of the month for 1.5 hours
    - iii. Training to come from the regional office in Des Moines and other members of the IDVA
    - iv. 4 new virtual CVSO trainings planned
    - v. Potentially working on new virtual training for County Commissioners
    - vi. Spring School is April 15-17
  - b. PIV
    - i. Have three counties that need to start the PIV process
    - ii. Have four counties in progress
    - iii. Must be complete by June 30<sup>th</sup>
  - c. Benefit Statistics
    - i. November 2023 total benefits paid was \$152,681,000
    - ii. November 2024 total benefits paid was \$177,213,000
21. Discussion, review and vote on 2025 ICVA Legislative Priorities
- a. Top Priorities
    - i. Property Tax Relief
    - ii. Iowa Veterans Trust Fund Modernization
    - iii. IDVA Code Revision
    - iv. Veterans Treatment Courts



- v. Support Veteran Service Organizations
- b. Awareness Issues
  - i. Any legislation that supports that will improve mental health or suicide prevention
  - ii. Any legislation that supports the needs of homeless and underserved Veterans
  - iii. Any legislation to align Iowa Code with Federal Code regarding the timing and manner of display of the National League of POW/MIA families' flag on all State of Iowa properties
  - iv. Any legislation that supports full implementation of federal legislation S.141-Senator Elizabeth Dole 21<sup>st</sup> Centruy Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act
- c. Motion to approve by Becky Dirks-Haugsted, 2<sup>nd</sup> by David Grimm. Motion passed unanimously.
- 22. Approval of Minutes from the ICVA quarterly meeting on October 2, 2024.
  - a. Motion to approve made by George Mosby, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dennis Jones. Motion passed unanimously.
- 23. Approval of Minutes from the Trust Fund in person meeting on October 2, 2024.
  - a. Motion to approve made by Scott Miller. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Reginald Richardson. Motion passed unanimously.
- 24. Approval of Minutes from the Trust Fund conference call on November 7, 2024.
  - a. Motion to approve by David Grimm, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Robert Suesakul. Motion passed unanimously.
- 25. Approval of Minutes from the Trust Fund conference call on December 5, 2024.
  - a. Motion to approve by Joella Perry, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Scott Miller. Motion passed unanimously.
- 26. Approval of Minutes from Trust Fund conference call on January 2, 2025.
  - a. Motion to approve by Joella Perry, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Elizabeth Ledvina
- 27. Old Business: None
- 28. New Business
  - a. The Veterans of Foreign Wars will be swearing in their first National Commander from Iowa in June. This will also be the first woman National Commander.
- 29. Public Comment: None
- 30. Next ICVA meeting will be April 2, 2025 at 10:00 am at the Iowa Veterans Home, Whitehill Auditorium, 1301 Summit St, Marshalltown, IA 50158.
- 31. Motion to adjourn made by Elizabeth Ledvina, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Scott Miller. Motion passed. 12:55 pm.