

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs Quarterly Meeting
Wednesday, October 4, 2023 10:00 a.m.
Iowa Veterans Home, Whitehill
Marshalltown, IA 50158

Commission of Veterans Affairs Members

Present: Elizabeth Ledvina, Chair, American Legion

Darlene McMartin, 1st Vice Chair, Public Member at Large
Gary Wattnem, 2nd Vice Chair, Reserve Organization of America (ROA)
Becky DirksHaugsted, Member, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
Scott Miller, Member, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA)
George Mosby, Member, Iowa National Guard (ING)
Joella Perry, Member, Iowa Association of County Commissioners and Veterans Service Officers (IACCVSO)
Robert Suesakul, Member, Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)
Mary Van Horn, Member, American Veterans (AMVETS)
Todd Jacobus, Commandant, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA)

Absent: Gregory Paulline, Member, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)
No Commissioner, Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs Staff Members Present:

Dylan Boles, IDVA Student Intern from University of Northern Iowa
Ben Dales, Veteran Service Officer, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs
Kevin House, Clerk Specialist, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs
Karl Lettow, Public Information Officer, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs
Melissa Miller, Trust Fund Administrator, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs
John Ralls, Veteran Service Officer, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs
Robert Stavnes, Chief, Veterans Benefits & Cemetery Bureau, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs
Sarah Bruner, Director of Nursing, Iowa Veterans Home
Penny Cutler Bermudez, Licensed Nursing Home Administrator, Iowa Veterans Home
Polly Roll, Executive Secretary, Iowa Veterans Home, Recording Secretary
Jack Studebaker, Charles Horton American Legion Commander, Iowa Veterans Home

Guests Present:

Adam Akers, Veteran Service Officer, Franklin County
Daniel Ballard, Franklin County Veteran
Krista Beck, VFW Post 8879
Jay Blakely, Veterans Health Advocate, Iron Hawk Medical
John Derner, Department Adjutant, The American Legion
Orene Cressler, Veteran Service Officer, Pocahontas County
Roger Elliott, Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 490
Stanley Elliott, Department Commander, The American Legion
Dan Gannon, Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
Dave Grimm, Adjutant Treasurer, Chapter 11 Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
Judith Johnson-Mekota, Deputy Network Director (DND) for the VA Midwest Health Care Network (VISN 23)
Dan Kuester, Public Affairs Officer, Veterans Affairs Central Iowa (VA CIHCS)
Rich Lennon, Webster County Veterans Affairs Commission
Elinor A. Levin, State Representative, District 89, Veterans Affairs Standing Committee
Brett McLain, Director, Story County Veterans Affairs
Wayne Marek, Des Moines Vet Center, Veterans Affairs
Mike Mortensen, President, Iowa Association of County Commissioners & Veteran Service Officers (IACCVSO); Polk County

Mike Olson, Veterans Fellow for Senator Charles Grassley
Jim Peterson, American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission (VA & R Commission)
Michelle Richart, Department of Defense State Liaison Office
Brenda Safranski, Special Assistant for Veteran & Military Affairs for Senator Joni Ernst
Pat Sweeney, Executive Director, Polk County Veteran Service Office
Kelsey Thien, Legislative Research Analyst, Iowa House Democrats
Josh Turek, State Representative, District 20, Veterans Affairs Standing Committee (Ranking Member)

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

APPROVED: Elizabeth Ledvina Date: 11/15/23
Elizabeth Ledvina, Chair, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

Call to Order

Chairperson Ledvina called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence/Prayer

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairperson Ledvina followed by a moment of silence for our departed Veterans, POWs, those missing in action (MIAs) and those on active duty at this time. Darlene McMartin opened with a prayer.

Welcome

Chairperson Ledvina welcomed everyone.

Roll Call and Introduction of Guests

We have 12 Commissioners. Ten were present for the meeting. One was absent. The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) have not nominated candidates to fill their position on the Commission. Guests introduced themselves.

VA Regional Office Update

Kristi Catrenich from the VA Regional Office sent her apologies as she was not able to make this meeting. She forwarded her updates to Commandant Jacobus. Commandant Jacobus reported on the following:

The Des Moines Regional Office had a great Fiscal Year 2023. Here are some highlights:

- We added and trained 73 personnel this Fiscal Year contributing to an almost 50% growth.
- We continue to send out monthly reports to key stakeholders (this group included), showing that almost 48,000 Veterans receive a monthly disability compensation award, their total monthly benefits at almost \$75 million. That is an increase of 1,800 Iowa Veterans receiving monthly compensation, \$12 million in benefits paid out monthly compared to last year.
- PACT Act is a high focus for the VA. Over 5,500 PACT Act claims have been completed for Iowa Veterans. Our station has completed over 8,200 PACT Act Claims for Veterans across the nation.
- Our Veteran Service Center (VSC) completed more than 17,000 claims and rates second in the nation for quality. The VSC hit outstanding levels in all metrics.
- We become a highly successful automation prototype station – helping the VA increase claim timeliness and preventing future processing backlogs. Using automation, we saw a deferral reduction in claims as we saw significant PACT Act claims come in.
- For outreach - we attended 178 events, conducted over 3100 emails, and took over 500 claims. We greatly improved services to rural Iowans by collocating in VHA spaces and hosting claims clinics. We also recently participated in a highly successful VEAC in Davenport.
- For FY24, we are outlining a territory-based outreach plan for our team to better connect with underserved Veterans.

- Our Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) division served 950 Veterans, 12% more than last year and 245 of those Veterans from other states.
- VR&E also had 100% accuracy in case closure decisions and exceeded the outstanding target for case management accuracy.

VA Medical Center - Iowa City Update

Judith Mekota-Johnson, Deputy Network Director, shared on the following:

There are two new members of their ELT:

- Steven Bryant is the new Assistant Director.
- Samantha Thompson is acting as the AD for Patient Care Services.

National Disabled Golf Clinic

There were over 205 Veterans at this year's Golf Clinic.

- 1 in 3 were first-time attendees.
- The participants come from 32 states, DC, and Puerto Rico.
- The oldest was 107 and the youngest 34.
 - 107-year-old WW2 Navy Vet Don Johnson of Cedar Rapids made ESPN's Top 10 Plays of the Week by sinking a 15-foot putt.

CBOC Openings

- Coralville CBOC: On August 17, they held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Coralville CBOC. Representative Miller-Meeks and GSA leaders helped us celebrate opening the new space. The clinic opened to patients on August 21, 2023.
- Waterloo CBOC: On September 21, 2023, they held a ribbon-cutting event that featured a flag-raising ceremony by the UNI Army ROTC Color Guard. Veterans, VSOs, and other community stakeholders joined us for tours of the new space. The clinic opened to patients on September 25th.

Mental Health Summit

- On September 22, 2023, they hosted a Mental Health Summit in Iowa City. This year's theme was "Military to Civilian Simulation." The Military to Civilian Simulation provided a taste of military culture (loosely based on boot camp) and the transition into navigating civilian life with different goals based on a made-up bio that participants were provided.

Veterans Experience Action Center (VEAC)

- On September 29-30, the VEAC returned to the Quad Cities for the first time since the pandemic. VA, VBA, and community partners came together through the event to provide resources and help Veterans with enrollment, filing claims, answering questions, and gathering information on programs and services offered by VA. Flu shots were also available.

Construction Updates

- Galesburg CBOC: Currently in design with a winter move in late 2024 or early 2025.
- Decorah CBOC: Currently in design with a winter move in late 2024 or early 2025.

VA Medical Center – Des Moines Update

Dan Kuester, Public Affairs Officer with the Veterans Affairs Central Iowa, gave updates.

- New director beginning Tuesday, October 10, 2023. Ms. Lisa Curnes recently served as Director for the Black Hills/Fort Meade Health Care System in South Dakota. Ms. Curnes received her Bachelor of Science and Nursing from the University of Iowa, and a Master of Health Administration from Des Moines University. She was at VA central Iowa some time ago as a service line chief.
- Here are some construction project updates:
 - New Marshalltown CBOC site turnover to VA is July 2024 with an estimated Sept 2024 opening.
 - Carroll CBOC will undergo some minor renovation in FY24 to increase security, and move Audiology to the front of the clinic.
 - New Warehouse building will open in the fall 2023, connecting the supply deliveries to the main hospital.

- Des Moines Medical Center will undergo Lab expansion. Main entrance to the building, larger rotating door may have some minor disruption.

Presentations

Governor's Challenge and Digital Equity

Karl Lettow Public Information Officer, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs spoke on the Governor's Challenge and Digital Equity.

1. **Governor's Challenge:** <https://www.samhsa.gov/smvf-ta-center/mayors-governors-challenges>
 - a) SAMHSA has partnered with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to bring the *Governor's and Mayor's Challenges to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families* (SMVF) to states, territories, and communities across the Nation. For the Governor's Challenge, 54 states and territories are currently taking part in the challenge and are working to develop and implement state-wide suicide prevention best practices for SMVF, using a public health approach.
 - b) IDVA has recently assumed an interagency 'co-lead' with HHS of the Iowa Team. This is the case in most states.
 - c) September (Post-Implementation Academy Meeting) was the first meeting attended by IDVA. Previously, the group had gathered nationally for the multi-state Implementation Academy.
 - d) The team has been broken out into three sub-groups by objectives. These groups will start topic-specific meetings this month.
 - e) The Iowa Governor's Challenge team developed a survey to gather information about organizations' suicide prevention efforts and training needs. We'll use this information to develop free suicide-specific training and toolkits. The survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete. Please identify a person in your organization who is most knowledgeable about suicide screening, training, and safety protocols to respond. We've attached a PDF of the survey so you have the questions before completing the survey. Here's the link to the [Governor's Challenge Survey](#).
 - f) Next meetings are scheduled as follows:
Dates/Times:
 Tuesday, October 10, 2023, any time between 10am and 1pm
 Wednesday, October 11, 2023, any time between 10am and 4pm
 Friday, October 13, 2023, any time between 10:30am and 4pm
 Tuesday, October 17, 2023, any time between 8:30am and 1pm
 Thursday, October 19, 2023, any time after 1pm
2. **Digital Equity:** <https://ocio.iowa.gov/broadband>
 This effort is part of the Iowa Department of Management - Office of the Chief Information Officer's effort to create a plan to ensure digital equity for all Iowans. This was the second of several cohorts of target "covered" groups and focused on vets.
 - a) Top 3 barriers for Vets:
 - 1) **Trust** (cultural) – first us, then the tech.
 - b) This includes reliability of service (Karl, Joella, Mary)
 - 1) Broadband Access
 - 2) CPU literacy/training
 - c) This effort is still in the second information collection phase. A previous collection phase of 55 local focused community groups and surveys was conducted over the summer. OCIO hopes to have information consolidated by January to start moving forward with some way-aheads in March.

Governor's Challenge – MARCH Marketing

Tom Aiello, CEO and Founder of March Marketing, presented virtually regarding the Governor Challenge with Veteran suicide prevention. Tom is an Army Veteran. In 2011, Tom started MARCH Marketing. They work with

VAs, Nonprofits, for profit companies, etc. March Marketing's mission is *"To improve the lives of veteran and active-duty military families."*

MARCH Marketing have helped other states and other organizations with Governor's initiatives of Veteran Suicide prevention. MARCH would like to partner with Iowa in this challenge. MARCH drew up a Governor's Challenge Outreach, Outreach Plan for the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs.

There is an urgent need as 17 military veterans commit suicide every day. Iowa Veterans suicide rate is almost two times higher than the general population. For women, the rate is 2.5 times higher. 75.4% of Iowa veteran suicides are by firearm compared to 47% of non-veteran.

The Response – Iowa has joined 53 other states and territories to in the Governor's Challenge program. The Governor's Challenge is a collaboration between state governors, federal agencies and local stakeholders to prevent suicide among Service Members, Veterans and their families.

The Mission - Plan and execute an integrated communication campaign to identify, reach, connect with, and influence target audiences to recognize the problem, solution, understand the where to access helpful resources, inspire them to believe they can make a difference and motivate them to act.

Strategic Goals:

- Reduce suicide rates among SMVF across Iowa.
- Increase awareness of resources for veterans and families in crisis – Especially going into Nov-Dec (holidays)
- Comprehensive suicide prevention initiatives must include lethal means safety messaging, education, and clinical attention.

Tactical Goals:

- Increase traffic to website page
- Content viewed (education & awareness)
- Sign up for updates from Iowa VA
- Encourage vet-supporting organizations to take advantage of free resources and training

Communication Channels to be used are Direct Outreach – email, phone and Champion Nurturing. Also, Digital Media – TV/Connected TV, Radio/Streaming Audio, Paid Social Media, Online Video & Display and Search Engine Marketing.

The Delivery Strategy - Effective public health strategies resulting in population-level behavioral change successfully produce outcomes across three connected and successive messages:

- Create and maintain awareness of the problem.
- Persuade and change of attitudes about the problem.
- Motivate a meaningful response to prompts to change behavior that would otherwise result in the problem.
- Deliver messaging to Veterans wherever they are, in their homes, communities, through the media they are known to consume.

To create behavioral change:

- The framework of lethal means safety strategies is delivered to Veterans in their day-to-day lives, homes, communities, and media consumption.
- Veteran preferences about messaging quality and validity and established market metrics must inform the creation and delivery of every asset and educational tool.
- This framework gives us the best way to align the Veteran-informed messages at specific points of contact in a Veteran's daily life and media consumption.

About March Marketing

- MARCH Marketing has been a leader in Veteran outreach since 2011.
- The company has implemented similar campaigns around veteran mental health, veteran social issues for AARP, the Institute for Veterans and Military Families, and other nonprofits to drive measured outcomes.
- MARCH helped produce a series of videos with the Ad Council on veteran gun safety and more on the “Don’t Wait. Reach Out” campaign.
- Pioneered “anonymous” marketing to veterans for Sound Off to overcome fears of losing jobs or families when seeking mental health help.
- MARCH also conducted proprietary veteran healthcare research to better understand the roles of communications in the veteran patient journey around 20 of the most common chronic conditions to gain targetable insights. More can be found on the MARCH website: www.marchcorp.com

Women’s Veterans June Event Update

Krista Beck with the VFW 8879 gave an update of the Women’s Veterans Luncheon program that was held in June. It was an all-women event with women servers/caterers. It was held on Women’s Veterans Day, June 12, 2023. Not all states recognize and/or celebrate Women’s Veterans Day.

- Last year, this event was held at a local restaurant with approximately 25 people attending. The year there were participants! The goal is to have 100 Women Veterans to attend next year.
- The luncheon was free for all Women Veterans. There were representatives from women’s clinics that dealt with suicide intervention, trauma, etc., there.
- The keynote speaker was Major Lillie Miller, Captain of Des Moines Police Academy.
- There were nice gift bags for the attendees.
- Krista extended a big thank you for the donation from the License Plate Fund. She will be applying for it again next year for this event. She believes this is a beneficial event that Women Veterans should attend.
- Krista’s email contact is Krista.Beck@live.com.

2024 State Policy

Michelle Richart is the Midwest Regional Liaison with the U.S. Department of Defense. She covers the states of Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. She gave a presentation on the Defense-State Liaison Office Overview and policies that are written.

- The Defense-State Liaison Office provides state policymakers with expert insight on issues affecting military families and their quality of life.
- This is part of the Defense Department’s efforts to identify and address the most pressing needs of service members and military families.

The liaisons work with state policymakers by:

- Helping to establish state-specific priorities.
- Offering insights into military life and issues that impact military families.
- Providing assistance and testimony with legislation for state policy priorities.
- Contributing to force readiness and quality of life by educating on policies that advance the well-being of service members and their families.

The website, <https://StatePolicy.MilitaryOneSource.mil>, complements support provided by regional liaisons by:

- Providing policy priority information and examples of best practice legislation
- Offering insight about how state policy impacts military families
- Tracking legislation on priorities across states
- Connecting to official Defense Department data
- Remaining mobile friendly and up to date

Iowa has: (Data Source – DMDC, Dec 31, 2022)

- 1,333 – Active-Duty Service Members
- 633 – Active-Duty Spouses
- 1,384 – Active-Duty Children
- 13,333 – National Guard and Reserve Members

- 5,944 – National Guard and Reserve Spouses
- 9,943 – National Guard and Reserve Children
- TOTAL – 32,570

2024 State Policy Priorities for Iowa are: Military Spouse Employment and Economic Opportunities, Military Family Anti-Discrimination Status (NEW), Military Community Representation on State Boards and Councils (NEW), State Support for Military Families with Special Education Needs (NEW), Open Enrollment Flexibility, Child Abuse Identification and Reporting, Concurrent Juvenile Jurisdiction, Military Access to Quality Family Child Care, Defining Armed Forces and State Response to Military Interpersonal Violence (NEW).

Iowa Veterans Home Nursing Department Update

Sarah Bruner, IVH Director of Nursing, gave updates on the IVH Nursing Department. Sarah started working as a CNA at the age of 16. She graduated from Allen College with a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing. She was worked at IVH since 2018.

There has been a shortage in nursing all around the United States, which was anticipated to start in 2025 but with the Covid pandemic, it started earlier. Below are the nursing department position totals at IVH. There are 423 positions with 349 filled. This results in volunteer and/or mandated overtime. IVH has excellent staff that truly care for the IVH residents.

Nursing Department Totals			
<u>Position</u>	<u>Authorized</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
AON	1	1	100.00%
NSD	3	3	100.00%
Nurse Supervisor	25	24	96.00%
Nurse Clinician	12	12	100.00%
RN	17	12	70.59%
LPN	49	34	69.39%
CMA	75	58	77.33%
RTW	181	147	81.22%
RA	35	33	94.29%
Staffing Coordinator	6	6	100.00%
NUC	6	6	100.00%
Restorative Aide	6	6	100.00%
Recreation Assistant	5	5	100.00%
AA 1	1	1	100.00%
Compliance Officer 1	1	1	100.00%
Total	423	349	82.51%
# of Temp RTWs	0	18*	*3 working FT hours
# of Temp RN/LPN		9*	*2 working FT hours

There have been promotional/hiring incentives which are:

- Developing a 20-hour CNA curriculum and strengthening our training program to be able to bring employees in with no training and train them how to work as a CNA.
- Supporting our LPN and RN students while they are in school with temporary positions and flexible scheduling opportunities.
- Hiring incentives or sign-on bonuses for Certified Medication Aides, LPNs, and RNs.
- Weekend package incentives for employees working 32 hours on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Some of the challenge IVH faces are:

- Attendance.
- Challenges associated with COVID and other illnesses. We had 16 employees off with COVID during the month of September.
- Our greatest need continues to be licensed nurses. We have hired, or have scheduled to hire, 16 nurses in the last 3 months: 2 full time temporary RNs, 3 weekend package LPNs, 2 full time RNs, 1

part time LPN, 5 temporary LPNs, 1 temporary RN, 1-day shift Nurse Supervisor, and 1 evening shift Nurse Supervisor that will work at least 20 hours a week as a licensed nurse on the floor.

CMS

As of September 1, 2023, CMS passed a proposed staffing rule for long term care facilities. CMS is allowing three years for rural facilities to meet the 24/7 RN requirement and 5 years to meet the minimum staffing requirement. The cost of this mandate is projected to be \$6.8 billion and will require 100 thousand new workers nationally. This includes:

- Having a registered nurse onsite 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- A minimum staffing standard of 0.55 hours per resident per day for RNs and 2.45 hours per resident per day for nursing assistants or RTWs.

Ulery Building

- 120 bed building divided into 8 fifteen bed households.
- Opened in 2012 as a memory care building. Over the years, due to needs of admissions, had transitioned to 45 open nursing beds and 75 beds of memory care.
- Over the past year, the Ulery Building has begun transitioning back to a dementia-focused building in order to provide the best possible dementia care to our residents.
- The goal is to provide a therapeutic living environment for residents with neurocognitive disorders or residents exhibiting behaviors that are unsafe to themselves or others, that require or benefit from trained caregivers, dementia specific programming, or a secure or semi-secure environment to optimize their quality of life.

Projects

- ARxIUM (ARxIUM is an industry-leading developer of pharmacy automation and workflow solutions. The primary goal is to improve the quality, flexibility, speed and overall efficiency of the pharmacy production process.)
- PCC - electronic health record (EHR), eMAR/eTAR and order entry, and the Skin & Wound application
- Ascom call light system with new Vocera devices for call lights and person to person communication
- IMPACT Medical
- Hospice Partnerships
- Palliative care
- Restorative Nursing Program

Veterans Benefit Delivery in Iowa

Dylan Boles, UNI Intern, with the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs gave a detailed update on Assessing Policy Implementation in the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs. He researched data and collected information.

- According to the US Census Bureau, there are 16,500,000 Veterans currently living in the United States with 174,514 Veterans living in Iowa.

Understanding the Claims Process

- Veteran submits a VA Form 21-526EZ
 - DD-214 Document
 - Service Treatment Records
 - Medical Evidence
- VHA Compensation & Pension Exam
- Determination Reached
- Appeals Process:
 - Veteran files a Notice of Disagreement

- Statement of the Case made by the VA
- Appeal seen by a Veteran Law Judge from the Board of Veterans Appeals
- Higher appeal to the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims

Challenges of the Claims Process

- Multiple levels to go through
 - Especially for the appeals process
- Veterans are not aware of the claims process or the availability of Benefits
 - World War II
 - Korean War
 - Vietnam War
- Fiduciaries for Veterans deemed mentally incompetent
- “Pension Poachers” on elderly Veterans

Methodology

- As a CVSO and their office participate in higher quantities of outreach events, their county’s claims density rating will be higher due to engagement with Veterans.
- Identifying Stakeholders are Veterans in the State of Iowa, County Veteran Service Officers, Veteran Service Organization (Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans of America, Disable American Veterans, American Legion, Paralyzed Veterans of American), IACCVSO, IDVA and State Government.)
 - Surveys were distributed and results were collected.
 - There was a breakdown by county for 2021, 2022 and 2023 for:
 - Percentage of Veterans Population by County
 - Total claims density percentage
 - Iowa County Districts

Findings of the Research – Explanations for Rise in November 2021 Claims

Victims of Agent Orange Relieve Act of 2021

- Introduced into the House on May 25, 2021
- Passed
- Aims of the Bill:
 - Address healthcare needs.
 - Improve housing and reduce poverty.
 - Remediate areas of Vietnam affected by Agent Orange.
- Benefits extended to children of Vietnam Veterans

- Added three additional health conditions:
 - Bladder Cancer
 - Hypothyroidism
 - Parkinsonism
- Later added:
 - Hypertension (high blood pressure)
 - Monoclonal Gammopathy of Undetermined Significance

PACT Act of 2022

- Introduced into the House on June 17th, 2021
- Passed & effective since August 10th, 2022
- Opened eligibility for health conditions that are service-connected due to:
 - Burn pits
 - Chemical fumes
 - Other toxins
- Added 20 new presumptive health conditions
- An estimated 3.5 million Veterans were
- affected of the following wars:

- Vietnam War
 - Persian Gulf War
 - Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)
 - Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) – Afghanistan
- As of June 28th, 2023, nearly 700,000 Veterans have filed a PACT Act claim with the VA.

Iowa and Veterans

- 290 Communities throughout Iowa that are affected every time an Iowa National Guard unit is deployed.
- 7.7% of Iowa's adult population are Veterans.
- 22.3% of Veterans in Iowa have a service-connected disability rating.
- 26, 119 Veteran-owned businesses in the state of Iowa.

Veterans and Education

- 78% of Veterans increased their education level post-service.
- 2.08 years of additional education attained by Veterans who utilized VA Benefits.
- 77% of Veterans using VA Benefits have gone on to college or graduate school.
- 7-to-1 return on investment with the GI Bill.

Health Needs of Veterans

- 13.5X Veterans are more likely to be diagnosed with PTSD than non-Veterans.
- 1 out of 4 Women Veterans likely to have experienced an in-service or post-service sexual assault.
- 450,000 Veterans who have been diagnosed with a Traumatic Brain Injury.
- 11.9 Million Veterans with service-connected disability in the United States.

Immediate Changes

- Lean of CVSOS - Utilize the impressive resource that is the Iowa County Veteran Service Officer community.
- Strengthen VSOS - Further develop communication channels in the collective effort of serving Veterans.
- Increase Outreach - Increase the frequency of outreach efforts and raise awareness to maximize effects.
- Improve Transportation - Accessibility of transportation is vital for disabled and elderly Veterans, especially for making VHA appointment.
- Use Surveys - Gather consistent feedback from Veterans, CVSOs, and other important personnel in the system.
- Technology as a Tool - Websites and other forms of media have great potential to increase outreach and access to important information.

Long-Term Changes

- Legislation - Push for legislative progress, like HF 259 & SF 444, to broaden Veteran eligibility, improve available services, and streamline unity amongst all levels.
- Improving Benefits - Expand healthcare to include mental health disabilities and increased PTSD / TBI care, in addition to educational and employment support.
- Accountability Mechanism - Identify an entity, such as the IDVA, to uphold a universal standard across the state through county VA office inspections.

Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

- Increase survey to County Commissioners & Board of Supervisors
 - More input from all members of the system
- Increase frequency of survey
 - Bi-annual, quarterly, etc.
 - Identify trends in responses over time
- Include data of previous years beyond 2020
- Only the first 4 months of 2023 were used

- “Awards by Beneficiaries Report” potential for misrepresented data / not exact
 - Out-of-state
 - Outside of county
 - CVSO error
 - 100% disabled Veterans
 - Population changes

Comments from Todd Jacobus, Commandant of Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs

1. **Inform – Iowa Veteran Demographics.** According to “Veterans Data Central”, Iowa has 174,514 Veterans, which represents 7.2% of Iowa’s adult population:

- a. 4,886 (2.8%) served during WWII;
 - b. 14,136 (8.1%) served during the Korean War;
 - c. 63,697 (36.5%) served during the Vietnam War;
 - d. 32,111 (18.4%) served during Gulf War I;
 - e. 30,365 (17.4%) served during Iraq & Afghanistan;
 - f. 41,011 (23.5%) served between conflicts.
- (<https://veteransdata.info/states/2190000/IOWA.pdf>)

2. **Inform – IVH Census.** The Iowa Veterans Home census includes 401 residents as of October 1, 2023. We have 346 in nursing level care and 55 in residential level care. Oldest resident is 100 years old. Youngest resident is 52 years old. We have 80 female residents, including 21 female Veterans. We have one resident who has called the IVH their home for 42 years. We have two more Veterans who have lived here for 30+ years. The Iowa Veterans Home has served 19,406 Veterans since opening on December 1, 1887.

- a. 2 (.5%) served during WWII
- b. 37 (9%) served during the Korean War
- c. 203 (51%) served during the Vietnam War
- d. 15 (4%) served during Gulf War I & Iraq | Afghanistan
- e. 86 (21%) served between conflicts (peacetime)
- f. 58 (14%) – Non-resident Veterans

3. **Inform – Fall Training.** The Fall 2023 County Commissioner & County Veteran Service Officer training will take place on October 9-12, 2023, at the Za-Ga-Zig Shrine Temple, 1100 Shriners Parkway, Altoona, Iowa 50009.

Commissioner Training

8:30 am – Welcome – President Mortensen

8:45 am – Roll call of counties and new Commissioners

9:15 am – Commandant Todd Jacobus, Robert Stavnes, IDVA Benefits Bureau Chief, IDVA/Cemetery Staff

10:00 am – Tracie Pinkston, VA Des Moines Regional Office Director

10:30 am – Commission roles, BOS relationship, agendas, Commission vacancies/attendance/monthly meetings etc.

11:30 am – Lunch

12:30 pm – Hiring process, salaries and hours, expectations, vacancy contingency

1:30 pm – Allocation funds – uses, who is in control of the money

2:00 pm – Budgets – line items, county spending, county policies

2:30 pm – Impact of federal/county dollars – GDX report/RO monthly report

3:00 pm – Iowa Veterans Trust Fund – updates IACCVSO Commission Representative Joella Perry

3:15pm – Questions

County Director / Administrator Training, Tuesday, October 10

8:00 am – Opening Ceremonies

8:30-8:50 am – VA Eligibility, Roxanne Swanson

8:50-9:10 am – VA Education, Lauren Devan
 9:10-9:30 am – VA Suicide Prevention, Lori Reynolds
 9:30-9:50 am – VA Exposure List, Shadona Head
 9:50-10:00 am – Break
 10:00-11:00 am – VA Pension, Xavier Williams
 11:00-11:30 am – Agriculture, Beth Grabau
 11:30 am-12:00 pm – Lunch (Catered)
 12:00-1:00 pm – Council Voting, District Staff
 1:00-1:30 pm – Iowa Workforce Development, Jamie Norton
 1:30-2:00 pm – Home Base Iowa, Jathan Chicoine
 2:00-2:30 pm – SBM VBOC, Ty Williams
 2:30-2:45 pm – Break
 2:45-3:15 pm – Employment for Veterans, Kyle Wilkens
 3:15-4:00 pm – By County Breakdown, Dylan Boles

County Director / Administrator Training, Wednesday, October 11

8:00-8:30 am – VA Regional Office Director Staff, Kristi Catrenich
 8:30-9:00 am – VA PCTC, Heidi Rhodes
 9:00-10:00 am – VBA Veterans Benefits Management System
 10:00-10:10 am – Break
 10:10-11:00 am – Schenker Transportation, William Geoghagan
 11:00-11:30 am – Secretary of State, Donya Jenkins
 11:30 am – 12:00 pm – Transition Assistance, Chad Cook
 12:00-1:00 pm – Lunch (Catered)
 1:00-2:00 pm – VA Debt Management, Gary Greenwood
 2:00-2:20 pm – Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve (ESGR), Becky Coady
 2:20-2:40 pm – Risk Reduction, Maggie Passer
 2:40-3:00 pm – Break
 3:00-3:20 pm – Retirement, Lyndsay Thrane
 3:20-3:40 pm – Family Readiness, Pat Medved
 3:40-4:00 pm – Military Family & Life Counseling (MFLC), Julie Ehrhardt

County Director / Administrator Training, Thursday, October 12

8:00-8:30 am – VA Caregivers, Sarah G / Sara S
 8:30-9:00 am – Iowa Veteran Cemetery Registry, Jeanna Hampel
 9:00-9:30 am – Bunker Labs, Sam Winebrenner
 9:30-10:00 am – Iowa Veterans Home Admissions, Kathy Kopsa / Jason Matteson
 10:00-10:10 am – Break
 10:10-10:40 am – Specialist / Graves, Kevin House
 10:40-11:00 am – Iowa Veterans Trust Fund, Melissa Miller
 11:00-11:30 am – Valor Insurance, Jen Crowl
 11:30-12:00 pm – My HealtheVet, Clifford / Eddie
 12:00-4:00 pm – Travel Home

4. **Inform – Veterans Day 2023.** Veterans Day will be OBSERVED on Friday, November 10, 2023, during ceremonies at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery at 8:30 am and at the Iowa Veterans Home at 10:30 am. Planning for these events is on-going.
5. **Inform – General Randy George, Army Chief of Staff, Alden, Hardin County Native!** The Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army is General Randy George, Alden, Hardin County, Iowa, native, who left Alden in 1982 for the United States Military Academy at West Point, and who has spent a career of service in America's Army. We invited General George to serve as keynote speaker for Veterans Day 2023; however, we learned on October 3, 2023,

that he is committed to events in New York City on that weekend. I anticipate that we will invite him to Iowa for Memorial Day 2024.

6. **Inform – Iowa DAV Donated Van to IVH.** The Iowa Disabled American Veterans (DAV) unanimously approved \$70,000 to purchase a van for the Iowa Veterans Home. This van will be used to replace our primary transport vehicle, which staff uses to take residents to appointments in Marshalltown, Ames, es Moines, and Iowa City. Our current vehicle is a 2015 Dodge, which has more than 159,000 miles. Our current van has fluid leaks and the air conditioning is not efficient. The DAV purchased a Dodge Ram Promaster 2500, which is versatile enough to comfortably and efficiently accommodate Veterans with a wide range of medical needs. It has a wheelchair lift, multiple tie-down points for securing up to three wheelchairs, adequate space for both an attendant and a driver, or one cot with an attendant and driver. Currently we have to utilize two separate vehicles to accommodate these same requirements. The flexibility of this particular van will allow us to use it for transportation to medical appointment and social activities. Thank you to Dave Thornburg and Dan Gannon for taking the lead on this.
7. **Inform – Gold Star Families Day in Iowa.** Governor Reynolds signed a proclamation recognizing September 24, 2023 as Gold Star Family Day in Iowa. On August 18-20, 2023, the Army Survivor Outreach Services of Iowa brought together 74 surviving family members from across the State for “Iowa Military Survivor Muster”. The Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs funded this event through the License Plate Fund. I can think of no better use of those funds than to investing in the families of our fallen service members.
8. **Action – ICVA Committees.** During our July 5, 2023, meeting we discussed our need to re-engage the Committees. Listed below are the Committees that have functioned over the last 15 years – some years more active than others – along with my recommendation:
 - a. **Iowa Veterans Trust Fund Committee** – Imperative to continue
 - b. **Education & Compliance Committee** – ICVA should be involved in training
 - c. **Veterans Mental Health Suicide Prevention Committee** – Area of significant importance
 - d. **Homeless Veterans Committee** – Area of significant importance
 - e. **Iowa Veterans Home Committee** – 1-2 Commissioners as POC could help
 - f. **Iowa Veterans Cemetery Committee** – 1-2 Commissioners as POC could help
 - g. **Legislative Committee** – It would be good to discuss legislation among Commissioners
 - h. **License Plate Fund Committee** – Approval comes from ICVA (not Committee)
 - i. **Injured Veterans Grant Program Committee** – Unsure of ICVA role
 - j. **Administrative Rules Committee** – Unsure of ICVA role
9. **Inform – DIA Survey of IVH Fox Building (Domiciliary Level Care).** On September 20-21, 2023, the Department of Inspection & Appeals conducted an unannounced survey of the Iowa Veterans Home’s Fox Building – where 59 residents live in an independent living environment. Amanda Thill is the Nurse Supervisor, and Doug Moberly is the Social Worker.
 - a. Bottom line up front: There were no deficiencies noted during this 2-day survey. This is an outstanding accomplishment! Furthermore, **this is the fourth consecutive deficiency free survey conducted at the Iowa Veterans Home.**
 - 1) Department of Veterans Affairs Survey Central Office conducted a survey of the Iowa Veterans Home on May 22-26, 2023 with five subject matter experts from throughout the Country, and provided an out-brief with NO deficiencies.
 - 2) The Iowa Department of Inspection & Appeals & Licensing conducted a survey at the Iowa Veterans Home on February 27-March 3, 2023, and provided an out-brief and report with NO deficiencies.
 - 3) The Iowa Department of Inspection & Appeals conducted a survey at the Iowa Veterans Home in May 2021; there were NO deficiencies.

- b. The surveyor shared with us that the approach into the Iowa Veterans Home campus is beautiful – makes him proud to be an Iowan and an Iowa Veteran.
- c. The Fox Building is a beautiful facility. The last time the surveyor was at IVH to do a survey we had residential level of care in the Heinz Building, which he really liked because of it is a historic facility. But, the Fox Building is absolutely top-quality in every way.
- d. The surveyor mentioned that the Fox Building is very clean, has a “homey” feel, and is very well-maintained. ABM does a phenomenal job maintaining the facility.
- e. The surveyor visited with many residents in their rooms. He was very impressed with the cleanliness and “homey” feel of our residents’ personal space. And the residents shared with him how much they enjoy their living areas and common areas.
- f. The surveyor highlighted the requirement of counting all narcotics each shift. This is an area that sometimes does not happen in other facilities, and it was nice to see that the staff at Fox are accounting for narcotics as required.
- g. The medication cart is organized correctly, and there were no violations noticed there. Management and security of narcotics has been an issue cited at numerous facilities. IVH had no deficiencies in this area.
- h. All doors with locks were locked. All required posters were posted.
- i. Going back to the checklist: In-Services - - - infection control, meal times, resident activities, mental illness, resident safety, resident rights, medication education, programming all very good. No issues. No concerns.
- j. Quarterly pharmacy reviews – no concerns.
- k. Infection Control – Reviewed our COVID Infection Control, and was very impressed with that. Great job with the Infection Control videos and training programs. Very impressive.
- l. The surveyor reviewed resident files, indicated that there is a very good overview on resident “condition on admission”. There is a lot of information on the in-take forms, and the IVH staff at Fox does a great job on these. Outstanding job of orienting new residents to IVH. 48-hour review. Service plan within 30 days. Quarterly reviews being done. No concerns with this area.
- m. Reviewed incident report regarding fall, and the fall protocol. Very good job on this. Very nice to see these types of incidents documented in such detail. Surveyor mentioned that he has seen facilities that have major incidents where there is no documentation of what took place. IVH exceeds the standard in this area.
- n. Surveyor shared with us that during his experiences working for DIAL he has seen some absolute horror stories involving care for residents, and it is refreshing to see what is taking place at IVH.
- o. Michael is able to find everything he needs to find in resident files.
- p. Michael was impressed with IVH’s quarterly physician reports. He’s been to facilities recently where the reports were done in June and September of 2022 – far and away from the requirement of quarterly. It is refreshing to see such attention to detail given to these here at the IVH. Quarterly reports are important as they outline treatments, medications, diets, and level of care. It is important to stay up on this. Great

job to IVH. Everything looks great.

- q. Michael complimented the staff on doing a very good job on maintaining closed files – files on residents who have been discharged. Surveyor asked who was responsible for doing this, complimented Amanda Thill when he learned that she is actively engaged in this.
- r. Activity Programming – This is outstanding. Incredible. Surveyor shared that he interrupted a BINGO game in the Fox Building today, and he was able to stop the meeting and ask questions about living conditions, etc. He introduced himself, shared why he was at the IVH, and told us that everyone present had very complimentary things to say about their time here at the IVH. It is neat as an onlooker to hear these stories. He likes the Resident Council Boxes. He likes the Staff C4 Boxes.
- s. Surveyor appreciates that both staff and residents have the C4 Boxes where they can provide feedback and input to the leadership team, and is glad to see that we address concerns and issues both in writing and through videos.
- t. The Staff did an impeccable job during medication administration – looked up orders, protocol done by the book, everything charted correctly. No concerns.
- u. Financials look very good. Noteworthy is that the Finance Bureau staff close out every day so that it is more efficient to audit and track, and there are signatures back and forth transferring responsibility of funds.
- v. Resident Interviews – talked with a ton of people. They really like it here. They think the staff is wonderful. Surveyor asked several residents about where they go when they need something or have a problem and they quickly mentioned that they can go to Stephanie Wolken, Doug Moberly, Amanda Thill or anyone over there and their issues are always addressed immediately.
- w. Residents shared with surveyor that they are very happy to live there, staff respects their rights to privacy, staff knock on the door before they enter rooms.
- x. Surveyor shared that he visited the Atha Dining Room and noted that it looks outstanding. In addition, the hot food is hot, the cold food is cold. It is impressive to see the Food Service Operation in action – everything is dated, the operation is efficient, things are clean, bright, and organized. Surveyor shared that it is amazing to see how things come together there at mealtimes.
- y. Surveyor shared with us that one of the residents shared with him that living at IVH is “like living at the Ritz Carlton”. Surveyor told us that he’s never heard any negatives about the IVH.
- z. Surveyor shared with us that he has heard very good things about the Iowa Veterans Home when he is out there around the State of Iowa doing his job. He walked around the facility last night and saw people shooting baskets, doing put-put golf, walking around the campus, enjoying life, etc. Overall – no deficiencies. Great survey.

10. **Inform – Action Items from IVH Resident Council Meeting.** The last Resident Council meeting was on September 13, 2023. Here are the issues identified:

- a. **Powdered Potatoes.** Concern about powdered potatoes being used when preparing mashed potatoes. Veteran voicing concern would like to see real potatoes used because they taste much better. Food Service Director will address.

- b. **Resident Preparing Food.** Question about who is able to cook / what it takes for someone to be able to be approved to prepare meals. Why can't Residents in Dack and Malloy use the Kopper Kettle to cook meals? Is this an IVH rule? Or is this a CMS requirement? Can someone explain that to us? Licensed Nursing Home Administrator will address.
 - c. **Massage Chairs.** Concern about not being allowed to have massage chairs at IVH. Why? Is this an IVH rule? Or is this a CMS requirement? Can someone explain that to us? Licensed Nursing Home Administrator will address. Licensed Nursing Home Administrator will address.
 - d. **Heating Elements in Chairs.** Concern about not being allowed to have heating elements in chairs. Why? Is this an IVH rule? Or is this a CMS requirement? Can someone explain that to us? Licensed Nursing Home Administrator will address.
 - e. **Scheduling Appointments.** "It takes too long to schedule appointments." Medical Director will address.
 - f. **Using Entrance as Exit in Atha Dining Room.** There were some suggestions on how to stop residents and staff from cutting through the line in Atha when they exit - creating safety concerns. Facilities Bureau Chief will address.
 - g. **New Trees Not Watered.** Concerns about recently planted trees not getting watered, and as a result they appear to be withering. Facilities Bureau Chief will address.
 - h. **Power Chairs Operating Unsafely.** Resident Council President shared that power chairs are operating too fast and unsafely throughout the IVH campus. We need to get them to slow down. Licensed Nursing Home Administrator will address.
11. **Inform – Iowa Veterans Home Staff Superior Performers.** The Clinical Support Bureau provides oversight of a Staff Recognition Program, which has been in effect since August 2023. The purpose of this program is to recognize superior performance of staff members at the Iowa Veterans Home; this may expand to include the entire Department. It has been awesome to see these great staff members recognized.
- a. The **Poppy Award** recognizes a front-line worker (one award in Nursing, one award in Food Service) who showcases excellent service to peers and residents by going above and beyond the call of duty. All individuals are nominated by their peers for their outstanding work within their department.
 - (1) Sadie Wertz, a Nurse Supervisor on Malloy Building 2nd Floor South Wing, was recognized with the POPPY AWARD on Monday, October 2, 2023. We received 10 nominations for consideration.
 - (2) Fred Oster, Food Service Department, was recognized with Poppy Award on September 6, 2023.
 - (3) Jenica "Jeni" Thompson, Nursing Department in Malloy Building 3rd Floor, was recognized with the Poppy Award on September 5, 2023.
 - b. The **Champion Award** is a facility-wide award for all staff (ABM and IVH), and is intended to showcase one individual's superior skills dedicated to building staff morale, providing excellent customer service and exuding leadership among peers to support the mission of the Iowa Veterans Home.
 - (1) Gisselle Verdinez, an Activities Assistant in the Dack Building, was recognized with the Champion Award on Monday, October 2, 2023. We received 17 nominations for consideration.
 - (2) Kristina Miller, a Resident Treatment Worker on Dack Building 3rd Floor, was recognized with the Champion Award on Friday, September 8, 2023. We received 31 nominations for consideration.

12. **Inform – ARC Decision on Trust Fund Criteria.** On August 15, 2023, Melissa Miller and I met with the Administrative Rules Committee (ARC) at the State Capitol.

- a. Bottom line up front: The ARC does not support the Commission's / Department's recommendation to change the current criteria that says Veterans must be at or below 300% of poverty level for income and at or below \$20,000 in liquid assets in order to be eligible. The ARC wants to retain those criteria.
- b. A general summary of the comments and discussion with Committee members are as follows:
 - (1) The Iowa Veterans Trust Fund purpose is to help Veterans in need. The legislature, and Iowans, expect County Commissioners / Directors and the State Commissioners / Director to manage the trust fund in an efficient manner.
 - (2) The ARC does not want to tie our hands with criteria, which limits the Commission's / Trust Fund Committee's ability to award support to a Veteran truly in need. Based on the six-figure monthly dividends that have augmented the \$500,000 appropriation - we have the resources to support current criteria, and consensus among the ARC was that we want to use available resources to support Veterans in need.

13. **Inform – Alignment & State of Iowa Logo.** On Tuesday, July 18, 2023, Governor Reynolds held a press conference in the atrium of the State Capital where she delivered a message on alignment implementation AND informed Iowans about the new State logo.

- a. Here is a link to the press release summarizing the press conference: [Alignment Press Release](#)
- b. Here is a link to the 35-minute video of the press conference: [Alignment Press Conf Video](#)
- c. After the press conference, Governor Reynolds sent out a letter (see below) and a link to a 3-minute video where she provides comments - basically abbreviating what she presented during the Press Conference on Tuesday afternoon, and talking more about the branding efforts that have been done. Here is a link to the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDgdJIZzBXk>
- d. The new logo has taken the Communications Teams from throughout State government some considerable effort to "get right". I was amazed to see the detailed level of staffing, meetings, and discussions that were done to determine the impressions and thoughts of people from different parts of the country about Iowa and Iowans, as well as proposed logos being considered. I really like the logo that was chosen.
- e. The "Freedom to Flourish" logo "expresses Iowa's commitment to creating a home where anyone can thrive. The landscape and road to the horizon is a familiar scene in Iowa and one that represents a journey to opportunity. The tagline "Freedom to Flourish" communicates a motivating message that in Iowa there are unlimited opportunities for you to succeed.
- f. Here are a few news stories about the events on July 18.
 - (1) Des Moines Register - [Freedom to Flourish Story DSM Register](#)
 - (2) KCCI Des Moines - [Freedom to Flourish KCCI Story](#)
 - (3) WOI Des Moines - [WOI Alignment Story](#)
 - (4) KCAU Siouxland - [KCAU Alignment Story](#)
 - (5) WHO Des Moines - [WHO TV Alignment Story](#)

14. **Inform – Boards & Commissions Report – Update to Commissioners.** The Boards and Commissions Review Committee published their recommendations on August 29, 2023.

- a. See attached PRESS RELEASE from Governor Reynolds - also located online at <https://governor.iowa.gov/press-release/2023-08-29/gov-reynolds-calls-public-input-boards-and-commissions-review-committee>
- b. See attached REPORT - also located online at <https://governor.iowa.gov/media/228/download?inline>
- c. See attached DES MOINES REGISTER ARTICLE - also located online at <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/politics/2023/08/29/iowa-could-eliminate-more-than-100-boards-and-commissions-kim-reynolds-state-government-reshaping/70711448007/>
- d. Since the end of the legislative session the issue of boards and commissions has been one of the topics of discussion - specifically the vast number of them here in Iowa.
- e. As you know, there is only one Commission supporting the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs - and that is the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs... all of you.
- f. See Line 120 in the REPORT to find the ICVA listed. The words "reorganize / other changes" are written in the recommendation.
- g. Below are the recommended changes to Iowa Code Chapter 35 - Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs - that I provided to this Committee.
 - (1) Adjust language to read follows: "In addition to the members appointed by the governor, the commandant of the department shall serve as a non-voting, ex officio member of the commission.
 - (2) I suggest that we clean up the capitalization of the Veteran Service Organizations that are listed. The organizations should be listed as follows: The American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Veterans (no longer referred to "of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam"), the Vietnam Veterans of America, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Iowa Association of County Commissioners and Veteran Service Officers, through their official department leadership, may submit two names respectively from their organizations to the governor.
 - (3) The Adjutant General and the Iowa affiliate of the Reserve Organization of America may submit names to the governor of persons to represent the Iowa National Guard and the Reserve Organization of America
 - (4) Note: In 2002 The American Veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam changed its name to "AMVETS / American Veterans" - eliminating the reference to WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CRPT-107hrpt569/html/CRPT-107hrpt569.htm>
 - (5) Note: The Reserve Officers Association of America changed its name to "Reserve Organization of America" [<https://www.roa.org/page/historyofroa>]
 - (6) Add, "The governor may appoint a member to represent an organization if no name is recommended by an organization.
 - (7) Remove reference to "Executive Director".
- h. Based on the questions being asked and the thoughtful discourse during the meetings I attended, I am confident that the final product will allow us to
 - (1) Continue to provide the Veterans community a voice to our elected officials;
 - (2) Ensure that interests of our Veterans community are heard and addressed;
 - (3) Ensure that there is both exchange of information between the Commission and the Department, and that the Department runs efficiently;
- i. There was a public comment opportunity on Wednesday, September 6, 2023 at 12:00-2:00 pm.

- j. This Committee published a 590-page document titled "A Review of Iowa's Boards & Commissions" on September 28, 2023. Throughout the Summer months Director Kraig Paulsen of the Department of Management led a task force in reviewing the 259 boards and commissions. The Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs is mentioned in this report on Pages 13, 50, 56, 67, and 76.
- k. In early August 2023, I was interviewed by the Boards & Commission Task Force. I provided verbal feedback in terms of the history, purpose, and products generated by the ICVA.
 - (1) The Commission was established on April 27, 1992 as part of Senate File 2011. Prior to July 1, 1992, the Department and the Iowa Veterans Home fell under The Adjutant General of Iowa in the Department of Public Defense. The Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs provides a forum for the Veterans Community in Iowa to communicate, synchronize, and distribute information to membership. This is a valuable resource for the State of Iowa.
 - (2) The Iowa Veterans Trust Fund Committee meets at least monthly, and more often if required, in order to review trust fund applications from the counties. This work takes expertise and time. In the past, the Commission has also had committees focusing on other areas involving Veterans, including Education & Compliance, Veterans Mental Health, Iowa Veterans Home, Iowa Veterans Cemetery Donations & Memorials, Legislative / Administrative Rules, Injured Veteran Grant Program Committee, and License Plate Fund, and we will be working to re-engage some of these committees.
 - (3) The Iowa Veterans Council consisted of four individuals from each of the following organizations (listed in order of their appearance in the IVC by-laws): Veterans of World War I (Honorary), AMVETS, Ex-Prisoners-Of-War, Iowa Paralyzed Veterans of America, Marine Corps League, Military Order of the Purple Heart, 40 and 8, Vietnam Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Disabled American Veterans. This group preceded the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, and the work done by this Council was very similar to the work now being done by the Commission. [The Council supported the legislative efforts to establish the Commission according to Mr. Ed McGivern of Keystone, Iowa, whom I met at a Commission meeting in 2007 in Marshalltown. I believe that the last meeting of the Iowa Veterans Council was in the 2013 timeframe.]
- 15. **Inform – USS Iowa SSN 797 Update.** The USS Iowa Skipper and a few crew members visited Iowa on August 13-15, 2023. There was a large reception at Big Grove Brewery, they were on the reviewing stand at the Iowa State Fair Veterans Parade, they were interviewed by several news stations and on WHO Radio, they visited the Iowa Veterans Home and there was an article written about their visit in the Times Republican. Thanks to Captain Doug MacCrea, U.S. Navy Retired, who has done phenomenal work in support of the USS Iowa and the fundraising campaign that is on-going here in the State. Captain MacCrea provided an outstanding presentation to the Marshalltown Rotary on September 5, 2023, and is willing to do similarly at any gathering where his presence is requested. <https://www.timesrepublican.com/news/todays-news/2023/08/uss-iowa-crew-pays-ivh-a-visit/>
- 16. **Action – Draft Procedures for Appointing Iowa Commissioners of Veterans Affairs.** The Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs is comprised of 12 Commissioners representing 10 organizations, 1 individual at-large representative, and the Commandant of the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs, who serves as an ex officio member. All 12 Commissioners are appointed by the Governor for a four-year term. Iowa Code Chapter 35A outlines the composition and duties of the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs. Link to Iowa Code Chapter 35A.
 - a. Individuals nominated should be members in good standing in the organizations they represent AND should have the confidence of the organization's leadership to speak on their behalf.

- b. Iowans willing to serve on a commission or board should create an account on the "Iowa Talent Bank" website and select the commission(s) and / or board(s) on which they would like to serve. URL to Iowa talent Bank: <https://talentbank.iowa.gov/boards/f9dd01d9-9981-412d-a7ae-f3294be61f58/1>
- c. After creating an account and selecting "Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs" on their Iowa Talent Bank website, individuals should NEXT reach out to the leadership of the organizations comprising the Commission, requesting that they be allowed to represent their respective organization on the Commission. Many organizations will want to see a resume, biographical summary, and meet with the nominee prior to nominating them to the Governor to serve in this capacity.

- (1) Department of Iowa American Legion – Contact Department Commander
- (2) Department of Iowa American Veterans (AMVETS) – Department Commander
- (3) Iowa Disabled American Veterans (DAV) – Contact Department Commander
- (4) Iowa Association of County Commissioners & Veteran Service Officers (IACCVSO) Contact President
- (5) Iowa National Guard – Contact The Adjutant General of Iowa
- (6) Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) – Contact Department Commander
- (7) Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) – Contact President
- (8) Reserve Organization of America (ROA) – Contact Department President
- (9) Department of Iowa Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) – Contact Department Commander
- (10) Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) – Contact State President
- (11) At-Large – Contact Commandant Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs

- d. Once the organization has at least two nominations for the Governor to consider for the individual leading the organization will send a letter to the Office of the Governor with the names of the individuals whom the organization endorses to serve as their Commissioner. Each organization must send at least two names for consideration. The Governor will select one of the two names submitted by the organization.
- e. Note that in accordance with Iowa Code Chapter 69.16A "all appointive boards, commissions, committees, and councils of the state established by the Code, if not otherwise provided by law, shall be gender balanced."

17. Hooah! – Commitment of U.S. In Identifying Americans MIA. On August 20, 2023, I shared a video with Commissioners. This video is available on YouTube at this URL: https://youtu.be/C6f_FvZpm3g. This is the story of the after-effects of ONE BATTLE that took place 81 years ago, August 18-19, 1942, during World War II - in the South Pacific, on an island [Butaritari Island (Makin Atoll)] that I imagine these Marines had never heard of before going there, fighting, and dying to fulfill their duty to our Nation, in an effort to establish a foothold on potential airfields that would help U.S. Forces in the campaign against Japan. Incredible sacrifices. It makes me proud, as an American, to see the incredible investment by our Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, to ensure that not one American service member goes without accounting. Every one. I have seen cemeteries in Europe and at the Punch Bowl in Hawaii that name those service members whom were never recovered. Yet, the Department of Defense Prisoner of War Missing in Action Accounting Agency [<https://www.dpaa.mil/>] continues to work to recover the remains of our fallen warriors. I've attended more than a dozen internments here in Iowa of those missing in action in WWII and Korea, and then located by DPAA, and seen the impact on family members two and three generations removed from those killed. The Marines in this video were missing in action until 1999, when information on their whereabouts came from Bureimoa Tokarei, an 82-year-old island native. Incredible story of war, sacrifice, courage, loss, and HONOR. Two of the 19 killed in action are from Iowa. Love the music here too! Watching this makes me even more proud to be able to serve those who serve. Thank you for doing your part to fulfill our Nation's commitment to Veterans - - - that when/if our Veterans have a need, then our Nation will be here to deliver.

- a. FM1 Vernon Leroy Castle, Jet, Oklahoma
- b. Cpl I.B. Earles - Tulare, California

- c. Pfc William A. Gallagher - Wyandotte, Michigan
- d. Cpl Daniel A. Gaston - Galveston, Texas
- e. Pfc Ashley W. Hicks, Waterford, California
- f. Capt Gerald P. Holtom - Palo Alto, California
- g. Cpl Harris J. Johnson - Little Rock, Iowa
- h. Cpl Kenneth K. Kunkle - Mountain Home, Arkansas
- i. Pvt Carlyle Oscar Larson - Glenwood, Minnesota
- j. Cpl Edward Maciejewski - Chicago, Illinois
- k. Pvt Robert B. Maulding - Vista, California
- l. Pfc Kenneth M. Montgomery - Eden, Wisconsin
- m. Pfc Norman W. Mortensen - Camp Douglas, Wisconsin
- n. Pvt Franklin M. Nodland - Marshalltown, Iowa
- o. Cpl Robert Brooks Pearson - Lafayette, California
- p. Pfc Charles A. Selby - Ontonagon, Michigan
- q. Sgt Clyde Thomason - Atlanta, Georgia
- r. Pvt John Eugene Vandenberg - Kenosha, Wisconsin
- s. CPL Mason O. Yarbrough - Sikeston, Missouri

18. Inform – Military Order of the World Wars Request for Representation on ICVA. I received a letter dated September 6, 2023, from Colonel Michael Farrell, USMC Retired, who represents Military Order of the World Wars (MOWW), which is a 501(c)19 tax exempt Veterans organization whose mission includes supporting Veterans and access to services available. This organization is interested in being represented on the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs. I spoke with Colonel Michael Peck [(847) 452-7619 | colpeck@yahoo.com], U.S. Army Retired, who is their Veterans Affairs Committee Chairperson, explained the ICVA, and the legislative process required to add more organizations to the Commission.

Inform - Next Meeting at Joint Forces Headquarters in Johnston. I have reached out to the office of the Chief of Staff of the Iowa Army National Guard to schedule the JFHQ Enhanced Classroom for our meetings designated for Camp Dodge. Our quarterly meetings are required by statute to take place on Camp Dodge (first Wednesday of January and July), and two of those meetings take place in Marshalltown (first Wednesday of April and October). The Enhanced Classroom is capable of virtual meetings with microphones set up around their front table. There is plenty of parking and lots of comfortable space for all attendees. This will improve the efficiency of our meetings.

Approval of Minutes

2nd Vice Chair Commissioner Wattnem made a motion to approve Commission Quarterly meeting minutes of July 5, 2023. Seconded by Commissioner Mosby. Motion carried. Approved unanimously.

1st Vice Chair McMartin made a motion to approve Trust Fund conference call meeting minutes of July 6, 2023. Seconded by Commissioner Miller. Motion carried. Approved unanimously.

Commissioner DirksHaugsted made a motion to approve Trust Fund conference call meeting minutes of August 3, 2023. Seconded by Commissioner Perry. Motion carried. Approved unanimously.

Commissioner Van Horn made a motion to approve Trust Fund conference call meeting minutes of September 7, 2023. Seconded by 1st Vice Chair McMartin. Motion carried. Approved unanimously.

Old Business

Chair Ledvina passed out a list of committees that Commissioners volunteered to serve on. There will be a meeting to discuss these committees following the Trust Fund meeting on October 5, 2023.

New Business

- Chair Ledvina shared that she had the privilege to speak at the Charles Horton American Legion monthly meeting on October 3, 2023, held at the Iowa Veterans Home. She was impressed with the attendance and the engagement of the members. They are at 100 percent membership. It was a great meeting!
- Each organization need to come up with their Legislation Priorities. A meeting needs to be set before January to discuss and make decisions on the Priorities.
- Veterans Day on the Hill will be January 17, 2024.

Public Comments

There is a gap in getting information to veterans or regarding veterans.

Dave Thornburg with DAV shared that DAV has not been involved with three years with this Commission due to conflicting issues in which they would like to see changed within the Commission. They developed a study commission on September 9th. They would like to get together with all of the Commissioners and going over some of these issues. What was suggested on April 4th, they would like to see the Commission rotate their Chairs that way not one Organization maintains a certain chair for a lengthy time of period. If you do not want to be involved in the Commission, step down so someone can step up and be truly involved. DAV is looking to submit a name from their Organization in June to be on the Commission.

Next Commission Meeting

The next meeting will be Wednesday, January 3, 2024, at the Joint Forces Headquarters Enhanced Classroom, 7104 Northwest 70th Avenue, Johnston, Iowa.

Adjournment

Commissioner Wattnem motioned to adjourn, seconded by Chair Ledvina. The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.