



2026 County Veterans Services Excellence Program Legislation

Background

As of federal FY24, the most current Veterans Administration data available*, **Iowa ranks 44 of 53 states and territories** in per capita annual veteran compensation at \$6,205. Additionally, in terms of per capita compensation only six Iowa counties are above the national average and seven are above the national median.

The **Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs** lists encouraging efficiencies, innovation, and incentivizing high performance of county veteran service officers (CVSOs) as a **top five 2026 legislative priority**. The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) believes that CVSOs provide a vital and much needed service and Iowa veterans will benefit greatly with passage of this legislation.

Payments to Iowa veterans total \$1.104 billion annually and represent a significant economic impact to the state. However, only 52,000 Iowa veterans currently receive benefits (29%).

Comparison with peer states shows there is an urgent need to act:

	Total State Veteran Population	Annual VA Compensation Paid to Veterans/Survivors	Veteran Per Capita	Ranking
Arkansas	201,272	\$ 1,868,805	\$ 9,285	13
Nebraska	116,961	\$ 970,742	\$ 8,300	22
South Dakota	62,433	\$ 481,996	\$ 7,720	30
Minnesota	285,734	\$ 1,713,051	\$ 6,559	38
Iowa	177,922	\$ 1,103,980	\$ 6,205	44

An increase of just 10% of current compensation levels is a \$110 million annual boost of federal dollars into the state, resulting in a per capita of \$6,825 with Iowa ranking 37th nationally, just ahead of Minnesota but still well behind several other peers. This is a very achievable goal and should be aggressively pursued.

The proposed County Veterans Services Excellence Program is **state budget neutral**.

1) Beginning in FY28, reallocates existing \$990K County Commission of Veterans Affairs Fund to take action and improve on the disparity with other states in receipt of federal veterans compensation by incenting high performance, efficiency, and innovation. For FY27, counties will each receive \$10K as in the past.

- Instead of all counties receiving \$10K regardless of performance, higher performing counties would receive a greater share of the fund, up to \$15K.
- IDVA would write rules to allow for adjustments to ensure program is achieving desired result.
- **Population neutral:** Based on per-capita receipt of compensation and fair to counties of all sizes.

2) Reallocates existing \$300K County Commission of Veterans Affairs Training Program transfer from the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund to the IDVA Training Fund.

- IDVA will purchase VA claims submission software and provide it to counties at no cost.
- All counties would be trained in and required to use this software, which many already use.
- IDVA would have statewide claim visibility and performance metrics, which it would share with county commissions and boards of supervisors.
- Seamless transfer of claims between CVSOs and elimination of paper claims.
- IDVA would add an education coordinator to expand upon the training that IDVA already provides on a year-round basis and allow for more one-on-one training, particularly with newly-hired CVSOs.

*[Geographic Distribution of VA Expenditures \(GDX\) Report - National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics](#)