



SF 2466 County Veterans Services Excellence Program Legislation

The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) believes that county veteran service officers (CVSO) provide a vital and much needed service and Iowa veterans will benefit greatly with passage of this legislation. The proposed County Veterans Services Excellence Program is state budget neutral.

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 CVSOs as a top five 2026 legislative priority. As amended by the Senate, SF 2466 also adjusts the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund for inflation by increasing the balance from \$50 to \$75 million through continued annual transfers from the Iowa Lottery. This is also a top five 2026 legislative priority of the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs.

The Iowa National Guard, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Disabled American Veterans-Iowa have all filed in favor of this bill.

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%). A comparison with peer states shows there is an urgent need to act:

Table with 5 columns: State, Total State Veteran Population, Annual VA Compensation Paid to Veterans/Survivors (000's), Veteran Per Capita, and Ranking. Rows include Arkansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa.

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.

As amended by the House, counties would retain the current annual \$990K County Commission of Veterans Affairs Fund standing appropriation. Additionally, \$250K from the annual Iowa Lottery transfer to the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund would be used to incentivize counties to effectively increase veteran outreach and efficiency in the application for individual federal veteran compensation.

- Beginning in FY28, directs IDVA to incent counties based on performance criteria determined by the department. Counties must increase the annual amount of benefits distributed by 5% to qualify.
IDVA would write rules to comply with the legislation.
Population neutral: Based on per-capita receipt of compensation and fair to counties of all sizes.

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