

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Agenda for January 25, 2017 Meetings start at 5:00 pm

- I. Call to Order Salute to the Colors
- II. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag
- III. Chaplin's Prayer
- IV. Roll Call of Delegates & Alternates
- V. Reading & Approval of the November 2016 Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. VA National Cemeteries Pre-Eligibility 12/8/2016
 - b. Legislation
 - c. Office Activity
- VIII. Committee Reports
- IX. Old Business
- X. New Business
 - a. Announcement of new Office Manager
 - b. Meeting schedule and location approval for 2017
- XI. For the Good of the Commission
- XII. Adjournment

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission minutes of November 16, 2016

Meeting was opened in due form by Chairman Jim Ebner. A roll call of officers was taken showing Sgt. at Arms excused and all other officers present.

Minutes of the October 26, 2016 meeting were reviewed by the delegates and alternates present. Being no additions or corrections to those minutes, Chairman Ebner stated that the minutes would stand approved as presented.

OLD BUSINESS: Chairman Ebner introduced new Superintendent Steven Kreitzer to the Commission members. Steve gave a brief history of his military service and education qualifications to the delegates and alternates.

Jack Leininger explained new line items that he was putting into the new VAC budget for software and part-time help. This will be done at the LaSalle County Finance Committee meeting on November 18, 2016. Steve Krietzer discussed the new software and the cost of the software which would be purchased by the office in the future. Chairman Ebner talked to the Commission about the new office layout. Due to HIPA laws, there is a concern for the lack of privacy in our VAC office. Also discussed were the benefits of keeping the VAC office in the Downtown Courthouse at this time.

Chairman Ebner asked that any retirement donations for the VAC office staff be sent directly to the Martin Rue at his home address of 1434 Plain Street, Peru, IL 61354 and Cindy Decker, VAC of LaSalle County, 119 W. Madison St., Room 103A, Ottawa, IL 61341

NEW BUSINESS: Service Officer's Report was presented to those delegates and alternates present. All questions pertaining to the Service Officer's Report were answered. A motion was made by Nick Nekrosius and seconded by George Mason to accept the Service Officer's Report. Motion passed.

The LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission 2017 annual election of officers was held. George Mason made a motion to have one unanimous ballot, seconded by William Luther. Motion carried. The 2016 VAC officers are as follows:

Chairman – Jim Ebner

Vice Chairman – Scott Buennemeyer

Chaplin – George Mason

Sgt. at Arms - Jim Nanowski

A motion was made by Jerry Fuchs and seconded by Lance Sire to adjourn. Motion passed.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Delegates Nick Nekrosius, American Legion Post 426; George Mason, VFW Post 2470; Jerry Fuchs, American Legion Post 570; Scott Buennemeyer, American Legion Post 235; Tom Troutman, VFW Post 4079; Joe Savitch, VFW Post 4668; Douglas Grieve, American Legion Post 260; Alternates Lance Sires, American Legion Post 235; William Luther, VFW Post 2470; John Duback, AMVETS Post 30; Jack Leininger, VFW Post 5506; and Chairman Jim Ebner, American Legion Post 237; Cindy Decker, Office Manager/VSO and new Superintendent Steven Krietzer

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs

Washington, DC 20420

Media Relations

(202) 461-7600

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 8, 2016

VA National Cemeteries Now Offering Pre-Need Eligibility Determinations

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced it now provides eligibility determinations for interment in a VA national cemetery prior to the time of need. Through the Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility Program, upon request, individuals can learn if they are eligible for burial or memorialization in a VA national cemetery.

“MyVA is about looking at VA from the Veterans’ perspective, and then doing everything we can to make the Veteran Experience effective and seamless,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. “This new program reaffirms our commitment to providing a lifetime of benefits and services for Veterans and their families.”

Interested individuals may submit VA Form 40-10007, Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a VA National Cemetery, and supporting documentation, such as a DD Form 214, if readily available, to the VA National Cemetery Scheduling Office by: toll-free fax at 1-855-840-8299; email to Eligibility.PreNeed@va.gov; or mail to the National Cemetery Scheduling Office, P.O. Box 510543, St. Louis, MO 63151.

VA will review applications and provide written notice of its determination of eligibility. VA will save determinations and supporting documentation in an electronic information system to expedite burial arrangements at the time of need. Because laws and personal circumstances change, upon receipt of a burial request, VA will validate all pre-need determinations in accordance with the laws in effect at that time.

VA operates 135 national cemeteries and 33 soldiers’ lots in 40 states and Puerto Rico. More than 4 million Americans, including Veterans of every war and conflict, are buried in VA’s national cemeteries. VA also provides funding to establish, expand and maintain 105 Veterans cemeteries in 47 states and territories including tribal trust lands, Guam, and Saipan. For Veterans buried in private or other cemeteries, VA provides headstones, markers or medallions to commemorate their service. In 2016, VA honored more than 345,000 Veterans and their loved ones with memorial benefits in national, state, tribal and private cemeteries.

Eligible individuals are entitled to burial in any open VA national cemetery, opening/closing of the grave, a grave liner, perpetual care of the gravesite, and a government-furnished headstone or marker or niche cover, all at no cost to the family. Veterans are also eligible for a burial flag and may be eligible for a Presidential Memorial Certificate.

Information on VA burial benefits is available from local VA national cemetery offices, from the

Internet at www.cem.va.gov, or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 800-827-1000. To make burial arrangements at any open VA national cemetery at the time of need, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117.

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VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.govFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 12, 2016

New Regulation Decreases Cost of Outpatient Medication Copay for Most Veterans

Washington – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is amending its regulation on copayments for Veterans' outpatient medications for non-service connected conditions. VA currently charges non-exempt Veterans either \$8 or \$9 for each 30-day or less supply of outpatient medication, and under current regulations, a calculation based on the medication of the Medical Consumer Price Index (CPI-P) would be used to determine the copayment amount in future years.

“Switching to a tiered system continues to keep outpatient medication costs low for Veterans,” said VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. David J. Shulkin. “Reducing their out-of-pocket costs encourages greater adherence to prescribed outpatient medications and reduces the risk of fragmented care that results when multiple pharmacies are used; another way that VA is providing better service to Veterans.”

This new regulation eliminates the formula used to calculate future rate increases and establishes three classes of outpatient medications identified as Tier 1, Preferred Generics; Tier 2, Non-Preferred Generics including over-the-counter medications; and Tier 3, Brand Name. Copayment amounts for each tier would be fixed and vary depending upon the class of outpatient medication in the tier.

These copayment amounts will be effective February 27, 2017:

\$5 for a 30-day or less supply - Tier 1 outpatient medication

\$8 for a 30-day or less supply - Tier 2 outpatient medication

\$11 for a 30-day or less supply - Tier 3 outpatient medication

These changes apply to Veterans without a service-connected condition, or Veterans with a disability rated less than 50 percent who are receiving outpatient treatment for a non-service connected condition, and whose annual income exceeds the limit set by law. Medication copayments do not apply to former Prisoners of War, catastrophically disabled Veterans, or those covered by other exceptions as set by law.

Copayments stop each calendar year for Veterans in Priority Groups 2-8 once a \$700 cap is reached.

More information on the new tiered medication copayment can be found at:
<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-12-12/pdf/2016-29515.pdf>

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.govFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 13, 2017

VA's Rule Establishes a Presumption of Service Connection for Diseases Associated with Exposure to Contaminants in the Water Supply at Camp Lejeune

VA to provide disability benefits for related diseases

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has published regulations to establish presumptions for the service connection of eight diseases associated with exposure to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

The presumption of service connection applies to active duty, reserve and National Guard members who served at Camp Lejeune for a minimum of 30 days (cumulative) between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987, and are diagnosed with any of the following conditions:

- adult leukemia
- aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes
- bladder cancer
- kidney cancer
- liver cancer
- multiple myeloma
- non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Parkinson's disease

“We have a responsibility to take care of those who have served our Nation and have been exposed to harm as a result of that service,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. “Establishing a presumption for service at Camp Lejeune will make it easier for those Veterans to receive the care and benefits they earned.”

Environmental health experts in VA's Technical Workgroup conducted comprehensive reviews of scientific evidence, which included analysis and research done by the Department of Health and Human Service's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), the Environmental Protection Agency, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the National Toxicology Program, and the National Academies of Science.

Veterans with 30 or more cumulative days of active duty service, at Camp Lejeune during the

contamination period are already eligible for certain medical benefits, following passage of the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012.

In the early 1980s, volatile organic compounds, trichloroethylene (TCE), a metal degreaser, and perchloroethylene (PCE), a dry cleaning agent, as well as benzene and vinyl chloride, were discovered in two on-base water supply systems at Camp Lejeune. The contaminated wells supplying the water systems were shut down in February 1985.

The area included in this presumption is all of Camp Lejeune and MCAS New River, including satellite camps and housing areas.

The rule will be effective either 60 days after publication in the Federal Register, or following conclusion of the 60-day Congressional Review, whichever is later.

Bill Status of SB0087 100th General Assembly

Short Description: PROP TX-SURVIVING SPOUSE

Senate Sponsors

Sen. [Terry Link](#)

Last Action

Date	Chamber	Action
1/18/2017	Senate	Referred to Assignments

Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance

[35 ILCS 200/15-169](#)

Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Property Tax Code. Provides that, for the 2016 taxable year and thereafter, the exemption for veterans with disabilities carries over to the surviving spouse of a veteran who was killed in the line of duty in the current taxable year or any preceding taxable year. Provides that, for the 2015 taxable year and thereafter, the exemption for veterans with disabilities carries over to the surviving spouse of a veteran who did not obtain the exemption before death, but who would have qualified for the exemption in the current taxable year if he or she had survived. Effective immediately.

Actions

Date	Chamber	Action
1/18/2017	Senate	Filed with Secretary by Sen. Terry Link
1/18/2017	Senate	First Reading
1/18/2017	Senate	Referred to Assignments

Bill Status of HB0360 100th General Assembly

Short Description: PROP TX-DISABLED VETS

House Sponsors

Rep. [Allen Skillicorn](#)

Last Action

Date	Chamber	Action
1/12/2017	House	Referred to Rules Committee

Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance

[35 ILCS 200/15-169](#)

Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Property Tax Code. In a Section concerning the homestead exemption for veterans with disabilities, provides that, for taxable years 2017 and thereafter, if the veteran has a service connected disability of 20% (currently, 30%) or more but less than 50%, then the annual exemption is \$2,500. Provides that that exemption also applies to veterans who are not disabled but are over the age of 75. Removes a requirement that the homestead exemption for veterans with disabilities applies only to residences with an equalized assessed value of less than \$250,000. Effective immediately.

Actions

Date	Chamber	Action
1/12/2017	House	Filed with the Clerk by Rep. Allen Skillicorn
1/12/2017	House	First Reading
1/12/2017	House	Referred to Rules Committee

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

Superintendent
Steven Kreitzer



Office Manager
Cindy Decker

January Claims Summary

Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2017 Amount	Monthly Amount	Location
70%	9/2016	12/1/2017	\$ 22,065.00	\$ 1,471.00	Kingston, IL
DIC	10/2016	12/1/2017	\$ 21,280.00	\$ 1,520.00	Ottawa, IL
Life Insurance and Burial Benefits			\$ 16,068.90	\$ -	Ottawa, IL
70%	6/2016	12/1/2017	\$ 25,882.92	\$ 1,437.94	Ottawa, IL
Widows Pension	7/2016	12/1/2017	\$ 19,601.00	\$ 1,153.00	Ottawa, IL
60%	9/2016	12/1/2017	\$ 15,934.05	\$ 1,062.27	Streator, IL
Widows Pension	11/2015	12/1/2017	\$ 27,624.00	\$ 1,153.00	Ottawa, IL
90%	8/2016	12/1/2017	\$ 31,861.94	\$ 1,991.37	Peru, IL
Totals:			\$ 180,317.81	\$ 9,788.58	

Office Activity December

Office Visits	22	VA Compensation	21
Phone	6	VA Healthcare	7
Outstation	1	VA Pension	1
		Other	5

119 W. Madison St.
Courthouse Room 103A
Ottawa, IL 61350
Phone 815-433-1761 Fax 815-433-6209

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

Superintendent
Steven Kreitzer



Office Manager
Cindy Decker

Here is the information that I was able to find on the Veterans in LaSalle County.

In the State of Illinois here is the breakdown of veterans by war era per the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Veterans in Illinois

Peacetime Veterans	WWII	Korean	Vietnam	Gulf War Era
186,526	44,564	70,769	247,246	200,520
25%	6%	9%	33%	27%

The number of veterans estimated by the Department of Veterans Affairs in LaSalle County is 8,653 in 2016

So, if we use the same percentages to estimate the different categories for LaSalle County it would breakdown like the chart listed below.

Veterans in LaSalle County (estimate)

Total Veterans	Peacetime Veterans	WWII	Korean	Vietnam	Gulf War Era
8,653	2,163	519	779	2,855	2,336
	25%	6%	9%	33%	27%

December 2, 2016

President Johnathon Lash and the Board of Heritage College:

I find it both despicable and absolutely unacceptable that your institution would even consider the removal of the American flag for any reason. I find you, and all who supported removal of the Flag, to be irresponsible in your commitment to guide the lives of young Americans in a patriotic, positive way. If you are ignorant of the rules and guidelines for the display of the American Flag, and when it is to be removed, flown at half-staff, etc. I suggest you acquire a booklet online from either the American Legion or the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Fly **YOUR** flag. Arrest those who desecrate it. If this flag is provided by the college, this is **your** property. Though I do not agree with the court's rulings, if a student wishes to burn their own flag, that is considered "free speech." If they burn **your** flag and mine, that is a crime. I have read the facts, and not the myths and misinformation leading up to this situation. I have read the statement of Mr. Lash and I consider that as simply a wimp's way out. There is **no justification** to take down the American flag while "we talk about these issues." **Everyone's personal agendas** are secondary to the flag of the United States. I would encourage you to school these pampered flag burners in the proper manner of protest and that you would develop security measures to insure that the flag under which many of us fought flies fully furled in the manner it was intended. To do less is disgraceful.

James Ebner
115 Bluff St.
Oglesby, IL 61348
U.S. Army
Viet Nam 1966-1967

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Agenda for February 22, 2017 Meetings start at 5:00 pm

- I. Call to Order Salute to the Colors
- II. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag
- III. Chaplin's Prayer
- IV. Roll Call of Delegates & Alternates
- V. Reading & Approval of the January 2017 Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. VA Healthcare Travel Pay
 - b. Office Remodel Progress
 - c. Office Activity
- VIII. Committee Reports
- IX. Old Business
- X. New Business
 - a. Meeting of the new Office Manager Christa Washelesky
- XI. For the Good of the Commission
- XII. Adjournment

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Minutes for January 25, 2017

Call to Order Salute to the Colors –

President Jim Ebner called the meeting to order at 5pm and lead us in the pledge of allegiance.

Delegates & Alternates Present

Tom Troutman – Mendota VFW – Jim Mcooneyham – VFW Marseilles – Bill Luther – VFW Ottawa – John Duback – Ottawa AMVETS – Nick Nekrosius – American Legion LaSalle – Joe Savitch – VFW LaSalle – Lance Sires – American Legion Marseilles – Scott Buennemeyer – American Legion Marseilles – Jim Ebner – American Legion – Oglesby – Bill Phillips – VFW Mendota – Howard Gast – American Legion Earville – Jim Nanowski – American Legion Ottawa.

Employees Present

Steven Kreitzer – Superintendent – Cindy Decker – Office Manager

Reading & Approval of the January 2017 Meeting Minutes

Minutes were approved as presented

Public Comment

Leslie Duntemann – She is the PACT Social Worker out of the LaSalle Community Based Outpatient Clinic and wanted to strengthen the clinics relationship with the Veterans Service Organizations. She went over a myriad of support services the clinic can provide to veterans enrolled in the VA Healthcare system. Scott Buennemeyer did bring up that the check in Kiosk had been broken for months now and Leslie stated that the management knows about the issue and are working to get it resolved.

The commission recognized both Martin Rue and Cindy Decker for over 3 decades of service to the LaSalle County Veterans.

119 W. Madison St.
Courthouse Room 103A
Ottawa, IL 61350

Phone 815-433-1761 Fax 815-433-6209

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LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Minutes for January 25, 2017

Superintendent's Report

- a. **VA National Cemeteries Pre-Eligibility 12/8/2016**
- b. **Legislation** – Illinois Senate Bill 0087 was discussed and how it could affect veterans families.
- c. **Office Activity** – The office has been preparing for the move to the 4th floor so the remodel can take place. They have been working on getting all the files scanned and microfilmed in preparation for the State to come out and authorize them to destroy the hard copies of the documents. There are new computers, database, and scanners so the office can help to tackle this task themselves in the future.

Steven Kreitzer also brought up about the new co-pay structure for medications at the clinics and how it would allow veterans to get name brand prescription drugs. Lastly, he brought up about the new Camp Lejeune Presumptive Conditions.

Nick Necrosius made a motion to accept the Superintendent Report and it was seconded by Scott Bunnemeyer. Motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Committee Reports -None

IX. Old Business - None

X. New Business

a. Announcement of new Office Manager

Steven Kreitzer announced the new Office Manager would be Christa Washelesky and a little about her background. The office is excited to have her start on 2/6/2017.

119 W. Madison St.
Courthouse Room 103A
Ottawa, IL 61350

Phone 815-433-1761 Fax 815-433-6209

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LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Minutes for January 25, 2017

b. Meeting schedule and location approval for 2017

Sherriff Tom Tempelton offered to allow the Veterans Assistance Commission to meet at their office as they have a large conference room available. There was much discussion on this matter but it was decided to continue to have our meetings at courthouse.

XI. For the Good of the Commission

Many of the veterans organizations shared their events and raffles coming up with the group.

XII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Nick Nekrosius and seconded by John Duback. Motion passed unanimously at 5:43 pm

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

Superintendent
Steven Kreitzer



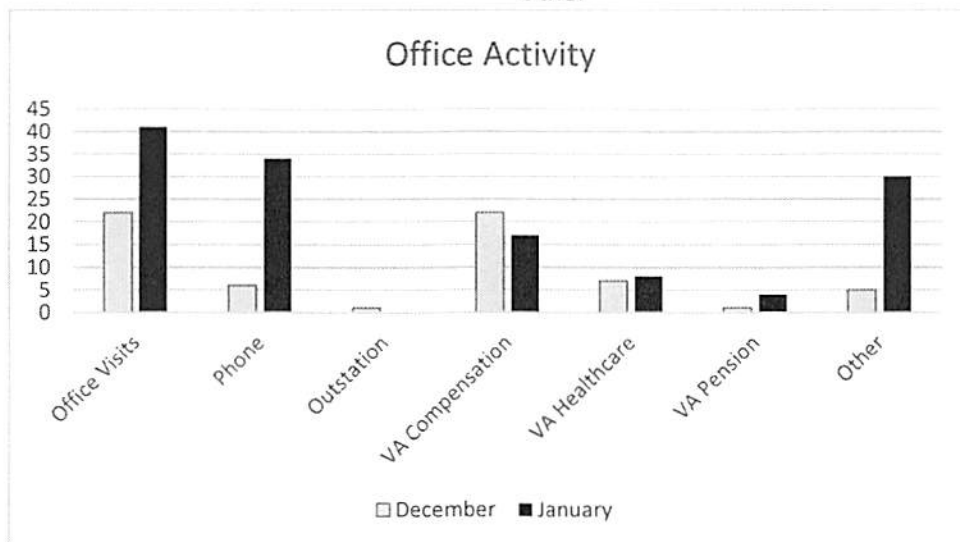
Office Manager
Christa Washelesky

February Claims Summary

Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2017 Amount	Monthly amount	Location
DIC/MOD Payment	12/2016	12/2017	\$ 18,173.51	\$ 1,257.95	South East
Burial Benefits	1/2017	1/2017	\$ 3,000.00	\$ -	South East
Claim	12/30/2016	12/2017	\$ 29,155.50	\$ 2,915.55	South East
Totals:			\$ 50,329.01	\$ 4,173.50	
Year to Date Total			\$ 230,646.82	\$ 13,962.08	

Office Activity January

Office Visits	41	VA Compensation	17
Phone	34	VA Healthcare	8
Outstation	0	VA Pension	4
		Other	71



Beneficiary Travel Benefits

A Veteran may be eligible for Beneficiary travel services if the following criteria are met:

YOU QUALIFY IF:	YOU QUALIFY FOR SPECIAL MODE TRANSPORTATION (Ambulance, Wheelchair Van etc.) IF:
<p>1) You have a service-connected (SC) rating of 30 percent or more, or</p> <p>2) You are traveling for treatment of a SC condition, or</p> <p>3) You receive a VA pension, or your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, or</p> <p>4) Your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, or you are traveling for a scheduled compensation or pension, or</p> <p>5) You are traveling for a Compensation and Pension Exam</p>	<p>1) You meet one of the eligibility criteria in the left column, and</p> <p>2) Your medical condition requires an ambulance or a specially equipped van as determined by a VA clinician, and</p> <p>3) The travel is pre-authorized (authorization is not required for emergencies if a delay would be hazardous to life or health)</p>



Department of Veterans Affairs

VETERAN/BENEFICIARY CLAIM FOR REIMBURSEMENT OF TRAVEL EXPENSES

Section A. Traveler's Information

1.a Name of Person Claiming Travel Reimbursement (Last, First, Middle)	1.b Claimant's SSN
	1.c Claimant's Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

2.a Claimant's status: (check one) Complete 3.a, 3.b, 3.c and 3.d if Caregiver, Attendant or Donor is checked.

Veteran
 Caregiver (National Caregiver Program)
 Attendant (Medically authorized by VA)
 Donor (VA Transplant Care)
 Other

3.a Name of Veteran (Last, First, Middle)	3.b Veteran's SSN
	3.c Veteran's Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

Section B. Trip Information

1.a I am claiming travel reimbursement from address: (Street, City, State, Zip)	1.b Date Trip Began (mm/dd/yyyy)	1.c Travel by: (e.g., car, train, bus, taxi)
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2.a I am claiming return travel reimbursement to the address in B.1.a above <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO (if no, provide the Street, City, State, Zip below)	2.b Date Trip Ended (mm/dd/yyyy)	2.c Travel by: (e.g., car, train, bus, taxi)
---	----------------------------------	--

3. I am claiming reimbursement of expenses other than mileage, such as tolls, parking, lodging, meals. YES NO

(If yes, itemize expenses below and provide a receipt for each expense claimed. Use reverse if additional space is required)

a.
b.
c.
d.
e.
f.
g.
h.

4. Treating Facility Name (VA or Non-VA location)	5. Treating Facility Address (Optional)
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Section C. Statements and Certifications

Penalty Statement: There are severe criminal and civil penalties including fine or imprisonment, or both, for knowingly submitting a false, fictitious, or fraudulent claim

Certification: I have incurred a cost in relation to the travel claimed. I have not obtained transportation at Government expense, through the use of Government owned conveyance, or Government purchased tickets/tokens, or received other transportation resources at no-cost to me. I am the only person claiming for the travel listed. I have not previously received payment for the transportation claimed. I certify that the above information is correct.

Signature of Claimant	Date (mm/dd/yyyy)
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 27, 2017

Statement from the Department of Veterans Affairs on federal hiring freeze

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced exemptions to the federal hiring freeze in the President's memo dated January 23rd, 2017. The authorities outlined in the President's memo provide VA the ability to continue filling essential positions that provide public safety services to our Veterans. We strongly believe that these exemptions are in line with the President's intent.

"The Department of Veterans Affairs intends to exempt anyone it deems necessary for public health and safety, including frontline caregivers," Acting Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Snyder said. "The President and VA remain committed to seeing that our Veterans receive the quality care and benefits they've earned. This is the right thing to do for our Veterans."

The memorandum is available for viewing [here](#).

#

Media Inquiries:

Lydia Blaha

VA Deputy Press Secretary

202-461-7458

Lydia.Blaha@va.gov



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital
5000 S. Fifth Avenue
Hines, IL 60141

February 14, 2017

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you already know, Hines VA Hospital made a request to VA Central Office last summer to discontinue the use of the Outpatient Mobile Medical Unit (MMU) with the intent of transitioning our community engagement to better reflect the needs of our Veteran population. Late last week we received official approval from the Under Secretary for Health, David Shulkin, M.D., to move forward with our plan to repurpose the bus to the VA Medical Center in Grand Junction, Colorado.

We remain committed to providing compassionate, comprehensive care of the highest quality and our analysis has shown that even with the MMU visits, the vast majority of our Veterans continue to receive their clinical VA care at one of our Medical Centers or through a community-based clinic. We've also found that most Veterans who go to our mobile clinics are there for basic vaccinations or medication management; or they want to know more about eligibility, enrollment, and other benefits. Our focus is shifting in that direction and this transition is well underway.

Our outreach team currently includes Pamela Svec-Gansel, RN and Orlando Conners, MSA (Eligibility & Enrollment Clerk), both of whom were part of the MMU team. Patrick Gavin, APRN-BC, is already in the process of working with patients whose primary contact has been through the MMU to ensure they are handed off to providers at Hines VA Hospital or one of our community-based clinics. Ms. Svec-Gansel will lead day-to-day activities and our Public Affairs Officer, Rick Fox will continue to provide oversight and strategic guidance to the Community Outreach team. In the near future, we plan to name a permanent Outreach Coordinator to lead our community engagement efforts.

Working with many of you, our community partners, our team has already begun evaluating where our team has been providing services to determine future suitability. The team has also identified and is testing new locations that might be a better fit for this new model.

We know this program will be successful because of our ability to work together, sharing ideas, listening to concerns, and supporting our Veterans. Thank you for your continued great work.

Sincerely,


Steven E. Braverman, M.D.
Director, Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Agenda March 22, 2017

- I. Call to Order & Salute to the Colors
- II. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag
- III. Chaplin's Prayer
- IV. Roll Call of Officers
- V. Reading & Approval of the February 2017 Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. VA Healthcare Meeting with Hines Director report
 - b. Facebook update
 - c. Brochures and other promotional items
 - d. Office Activity
- VIII. Committee Reports
- IX. Old Business
 - a. Office remodel update
- X. New Business
- XI. For the Good of the Commission
- XII. Adjournment

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Minutes for February 22, 2017

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors –

President Jim Ebner called the meeting to order at 5pm and lead us in the pledge of allegiance.

Delegates & Alternates Present

Bill Luther – VFW, Ottawa – John Duback – AMVETS, Ottawa – Lance Sires – American Legion, Marseilles – Scott Buennemeyer – American Legion, Marseilles – Jim Ebner – American Legion, Oglesby – Bill Phillips – VFW, Mendota – Howard Gast – American Legion, Earville – Jim Nanowski – American Legion, Ottawa – William Patterson - American Legion, Mendota.

Employees Present

Steven Kreitzer – Superintendent
Christa Washelesky – Office Manager

Reading & Approval of the February 2017 Meeting Minutes

Minutes were approved as presented

Public Comment

None

Superintendent's Report

- a. **VA Healthcare Travel Pay** - Steven Kreitzer went over the updates to travel pay and who is eligible to receive it.
- b. **Office Remodel Progress** – The office has been move to the 4th floor and the remodel will be commencing shortly. Anticipated completion is April 4th, 2017.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Minutes for February 22, 2017

Superintendent Report Continued

c. Office Activity –

Steven Kreitzer reported that there were 41 people who visited the office and 34 phone calls. The office has brought in \$230,646.82 for veterans through the end of 2017.

John Dubeck made a motion to accept the Superintendent Report and it was seconded by Scott Bunnemeyer. Motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports -None

Old Business - None

New Business

a. Announcement of new Office Manager

Christa Washelesky introduced herself and talked about her prior work history of being an Air Force Veteran and serving veterans after service. She has a degree in graphic design as well.

For the Good of the Commission

- a. **Jim Ebner** – He brought up that if a veterans organization wanted to bring in their newsletter and or list of events it might be a good way for us to work together.
- b. It was asked to get the cost of the LaSalle Nursing Home for the next meeting.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Jim Nanowski and seconded by Lance Sires. Motion passed unanimously at 5:45 pm.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

Superintendent
Steven Kreitzer



Office Manager
Christa Washelesky

Choice program process

- 1) Have an appointment that is more than 30 days out or you are more than 40 miles from an VA Medical Center or Clinic.
- 2) Let your Dr. Know that you would like to utilize the choice program as you meet one of the two criteria listed above
- 3) Once the referral has been submitted wait 24 hours and call 708-202-7200 to make sure the referral has been submitted to the choice program. If not follow their directions and let them know your preference of care.
- 4) Once everything is submitted to the Choice Program then wait 24 hours and call them at 866-606-8198. They have 7 business days to get you in the system and 5 additional business days once you have give them your preferences. It is imperative to give them your preferences upfront so you don't have to wait the additional 5 days.
- 5) If you have any issues with the Choice Program call 708-202-7200 and ask them to do a conference call with you and the Choice Program to straighten things out.
- 6) Once at the appointment make sure the provider has the Choice Program as the insurance provider and they know how to bill them. If not have them call 866-606-8198.
- 7) About a week after the appointment call the Choice Program and make sure the appointment is processing your claim. If not give our office a call 815-433-1761

Do Not at any time call the private provider and schedule your own appointment. Choice will not pay.

Do Not pay on the bill or give the provider any of your other health insurance information. Choice will not pay

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

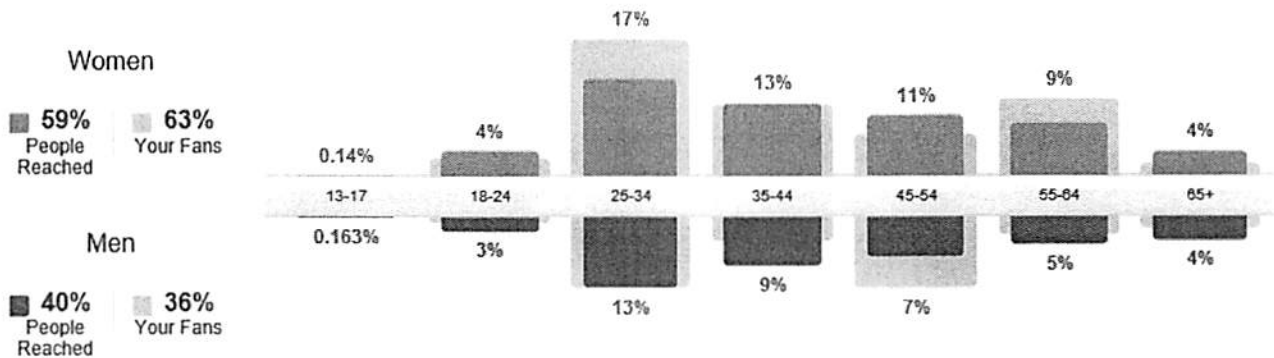
Superintendent
Steven Kreitzer



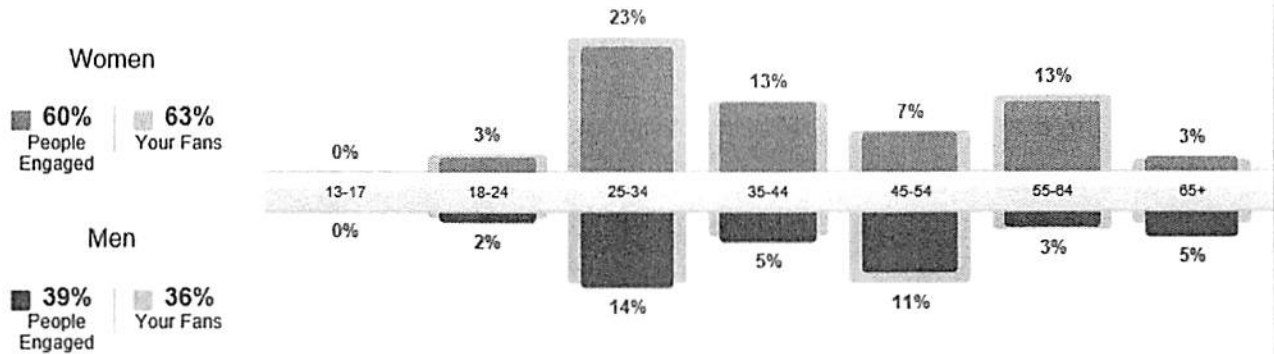
Office Manager
Christa Washelesky

Facebook Statistics

The number of people your post was served to in the past 28 days.



The people who have liked, commented on, or shared your posts or engaged with your Page in the past 28 days.



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Courthouse Room 103A
Ottawa, IL 61350

Phone 815-433-1761 Fax 815-433-6209

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

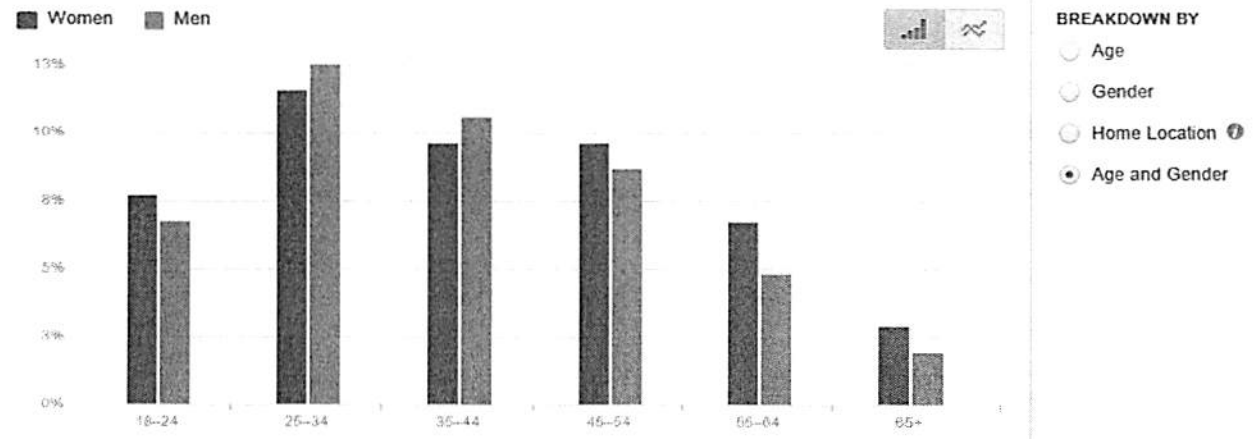
**Superintendent
Steven Kreitzer**



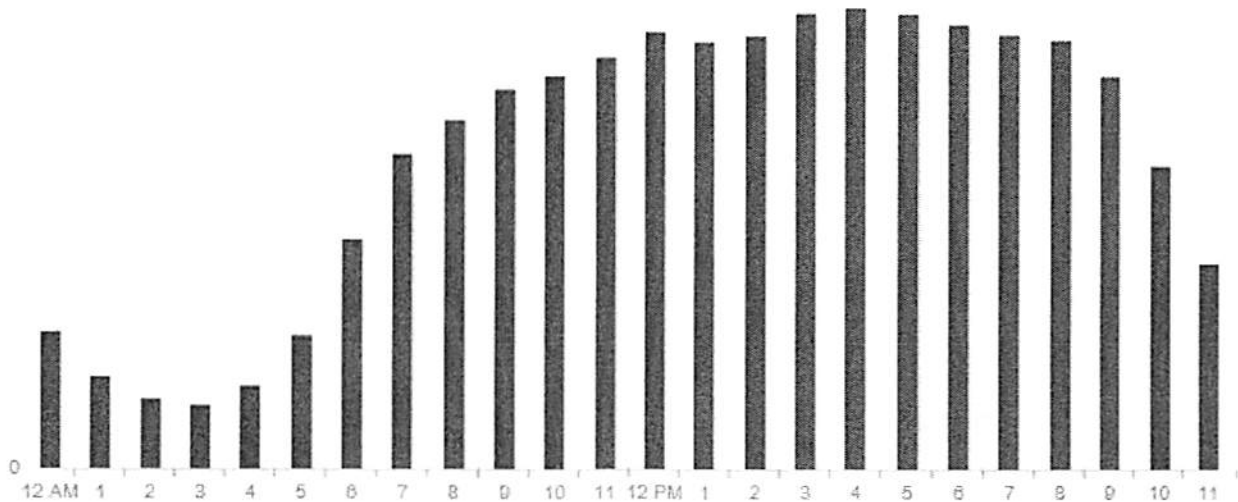
**Office Manager
Christa Washelesky**

Demographics

The age, gender and home location of people on Facebook in zip code 61350 during the past month. [Learn More.](#)



View the trend of people on Facebook in zip code 61350 during the past month. [Learn More.](#)



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LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

Superintendent
Steven Kreitzer



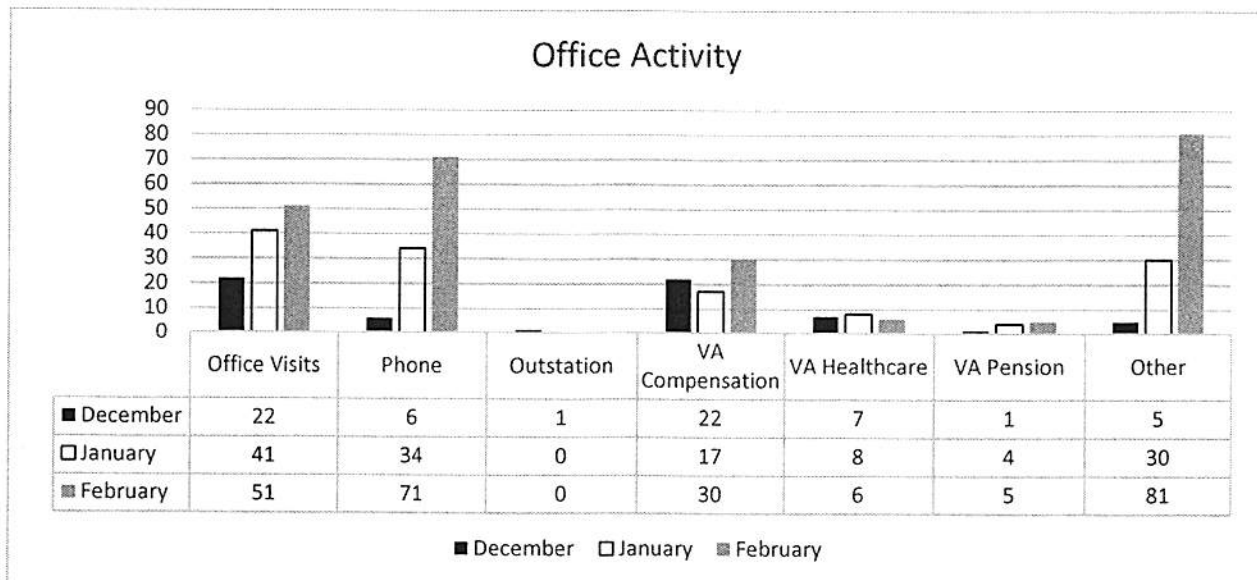
Office Manager
Christa Washelesky

March Claims Summary

Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2017 Amount	Monthly amount	Location
70%	9/2016	12/2017	\$ 18,741.94	\$ 1,338.71	North West
100%	11/2016	12/2017	\$ 39,335.04	\$ 3,277.92	South West
100% P&T	12/2016	12/2017	\$ 36,826.80	\$ 3,068.90	North East
70%	12/2016	12/2017	\$ 16,064.52	\$ 1,338.71	North West
Totals:			\$ 94,903.78	\$ 9,024.24	
Year to Date Total			\$ 325,550.60	\$ 22,986.32	

Office Activity February

Office Visits	51	VA Compensation	30
Phone	71	VA Healthcare	6
Outstation	0	VA Pension	5
		Other	81



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LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Agenda April 26, 2017

- I. Call to Order & Salute to the Colors
- II. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag
- III. Chaplin's Prayer
- IV. Roll Call of Officers
- V. Reading & Approval of the March 2017 Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. VA Healthcare Meeting with Hines Director report
 - b. CHAMPVA Brochure
 - c. Town Hall Meeting with the Hines VA Director June 1st
 - d. Open House May 19th
 - e. Office Activity
- VIII. Committee Reports
- IX. Old Business
 - a. Office remodel update
- X. New Business
 - a. Christa Washelesky – Accreditation Training update
- XI. For the Good of the Commission
- XII. Adjournment

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Minutes for March 22, 2017

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors –

President Jim Ebner called the meeting to order at 5:05pm and lead us in the pledge of allegiance.

Delegates & Alternates Present

Bill Luther – VFW, Ottawa – John Duback – AMVETS, Ottawa – Lance Sires – American Legion, Marseilles – Scott Buennemeyer – American Legion, Marseilles – Jim Ebner – American Legion, Oglesby – Howard Gast – American Legion, Earville – William Patterson - American Legion, Mendota – George Mason – VFW, Ottawa – Tom Troutman – VFW, Mendota – Nick Nekrosiouos – American Legion, LaSalle – Joe Savitch – VFW, LaSalle – Chuck Erb – VFW, Marseilles.

Officers Present

President – Jim Ebner
Vice President – Scott Buennemeyer
Guard – Absent
Chaplin – George Mason

Employees Present

Steven Kreitzer – Superintendent
Christa Washelesky – Office Manager

Reading & Approval of the February 2017 Meeting Minutes

Minutes were approved as presented

Public Comment

None

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Minutes for March 22, 2017

Superintendent's Report

- a. **VA Healthcare Meeting with the Hines Director report** - Steven Kreitzer explained that the meeting went well and the Director seemed receptive to the concerns. What some of the solutions proposed were to add routes on the bus to the Joliet CBOC for specialize care rather than just to Hines. They are also planning to expand the Joliet clinic to the point of almost being a full hospital. Both Kankakee and LaSalle CBOC's then could use that facility rather than making them go all the way into Hines. They are also planning on expanding the ability to utilize the Choice Program. There was much discussion and a handout given on how to utilize the Choice program effectively. Scott Buennemeyer and John Dubeck shared a story about his own personal frustrations with the program and what he had to do to handle the situation.
- b. **Facebook Update** - Christa Washelesky went over the Facebook page and how to find it. There have been multiple likes already and getting more likes everyday.
- c. **Brochures and other promotional Items** - Steven Kreitzer went over the brochures on the various benefits. He also explained that if any post would like to have more of the brochures than they should contact the office and we would mail them out. These are great tools if someone goes into a post and has questions on what benefits they may be eligible for.
- d. **Office Activity** – Steven Kreitzer reported that there were 51 people who visited the office and 71 phone calls. The office has brought in \$325,550.60 for veterans though the end of 2017.

John Dubeck made a motion to accept the Superintendent Report and it was seconded by Scott Bunnemeyer. Motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports -None

Old Business – Steven Kreitzer reported that the office was on track to be done by April 5th as scheduled.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Minutes for March 22, 2017

New Business - None

For the Good of the Commission

- a. Jim Ebner – stated that he went on the website and thought it was a great improvement. He also encouraged the veterans organizations to get their events into the office to get them on the website.
- b. William Luther – reported that the Kiosk was fixed again at the LaSalle Clinic. He also stated that Ottawa VFW would have a Fish Fry this Friday Night.
- c. John Dubeck – Stated that on April 22 there would be a Gold Star Mothers event at the Middle Eastern Conflict Wall in Marseilles, IL at 4pm

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by John Dubeck and seconded by Scott Buennemeyer.
Motion passed unanimously at 5:47 pm.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

Superintendent
Steven Kreitzer



Office Manager
Christa Washelesky

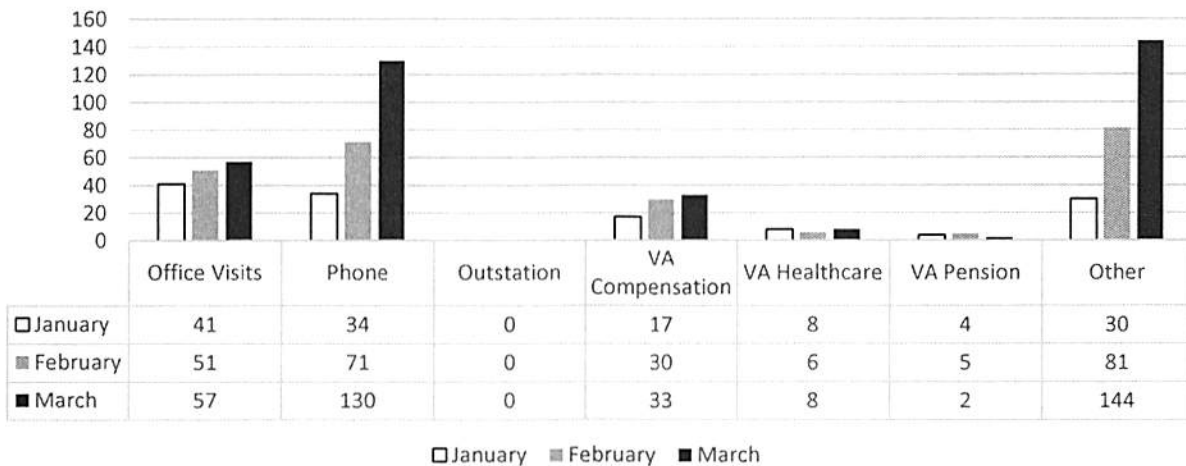
April Claims Summary

Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2017 Amount	Monthly amount	Location
100%	1/2012	12/2017	\$ 151,730.16	\$ 3,329.03	South West
20%	2/2017	12/2017	\$ 2,640.20	\$ 264.02	South East
Widows Pension	9/2016	12/2017	\$ 7,980.00	\$ 532.00	South East
100%	11/2016	12/2017	\$ 39,044.04	\$ 3,253.67	South East
DIC	11/2016	12/2017	\$ 15,050.28	\$ 1,254.19	South East
Totals:			\$ 216,444.68	\$ 8,632.91	
Year to Date Total			\$ 541,995.28	\$ 31,619.23	

Office Activity March

Office Visits	57	VA Compensation	33
Phone	130	VA Healthcare	8
Outstation	0	VA Pension	2
		Other	144

Office Activity



□ January ■ February ■ March

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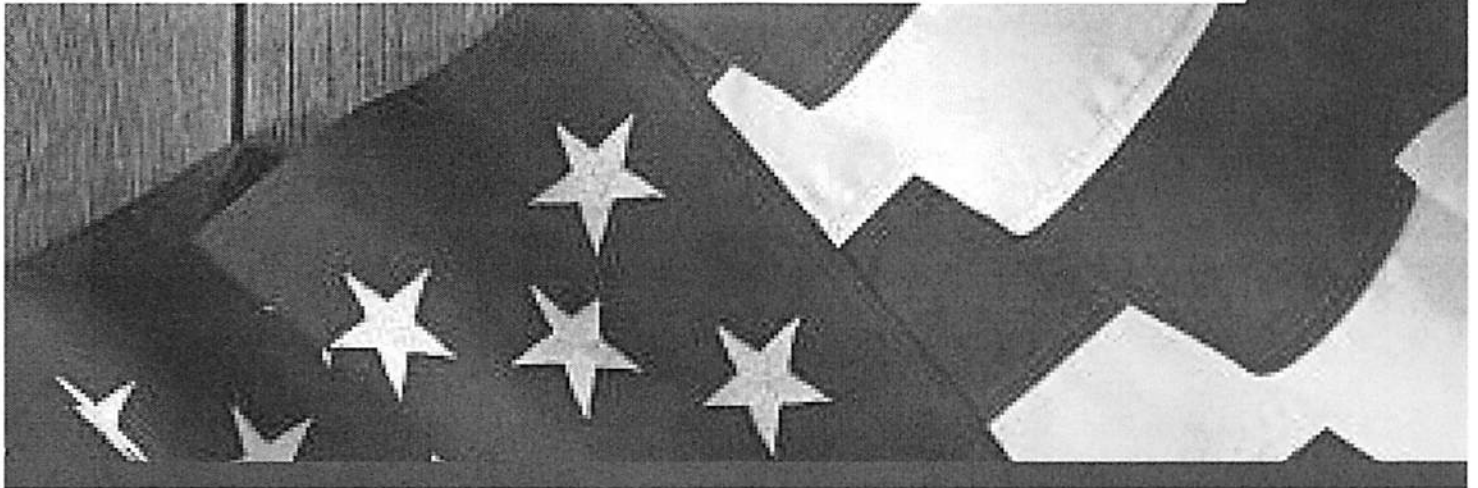
Phone 815-433-1761 Fax 815-433-6209

LASALLE COUNTY VETERANS ASSISTANCE
COMMISSION

OPEN HOUSE



FRIDAY MAY 19th, 2017 1:00p-4:00p



Join us for some light snacks to check out
the new office while inquiring about the
services we provide!

Hope to see you there!

Find us on FaceBook @LaSalleCountyVeterans

119 West Madison St., Courthouse Room 103A, Ottawa, IL 61350

Phone: 815-433-1761

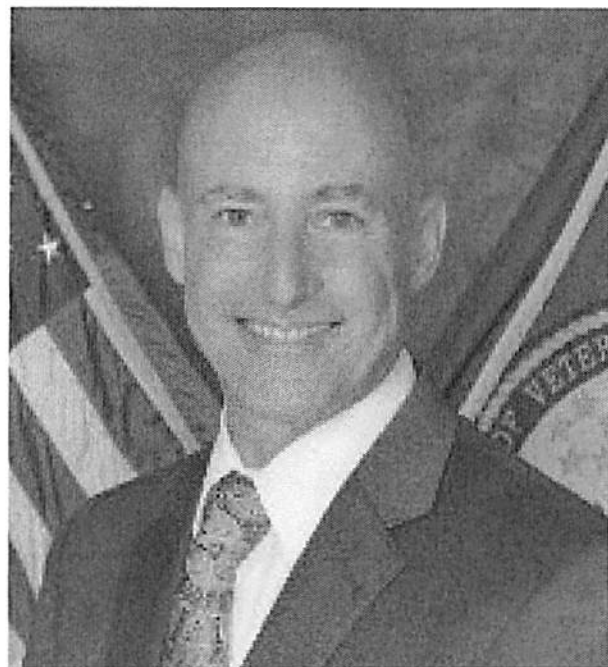
Let's Discuss
Your needs

TOWN HALL MEETING

VFW POST 4668
2325 DONAHUE ST.
LASALLE, IL

- OPEN FORUM WITH HINES VA DIRECTOR, DR. BRAVERMAN
- Q & A SESSION ON VA CARE

Thursday June 1, 2017
6:00-7:00pm



LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Agenda May 24, 2017

- I. Call to Order & Salute to the Colors
- II. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag
- III. Chaplin's Prayer
- IV. Roll Call of Officers
- V. Reading & Approval of the April 2017 Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. VA Healthcare Meeting with Hines Director report
 - b. Town Hall Meeting with the Hines VA Director June 1st
 - c. Open House Report
 - d. Strategic Priorities for the remainder of 2017
 - e. Office Activity
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
- X. For the Good of the Commission
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Minutes for April 26, 2017

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors –

President Jim Ebner called the meeting to order at 5:00pm and lead us in the pledge of allegiance.

Delegates & Alternates Present

Bill Luther – VFW, Ottawa – John Duback – AMVETS, Ottawa Scott Buennemeyer – American Legion, Marseilles – Jim Ebner – American Legion, Oglesby– William Patterson - American Legion, Mendota – George Mason – VFW, Ottawa – Tom Troutman – VFW, Mendota – Chuck Erb – VFW, Marseilles – Jack Leininger – VFW Marseilles.

Officers Present

President – Jim Ebner
Vice President – Scott Buennemeyer
Guard – Absent – Jim Nanowski
Chaplin – George Mason

Employees Present

Steven Kreitzer – Superintendent
Christa Washelesky – Office Manager

Reading & Approval of the March 2017 Meeting Minutes

Minutes were approved as presented

Public Comment

None

Superintendent's Report

- a. **VA Healthcare Meeting with the Hines Director report / Town Hall Meeting-**
Steven Kreitzer explained that the meeting went well with the Director. There are going to be a lot of changes with the CHOICE program in the near future. He also expressed excitement with going to do the town hall meeting in LaSalle June 1, 2017 at the LaSalle VFW Post.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Minutes for April 26, 2017

- b. **Open House** – The office will be having an open house to showcase the remodel and the services we offer.
- c. **Office Activity** – Steven Kreitzer reported that there were 57 people who visited the office and 130 phone calls. The office has brought in \$541,995.28 for veterans through the end of 2017.

George Mason made a motion to accept the Superintendent Report and it was seconded by John Duback. Motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports -None

Old Business – Steven Kreitzer reported that the office was completed on time and that we were very happy with the results.

New Business – Christa Washelesky went to training and gave the commission an update on what she learned. We are all very proud of her for passing and happy she has joined the team.

For the Good of the Commission

- a. John Duback stated that on May 22, from 10-1 the Hines MMU Team would be at the Ottawa American Legion.
- b. Jack Leininger stated that the Marseilles VFW is having Breakfast from 8-11 on April 30
- c. Jack Leininger also brought up about the Tenderloin Tuesdays at the Ottawa American Legion and Tacos on Friday at the Ottawa VFW.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by John Duback and seconded by Scott Buennemeyer. Motion passed unanimously at 5:43 pm.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

Superintendent
Steven Kreitzer



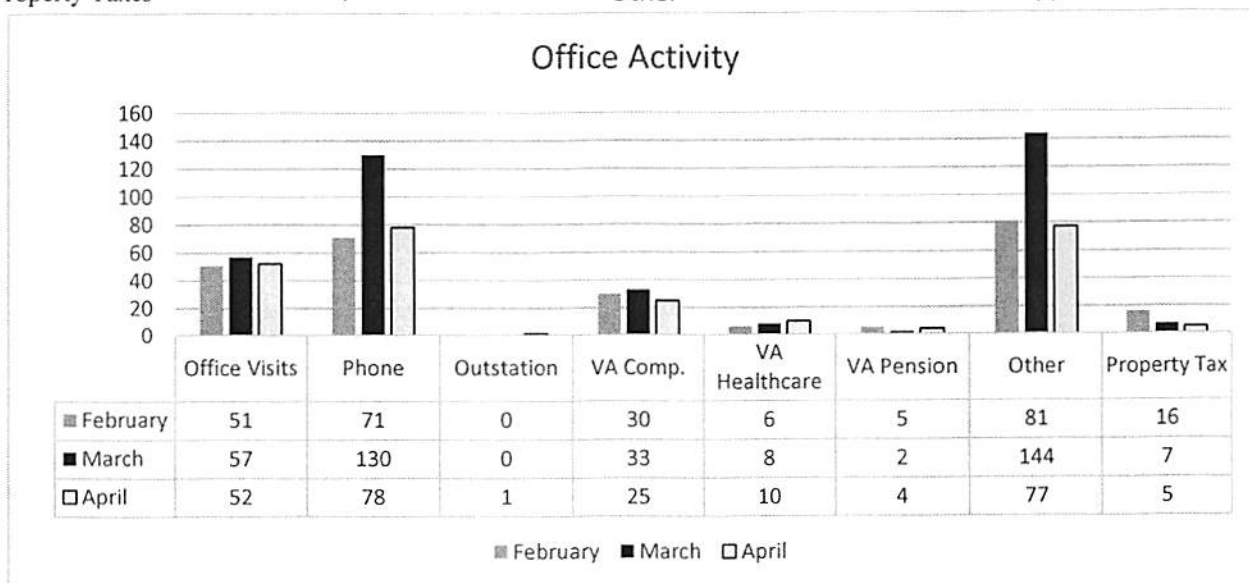
Office Manager
Christa Washelesky

May Claims Summary

Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2017 Amount	Monthly amount	Location
Pension	8/2016	12/2017	\$25,116.00	\$1,794.00	South West
10% back to 2005	1/2017	12/2017	\$18,913.34	\$133.57	South West
100%	7/2016	12/2017	\$32,158.93	\$3,529.53	South East
30%	1/2011	12/2017	\$14,471.28	\$408.97	South West
100%	12/2016	12/2017	\$41,111.88	\$3,425.99	South East
Pension	4/2017	12/2017	\$7,525.00	\$1,075.00	South East
Totals:			\$139,296.43	\$10,367.06	
Year to Date Total			\$681,291.71	\$41,986.29	

Office Activity April

Office Visits	52	VA Compensation	25
Phone	78	VA Healthcare	10
Outstation	1	VA Pension	4
Property Taxes	4	Other	77



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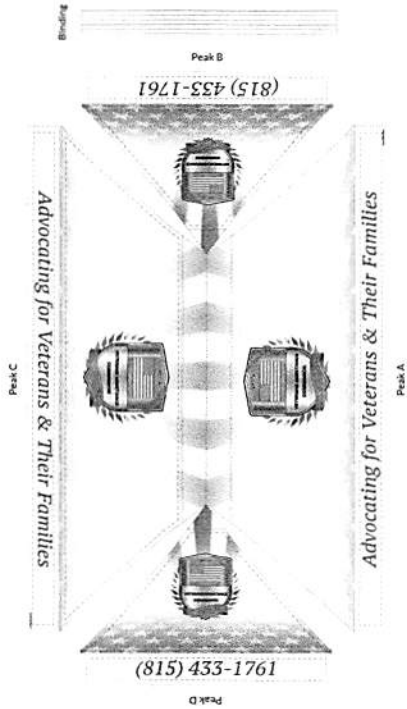
Phone 815-433-1761 Fax 815-433-6209

PRODUCTION SKETCH.

Job Name: County Veterans Assistance Commission Job Number: 1740738T

MASTERTENT™
10'x20' Series 43
(10% Scale)

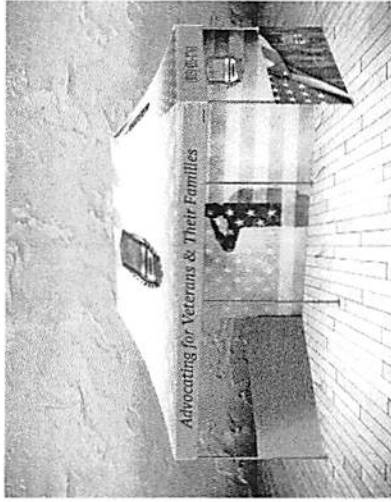
ATTENTION CUSTOMER: Please review your sketch carefully, paying special attention to spelling, grammar, print locations, finish sizes and safety lines. Once a sketch is approved, TentCraft begins production on your order exactly as shown in the approved sketch. Any changes requested post-approval are subject to additional fees and production timelines. The 3/4 view shown below is for conceptual purposes only.



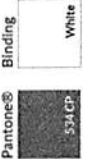
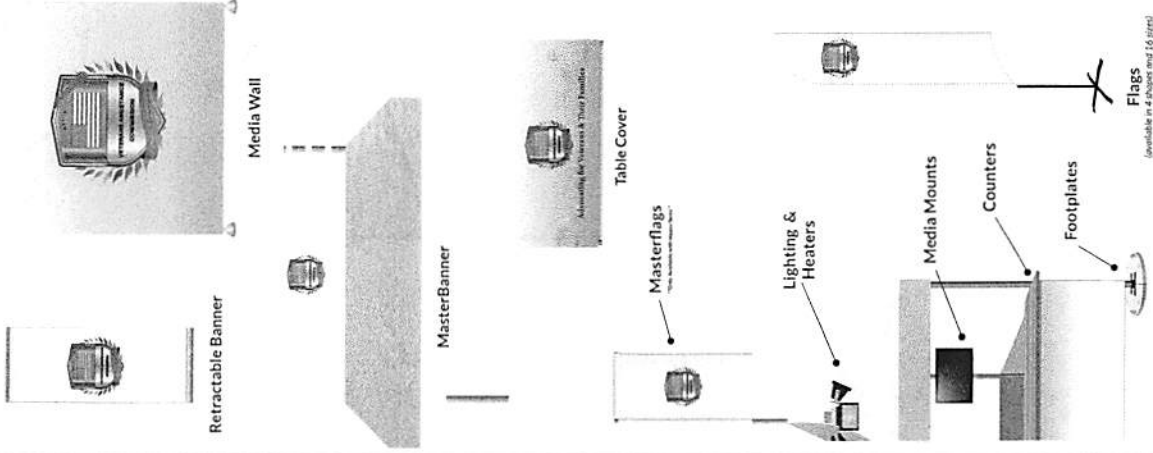
Job# 1740738T-1 Quantity: 1pc
20' ROOF UV on POLY
FINISH SIZE: 896"h x 60"w
*CUSTOMER IS SENDING US
A BETTER LOGO FILE



Job# 1740738T-2 Quantity: 1pc
20' FULL WALL - UV on POLY
FINISH SIZE: 80.75"h x 246.5"w
*INSIDE PRINT - WRAP BACKWARDS
*CUSTOMERS SENDING US
A BETTER LOGO FILE



Job# 1740738T-3 Quantity: 2pc
10' HALF WALL - UV on POLY
FINISH SIZE: 40.5"h x 130"w
*OUTSIDE PRINT
*CUSTOMERS SENDING US
A BETTER LOGO FILE



Seam
Seam in material falls here.

Safety
Keep logos and text within this area.

Visual
This line represents the finished size of the product.

Bleed
Extend your art to this line to be sure there aren't white edges on your art.

Please confirm proper Pantone colors
Note: Master Tent Logo Prints on 2 Opposite Valances.

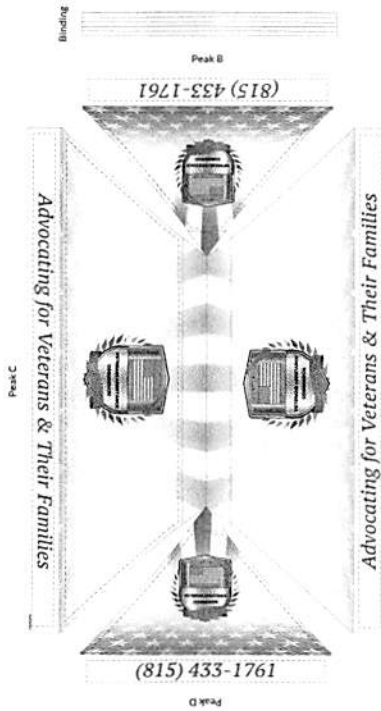
Ask us about these exciting add-ons!

PRODUCTION SKETCH.

Job Name: County Veterans Assistance Commission Job Number: 1740738T

MASTERTENT™
10'x20' Series 43
(10% Scale)

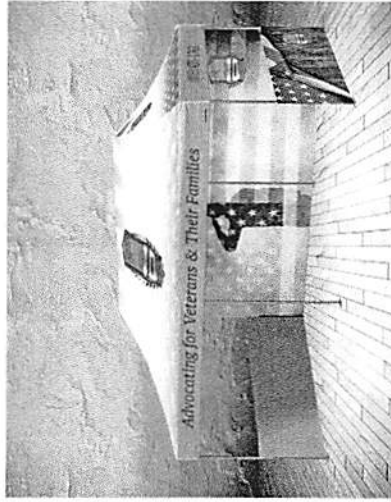
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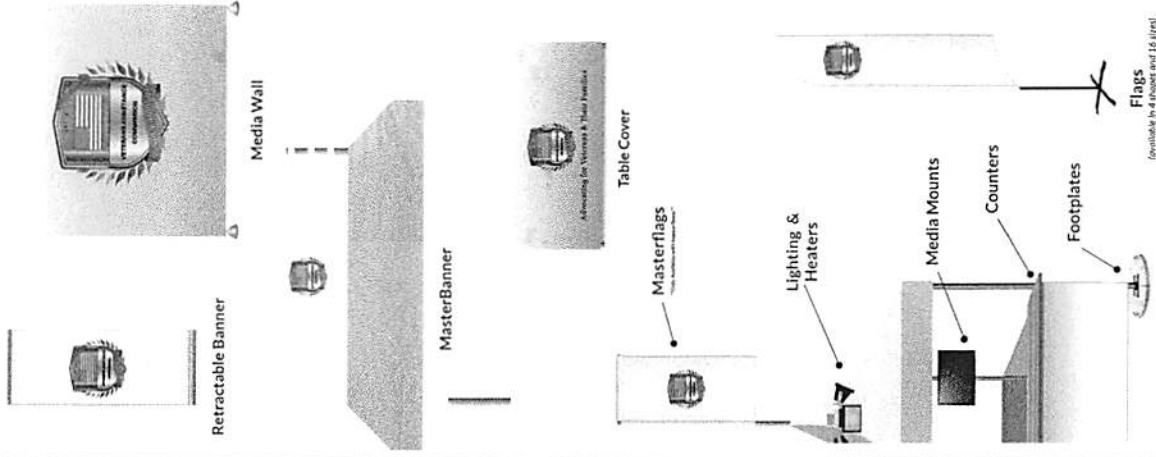
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20' ROOF UV on POLY
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Job# 1740738T-2 Quantity: 1pc
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*CUSTOMERS SENDING US
A BETTER LOGO FILE



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10' HALF WALL - UV on POLY
FINISH SIZE: 40.5" h x 130" w
*OUTSIDE PRINT
*CUSTOMERS SENDING US
A BETTER LOGO FILE



Scam Scan in material. Talk here.
Safety Keep logos and text within this area.
Visual This line represents the finished size of the product.
Bleed Extend your art to this line to be sure there aren't white edges on your art.

Note: MasterTent Logo Prints on 2 Opposite Valances.

Ask us about these exciting add-ons!

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

Superintendent
Steven Kreitzer



Office Manager
Christa Washelesky

Mission: To advocate for veterans and their families.

Vision: To make sure no military family or veteran in LaSalle County goes without knowing we support our troops

2017 Strategic Goals

- 1) To expand the number of services provided for veterans in LaSalle County
 - a. This will be measured by the number of new programs created
- 2) Promote the services we can provide throughout the community through media and outreach
 - a. Measured by:
 - i. Our goal by the end of 2017 to have 250 Followers
 - ii. Foot Traffic and Phone Call's to the office consistently as compared to January 2017
- 3) Conduct impactful outreach efforts
 - a. Our goal is to see 10 people per month during our outreach efforts.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

Superintendent
Steven Kreitzer



Office Manager
Christa Washelesky

In the past 6 months the office has seen tremendous change.

- Started a file tracking system to figure out when to archive files
- Claims management database to access information and help veterans more efficiently when they come into our office. As well as providing us quantifiable information we can track and report to the commission
- We have started the process to scan and microfilm all of our old files so that we can destroy the hard copies. Getting away from having all this paper and file cabinets
- We hired a new Veterans Service Officer Christa Washelesky – She has gone to Nebraska and is now accredited by the VA. And Christa is going to Hines to find out more on how we can serve our Women veterans better. Brochures on our services
- We are now on Facebook with 151 Followers
- Featured in the local newspaper 5 times in 6 months
- Increased foot traffic every month since I took over in December
- Hines VA Director coming out June 1, 2017 to the LaSalle VFW. First time the director has come out to address to concerns of veterans in an open format.
- Working on getting more veterans to go to Joliet instead of Hines for their specialized care
- Open House May 19th 1-4pm
- Records Office has started an Honors Rewards Program
- Working with the Assessors office on Property taxes
- I'm visiting every active veterans organization in LaSalle County to let them know of the changes and what's going on.
- Oversaw the design and work for the remodel.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Agenda June 28, 2017

- I. Call to Order & Salute to the Colors
- II. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag
- III. Chaplin's Prayer
- IV. Roll Call of Officers
- V. Reading & Approval of the May 2017 Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. VA Healthcare Meeting with Hines Director report
 - b. VA Budget Overview – Individual Unemployability
 - c. Office Activity
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
- X. For the Good of the Commission
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Minutes for May 24, 2017

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors –

President Jim Ebner called the meeting to order at 5:03pm and lead us in the pledge of allegiance.

Delegates & Alternates Present

Bill Luther – VFW, Ottawa – John Duback – AMVETS, Ottawa - Scott Buennemeyer – American Legion, Marseilles – Jim Ebner – American Legion, Oglesby – George Mason – VFW, Ottawa – Tom Troutman – VFW, Mendota – Jack Leininger – VFW Marseilles – Nick Nekrosius – American Legion, LaSalle – Bob Riley – Amvets, Ottawa – Howard Gast – American Legion, Earlville – Jim Nanowski – American Legion, Ottawa.

Guest – Mike Kassip – LaSalle County Board Member

Officers Present

President – Jim Ebner
Vice President – Scott Buennemeyer
Guard – Absent – Jim Nanowski
Chaplin – George Mason

Employees Present

Steven Kreitzer – Superintendent

Reading & Approval of the April 2017 Meeting Minutes

Minutes were approved as presented

Public Comment

None

Superintendent's Report

- a. **VA Healthcare Meeting with the Hines Director report / Town Hall Meeting-**
Steven Kreitzer explained that there is going to be an app soon to schedule your VA appointments.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Minutes for May 24, 2017

- b. **Town Hall** – The Town Hall meeting with the Hines VA Medical Center Director. He is coming on June 1st to the LaSalle VFW.
- c. **Strategic Priorities** – Went over the various goals that are being set for us to meet by December 2017. These goals also include the expansion of outreach efforts next year.
- d. **Office Activity** – Steven Kreitzer reported that there were 52 people who visited the office and 78 phone calls. The office has brought in \$681,291.71 for veterans through the end of 2017.

Committee Reports -None

Old Business – None

New Business – None

For the Good of the Commission

- a. We collected all the Memorial Day Services information for distribution on Facebook.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by William Luther and seconded by George Mason.
Motion passed unanimously at 5:41 pm.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

Superintendent
Steven Kreitzer



Office Manager
Christa Washelesky

Hines Director Meeting **Points of interest**

- 1) Homeless Veterans housing is expanding by about 50 rooms that include 1 bedroom and 2 bedroom apartments for veterans with families. This is being done by a private investor and is the second building by Freedoms Pass.
- 2) The Veterans Health Administration is adopting the same healthcare tracking system as the Department of Defense. This should improve the communication of the two agencies and allow continuity of care.
- 3) Health Fair at the LaSalle CBOC in October. More information to follow.
- 4) At Hines they have had some weapons found on individuals during altercations. They will be instituting random baggage checks at various entrances to act as a deterrent.
- 5) Hines is going to have a Veterans Day Ceremony on 11/10/2017 on or about 10am.
- 6) They are going to begin working with other agencies in order to streamline processes
 - a. Work with GSA in order oversee heir vacant properties. The VA is going to sell over 300 vacant buildings and repurpose and integrate another 140.
 - b. The Hud/Vash program for homeless veterans is going to be managed by Hud.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

Superintendent
Steven Kreitzer



Office Manager
Christa Hammers

May Claims Summary

Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2017 Amount	Monthly amount	Location
Pension	8/2016	12/2017	\$ 25,116.00	\$ 1,794.00	South West
10% back to 2005	1/2017	12/2017	\$ 18,913.34	\$ 133.57	South West
100%	7/2016	12/2017	\$ 32,158.93	\$ 3,529.53	South East
30%	1/2011	12/2017	\$ 14,471.28	\$ 408.97	South West
100%	12/2016	12/2017	\$ 41,111.88	\$ 3,425.99	South East
Pension	4/2017	12/2017	\$ 7,525.00	\$ 1,075.00	South East
Totals:			\$ 139,296.43	\$ 10,367.06	
Year to Date Total			\$ 681,291.71	\$ 41,986.29	

Office Activity April

Office Visits	52	VA Compensation	25
Phone	78	VA Healthcare	10
Outstation	1	VA Pension	4
		Other	77
		Property Taxes	4

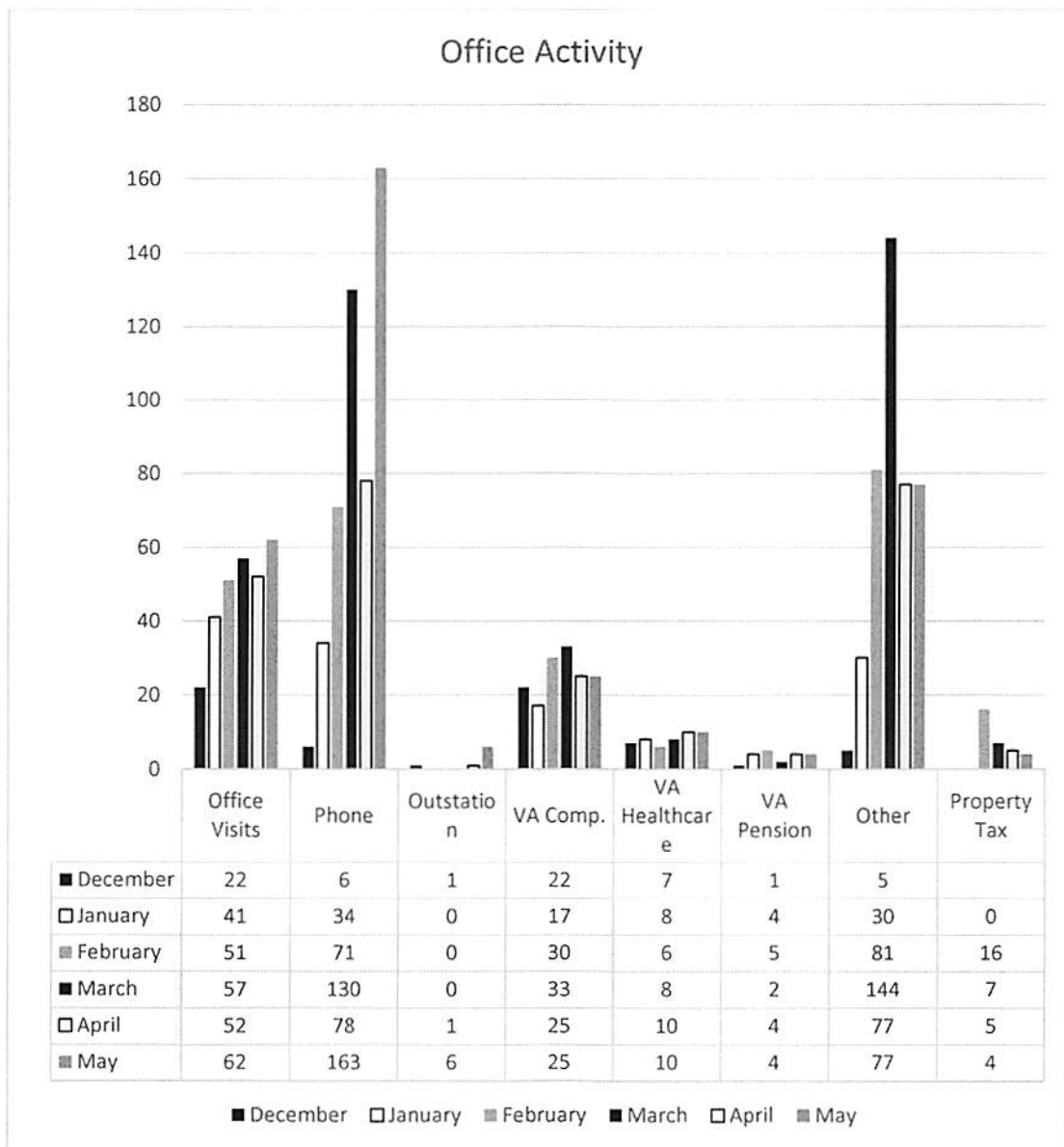
119 W. Madison St.
 Courthouse Room 103A
 Ottawa, IL 61350
 Phone 815-433-1761 Fax 815-433-6209

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

Superintendent
Steven Kreitzer



Office Manager
Christa Hammers



119 W. Madison St.
 Courthouse Room 103A
 Ottawa, IL 61350
 Phone 815-433-1761 Fax 815-433-6209

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Agenda July 26, 2017

- I. Call to Order & Salute to the Colors
- II. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag
- III. Chaplin's Prayer
- IV. Roll Call of Officers
- V. Reading & Approval of the June 2017 Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. Office Budget For Approval
 - b. Office Activity
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
- X. For the Good of the Commission
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Minutes for June 28, 2017

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors –

President Jim Ebner called the meeting to order at 5:00pm and lead us in the pledge of allegiance.

Delegates & Alternates Present

Bill Luther – VFW, Ottawa – John Duback – AMVETS, Ottawa - Scott Buennemeyer – American Legion, Marseilles – Jim Ebner – American Legion, Oglesby – George Mason – VFW, Ottawa – Tom Troutman – VFW, Mendota – Jack Leininger – VFW Marseilles – Nick Nekrosius – American Legion, LaSalle – Bob Riley – Amvets, Ottawa – Howard Gast – American Legion, Earlville – Jim Nanowski – American Legion, Ottawa.

Officers Present

President – Jim Ebner
Vice President – Scott Buennemeyer
Guard – Jim Nanowski
Chaplin – George Mason

Employees Present

Steven Kreitzer – Superintendent

Reading & Approval of the May 2017 Meeting Minutes

Minutes were approved as presented

Public Comment

None

Superintendent's Report

- a. **VA Healthcare Meeting with the Hines Director report / Town Hall Meeting-**
Steven Kreitzer Gave a handout to go over all the changes coming up and went over then with the group.
- b. **VA Budget Overview** – Went over the various goals that are being set by the Department of Veterans Affairs and how those goals are tied to the budget.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Minutes for June 28, 2017

- c. **Office Activity** – Steven Kreitzer reported that there were 62 people who visited the office and 163 phone calls. The office has brought in \$55,234.38 for veterans through the end of 2017.

Committee Reports -None

Old Business – None

New Business – None

For the Good of the Commission

- a. Veterans groups went over their local events.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by William Luther and seconded by Jim Nanowski.
Motion passed unanimously at 5:41 pm.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



July Claims Summary

Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2017 Amount	Monthly amount	Location
Pension	4/2017	12/2017	\$8,600.00	\$1,075.00	South East
Claim	3/2017	12/2017	\$4,848.62	\$692.66	South West
Pension	2/2017	12/2017	\$17,940.00	\$1,794.00	South East
50%	2/2017	12/2017	\$16,772.80	\$1,677.28	South East
90%	3/2017	12/2017	\$17,052.39	\$1,894.71	South West
100%	1/2012	12/2017	\$242,161.32	\$3,125.99	South East
Totals:			\$307,375.13	\$10,259.64	
Year to Date Total			\$1,043,901.22	\$52,245.93	

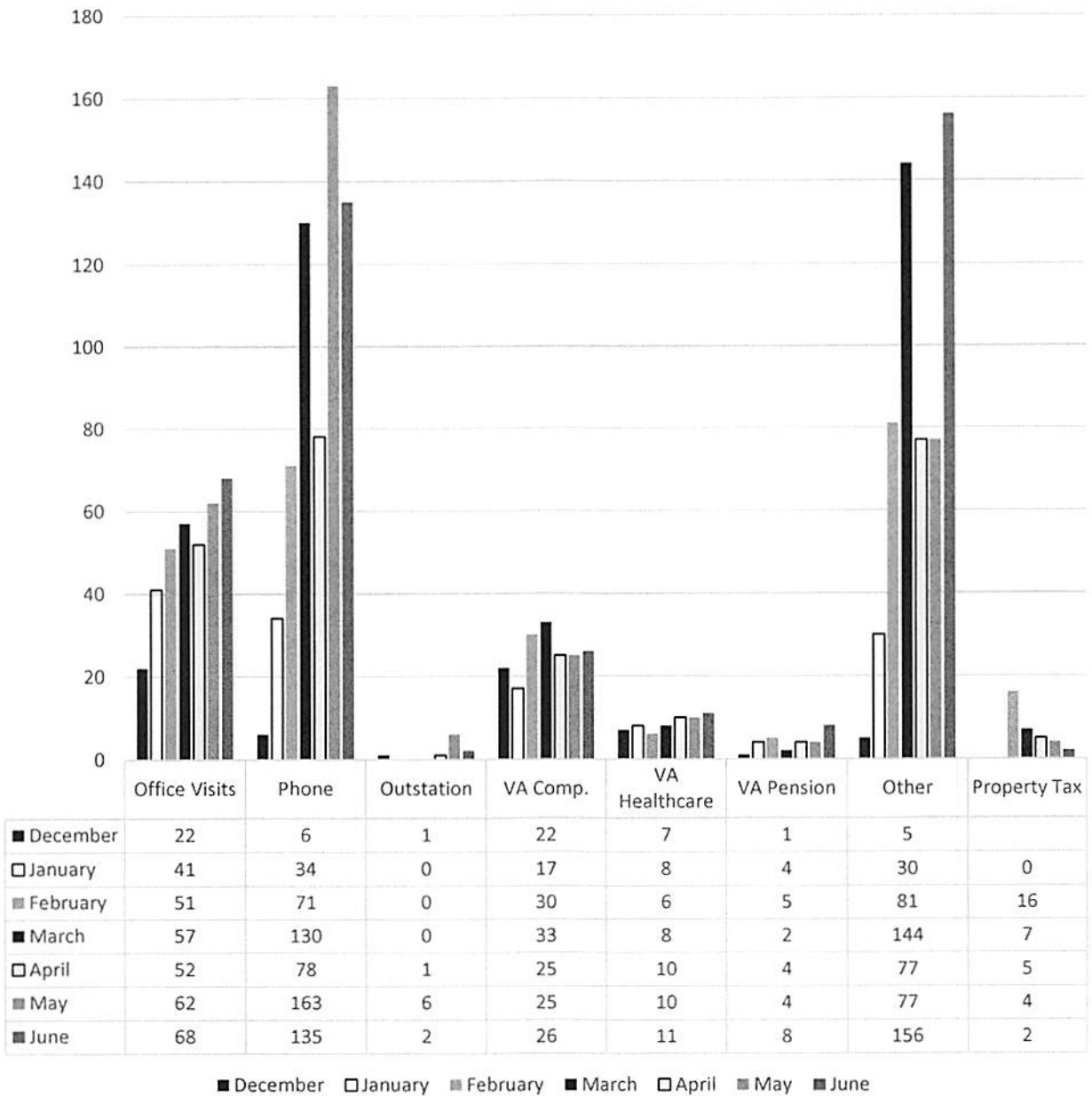
Office Activity June

Office Visits	68	VA Compensation	26
Phone	135	VA Healthcare	11
Outstation	2	VA Pension	8
LaSalle	2	Other	156
Mendota	N/A	Property Taxes	2
Streator	N/A		

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Office Activity



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Account Code	Income	Budget 2017	2017 To Date	2017 Balance	2018 Proposed Budget
301001	Tax Levy	\$ 192,804.00			
308001	Interest Income	\$ 1,973.94			
350001	Misc Income	\$ -			
	Total	\$ 194,777.94			
	Expenses				
441001	Medical (help with medical exp)	\$ 10,000.00	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 1.00
502001	Maintenance & repair Equipment	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
502003	Building Repair	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 47,119.00	\$ (17,119.00)	\$ 1.00
503001	Mileage	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 530.32	\$ 1,469.68	\$ 4,000.00
510004	Telephone	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 979.39	\$ 520.61	\$ 2,000.00
511001	Rental (office)	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ -	\$ 3,000.00
538001	Emergency Relief	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 11,586.19	\$ 3,413.81	\$ 20,000.00
540001	Postage	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 35.55	\$ 1,464.45	\$ 1,500.00
541001	Education	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 1,557.00	\$ 443.00	\$ 6,000.00
541004	Dues and Subscriptions	\$ 400.00	\$ 651.00	\$ (251.00)	\$ 1,500.00
541005	Library	\$ 750.00	\$ 385.00	\$ 365.00	\$ 1,000.00
541006	Printing	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 19.64	\$ 1,480.36	\$ 1,500.00
596001	New Programs	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 324.00	\$ 676.00	\$ 1.00
598001	MISC	\$ 1.00	\$ 1.00	\$ -	\$ 1.00
599001	Contingencies	\$ 27,000.00	\$ 83.12	\$ 26,916.88	\$ 10,000.00
601001	Office Supplies	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 14,632.16	\$ 367.84	\$ 12,000.00
704001	Software Purchases	\$ 1,000.00		\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,500.00
801001	Employee Dishonesty Bond	\$ 300.00	\$ -	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00
807001	Liability ins.	\$ 7,000.00	\$ -	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 7,000.00
810001	Health and Life insurance	\$ 33,776.00	\$ -	\$ 33,776.00	\$ 35,000.00
810005	Umbrella Insurance	\$ 750.00	\$ -	\$ 750.00	\$ 750.00
811001	Workers Compensation	\$ 750.00	\$ -	\$ 750.00	\$ 750.00
900000	Office Supervisor	\$ 52,000.00	\$ 30,556.51	\$ 21,443.49	\$ 52,000.00
900101	Temp Help	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 8,595.01	\$ 9,404.99	\$ 5,000.00
900000-999	Superintendent	\$ 65,000.00	\$ 46,323.60	\$ 18,676.40	\$ 65,000.00
	Administrative Assistant				\$ 25,000.00
	Outreach Events				\$ 2,000.00
	Document Scanning				\$ 11,000.00
	Retirees Health Insurance				\$ 28,622.40
	Total	\$ 289,727.00	\$ 166,378.49	\$ 123,348.51	\$ 296,926.40

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LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

Superintendent
Steven Kreitzer



Office Manager
Christa Hammers

In the past 8 months the office has seen tremendous change.

- Started a file tracking system to figure out when to archive files
- Claims management database to access information and help veterans more efficiently when they come into our office. As well as providing us quantifiable information we can track and report to the commission
- We have started the process to scan and microfilm all of our old files so that we can destroy the hard copies. Getting away from having all this paper and file cabinets
- We hired a new Veterans Service Officer Christa Hammers– She has gone to Nebraska and is now accredited by the VA. And Christa is going to Hines to find out more on how we can serve our Women veterans better. Brochures on our services
- We are now on Facebook with 247 Followers
- Featured in the local newspaper 7 times in 8 months
- Increased foot traffic every month since I took over in December
- Hines VA Director came out June 1, 2017 to the LaSalle VFW. First time the director has come out to address to concerns of veterans in an open format.
- Working on getting more veterans to go to Joliet instead of Hines for their specialized care
- Open House May 19th 1-4pm
- Records Office has started an Honors Rewards Program
- Working with the Assessors office on Property taxes
- Steven Kreitzer visiting every active veterans organization in LaSalle County to let them know of the changes and what's going on.
- Oversaw the design and work for the remodel.
- Working with Hines VA Medical Center to get bus transportation from the LaSalle Clinic to Joliet VA Clinic
- Started our outreach efforts to LaSalle and Streator with Mendota starting in August. More locations will be added as time allows.
- Working towards more outreach at community events.
- Have received over a Million dollars for veterans in LaSalle County through Compensation and Pension benefits.
- Working with Compensated Work Therapy at Hines who just received a grant to help LaSalle County Veterans.

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LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Agenda October 25, 2017

- I. Call to Order & Salute to the Colors
- II. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag
- III. Chaplin's Prayer
- IV. Roll Call of Officers
- V. Reading & Approval of the August 2017 Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. Steve Training Summary
 - b. Office Activity
 - c. Changes with the Department of Veterans Affairs
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
 - a. Annual election of officer's in November
- X. For the Good of the Commission
 - a. Announcement to the Office
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Meeting Minutes 8/23/2017

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors –

President Jim Ebner called the meeting to order at 5:01pm and lead us in the pledge of allegiance.

Delegates & Alternates Present

Bill Luther – VFW, Ottawa – John Duback – AMVETS, Ottawa Jim Ebner – American Legion, Oglesby – George Mason – VFW, Ottawa – Tom Troutman – VFW, Mendota – Jack Leininger – VFW Marseilles – Nick Nekrosius – American Legion, LaSalle – Bob Riley – AMVETS, Ottawa – Howard Gast – American Legion, Earlville - Lance Sues – American Legion, Marseilles – Doug Grieve – American Legion, Tonica – Joel Musks – AMVETS, Ottawa – Jerry Fuchs, American Legion, Leland – Bill Paterson – American Legion, Mendota.

Officers Present

President – Jim Ebner
Vice President – Absent
Guard – Absent
Chaplin – George Mason

Employees Present

Steven Kreitzer – Superintendent

Reading & Approval of the July 2017 Meeting Minutes

Minutes were approved as presented

Public Comment

Larry Johnson came in to present about bringing the Vietnam wall back to Ottawa in 2018. The last time it was here was 1987 and wanted to know if there was any interest from the veterans organizations. There were some questions and did seem to be some interest. He will bring more information as it is available to the veterans organizations

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Superintendent's Report

- a. **Office Activity** – Steven Kreitzer reported that there were 79 people who visited the office and 149 phone calls. The office has brought in \$141,519.19 this month for veterans through the end of 2017 totaling \$1,185,420.41.
- b. **September meeting cancellation due to Steven Kreitzer being at annual training.** There was some discussion on this and the motion was made by Bob Reiley and seconded by Jack Leninger. Motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent report and budget was motioned for approval by Leonard Lance and seconded by Nick Nekrosius. Motion passed unanimously.

Old Business – None

New Business – None

For the Good of the Commission

- a. Veterans groups went over their local events.
- b. Humana Representative – Paul Sherock presented on their Free Medicare Supplement plan for Veterans.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Bob Riley and seconded by Jerry Fuchs. Motion passed unanimously at 5:55 pm.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



September Claims Summary

Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2017 Amount	Monthly amount	Location
100% SMC S+K	5/2017	12/2017	\$ 21,177.18	\$ 3,529.53	North East
100%	8/20/2015	12/2017	\$ 48,606.93	\$ 3,181.65	South Ease
		Totals:	\$ 21,177.18	\$ 3,529.53	
	Year to Date Total		\$ 1,206,597.59	\$ 67,913.14	

Office Activity August

Office Visits	69		VA Compensation	30
Phone	162		VA Healthcare	10
Outstation	12		VA Pension	5
LaSalle	5		Other	186
Mendota	4		Property Taxes	0
Streator	3			

October Claims Summary

Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2017 Amount	Monthly amount	Location
10%	2/2017	12/2017	\$ 1,330.00	\$ 133.00	South West
Pension	5/2017	12/2017	\$ 287.00	\$ 41.00	North East
Pension	3/2017	12/2017	\$ 810.00	\$ 90.00	South East
100%	5/23/2017	12/2017	\$ 24,706.71	\$ 3,529.53	North East
		Totals:	\$ 27,133.71	\$ 3,793.53	
	Year to Date Total		\$ 1,233,731.30	\$ 71,706.67	

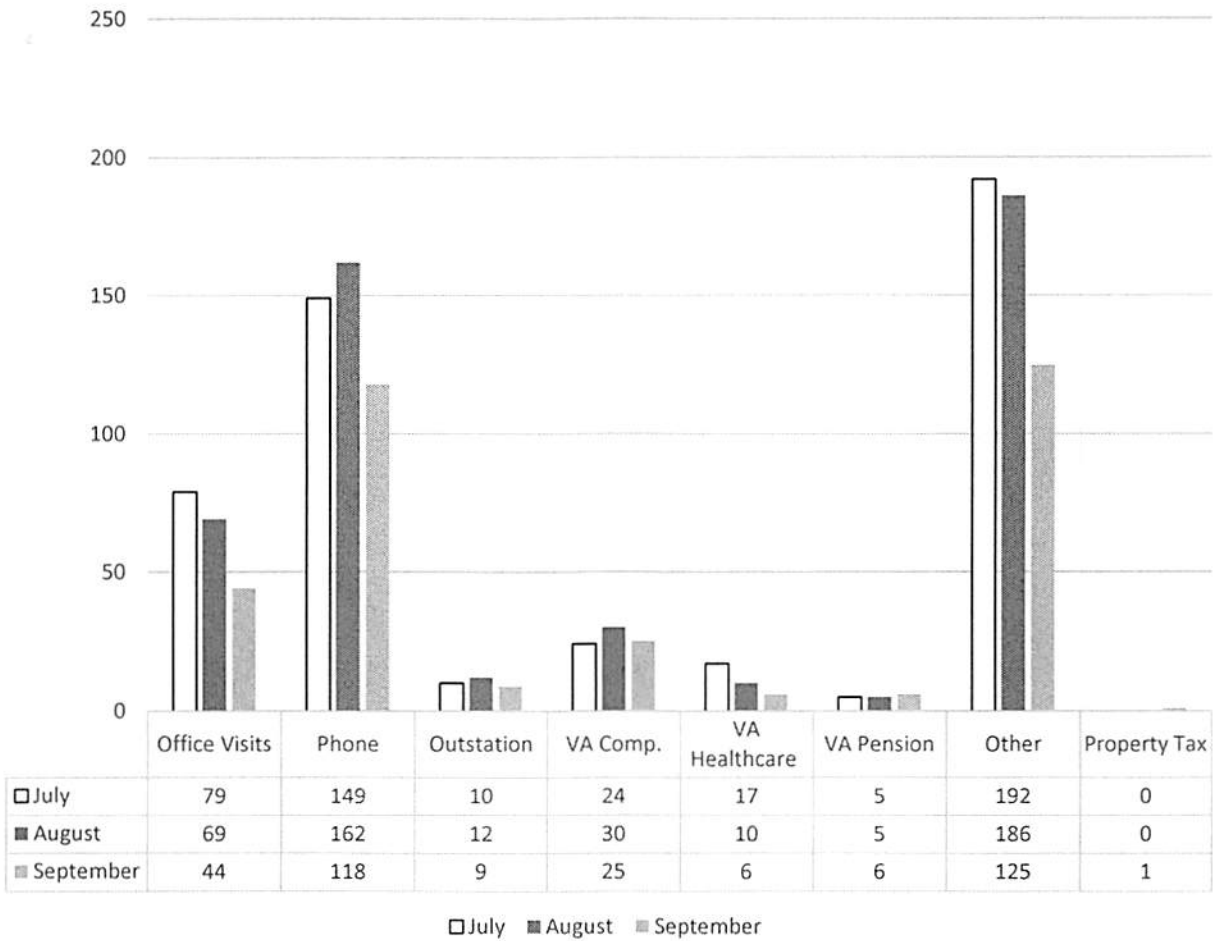
Office Activity September

Office Visits	44		VA Compensation	25
Phone	118		VA Healthcare	6
Outstation	9		VA Pension	6
LaSalle	6		Other	125
Mendota	2		Property Taxes	1
Streator	1			

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Office Activity



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LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission



Illinois Association of County Veterans Assistance Commissions Training summary:

- 1) Sleep Apnea – Had a sleep specialist from Peoria IL come and talk to us about sleep apnea and risk conditions for veterans and treatment options. This is becoming a big issue for our Gulf War Veterans, OEF, and OIF in relation to burn pits.
- 2) John Marshal School of Law – They are a program out of Chicago, IL and they train Lawyers to represent Veterans before the Department of Veterans Affairs. They went over some of their senior projects and claims that they have represented veterans on. It was interesting to see how they prepare and present their cases similar and different from how our office does.
- 3) Substance abuse and rehabilitation – This was presented on by the Danville VAMC staff and they talked about what programs veterans can go through in order to help them recover. Their program is 6 weeks long compared to most 4 week programs. They have seen a higher success rate as it take time to retrain you brain and minimize cravings.
- 4) Went over the Medical Discharge process for service members to know how it is supposed to work and when to push back. The service members PEBLO (Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officer) is supposed to be their representative during this process but sometimes they aren't the best and that's where we can help.

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 16, 2017

VA Announces Veterans Coordinated Access & Rewarding Experiences ('CARE') Act

Replaces Current '30-day/40-mile' System With Patient/Provider-centric Decision-making

WASHINGTON — Today, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it has presented the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees with the administration's draft proposal of the Veterans Coordinated Access & Rewarding Experiences (CARE) Act, designed to improve Veterans' experiences with and access to health care, building on the best features of VA's existing community care programs and strengthening VA's ability to furnish care in its facilities.

In order to meet Veterans' needs quickly and in a way that is easy to understand, the bill aims to:

- Clarify and simplify eligibility requirements,
- Set the framework for VA to continue to build a high-performing network,
- Streamline clinical and administrative processes,
- Implement new care coordination support for Veterans, and
- Merge and modernize community care programs.

"We want Veterans to work with their VA physicians to make informed decisions that are best for their clinical needs, whether in the VA or in the community, and this bill does just that, while strengthening VA services at the same time," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin.

The bill would replace the current wait-time and distance eligibility criteria under the Choice Program ("30-day/40-mile") with criteria that:

- Place the Veteran and his or her physician at the center of the decision process on how and where to get the best care available,
- Ensure VA is improving medical facilities and staffing levels to meet Veterans' needs in areas where VA care is substandard, and
- Offer options for Veterans to use a network of walk-in clinics for minor illnesses and injuries.

The CARE Act also includes:

- Proposals for new workforce tools to assist in maintaining and strengthening VA's world-class medical staff,
- A number of business process enhancements to improve financial management of the Community Care program,
- Provisions that would strengthen VA's ability to partner with other federal agencies and streamline VA's real property management authorities.

More information about access to care at the VA can be found at <https://www.accesstocare.va.gov/>.

###

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.govFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 19, 2017

VA Seeks Partnerships to Build and Improve Health-care Facilities

WASHINGTON — Today, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released a Request for Information (RFI) seeking interest from potential partners who want to support efforts to build world-class health-care facilities for America's Veterans.

Public Law 114-294, the Communities Helping Invest through Property and Improvements Needed for Veterans Act of 2016, also known as the "CHIP-IN Act," authorizes VA to accept donations from up to five non-federal entities to help fund and expedite the construction of health-care related capital projects.

The CHIP-IN Act aligns with VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin's efforts to modernize the department and enhance service to Veterans by streamlining and instituting infrastructure improvements to health-care facilities.

"Our strategic partnerships are one of many valuable tools that allow us to provide assistance to our Veterans," Shulkin said. "Donations through the CHIP-IN Act will help us deliver health-care facilities for our Veterans in a faster, more cost-effective manner."

The first CHIP-IN Act partner is helping to build a new Ambulatory Care Center in Omaha, Nebraska. The center will provide a much-needed facility to Veterans in the region faster than a traditional funding and construction timeframe, and with a reduced burden on the taxpayer. VA is looking forward to developing similar partnerships for future CHIP-IN Projects through the RFI.

The RFI, available on the Federal Business Opportunities website, is seeking interest from non-federal entities, including 501(c)(3) nonprofits, private entities, and donor groups, for the remaining four partnership opportunities. The donations must be: (1) real property that includes a constructed facility or that is to be used as the site of a facility constructed by the donor, or (2) a facility to be constructed by the donor on VA-controlled property. Interested parties must respond by Jan. 15, 2018.

The CHIP-IN Act will help VA forge even closer bonds to the community by developing strategic partnerships with existing and new partners that have close ties to the communities they serve. The CHIP-IN Act is also a roadmap for communities that want to support VA's efforts to address the emerging needs of Veterans in a collaborative, cost-efficient manner, which will benefit taxpayers and communities broadly.

The RFI can be found at:

https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=df2a80ea513b931ba8e0030504d27a5&tab=core&_cvview=0

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VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.govFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 15, 2017

VA Releases Veteran Suicide Statistics by State

Report shows state, age, gender and most common method

WASHINGTON — Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released findings from its analysis of Veteran suicide data for 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia.

The release is part of VA's comprehensive [examination](#) of more than 55 million records, from 1979 to 2014, which will be used to develop and evaluate suicide prevention programs across every state.

The new data include Veteran suicide rates and overall suicide rates by state, age group, and gender and list the most common suicide methods. Analysis of this information will help VA's Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention gain insight into high-risk populations and share that information with community-based health care providers and partners, continuing to expand the network of support for Veterans.

Among VA findings:

- Findings show there is variability across the nation in the rates and numbers of deaths by suicide among Veterans. Overall, the Veteran rates mirror those of the general population in the geographic region, with the highest rates in Western states. While we see higher rates of suicide in some states with smaller populations, most Veteran suicides are still in the heaviest populated areas.
- The suicide rate among middle-age and older adult Veterans remains high. In 2014, approximately 65 percent of all Veterans who died by suicide were age 50 or older.
- After adjusting for differences in age and sex, risk for suicide was 22 percent higher among Veterans when compared to U.S. non-Veteran adults. After adjusting for differences in age, risk for suicide was 19 percent higher among male Veterans when compared to U.S. non-Veteran adult men. After adjusting for differences in age, risk for suicide was 2.5 times higher among female Veterans when compared to U.S. non-Veteran adult women.

"These findings are deeply concerning, which is why I made suicide prevention my top clinical priority," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. "I am committed to reducing Veteran suicides through support and education. We know that of the 20 suicides a day that we reported last year, 14 are not under VA care. This is a national public health issue that requires a concerted, national approach."

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a Veteran in crisis, can call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text to 838255.

For a full copy of the report, click here: [State Data](#). For more information on VA's suicide prevention campaign, visit [Be There](#). Reporters covering this report are strongly encouraged to visit www.ReportingOnSuicide.Org for important guidance on ways to communicate suicide.

###

New Federal Veterans ID Card Coming Soon

Update: The VA has announced that the Veterans Identification Cards will be released in November 2017. The VA has announced there is no anticipated cost for the Veterans ID card, even though they are authorized to charge a fee. In the mean time, we have updated this article to include instructions for printing a VA Proof of Service Letter so you can show an official letter from the VA proving your military service.

SHOPPING FOR A HOME?

Don't wait for rising interest rates to cut into your homebuying budget. The experts at Veterans United can help you understand how changing rates affect your purchasing power.

GET A QUOTE NOW

 Veterans United. | NMLS #1907
Home Loans | Not a government agency.

Congress passed the **Veterans Identification Card Act**, a new bill that would create a government issued Veterans ID card, something many veterans have been requesting for years. The bill was unanimously passed by both the House and the Senate. President Obama signed the bill into law on July 20, 2015. The Veterans Identification Card Act authorized the VA to begin issuing Veterans ID cards to all veterans with an honorable discharge. However, delays have pushed back the initial issue date until 2017.



A Solution Many Veterans Have Been Seeking

Before the law was passed, the **military only** issues ID cards for current servicemembers, retirees, and certain veterans with a 100% disability rating. There are, however, several ID card options veterans can use to prove their military service. These include a **VA Health Identification Card** used for

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health care (if eligible), or a state-issued drivers license with a Veterans Designation (most, but not all states currently offer this).

Many veterans who were not eligible for the above cards had a difficult time proving their military service, and often carried a **DD Form 214**, which contains personal information that should be kept secure (such as the veteran's SSN, birthday, etc.). **Best practices for avoiding identity theft** recommend leaving your SSN and other personally identifying information in a locked and secure place to avoid potential loss.

Veterans: What can you afford?

Estimate your monthly payment with our free VA Mortgage Calculator.

Your Monthly Estimated Payment: **\$1,293**

Veterans United Home Loans

CALCULATE PURCHASING POWER

Not a government agency. NMLS #1907

Related: More ways to prove military service.

UPDATE: The VA Will Begin Issuing Veterans ID Cards in 2017

The most recent announcement from the VA states they will begin issuing ID Cards in November 2017, as first mentioned by Amy Bushatz **on Military.com**.

How to Apply for the new VA Veterans ID Card: There will be an online application process, but the sign up form has not yet been made available. We will update this page when the new form is live. The VA has also not announced how long it will take to issue ID cards that are created online. Veterans must have an honorable discharge to be eligible for this ID Card. Learn more about **how to get your discharge rating upgraded**.

Why did it take so long to implement these ID Cards? This bill was signed into law in July 2015, and the VA was given limited guidance on how to implement the ID Cards. While this seems like a fairly simple process on the surface, there is a lot that needed to be established behind the scenes. The VA had to establish the processes to verify military service, design an ID card, ensure they have the procedures, materials, and personnel in place. The bill authorized the VA to begin as soon as early 2016, but the process took much more time to develop and implement. The VA is also authorized to charge individuals to cover the administrative costs of issuing the ID Cards. However, recent announcements have not included a cost for this Veterans ID Card.

Veterans ID Card for Identification Use & Proof of

World, Orlando FL

Military Life Insurance Guide – How Much, What Type, & Where to Buy it

AAFES and Military Exchanges to Allow Veterans to Shop Online – Coming in 2017

Blue Star Museums – Free Admission for Military Members and their Families

The Military Wallet
12,103 likes

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Service Only

The new ID cards will only be valid for proving military service. The new cards cannot be used for **benefits through the VA**, to access military installations, or to receive other military or veterans benefits. However, those who are currently eligible for benefits through the military or VA will continue to have them through their current methods.

These ID Cards will include a photo of the veteran, their name, and a non-Social Security identification number.

How Veterans Can Prove Their Service

There are several methods for proving your military service. Here are the most common methods and availability:



\$0 Down VA Home Loans



Find out what you're eligible for! Prequalify today with Veterans United.

- **Military ID Card:** Current servicemembers and retirees can use their issued military ID card.
- **Veterans Health Identification Card:** Available through the VA for eligible veterans.
- **State Issued Drivers License or ID Card:** Available through most states.
- **VA Proof of Service Letter:** Available through the VA's eBenefits Logon Service. See instructions below.
- **Veterans Organization Membership Card:** Many Veterans Service Organizations give members ID cards that certify their military service.
- **More methods to prove military service.**

Click on the links in the section above for more information for each of these methods. See below for instructions for obtaining a VA Proof of Service Letter:

VA Proof of Service Letter Instructions

Here is an example of a VA Proof of Service Letter. Follow the guide below to generate and print your own Proof of Service Letter.



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

April 29, 2016

Ryan Guina

Dear Mr. Guina:

Please use the cut-out card below as verification of your honorable service in the Uniformed Services of the United States.

<front of card>

<back of card>

<p>This card is to serve as proof the individual listed below served honorably in the Uniformed Services of the United States.</p> <p>Ryan Guina</p> <p>Effective as of: April 29, 2016</p>	<p>United States of America Department of Veterans Affairs</p> <p>General Benefit Information 1-800-827-1000 Health Care Information 1-877-222-VETS (8387)</p>
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You can print a VA Proof of Service Letter from the VA eBenefits website by first logging into your account [on the eBenefits site](#), then using the following instructions

1. At the top of the page under the eBenefits logo, hover your mouse over the "Manage" tab. In the dropdown that appears below it, click on "Documents and Records."
2. In the left column on the following page, click on "VA Letters."
3. At the bottom of the following page, click on "Veteran Proof of Service."
4. Print.

Step One: Documents & Records

Apply Manage Learn National Resource Directory Employment Center Contact

Status Tracking

Documents and Records

Contact and Direct Deposit

VA Representative

Compensation

Education

Health Care

Housing

Insurance

Pension

Click This Link

Step Two: Access Your VA Letters

Access Your Documents and Records

Service Member Personnel Information View a summary of your personnel information in DEERS.	Service Member Civilian Employment Information View and update your civilian employment and student information.
VA Letters Download and modify VA letters, including civil service preference, commissary and exchange privileges, and service/benefit verification.	VA Medical Records Use the VA Blue Button tool to view, print, and download information from your My HealtheVet account.
myPay Change or review pay information, leave and earning statements, W-2s and more.	



Step Three: Download Proof of Service Letter

Download VA Letters

Verify that your address is correct, then select a letter template from the list that follows your address.

Step 1: Confirm Your Address on File

Below is your address on file with Compensation and Pension. If this is incorrect, please update your contact information before proceeding to Step 2 (on right) to generate your letter.

Step 2: Select a letter from the following list.

- **Benefit Summary - Veteran Benefits**
Create a Benefit Summary Letter to show you are receiving certain benefits from VA.
- **Benefit Verification**
Send this letter to confirm details about the VA benefit that you are currently receiving.
- **Disabled Veteran Civil Service Preference**
Send this letter to establish your Veteran's preference for civil service employment.
Related: Application for 10-Point Veteran Preference
Send this form if you are applying for Federal jobs and want to apply an additional 10-point examination credit based on your military service or that of a spouse or child.
- **Proof of Creditable Prescription Drug Coverage**
Create this letter to show you are eligible for Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage.
- **Proof of Minimum Essential Coverage**
Create this letter to show you meet the individual responsibility requirement under the Affordable Care Act.
- **Service Verification**
Send this letter to confirm your Branch of Service, Date Entered on Active Duty, and Date Discharged from Active Duty.
- **Veteran Proof of Service**
Create a Proof of Service card to confirm you've honorably served in the Armed Forces.

Step Four: Clicking the Veteran Proof of Service Letter link will open a new tab or automatically download a PDF (depending on your browser settings). You can print this letter, then cut out the card. An image of my letter is copied above with my personal information redacted.



Veterans: What can you afford?

Estimate your monthly payment with our free VA Mortgage Calculator.

\$1,293

Veterans United Home Loans

CALCULATE PURCHASING POWER

Not a government agency. NMLS #1907

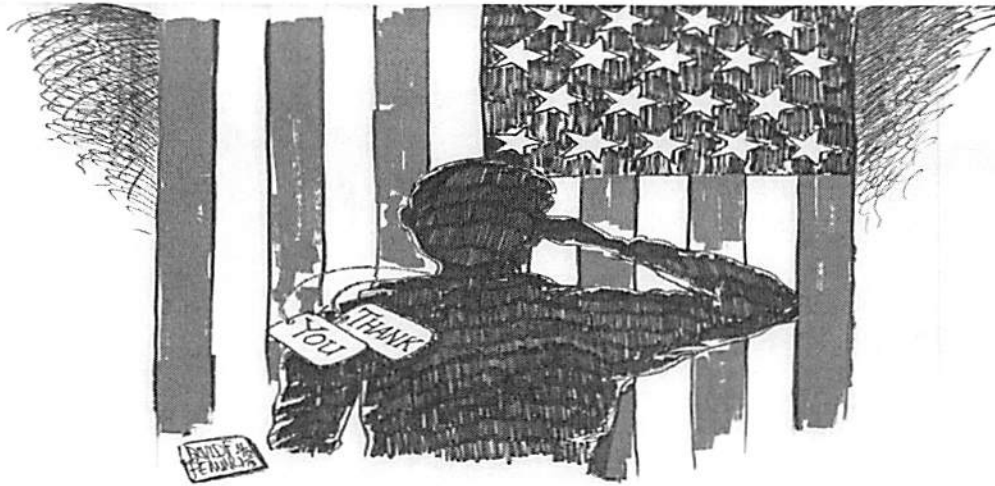
We will update this article in the future when more details become available.

Share  

Date published: October 9, 2017. Last updated: October 11, 2017.

Previous Article: ←Shades of Green Military Resort at Walt Disney World, Orlando FL

Join Our FREE Newsletter



VETERANS DAY RECEPTION
at
Mendota Area Senior Services

WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER 8th 1:30 PM

**MASS invites all Veterans to a
reception to thank you for your service
and to meet Christa Hammers the
representative from the LaSalle County
Veterans Assistance Commission.**

Illinois

Veteran Suicide Data Sheet



The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) conducted the Nation's most comprehensive analysis of Veteran suicide rates in the United States. The resulting report, released in 2016, examined more than 55 million records from 1979 to 2014 in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. Data from the report have allowed us to examine Veteran suicide rates in each state and region.

This Illinois Veteran Suicide Data Sheet is based on a collaborative effort among VA, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). The statistics herein are derived from multiple data sources, including the VA Office of Enterprise Integration, the VA Serious Mental Illness Treatment Resource and Evaluation Center, VA Post-Deployment Health Services, the VA Center of Excellence for Suicide Prevention, and the Defense Suicide Prevention Office. Cause of death was identified through the NCHS National Death Index (NDI). For additional information, please email Dr. Megan McCarthy, Deputy Director, Suicide Prevention, VA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, at megan.mccarthy@va.gov.

Illinois Veteran Suicide Deaths, 2014

Sex	Veteran Suicides
Total	193
Male	183
Female	10

Midwestern Region

Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Kansas
Michigan
Minnesota
Missouri
Nebraska
North Dakota
Ohio
South Dakota
Wisconsin



Illinois, Midwestern Region^a, and National Veteran Suicide Deaths^{b,c}, by Age Group, 2014

Age Group	Illinois Veteran Suicides	Midwestern Region Veteran Suicides	National Veteran Suicides	Illinois Veteran Suicide Rate	Midwestern Region Veteran Suicide Rate	National Veteran Suicide Rate
Total	193	1,516	7,388	30.2	36.4	38.4
18-34	32	250	1,171	62.3	79.2	70.4
35-54	62	493	2,193	43.8	52.3	47.7
55-74	61	517	2,594	21.8	27.4	30.4
75+	38	256	1,430	22.8	25.2	32.0

After accounting for differences in age, the Veteran suicide rate in Illinois was not significantly different from the national Veteran suicide rate ($p=0.1418$)^d.



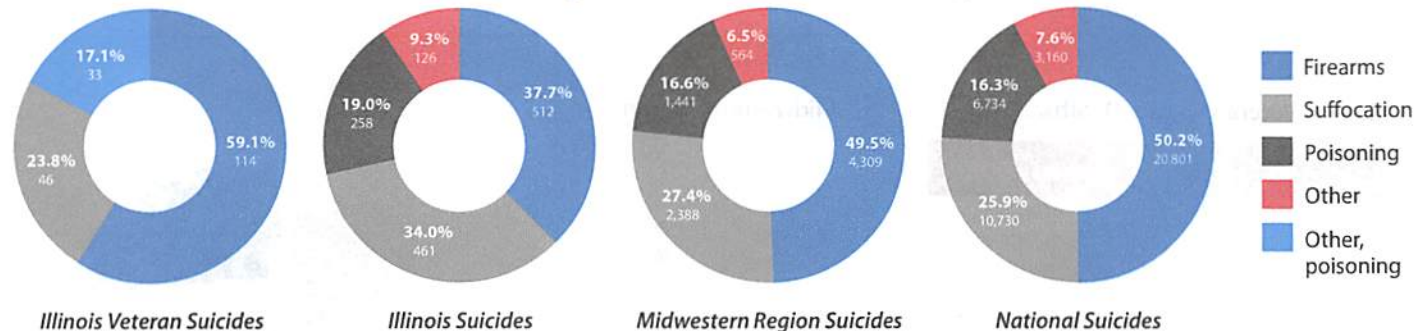
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Mental Health and
Suicide Prevention

Illinois Veteran and Overall Illinois, Midwestern Region^a, and National Suicide Deaths^{b,c,e}, by Age Group, 2014

Age Group	Illinois Veteran Suicides	Illinois Total Suicides	Midwestern Region Total Suicides	National Total Suicides	Illinois Veteran Suicide Rate	Illinois Suicide Rate	Midwestern Region Suicide Rate	National Suicide Rate
Total	193	1,357	8,702	41,425	30.2	13.7	16.7	17.0
18-34	32	367	2,411	10,732	62.3	12.2	15.6	14.5
35-54	62	511	3,304	15,473	43.8	14.8	18.8	18.4
55-74	61	378	2,299	11,637	21.8	14.4	15.8	17.5
75+	38	101	688	3,583	22.8	12.9	15.5	18.1

After accounting for differences in age, the Veteran suicide rate in Illinois was significantly higher than the overall national suicide rate ($p < .0001$)^d.

Illinois Veteran and Overall Illinois, Midwestern Region, and National Suicide Deaths by Method^f, 2014



Statistics contained herein are derived from the U.S. adult population 18 years of age or older. Suicide rates displayed are standard unadjusted mortality rates per 100,000 people. These rates are based on the number of suicide deaths within the 2014 calendar year divided by the population estimates multiplied by 100,000. The national statistics displayed include the contiguous United States, plus Alaska and Hawaii. The overall state, regional, and national rates presented include both Veterans and non-Veterans. Significance testing and rankings are derived from the direct age-adjusted rates, using the 2000 standard U.S. population^g. Because suicide rates based on less than 20 suicide deaths are considered unreliable, any comparisons of age-adjusted rates with underlying age-specific rates with less than 20 suicide deaths should be interpreted with caution.

A customary "rule of twenty" was applied to all rates based on a number of suicides that was less than 20. These rates are marked with an asterisk (*) as unreliable because rates calculated on a small number of deaths are considered unstable, and a small change in the number of suicides can result in a large change in the rate.

The method of suicide death is based on the cause of death listed on the state death certificate using the International Classification of Diseases, 10th revision (ICD-10), and for which the underlying cause of death is defined as (a) the disease or injury which initiated the train of events leading directly to death, or (b) the circumstances of the accident or violence which produced the fatal injury (World Health Organization, Manual of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases, Injuries, and Cause of Death, based on the recommendations of the Ninth Revision Conference, 1975; Geneva, 1977). For purposes of this data sheet, the ICD-10 codes used to define suicide deaths are X60-X84 and Y87.0.

^a Midwestern region includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

^b Rates presented are crude rates per 100,000. Death counts and rates are suppressed when based on 0-9 people. Rates calculated with a numerator of less than 20 are considered unreliable, as indicated by an asterisk (*).

^c Veteran and overall population estimates used for rate calculations are obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-year estimates. Specific population estimates used in rate calculations are available upon request.

^d Suicide rates presented here are unadjusted for age and are influenced by the underlying age distribution of the state or region. Age-adjusting suicide rates ensures that differences in rates are not due to differences in the age distributions of the populations being compared. In some cases, the results of comparisons of age-adjusted rates differ from those of unadjusted rates.

^e National, regional, and Illinois state total suicide counts are obtained from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) WONDER online database. For more information on CDC WONDER, please refer to <http://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>.

^f Methods are defined based on ICD-10 codes X72 to X74 for firearm, X60 to X69 for poisoning (including intentional overdose), and X70 for suffocation (including strangulation). "Other" includes cut/pierce, drowning, fall, fire/flame, other land transport, struck by/against, and other specified or unspecified injury.

^g Klein, RJ, and Schoenborn, CA. Age adjustment using the 2000 projected U.S. population. Healthy People Statistical Notes, no. 20. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. January 2001.

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**Fact Sheet**Office of Public Affairs
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.gov**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP)*****Facts About Veteran Suicide: August 2017*****Overview**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) believes every Veteran suicide is a tragic outcome. Regardless of the numbers or rates, one Veteran suicide is one too many. VA is spreading the word throughout VA that *suicide prevention is everyone's responsibility*. These new data about Veteran suicide will inform our suicide prevention programs and policies, especially for groups at elevated risk for suicide, including older and female Veterans. VA is addressing Veterans' needs through strategic partnerships with community and federal allies and seeks to enhance these partnerships. Meanwhile, we continue to serve as a leader in evidence-based care for suicide prevention.

VA relies on multiple sources of information to identify deaths that are likely due to suicide and has undertaken the most comprehensive analyses of Veteran suicide rates in the U.S. We have examined over 55 million records from 1979 to 2014 from all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. This effort extends VA's knowledge from the previous report issued in 2010, when over 3 million records from 20 states were available.

Veteran Suicide Statistics 2014

- An average of 20 Veterans died by suicide each day. Six of the 20 were users of VA health services in 2013 or 2014.
- Veterans accounted for 18% of all deaths by suicide among U.S. adults, while Veterans constituted 8.5% of the U.S. population.
- Approximately 67% of all Veteran deaths by suicide were the result of firearm injuries.
- The suicide rate among middle-aged and older adult Veterans remains high. In 2014, approximately 65% of all Veterans who died by suicide were age 50 or older.
- After adjusting for differences in age and sex, risk for suicide was 22% higher among Veterans when compared to U.S. civilian adults.
- After adjusting for differences in age, risk for suicide was 19% higher among male Veterans when compared to U.S. civilian adult men.
- After adjusting for differences in age, risk for suicide was 2.5 times higher among female Veterans when compared to U.S. civilian adult women.

**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**Veterans Health Administration
Office of Mental Health and
Suicide Prevention

Overview of Data for 2001–2014

- In 2014, the rate of suicide among all Veterans was 35.6 per 100,000.
 - Since 2001, the age-adjusted rate of suicide among U.S. Veterans has increased by 31.1%.
- In 2014, the rate of suicide among U.S. civilian adult men was 25 per 100,000.
 - Since 2001, the age-adjusted rate of suicide among U.S. civilian adult men has increased by 2.6%.
- In 2014, the rate of suicide among U.S. male Veterans was 37.2 per 100,000.
 - Since 2001, the age-adjusted rate of suicide among U.S. male Veterans has increased by 29.7%.
- In 2014, the rate of suicide among U.S. civilian adult women was 7.2 per 100,000.
 - Since 2001, the age-adjusted rate of suicide among U.S. civilian adult women has increased by 40.1%.
- In 2014, the rate of suicide among U.S. female Veterans was 19 per 100,000.
 - Since 2001, the age-adjusted rate of suicide among U.S. female Veterans has increased by 62.4%.

VA Aggressively Undertaking New Measures to Prevent Suicide

Veterans Crisis Line Expansion

- The 24/7 Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) provides immediate access to mental health crisis intervention and support. Veterans can call the Veterans Crisis Line — 1-800-273-8255 and then press 1 — to reach highly skilled responders trained in suicide prevention and crisis intervention. The VCL also includes a chat service and texting option. We have modified phone systems to allow for direct connection to the VCL by dialing “7” when calling a VA medical center (VAMC).
- Each responder receives intensive training on a wide variety of topics in crisis intervention, substance use disorders, screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment.
- Since its establishment and through June 2017, the VCL has:
 - Answered nearly 3 million calls, made nearly 354,000 chat connections, and responded to more than 75,000 texts.
 - Initiated the dispatch of emergency services to callers in imminent suicidal crisis nearly 82,000 times.
 - Provided more than 475,000 referrals to a VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC), thus ensuring Veterans are connected to local care.

Using Predictive Analytics to Identify Those at Risk and Intervene Early

- Screening and assessment processes have been set up throughout the system to assist in the identification of patients at risk for suicide.
- VA will use predictive modeling to determine which Veterans may be at highest risk of suicide so providers can intervene early.



- Veterans in the top 0.1% of risk (who have a 43-fold increased risk of death by suicide within a month) are identified before clinical signs of suicide are evident in order to save lives before a crisis occurs.
- Patients who have been identified as being at high risk receive an enhanced level of care, including missed appointment follow-ups, safety planning, follow-up visits, and individualized care plans that directly address their suicidality.

Bolstering Mental Health Services for Women

Since 2005, VA has seen a 154% increase in the number of women Veterans accessing VHA mental health services. In fiscal year (FY) 2015, 182,107 women Veterans received VA mental health care.

- VA has enhanced provision of care to women Veterans by focusing on training and hiring Designated Women's Health Providers (DWHPs) at every site where women access VA, with 100% of VAMCs and 90% of community-based outpatient clinics having DWHPs.
- VA has trained nearly 2,500 providers in women's health and continues to train additional providers to ensure that every woman Veteran has the opportunity to receive primary care from a DWHP.
- VA now operates a Women Veterans Call Center (WVCC), created to connect with women Veterans to inform them about eligible services. As of February 2016, the WVCC received 30,399 incoming calls and made about 522,038 outbound calls, successfully reaching 278,238 women Veterans.

Expanding Telemental Health Services

- VA is leveraging telemental health care by establishing 10 regional telemental health hubs across the VA health care system.
- In FY 2015, 12% of all Veterans enrolled for VA care received telehealth-based care, totaling more than 2 million telehealth visits by 677,000 Veterans, including 380,000 telemental health visits.
- Since FY 2003, VHA has provided more than 2 million telemental health encounters, expanding its role as a world leader in telehealth and telemental health services, including services provided directly to Veterans' homes.

Free Mobile Apps to Help Veterans and Their Families

VA has deployed a suite of 13 award-winning mobile apps to support Veterans and their families, with tools to help them manage emotional and behavioral concerns. These include:

- **PTSD Coach** (released 2011; 233,000 downloads in 95 countries) is a widely acclaimed VA and Department of Defense (DoD) joint project, winning numerous awards. It is a tool for self-management of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and includes a self-assessment tool; educational materials about PTSD symptoms, treatment, and related conditions; relaxation and focusing exercises designed to address symptoms; and immediate access to crisis resources, personal support contacts, or professional mental health care.



- **CBT-i Coach** for insomnia (released 2013; 86,000 downloads in 87 countries) was a collaborative effort between the VA National Center for PTSD (NCPTSD), Stanford University Medical Center, and the DoD's National Center for Telehealth and Technology (T2). CBT-i Coach is a mobile phone app designed for use by people who are having difficulty sleeping and are participating in cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia, guided by a health care professional.
- **ACT Coach** for depression (released 2014; 23,000 downloads in 93 countries) supports people currently participating in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) who want to use an app in conjunction with their therapist to bring ACT practice into daily life.
- **Mindfulness Coach** (released 2014; 39,000 downloads in 95 countries) provides tools to assist users in practicing mindfulness meditation.
- **Moving Forward** (released 2014; 5,400 downloads in 54 countries) teaches problem-solving skills and can be used in a stand-alone fashion or while participating in problem-solving training.

Leveraging VA Vet Centers and Readjustment Counselors

Vet Centers are community-based counseling centers that provide a wide range of social and psychological services. These services include professional readjustment counseling to Veterans and active duty Servicemembers, including members of the National Guard and Reserve components who served on active military duty in any combat theater or area of hostility.

- There are 300 community-based Vet Centers and 80 mobile Vet Centers located across the 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (www.vetcenter.va.gov).
- In FY 2015, the Vet Centers accommodated over 1,664,000 visits for more than 228,000 Veterans, Servicemembers, and families.
- To use Vet Center services, Veterans or Servicemembers:
 - Do not need to be enrolled with VA medical centers.
 - Do not need a disability rating or service connection for injuries from either VA or the DoD.
 - Can access Vet Center services regardless of discharge character.
- The Vet Center Combat Call Center is an around-the-clock confidential call center where combat Veterans and their families can talk with fellow combat Veterans from several eras. In FY 2015, the Vet Center Combat Call Center took over 113,000 calls from Veterans, Servicemembers, their families, and concerned citizens.

Telephone Coaching for Families of Veterans

Coaching Into Care (www.va.gov/coachingintocare) assists family members and friends in helping a Veteran seek care. It provides a motivational coaching service for family and friends of Veterans who see that a Veteran in their life needs help.

Coaching involves helping the caller figure out how to motivate the Veteran to seek services. The service is free and provided by licensed clinical social workers and psychologists. From the inception of the service in January 2010 to December 2016, Coaching Into Care has logged 33,900 total initial and follow-up calls.



Innovative Public-Private Partnerships to Reach Veterans

VA is working with public and private partners across the country with the goal of ensuring that wherever a Veteran lives, he/she can access quality, timely mental health care.

VA is working with universities, colleges, and health professional training institutions across the country to expand their curricula, addressing new science related to meeting the mental and behavioral health needs of our Nation's Veterans, Servicemembers, and their families.

- VA has recently partnered with the University of Michigan Health System and its Military Support Programs and Networks to support student Veterans as they transition from military to student life. Its Peer Advisors for Veteran Education program, which is expanding to 42 campuses across the country, and VA's Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership program and Peer Support Program will coordinate referrals and share resources. Together, they will collaboratively help student Veterans successfully navigate college life.

VA is also supporting community provider organizations through innovative partnerships:

- VA recently partnered with the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation to share subject matter expertise across a range of topics relevant to Veterans and their families, including student Veteran programs, caregiver training programs, faith/chaplain/spirituality-based mental health programs, and other mental health and well-being programs.
- VA has also recently partnered with Give an Hour (GAH) to share training resources on various mental health topics to be disseminated to GAH's provider network, so more Veterans have access to evidence-based mental health care and are competent in military culture. In addition, VA's *Make the Connection* (MakeTheConnection.net) Veteran-focused outreach campaign is collaborating with GAH's Change Direction Campaign to reduce negative perceptions associated with seeking mental health care and promote mental health literacy among Veterans and the general public.
- VA has also partnered with Psych Armor Institute (PAI) to share subject matter expertise on a range of mental health and caregiving topics to help civilians better serve Veterans. PAI is delivering training free of charge to the public and VA.
- VA Campus Toolkit (www.mentalhealth.va.gov/studentveteran) is a resource that helps faculty, staff, and administrators find resources to support student Veterans and learn about their strengths, skills, and needs.
- VA is hosting annual Community Mental Health Summits at each VAMC. Each facility will focus on building new partnerships and strengthening existing ones to meet the needs of Veterans and Veterans' families residing in their catchment areas.
- Each VAMC has appointed a Community Mental Health Point of Contact to provide ready access to information about VA eligibility and available clinical services, ensure warm handoffs at critical points of transition between care systems, and serve as a liaison between VA and community partners.

Maintaining the High Quality of VA Mental Health Care

The Altarum/RAND Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Mental Health Program Evaluation (2011) concluded that "timeliness for mental/behavioral health care in VHA is as good as or better than in commercial and public plans."



A recent publication comparing VA mental health care to private sector care examined medication treatment for mental disorders, finding:

- Across seven performance indicators, VA “performance was superior to that of the private sector by more than 30%.”
- In conclusion, the authors wrote: “Findings demonstrate the significant advantages that accrue from an organized, nationwide system of care. The much higher performance of the VA has important clinical and policy implications.”
(ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ps.201400537)

Proactive Outreach to Reach Veterans Needing Care

- VA works proactively to connect Veterans and their families with the resources they need. In addition to VA’s ***Make the Connection*** outreach campaign and extensive suicide prevention outreach, many specific mental health programs and services have outreach as part of their efforts. SPCs are required to conduct at least five outreach activities per month in all of their local communities and are able to provide a community version of Operation S.A.V.E. to Veterans and others.
- Partnering with community organizations has broadened VA’s outreach efforts and promotes more positive outcomes from community providers.
- ***Make the Connection*** is VA’s award-winning mental health public awareness campaign. Its primary objectives are to highlight Veterans’ true and inspiring stories of mental health recovery, reduce negative perceptions about seeking mental health care, and connect Veterans and their family members with local mental health resources.
- Over the past four years, ***Make the Connection*** has seen tremendous engagement with Veterans, Veterans’ family members, and supporters. Through November 2016, ***MakeTheConnection.net***, the campaign’s outreach efforts, and social media properties including Facebook and YouTube have earned a total of:
 - 11.7 million website visits
 - 373,000 resource locator uses (for local VA and other community sources of support)
 - 16.9 million video views
 - 27,000 YouTube subscribers
 - 3.5 million total “likes” on the Facebook page, making it one of the largest government Facebook communities in the country
 - 44.4 million engagements on Facebook (“likes,” comments, and shares)
 - More than 1.8 billion impressions of the campaign’s public service announcements, earning free, donated airplay with a paid media value of more than \$29 million
 - More than 245 organizations broadcasting campaign messaging through their communication platforms
 - More than 1.9 million pieces of material distributed nationwide



For more information, Veterans currently enrolled in VA health care can speak with their VA mental health or health care provider. Other Veterans and interested parties can find a complete list of VA health care facilities, Vet Centers, their local Suicide Prevention Coordinators, and other resources under the resource section of VeteransCrisisLine.net or at www.va.gov.

For more information about this fact sheet, contact Dr. David Carroll, Executive Director of VA's Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, at 202-461-4058.

