

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION

WEEKLY UPDATE

Week Ending — 02/23/2024

Division Operations

Meetings:

- February 19-23: VA&R Division continues to prepare for Washington Conference.
- February 20: VA&R Director participated in the Veteran Service Organization panel at the annual National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) Midwinter Conference in Arlington, Virginia.
- February 21: VA&R Director met with leadership from National University to discuss the possibility of giving veterans academic credits for attending American Legion Service Officer training. A follow-on meeting will be scheduled after Washington Conference.

Something you should know...

February 24-28: The American Legion Washington Conference
March 13: National Commander's Testimony

Two organizations will be bringing dogs for companionship to our veterans in attendance at the Washington Conference.

Warrior Canine Connection is dedicated to supporting veterans through their Mission Based Trauma Recovery Model, in which veterans train service dogs that provide mobility and social assistance for other veterans with disabilities. Based in Boyd's, Maryland.

Mutts With a Mission is dedicated to restoring independence and freedom to veterans, wounded warriors, and others through the provision of service dogs. Based in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Health Policy Team Operations

Meetings:

- February 19: Health Policy Team (HPT) completed preparation for the Washington Conference Posttraumatic Stress Disorder/Traumatic Brain Injury/Suicide Prevention (PTSD/TBI/SP) Committee.
- February 20: HPT virtually attended the Toxic Exposure in the American Military (TEAM) Coalition meeting where committees presented current legislation and ongoing efforts regarding research and data.
- February 20: HPT attended the Women Veteran Service Organization (VSO) Working Group to discuss organizational updates, development of community agreements, upcoming legislation, and future women veteran events.
- February 21: HPT met virtually with the Veterans Affairs Physician Assistant Association (VAPAA) to discuss their ongoing advocacy efforts.
- February 21: HPT conducted recon at Arlington National Cemetery in preparation for The American Legion General Hershey wreath laying event scheduled on Monday, February 26, 2024.
- February 21: HPT virtually attended the PTSD Consultation Program Lecture Series, "Navigating Complexities When Delivering EMDR Therapy" presented by Marianne Silva, Licensed Clinical Social Worker.
- February 22: HPT met with Patricia Rios of the Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network to discuss bladder cancer regarding The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act.

Legislative Bill Reviews:

- **H.R. 4731 – Access to Infertility Treatment and Care Act – *No position***
 - To require health insurance coverage for the treatment of infertility.
- **H.R. 1256 – Veterans Health Administration Leadership Transformation Act – *No position***
 - To amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements in the laws relating to the appointment of the Under Secretary of Health and Assistant Under Secretaries of Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

Benefits & Claims Team Operations

Meetings:

- February 16: Deputy Director of Benefits & Claims (DDBC) met with Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and their alliance partners to discuss the upcoming effort to advocate for Richard Star Act.
- February 22: DDBC and Veterans Benefits policy analyst participated a panel discussion on reducing Board of Veterans Appeals remand hosted by Court of Appeals of Veterans Claims (CAVC) Bar Association

Claims & Appeals Team Operations

Accreditations:

- | | |
|---|----|
| - Applications received from TAL Departments | 13 |
| - Certifications submitted by TAL Washington Office | 13 |
| - Certifications approved by VA's Office of General Counsel | 1 |

The American Legion Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) Unit:

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| - AMA appeals pending (125+ days) | 0 |
| - Informal Hearing Presentations (IHPs) prepared | 139 |
| - Memos generated | 5 |
| - Phone inquiries | 221 |
| - Internal quality reviews | 6 |
| - Individual training | 6 hours |
| - Team training | 17 hours |
| - Hearings | 3 |
| - Board dispositions | 113 |
| o Appeals granted | 37 (32.7%) |
| o Remanded | 58 (51.3%) |
| o Denied | 14 (12.4%) |
| o Other | 4 (3.5%) |
| - Largest retroactive awards won for veteran | \$181,034 |

Senior Veterans Disability Claims Specialist:

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| - Compensation & Pension Claims | 118 |
| - Other Issues | 2 |
| - Contacts | 120 |

Pension & Debt Management:

- New Claims	15
- Supporting Submissions	13
- Sensitive Claims	0
- Rating Reviews/Audits	55
- Contacts	142
- Debt Notices Received	12
- Insurance Questions	1
- Waivers Granted	0
- Pension Notification Letters Processed	309
- Largest debt waiver won for veteran	\$131,771

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Director

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division

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End of VA&R weekly update – 02/23/2024