

WA State Legislative Update

Dave Casteel, WA State Council President

As I write this, we are in Day 28 of the 2023 105-day Regular Session. As you know, when the new biennium starts, all bills that did not pass the last session die and must be reintroduced to be considered.

As of Friday, February 3rd, there were 31 veterans-related bills introduced—everything from extending: B&O tax credits for businesses hiring military, to spouse employment issues, to mental health issues, to recognizing schools that “show a commitment to students and families connected to our military,” to property tax exemptions for service-connected disabled veterans.

You can find Friday’s list [here \(WDVA Legislative Updates\)](#) (updates weekly on Fridays).

Or use this QR Code on with your smart phone:



We have one MOAA member, Col Bob Mead, USAF, Ret., on the Governor's Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee (VAAC).



The VAAC is hosted by the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) and presents four Townhalls around the state each year. The first of which was held in Vancouver on Feb 1.

David Puente Jr., who was recently appointed as WDVA Director after Alfie retired Jan 31, attended as did David Holt, newly appointed Director of the Portland Health Care System which also serves the SW WA area.

The WDVA staff gave several very informative presentations and one of the "leave behinds" was the WDVA 2022 in Review Flyer to the left.

One of the newest programs is the "Digital Navigator Program" which will be of interest to those of you who work with homeless or low-income veterans.

Through the “Digital Navigator” program WDVA has a limited number of initial 5G phones (and service) from T-Mobile available to veterans due to a \$2.5M grant (see WDVA 2022 In Review flyer) and is free of charge to veterans with IRS Form 1040 incomes of \$73,000 or less (contact presenter jeff.powell@dva.wa.gov). Go to <https://www.dva.wa.gov/> or 1-800-562-2308 benefits@dva.wa.gov for complete information.

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

"Serving Those Who Served"

2022 in Review

<p>6</p> <p>21</p> <p>7</p> <p>9,999</p> <p>\$83.5M</p> <p>\$2.9B</p> <p>1,011</p> <p>111</p> <p>1,963</p> <p>763</p> <p>127</p> <p>\$693,550</p> <p>\$142,500</p> <p>\$331,381</p> <p>\$636,000</p> <p>\$2.5M</p> <p>\$100,000</p>	<p>Nonprofit VSOs</p> <p>County VSOs</p> <p>Indian Tribes</p> <p>VA Disability, Pension, and Survivor Claims filed</p> <p>New funds received by Veterans and their families in 2022</p> <p>Received by Veterans and families each year</p> <p>Veterans and family members received 3,811 hours of counseling</p> <p>Veterans served in Transitional Housing at Port Orchard and Orting</p> <p>Veteran-Owned Businesses certified by WDVA through 2022</p> <p>Interments at the State Veterans Cemetery. \$630,000 raised through Armed Forces License Plate sales to support the cemetery and serve Veterans without homes.</p> <p>NACs received Recruitment and Retention Incentives to counter the 24% vacancy rate at State Veterans Homes. WDVA is also training our own NACs! We graduated 4 in 2022 and now have 17 new employees gaining certification through partnership education programs around the state.</p> <p>Unique Funding Opportunities to Serve Veterans and Families</p> <p>Grant for Vets in Agriculture to train and connect Veterans with VA services</p> <p>Grant from the US Dept. of Agriculture to empower Women Veteran Farmers to conserve farms</p> <p>Grant from Eco-studies Institute to restore coastal lands and waters</p> <p>Grant from AmeriCorps to support Vet Corps serving in 37 locations across the state</p> <p>Digital Navigator Grant received to connect low-income Veterans to broadband resources allowing them to access VA benefits and health care</p> <p>Funds received from CDC and DOH for Tobacco Cessation for Veterans</p>	<p>Suicide Prevention</p> <p>\$1.1 million from Legislature for Suicide Prevention Staff, Peer Specialists, and creating an online Resource Database.</p> <p>\$750,000 grant to provide Suicide Prevention services to at least 680 Veterans in rural North Puget Sound and North Central Washington.</p> <p>9 Governor's Challenge Team for Suicide Prevention Goals met to reduce suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families.</p> <p>Encouraging public participation by unveiling a Suicide Prevention License Plate Emblem to raise funds for Community-Based Suicide Prevention Efforts and generate awareness for the new 988 Lifeline.</p> <p>Leadership Commitment:</p> <p><i>to the principles of Change agility and capacity planning. Strategically focused on People, Process, and Technology, to be equipped to serve Veterans and their Families.</i></p> <p>Contact</p> <p>Alfie Alvarado-Ramos Director Alfie@dva.wa.gov</p> <p>David Puente, Jr. Deputy Director DavidP@dva.wa.gov</p>
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