

Board of Veterans Affairs

Creation, Mission and Make-Up

The Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs is a seven-member board housed in the Division of Veterans Affairs in the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. Board members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. All members must be honorably discharged veterans of military service and serve four-year terms. No more than four members may be members of the same political party.²

The purpose of the Board of Veterans Affairs is to advise and consult with the Division of Veteran Affairs.³

Responsibilities of the Board of Veterans Affairs

The Board of Veterans Affairs acts in an advisory capacity to the State regarding veterans affairs including:⁴

- The State Board of Human Services and the Department of Human Services (DHS) regarding the operations and maintenance of veterans community living centers;
- The Division of Employment and Training in the Department of Labor and Employment regarding the provision of services to state veterans pursuant to the Colorado Workforce Investment Act; and
- Any department, division, board, or other entity that provides services specifically to state veterans, and any executive director, director, board, or other entity that has rulemaking authority pursuant to state law regarding proposed rules that are directed specifically to veterans.

Additionally, the Board of Veterans Affairs reviews applications for the Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) and recommends approval to the Director of the Veterans Community Living Centers or the Director of Veterans Affairs.⁵

The Board of Veterans Affairs recommends approval of VTF funds through a competitive grant process to cover:^{6,7}

- Capital improvements or needed amenities for state veterans nursing homes,
- Costs incurred by state veterans cemeteries,
- Costs incurred by the Division of Veterans Affairs, and

² § 28-5-702(2), C.R.S.

³ § 28-5-702(1), C.R.S.

⁴ § 28-5-703(4), C.R.S.

⁵ § 28-5-709(4), C.R.S.

⁶ *Veterans Trust Fund Grant Program, Department of Military and Veteran Affairs, Performance Audit, Office of the State Auditor (May 2014), p. 7.*

⁷ § 28-5-709(1)(b), C.R.S.

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- Veterans programs operated by nonprofit veterans organizations that meet criteria adopted by the Board of Veterans Affairs and selected by the Board of Veterans Affairs as grant recipients.

The VTF is entirely funded through the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement funds.⁸

Revenues and Expenditures

Members serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for travel and other expenses. The expenses are paid from the Division of Veterans Affairs funds.

The Division of Veteran Affairs reimbursed members \$3,361 in fiscal year 14-15 and \$7,348 in fiscal year 15-16 for travel expenses.

Meetings of the Board of Veterans Affairs

The Board of Veterans Affairs met 11 times in fiscal year 14-15. Six members attended four meetings, five members attended five meetings and four members attended two meetings.

The Board of Veterans Affairs met 11 times in fiscal year 15-16. Six members attended six meetings, five members attended four meetings and four members attended one meeting.

Proposals and Their Status

The Board of Veterans Affairs submitted several advisory proposals during the two-year period under sunset review, most of which have been implemented:

- Proposed to make organizations seek regional partnerships when applying for grants.

Status: The proposal was implemented as part of grant webinar training.

- Proposed revisions for how grants are rated.

Status: The revisions were implemented as part of a new scoring matrix.

- Worked with Clear Creek County and the Colorado Department of Transportation to rename the I-70 Westbound Twin Tunnels the “Veteran’s Memorial Tunnels.”

Status: The General Assembly enacted the name change in April 2015.

⁸ Veterans Trust Fund Grant Program, Department of Military and Veteran Affairs, Performance Audit, Office of the State Auditor (May 2014), p. 8.

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- Worked with the Division of Motor Vehicles to clarify Colorado disabled veteran license plate requirements.

Status: The Division of Motor Vehicles implemented the changes.

- Supported increase in county veteran service officer payment.

Status: The General Assembly passed House Bill 15-1315, which addressed the funding for county veteran service officers.

- Supported the creation of the Volunteers of America (VOA) One-Stop Program.

Status: The program was implemented.

- Proposed the use of a webinar to clarify the application process for the VTF grant program.

Status: The proposal was implemented.

- Proposed conducting meetings in rural areas in order to identify veterans issues.

Status: The schedule was revised accordingly.

- Proposed sending grant proposals electronically.

Status: This has not been implemented as of the writing of this sunset review.

- Supported expanding the definition of a “qualifying disabled veteran” related to a property tax exemption in order to include more veterans and spouses of veterans.

Status: The General Assembly passed House Bill 16-1444.

- Scored and approved VTF grants.

Status: In fiscal years 14-15 and 15-16, the Division of Veterans Affairs accepted and approved the recommendations from the Board of Veterans Affairs. The grant requests and allocations from the VTF in fiscal year 14-15 and 15-16 are provided in Appendix A of this report.

- Supported VOA One-Stop Shop in Grand Junction.

Status: This is pending approval.

Additionally, the Board of Veterans Affairs supported and participated in a Veterans Community Panel hosted by the Sturm Family Foundation to address a new Military Psychology Program at the University of Denver.

Reasons for Continuation of the Board of Veterans Affairs

The Board of Veterans Affairs provides a forum for veterans to influence public policy related to veterans issues. Recently, it has been especially effective in identifying and addressing issues facing veterans in Colorado's rural communities.

The Board of Veterans Affairs plays an important role in the administration and oversight of the VTF grant program. Recently, it made changes to the approval process in order to improve the quality of the program and to increase its transparency. Services funded through the VTF have assisted veterans in gaining access to primary and mental health care, housing services for homeless individuals, and job training programs for unemployed and underemployed veterans.

Analysis and Recommendation

The Board of Veterans Affairs plays an important role in improving the provision of essential services to veterans in Colorado. All members of the board are veterans, and the contributions provided by this board through the members' leadership and vision in addressing issues affecting Colorado residents who served in the military are invaluable.

The seven members volunteered their time at 22 meetings over a two-year period to allocate over \$1.6 million to support veterans organizations, government agencies and non-profit organizations that provide services to veterans throughout the state.

Therefore, the General Assembly should continue the Board of Veterans Affairs.

Appendix A – Grants of the Veterans Trust Fund

Appendix A shows, for fiscal years 14-15 and 15-16, the dollar amount requested by applicants, the amount the Board of Veteran Affairs approved, and the final amount approved by the Division of Veteran Affairs.

Veteran Trust Fund Grants Fiscal Year 14-15

| Organization | Amount of Request | Board Approved |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| AL Post #25, Florence | \$25,000 | \$15,000 |
| AL Post #44, Steamboat Springs | \$5,600 | \$5,600 |
| AL Post #115, Rye | \$6,000 | \$5,000 |
| AL Post #66, Akron | \$5,000 | \$3,500 |
| VFW Post #3621, Lamar | \$12,000 | \$10,000 |
| VFW Post #8661, Conifer | \$8,440 | \$7,200 |
| AL Post #103, Littleton | \$30,000 | \$20,000 |
| VFW Post #899, Alamosa | \$27,600 | \$25,000 |
| AL Post #108, Pagosa Springs | \$57,000 | \$50,000 |
| VFW Post #7829, Monument | \$17,500 | \$15,000 |
| VFW Post #5231, Mancos | \$4,810 | \$4,810 |
| AL Post #113, Alamosa | \$2,000 | \$2,000 |
| AL Post #23, Aurora | \$20,000 | \$10,000 |
| AL Post #2, Pueblo | \$57,000 | \$42,000 |
| VFW Post #1, Denver | \$132,000 | \$89,000 |
| AL Post #1, Denver | \$50,000 | \$15,000 |
| NABVETS Chapter #24, Aurora | \$25,000 | \$20,000 |
| DAV Chapter #25, Grand Junction | \$12,000 | \$12,000 |
| AL Post #32, Longmont | \$37,800 | \$20,000 |
| VFW Post #41, Loveland | \$84,000 | \$40,000 |
| DAV Chapter #48, Durango | \$62,128 | \$36,000 |
| AL Post #44, Hot Sulphur Springs | \$15,000 | \$7,000 |
| AL Post #109, Windsor | \$80,000 | \$40,000 |
| AL Post #127, Westcliffe | \$60,000 | \$40,000 |
| VFW Post #4265, Craig | \$10,000 | \$10,000 |
| VFW Post #5843, Meeker | \$8,000 | \$6,000 |
| SVCLC Homelake, Monte Vista | \$14,097 | \$14,097 |
| SVCLC Bruce McCandless, Florence | \$15,710 | \$15,710 |
| SVCLC Rifle | \$14,085 | \$14,085 |
| SVCLC Walsenburg | \$16,828 | \$16,828 |
| AL Department of Colorado, Lakewood | \$30,000 | \$20,000 |
| DAV Regional, Denver | \$18,000 | \$18,000 |
| VFW Department of Colorado | \$75,000 | \$40,000 |
| DAV Chapter #44, Delores | \$55,000 | \$40,000 |
| VFW Post #4171, Golden | \$30,000 | \$20,000 |
| AL Post #29, Aurora | \$11,156 | \$6,000 |
| AL Post #22, Northglenn | \$31,000 | \$25,000 |
| VVA Chapter #1071, Denver | \$25,000 | \$12,500 |
| Total | \$1,189,754 | \$792,330 |

Veteran Trust Fund Grants Fiscal Year 15-16

| Organization | Amount of Request | Board Approved |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| AL Post #44, Steamboat Springs | \$5,600 | \$5,600 |
| DAV Chapter #48, Durango | \$80,270 | \$80,270 |
| AL Post #103, Littleton | \$30,000 | \$30,000 |
| VFW Post #5231, Mancos | \$4,810 | \$4,810 |
| AL Post #0115, Rye | \$5,000 | \$5,000 |
| DAV Chapter #44, Mancos | \$68,900 | \$68,900 |
| AL Post #18, Greeley | \$16,600 | \$16,600 |
| AL Post #88, Hot Sulphur Springs | \$20,000 | \$20,000 |
| VFW Post #899, Alamosa | \$48,568 | \$48,568 |
| AL Post #170, Westcliffe | \$51,750 | \$51,750 |
| VFW #8661, Conifer | \$8,400 | \$8,400 |
| AL Post #25, Florence | \$25,000 | \$25,000 |
| VFW Post #4265, Craig | \$36,120 | \$36,120 |
| AL Post #109, Windsor | \$60,000 | \$60,000 |
| VFW Post #7829, Monument | \$20,000 | \$20,000 |
| AL Post #32, Longmont | \$50,000 | \$50,000 |
| CO VFW Foundation | \$70,000 | \$53,028 |
| AL Post #2, Pueblo | \$35,500 | \$18,000 |
| VFW Post #4663, Clifton | \$6,500 | \$0 |
| VVA, Chapter #1071, Westminster | \$25,000 | \$25,000 |
| VFW Post #1, Denver | \$5,625 | \$5,625 |
| VFW Post #41, Loveland | \$58,000 | \$58,000 |
| AL Post #108, Pagosa Springs | \$46,500 | \$46,500 |
| DAV Chapter #25, Grand Junction | \$12,000 | \$12,000 |
| SVCLC Walsenburg | \$29,776 | \$19,576 |
| SVCLC Homelake | \$19,462 | \$9,683 |
| AL Post #143, Bayfield | \$48,000 | \$48,000 |
| VFW Post #5843, Meeker | \$6,500 | \$6,500 |
| Total | \$962,112 | \$832,930 |