



STATE OF VERMONT VETERANS AFFAIRS

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**VT Office of Veterans Affairs Report to Housing, General and Military Affairs Committee**

**January 14, 2014**

Historically, the Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs has been the primary repository of Vermont veteran's discharges. We have over 200,000 discharge papers on file for veterans who have entered the service from Vermont from World War II to Present. In some instances, paperwork lost in the 1973 fire at the National Military Personnel Records Center in St. Louis may only still exist in our files.

Over the years the role of the office has grown to encompass operation of the Vermont Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Randolph; oversight and distribution of Vermont Veterans Medals; a strong service officer program; State Approving Agent for the GI Bill and eligibility for a variety of Vermont state programs and services.

2013 was a busy year for the Office of Veterans Affairs.

**Eligibility Verification Programs (calendar year 2013)**

Disabled Veterans Property Tax Exemption –

2401	Applications and letters sent
65	Disqualified (mainly due to death, remarriage or reevaluation)
1007	Annual
1353	Permanent (includes survivors)

We are preparing letters to go to Permanently eligible recipients to go out by the end of the month. Annual letters will go out after VA sends out their Statement of Benefits letters.

Veteran License Plates

635

Veteran Designator on Driver's License (started September 2013)

333

Moose Hunting Permit Applications

36

DD 214s (Discharges)

533	New received
966	Requests for copies
979	Welcome Home Packages sent

## Vermont Veterans Memorial Cemetery (2013 season)

2026	Total interments since cemetery opening
150	Burials
36	Caskets
114	Urns
43	Dependents

### Master Plan for expansion of cemetery

Design contract awarded to LA Group \$239,000. Committee reviewed three competitive bids, LA Group, Smith, Alvarez, Sienkewycz and G. Brown Designs. Chose LA Group based on most experience in cemetery design, experience with NCA and other related federal regulation. Expect to have plan developed by September 2014 for submission for NCA consideration.

Memorial Day 2013 attended by over 100 people, included a separate ceremony at GWOT Memorial. Plans underway for Memorial Day 2014, Jon Gailmore to sing the National Anthem.

### Service Officer Program (FY 2013)

267	Claims taken
27	Survivor Claims
227	Male
40	Female (over half survivors)
<b>\$5,948,063.00</b>	Funds recovered from VA
\$3,963,310.00	Funds recovered FY 2014 to date

Hired third Service Officer, Paul Perreault in September 2013. Paul has worked in the office for about two years as a Program Services Clerk, National Guard retiree, veteran of two tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan.

In 2013 the VA instituted two major changes that will have long term effects on veterans and this program. They began strongly promoting **Fully Developed Claims (FDC)** designed to expedite service to those who can submit all relevant evidence with a claim. FDCs in Vermont are taking 30 – 120 days to process, a distinct improvement over traditional claims.

The VA is also moving ahead with submission of paperless claims, which for us involves a **Shareholders Enterprise Portal (SEP)**. There have been many glitches and hiccups with this system. We were supposed to be online as remote customers in September 2013. Last word from the VA is by the end of May 2014. The system will enable Service Officers to load claims and related documents directly into the VA computer system via the SEP. It looks great on paper, and should eventually be a vastly improved method of claims handling. Just not yet.

We do expect significant negative impact on this and other programs due to DoD reductions in force and changes in the military retirement structure. The Air Force has announced intent to have review boards consider discharging “marginal” personnel with administrative, general and other than honorable discharges.

## **Veterans Medals**

103	Vermont Veterans Medal requests
94	Vermont Distinguished Medal requests
33	Vermont Medals presented by Governor November 12, 2013
30	Republic of Korea Gold Medals of Appreciation presented November 12
35	Additional Korean medals mailed by OVA

## **State Approving Agency (SAA) Federal FY 2013**

166	Active Facilities
1271	Individuals using GI Bill in Vermont

## **Vermont Veterans Fund**

\$103,000.00	Total Grant Requests
\$ 42,000.00	Monies collected

Grantees: Friends of Veterans, VT/NH Inc.  
Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 601  
The Dodge House  
The Veterans Place, Inc.  
COTS  
Blue Star Mothers

UVM Men's Catamount Hockey Military Appreciation night November 24,  
auctioned off "camo" hockey jerseys, donated \$2,045.00 to the VT Veterans Fund.

## **Thank You! Books**

2,500	4 <sup>th</sup> Edition Thank You! books printed.
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Respectfully submitted,

Richard Reed  
Veteran Services Director  
VT Office of Veterans Affairs