



The Guardian

The monthly newsletter of the New Mexico Dept. of Veterans Services
March, 2022

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DVS Secretary Smith, on VA Recommendation to Close Four CBOCs in New Mexico: “This is Not Acceptable”

New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith is “angry...and disappointed” over a plan by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that recommends closing four VA-managed community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) in northern New Mexico. According to the VA’s just-released Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission Report, the four CBOCs are: Gallup, Las Vegas, Raton, and Española. The recommendations also include moving PTSD services to the Phoenix, Arizona, area.



The recommendations to the AIR Commission report mentions closing 174 VA or VA-contracted facilities across the nation in areas with declining populations or usage, and that VA Secretary Denis McDonough believes this will allow VA to consolidate and strengthen veteran health care nationwide.

Secretary Smith finds this hard to believe.

“Strengthen VA health care? How? How can it strengthen care by taking away facilities that serve veterans in rural states like New Mexico?” said an incredulous Secretary Smith. “This is unacceptable. There are no nearby alternative VA clinics in these areas, so the closures would only strain each community’s already-stressed non-veteran facilities.”

Nationwide, the report recommends closing 174 of its outpatient health care facilities, and three medical centers (Brooklyn, NY; Northampton, MA; and Chillicothe, OH). It does recommend upgrading several divisions at the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center in Albuquerque—the only VA hospital in the state.

“VA came to these recommendations by asking ourselves one question above all else: ‘What’s best for the veterans we serve?’” said VA Secretary McDonough in a statement posted on VA’s website.

“Because that is our number one goal, today and every day. That’s what our Asset and Infrastructure Review recommendations are all about.”

The approval process for the proposals includes a sign-off by the President, and approval by Congress in 2023—and any changes would be at least ten to twenty years away.” said DVS Secretary Smith. “These are just recommendations. DVS sees an opportunity to reverse this decision...and turn things around. Stay tuned.”

VA’s AIR Commission report can be found at [VA Recommendations to the AIR Commission Home](#)



New Mexico Joins Nationwide Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, & Families

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham has tasked DVS with taking the lead for the state’s participation in the nationwide *Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families*.

The program, more commonly known as The Governor’s Challenge, was developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)—a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services--to enlist states in helping spread awareness about and develop strategies to stop suicides among our nation’s military members and veterans. New Mexico is the latest state to join this effort to find solutions to this national tragedy that, according to SAMHSA, shows a 52% higher suicide rate among military veterans than non-veterans. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 17 veterans die by suicide every day in the United States.

“Many of our men and who’ve served our country need our help now that they’ve finished their service and are back home,” said DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith. “We are honored to take the lead in this nationwide challenge, and coming up with solutions to help veterans and their families here in New Mexico.”

For the Governor’s Challenge, DVS will be forming partnerships with motivated federal, state, and local agencies throughout the state to develop the best practices to prevent veteran and military suicides. Other goals include educating the public, helping at-risk veterans, service members, and their families.





DVS to Lead Multi-Agency Effort to Restore Historic Albuquerque Cemetery

DVS is leading a multi-agency effort to restore the Historic Fairview Cemetery in Albuquerque—where nearly 500 veterans are buried in gravesites that, along with the rest of cemetery’s 12,000 plots, have eroded to the point of needing major repairs.

DVS met with representatives from the Historic Fairview Cemetery nonprofit organization, State Historical Preservation Officer Jeff Pappas, and SBA New Mexico District Director John Garcia on March 9 in Santa Fe (*middle photo; DVS Cabinet Secretary at the head of the table*) to discuss forming a partnership to make the badly needed repairs and install landscaping at the cemetery.

“I am overwhelmed with sadness seeing what I see,” said Secretary Smith after she was shown photos of the cemetery at the meeting and learning more about its history. “But yet I also have an overwhelming desire to fix this...to give these veterans the respect they deserve for having served our country. We *have* to do this!”

Among the veterans buried at the cemetery are those who served in our nation’s Civil War, and “Buffalo Soldiers”—African American members of the U.S. Army who were assigned to defend post-Civil War U.S. frontier outposts and forts, including many here in New Mexico. Other veterans buried there served in the Spanish-American War, World War I, and all war eras up until the cemetery’s last burial in 2012.



The 17.5-acre historical cemetery in the city’s southeast quadrant began in 1881 as an informal rural area burial ground where families who could not afford a proper funeral would bury their deceased members. It officially opened as a cemetery in 1882. In 1934, a newer burial ground was built to the south of the cemetery. A wall was built to separate the two areas. All focus shifted to the newer area that is currently Fairview Memorial Park, which continues with funerals and is the access point for the historical cemetery.



Governor Signs Bill Into Law Exempting Most Military Pensions From State Income Tax

Thanks to the stroke of her pen, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham has given military retirees in New Mexico what many have been waiting for more than 15-years:

On March 8, the governor signed into law HB-163, a broad tax-cutting bill that, among other measures, will provide a five-year exemption of state income taxes on military pensions.

An exemption was something that DVS Secretary Sonya Smith advocated for in meetings with the governor, her staff--and legislators who pushed for it in this year's 30-day legislative session that adjourned on February 17. The tax-cutting bill that made it to the governor's desk did not have a provision for a military retiree income tax exemption. The governor inserted language into the bill outlining the following three-year exemption period before signing it.

For tax year 2022 (to be filed by April 15 of next year), the new law will provide a \$10,000 exemption. Tax year 2023 will provide a \$20,000 exemption, and a \$30,000 exemption will apply for tax years 2024, 2025, and 2026.

"On behalf of the 15,000 military retirees in New Mexico, I want to thank our governor so very much for providing what other governors before her could not or would not do—a long-awaited military pension income exemption," said an elated Secretary Smith. "This should not only keep our own military retirees here in New Mexico—it can also attract retirees from across the nation to move here."



The exemption was among other tax cutting measures in the bill, such as the permanent elimination of income tax on social security income for most New Mexicans—with a cap for exemption eligibility set at \$100,000 for single filers and \$150,000 for married couples filing jointly.

DVS Resumes In-Person Veterans Benefits Outreaches

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) has resumed in-office veterans benefits outreach visits and veterans property tax exemption/waiver service days in communities throughout the state.



These outreaches had been halted due to a winter surge in the number of positive COVID-19 pandemic cases. The positivity rate has dropped, and the state Department of Health has lifted its safety mask public health order for most public locations.

Below is a list of DVS veterans benefits outreaches scheduled for March. Additional community outreaches throughout the year will be announced when plans have been finalized.

<u>Date</u>	<u>City/Venue</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Time</u>
Mar. 4	Rio Rancho /Loma Colorado Public Library	755 Loma Colorado Bl.	10am-2pm
Mar. 8	Bernalillo / Dell Webb at Alegria <i>*for gated community residents only</i>	901 Cottonwood Circle	9am-11am
Mar. 17*	Artesia /United Veterans Hall <i>*by appointment only. (575) 988-5900</i>	402 W. Hermosa	9am-4pm
Mar. 21	Los Lunas /Valencia County Sheriff's Office	<i>(for deputies/staff only)</i>	10am-4p,
Mar. 25	Los Alamos /Police Department	<i>(for PD staff only)</i>	9am-4pm
Mar. 28	Bernalillo /Bernalillo County Senior Ctr.	801 Rotary Park Dr.	10am-4pm
Mar. 29	Zuni /DY Springs Mountain	Parking area	2pm
Mar. 31*	Artesia /United Veterans Hall <i>*by appointment only. (575) 988-5900</i>	402 W. Hermosa	9am-4pm
Mar. 31	Tijeras /Los Vecinos Community Center	478 Hwy 333	10am-3pm
Apr. 7*	Artesia /United Veterans Hall <i>*by appointment only. (575) 988-5900</i>	402 W. Hermosa	9am-4pm
Apr. 7	Capitan /Public Library	101 East 2nd St.	10am-3pm

On the next page are scheduled Veterans Property Tax Exemption/Waiver outreaches. DVS and county assessor staff will help veterans or unmarried widows of veterans file for the *veterans property tax exemption*—which is a \$4,000 reduction off the taxable value of a primary residence. Veterans rated by the VA as 100% permanent-and-total, service-connected disabled can file for the *veterans property tax waiver*, which eliminates the entire property tax bill.

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Mar. 1	Los Lunas /Valencia County Assessor's Office	444 Luna Ave.	10am-2pm
Mar. 10	Aztec /San Juan County Assessor's Office	100 S. Oliver	10am-730pm
Mar. 16	Los Alamos /County Assessor's Office	1000 Central Ave.	10am-2pm
Mar. 17	Las Vegas /DVS Las Vegas Office	917 Douglas Ave.	10am-4pm
Mar. 24	Albuquerque /DVS NE Heights Office	5201 Eagle Rock Blvd.	9am-5pm
Mar. 28	Ruidoso /Senior Community Center	501 Sudderth Dr.	
Mar. 29	Roswell /NM Nat'l Guard Armory	1 W. Earl Cummings Loop	

Proof of veteran status and NM residency required

Proof of veteran status must be provided when filing for the veterans property tax exemption—and can be done by bringing either a copy of a veteran’s DD-214 separation form, a National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Form 56-16, or a U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) Form 1867. If filing for the property tax waiver, please bring a copy of the letter from VA declaring a 100% permanent-and-total, service-connected disability rating.

Proof of residency must also be provided, and can be one by bringing either a valid New Mexico driver’s license, voter registration card, or your latest state income tax return. For further questions, please contact DVS Event Planner Joseph Dorn at josephM.dorn@state.nm.us or (505) 861-9117.

As a reminder, veterans from anywhere in the state can also contact any DVS veterans service officer with in-person office assistance...or through remote assistance by phone or email. For a list of all DVS field offices, please go to <https://www.nmdvs.org/new-mexico-offices/>

DVS to Resume Quarterly Briefings March 31

DVS will resume its quarterly briefings of commanders, presidents, and representatives of veteran and community service organizations—along with any interested veterans—on March 31 from 9am-noon at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial in Albuquerque.

The briefing will be in the indoor meeting room at the Memorial, which is located at 1100 Louisiana Blvd. SE. DVS Secretary Sonya L. Smith and other DVS staff will provide an update on agency goals, plans, and news—along with information on other veteran-related issues.

In addition to being a great opportunity to be updated on veterans’ issue, the briefing is an excellent networking opportunity for New Mexico’s veteran community.

For more information, contact DVS Executive Administrative Assistant Shannon Quintana at shannon.quintana@state.nm.us or (505) 827-6334.



VBOC Director Among Dignitaries to Meet SBA Administrator During Her Albuquerque Visit

New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) Director Rich Coffel was among a small group of business community leaders invited to meet with U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Administrator Isabella Casillas Guzman during her visit to Albuquerque on February 21. (LEFT PHOTO: VBOC Director Coffel in red tie/upper right; SBA Administrator Guzman seated at the head of the table/in the middle)

Administrator Guzman, who leads the federal agency that advocates for our nation's 32.5 million small businesses, wanted to hear from the New Mexico small business community about recovery efforts as the nation begins opening up once again after COVID-19 pandemic safety measures are being lifted throughout the country.

“She expressed strong support for New Mexico’s business owners, and particularly our veteran-owned business owners,” said Director Coffel, who heads the VBOC—the business development division of the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services. Administrator Guzman laid out how President Biden’s *Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act*, which he signed to boost the post-pandemic economy—and is being administered by the SBA—promises to create job opportunities for small businesses here in New Mexico.

The VBOC helps veteran-owned businesses with everything planning, starting, marketing, and growing a business. Administrator Guzman also discussed 8a Business Development program to help socially and economically disadvantaged business owners, an effort to improve outreach to Native American-owned businesses and contractors, and a new VA Center for Verification and Evaluation program coming to the SBA in January, 2023, to provide improved assistance for veteran-owned businesses.

VBOC Names New Veterans Business Counselor

John W. Martinez has been named as the new Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) business counselor. He had been serving for the past year-and-a-half as one of DVS’ Albuquerque-based veteran service officers.

“Johnny” will continue to be based at the DVS Albuquerque Northeast Heights office—only now he will focus on assisting VBOC Director Rich Coffel with helping entrepreneurial-minded veterans, transitioning active service members, and their spouses with starting and growing a business. The Albuquerque native has a long history of serving his fellow veterans. After serving 18-years as a U.S. Army 11B Infantryman—where he served with the famed “Big Red One”/ 1st Infantry Division based in Göppingen, Germany, he helped homeless veterans as a program manager at the New Mexico Veterans Integration Centers (VIC) in Albuquerque. For assistance, contact Johnny at johnny.martinez@state.nm.us or (505) 469-8501.



Johnny Martinez
VBOC Veterans
Business Counselor

Two New Apprenticeship Programs in New Mexico to be Available For Use of the GI Bill®

Eligible veterans in New Mexico, or their eligible family members now have two more opportunities to use their VA GI Bill® education benefits.

The New Mexico State Approving Agency (SAA), which is supervised by DVS, has approved two registered apprenticeship programs offered by Albuquerque Plumbing, Heating and Cooling, Inc. for the GI Bill. They are just one of many approved apprenticeship programs.



“DVS is excited to provide this additional opportunity for eligible veterans and dependents to use their GI Bill benefits,” said SAA Director Katherine (Kathy) Snyder. “Some do not realize they may use their GI Bill benefits to receive job training in an Apprenticeship or On-the-job training program. It is another great way to utilize those education benefits--as VA will pay benefits to eligible individuals on a sliding scale while they are receiving a salary from their employer.”



Katherine Snyder
NMSAA Director

About New Mexico's SAA

State Approving Agencies are authorized under title 38 of the United States Code. Each state has an SAA responsible for ensuring the quality and integrity of programs of education and training programs for use of GI Bill benefits—which helps pay for tuition, books, and housing.

New Mexico's SAA ensures that every eligible veteran, reservist, National Guard member, dependent, and transfer of entitlement beneficiary is afforded the opportunity to pursue their educational or vocational goals to their full potential. The SAA will work to protect the eligible person's opportunity to a quality education or training program at:

- Institutions of higher learning (colleges and universities)
- Non-college degree institutions (such as cosmetology and barbering)
- Apprenticeship and On-the-Job Training Establishments
- Vocational flight schools
- Hospitals

A key role of the SAA is to review, evaluate, and approve education and training programs for the GI Bill —ensuring compliance with strict state and federal statutory and regulatory criteria.

“Our SAA helps makes sure our eligible veterans and dependents can use their GI Bill in New Mexico with confidence,” said DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith. “Kathy reviews programs to ensure they meet those strict qualification requirements and works to provide greater education and training opportunities for GI Bill beneficiaries.”

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The SAA accomplishes this by performing all duties necessary for the inspection, approval, and supervision of those programs offered by qualified educational institutions and training establishments. This includes providing technical assistance and outreach liaison with related organizations, agencies, individuals, and activities to help veterans and other eligible persons achieve their educational and vocational goals.

For information on facilities and programs currently approved in New Mexico, please visit <https://inquiry.vba.va.gov/weamspub/buildSearchInstitutionCriteria.do>, or <https://www.va.gov/education/gi-bill-comparison-tool/>. For questions regarding how an OJT, apprenticeship, or other program is approved for VA education benefits, contact SAA Director Kathy Snyder at SAA.approvals@state.nm.us or (505) 280-1047.

For questions regarding your eligibility for GI Bill benefits, a remaining entitlement, payment, or general GI Bill question, please contact VA at 1(888) 442-4551 or <https://www.ask.va.gov/>. GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about the GI Bill is available at the official U.S. government website: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.

SAA Director Snyder Honored by the National Association of State Approving Agencies

New Mexico SAA Director Kathy Snyder has been honored by the National Association of State Approving Agencies (NAASA) for mentoring Montana SAA Director John Stankowiak.

Mr. Stankowiak was so impressed and grateful for Kathy's guidance that he notified the NASAA about her work, and nominated her for recognition by the association. NAASA concurred, and presented Kathy a certificate of appreciation (*at right*)

“For nearly two years, Kathy has been an invaluable mentor,” he wrote to NAASA President Michelle Hill. “Words cannot describe how grateful I am for her willingness to share her knowledge and experience. I believe it is also worth noting that, while providing continuous support and help, Kathy has always been professional, respectful, and patient. Thanks Kathy!”



DVS Tribal/Pueblo Liaison Provides Outreach at the 2022 Native American Behavioral Health Conference

DVS Pueblos, Nations, & Tribal Liaison Beverly Charley provided veterans benefits outreach at the 2022 Native American Behavioral Health Conference on March 1-3 at the Isleta Resort & Casino. *(right photo, in black)*



The three-day event focused on suicide awareness and prevention, violence, and other social concerns in Native American communities. Ms. Charley reached out to veterans attending the three-day conference—providing information and answering questions about VA and state veterans benefits. She also reached out to the numerous federal, state and local agencies attending the conference—laying the groundwork for future collaborations with DVS.

“I made a lot of valuable contacts with Native American groups that we haven’t worked with yet,” said Ms. Charley. “I look forward to working with these groups to increase our reach among Native American veterans.”

Increasing DVS outreach to Native American veterans is the new focus of Ms. Charley. Previously the DVS Farmington-based veterans service officer to help veterans with filing VA claims and filing for state veterans benefits, she will now focus on helping Native American veterans throughout the state. The Farmington native, who served 14-years in the United States Army, will work to strengthen ties between DVS, the 19 pueblos, and four tribal nations in New Mexico. The following Ms. Charley’s immediate goals as she hits the ground running in her new position as tribal & pueblo liaison:

- Schedule regular virtual or on-site visits with leaders of pueblos, tribes, and nations to discuss veterans issues, partnerships, events/ceremonies, etc., and ways DVS can help.
- Attend annual tribal summits and other events
- Plan DVS-sponsored or co-sponsored health and wellness fairs on tribal land—especially in highly rural areas
- Offer DVS PIO support for major events by nations, pueblos and tribes. Encourage submittals of veteran-related events to the DVS monthly newsletter *The Guardian* to help spread the word about events.
- Work with the DVS Field Operations Division to expand training for Native American VSOs as part of DVS’ effort to help Native American veterans file VA claims
- Provide monthly briefings for DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith regarding all matters relating to the Native American veteran community



DVS Hosts Native American Veterans Collaboration Meeting

Representatives from Native American communities were invited by DVS to its Albuquerque Northeast Heights office for a *Native American Veterans Collaboration* on March 15.

The event was originally scheduled five days. But snowfall in many parts of northern New Mexico prompted a change in the date and original Santo Domingo Pueblo site.

At the meeting, DVS directors and managers provided an overview of their divisions and programs—stressing an aggressive community outreach approach beginning by the agency now that the COVID pandemic travel and gathering restrictions have been lifted.

“There is a sense in many Native communities that veterans, and the community as a whole, have been forgotten by the state and are being left behind,” said DVS Pueblos, Nations, and Tribal Liaison Beverly Charley (*upper right photo*). “But DVS will go out to you. We value our partnerships with you, and encourage you to reach out to us. We didn’t have my position before. But we’re waking up...waking up to the needs of our Native American veterans. Let’s all wake up together.”

Ms. Charley, who told everyone of her immense pride in growing up as a member of the Navajo nation, outlined her plan to provide assistance as the agency’s liaison to New Mexico’s Native American veteran population. At the top of her list: To host monthly meetings in an effort “to keep everyone connected.” In addition, she will significantly increase the frequency of multi-agency assistance fairs at all 19 pueblos in the state, the Navajo nation, the Jicarilla and Mescalero nations—and any Native American veteran in the state.

“If I can’t help...if DVS can’t help...then I will find you the agency that can,” she said. “We have partnerships with agencies all over the state who are willing to work with us to help you.”

DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith (*left photo*), in her opening and closing remarks, amplified Ms. Charley’s commitment, saying DVS will lead the fight against plans by the VA in Washington to close the VA-managed community-based outpatient clinic (CBOC) in Gallup (*see page 1 for a story about this controversial VA plan*).

“I can assure you, your voice will be heard by the VA,” she said. “We will let them know in Washington that the health care needs of New Mexico’s Native American veterans cannot continue to be ignored.”



The Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery is Hiring!

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) is hiring an **Interment Specialist** at its Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery.

The main responsibility will be working with families and funeral homes for funerals of deceased veterans and their spouses, and working with other staff for maintenance of the cemetery grounds.

This is a full-time state “classified” position offering:

Competitive pay
Paid holidays
Paid sick days
Excellent health care benefits
Enrollment in the New Mexico state employee pension program

Veterans are especially encouraged to apply!

To apply and for more information, go to the New Mexico State Personnel Office website.:

<https://www.spo.state.nm.us/view-job-opportunities-and-apply/>

- In the upper right corner, go to “*view job opportunities and apply.*”
- In the ensuing drop-down menu, go to “*new employee job opportunity*”
- In the “*Search Jobs*” box at the top of the new page, type in the job ID number **122722** and hit “enter.”
- Click on the link for the application and information
- *Please do NOT send resumes to DVS. All full-time state “classified” job vacancies are filled through the NM State Personnel Office.*





DVS to Present Southern NM Honor Guard Conference

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS), the New Mexico National Guard, and AARP New Mexico will present the 2022 Southern New Mexico Honor Conference on April 21 in Las Cruces.

The conference will be from 7:45am-4pm at the Sonoma Ranch Golf Course, located at 1274 Golf Club Road.

This will be the first of two honor guard conferences scheduled this year, and is an opportunity for southern New Mexico honor guards to attend a conference more convenient for them than the annual summer training conference held in Albuquerque. A date for this summer’s conference will be announced by DVS as soon as details are finalized.

New Mexico’s Honor Guards are all-volunteer units that perform the flag-fold, rifle volley, and bugle rendition of *Taps* at most funerals of honorably discharged veterans in the state.

The conferences are presented as a learning and training opportunity for the volunteer honor guards. Instruction and coaching will be provided by the New Mexico Army National Guard Honor Guard. Veterans service groups interested in forming an all-volunteer honor guard are also encouraged to register with DVS or to obtain information.



The highlight of the conference is a two-tiered performance competition between large and small-size honor guards. A free catered lunch will be provided courtesy of AARP New Mexico. For more information, contact Diana Myklebust at (505) 231-8911 or diana.myklebust@state.nm.us.

(all photos are from previous conferences in Albuquerque)

March is National Women's History Month

March is Women's History Month, set aside by Congress to commemorate and encourage the study, observance and celebration of the vital role of women in American history.

In honor of this month, DVS Women Veterans Program Manager Robin Wilson would like to shine the spotlight on the following five women veterans..."Five Women of Yesterday"...for their accomplishments while serving our country.

Women Veterans of Yesterday



Florence Blanchfield

Superintendent of the Army Nurse Corps during World War II, instrumental in advocating for the law allowing full rank for nurses, and the first woman to receive a military commission in the regular Army.



Susan Ahn Cuddy

The first Asian-American woman to enlist in the Navy during World War II, the first woman gunnery officer in the Navy, and the first Asian American to achieve the rank of lieutenant in the Navy.



Annie Fox

A member of the Army Nurse Corps during World War I, the first woman in U.S. military history to be awarded the Purple Heart Medal for her meritorious actions as a first lieutenant in helping to care for the wounded during the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.



Marcelite Harris

The first woman aircraft maintenance officer, one of the first two women Air Force officers commanding at the United States Air Force Academy, and the Air Force's first woman Director of Maintenance. Harris retired as a major general.



Grace Hopper

A rear admiral (lower half) in the Naval Reserve who served during World War II and after, and a pioneer of computer programming. Hopper was the first to devise the theory of machine-independent programming languages that were used to create COBOL, a programming language still in use today.

2022 Women Veterans Conference

Saturday, June 11, 2022

(9am-3pm)



Albuquerque, NM
CNM WORKforce Training Center
5600 Eagle Rock Ave. NE

FREE for women veterans, transitioning active service members, and women veterans support agencies

To RSVP for sponsorships...and free vendor/booth space, contact DVS Women Veterans Program Manager Robin Wilson at robin.wilson@state.nm.us or (505) 372-9106



*Presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services
Women Veterans Program*

Veterans Community Bulletin Board

The following page(s) feature event and informational flyers provided to DVS by veterans and community service agencies. These flyers are published for the convenience of New Mexico's veteran community. Inclusion in *The Guardian* does not constitute an endorsement by DVS of the organization, content, products, or services contained therein.

DVS invites government agencies and non-profit service organizations to send flyers for publication in *The Guardian* announcing an upcoming or ongoing veteran-related event. DVS will run these flyers as a public service courtesy to the veteran community.

However:

- Flyers must have the name of a point-of-contact from the organization...along with the contact's phone number or email address. Flyers without this information will not be published.
- DVS is not responsible for the accuracy of the content, products, or services in these flyers.
- Views expressed in these flyers are the independent views of the authors/owners of the third-party entity that created the flyer—and does not necessarily reflect the views of DVS.
- To the maximum extent permitted by law, DVS expressly denies liability for any and all losses suffered by any persons or organizations who, in their independent discretion and reliance, either directly or indirectly rely on content, products, services or information offered by these independent third-party organizations.
- DVS reserves the right to edit or decline to publish any flyer.

Join Us On Sat. March 26, At 12:00 Noon On
The Santa Fe Plaza To Honor Our Brave Union
Soldiers On This

160 Year Anniversary of the Battle of Glorieta Pass

THE BATTLE KNOWN AS THE GETTYSBURG OF THE WEST



*Erected in 1866 the Plaza centerpiece called the Soldiers Monument
was constructed to honor the Civil War Union Soldiers*

Presented by:



www.SaveSantaFeCulture.com



NATIONAL VIETNAM WAR VETERANS DAY CEREMONY

Tuesday, 29 March, 11am-3pm
Elks Lodge, 3000 Elks Drive, Las Cruces



*Join the Las Cruces Vet Center and
Elks Lodge 1119 to thank a Vietnam
Veteran for Service to our Nation*



vietnamwar50th.com or www.va.gov/las-cruces-vet-center



Save the Date!



NATIONAL VIETNAM WAR VETERANS DAY RECOGNITION EVENT

TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2022

**2PM @ DY SPRINGS MOUNTAIN
PARKING AREA**

EVENTS:

2:00pm— Recognition March/ Walk starting at DY Springs Mountain Parking Area

2:30pm— Recognition of Zuni Vietnam War veterans

3:00pm— Car Parade around the community. Decorate your vehicles!!



Staff from the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (NMDVS) will be on site to provide their services during this event.



To recognize and honor our Vietnam War Veterans for their service to their Country and the sacrifices faced in our time of need.



Zuni Veterans Program: For More Information, Call: (505) 782-7280/7281/7124

FOR SAFETY REASONS: PETS ARE NOT ALLOWED AT THIS EVENT

High Tea &

BINGO

PROCEEDS WILL BENEFIT
NEW MEXICO GOLD STAR MOTHERS

Saturday April 2nd, 2022
2 O'clock in the afternoon



VFW Post 2951
307 Montezuma Ave.
Santa Fe, NM 87501



\$15 per person
Includes Lunch &
8 Bingo Games

Contact for Tickets:
Angelia Velarde-Logsdon
505-316-4798



A Powerful Mountain Retreat to Reduce Stress, Gain Insight, and Strengthen Your Relationships

The National Veterans Wellness & Healing Center offers FREE 7-day retreats for Veterans and their partners that are coping with Post Traumatic Stress (PTS).

Download an application on our website or call to have one mailed to you.

This opportunity for healing is one of a kind!

YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

You will enjoy activities like:

- Group education to enlighten you and give you over 50 new coping tools
- Individual counseling to ensure privacy
- Alternative modalities to reduce stress and promote strength and healing like: Massage, Acupuncture, Chiropractic Care, Reiki, Qi-ssage, Yoga, and Art
- Equine experiences to teach non-verbal communication skills

2022 Retreat Dates:

*May 1-8

*June 5-12

*August 21-28

* October 23-30

For more retreat information and to download an application,
please visit

<http://www.VeteransWellnessAndHealing.org>

email or call us at:

info@veteranswellnessandhealing.org

6TH ANNUAL CAR SHOW

SUNDAY, MAY 1
10AM - 2 PM

NEW MEXICO VETERANS MEMORIAL
1100 LOUISIANA BLVD SE
ALBUQUERQU, NM

Help us send our Veterans to Washington D.C.



REGISTRATION:

\$20 PER CAR

FOR MORE INFORMATION

CALL SHIRLEY 505-410-3978

SPECTATORS ARE FREE!



Veterans, Military, and their Families News Digest

1. **NEW: VA Urges Women Veterans to Take Survey to Better Meet Their Benefit Needs**
 (Posted on www.VA.gov)
<https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/99984/are-you-one-of-the-fewer-than-half-of-all-women-veterans-not-using-va/>

2. **FEATURED on www.VA.gov: AARP's Free Resources Help Veterans, Military Spouses Find Jobs**
 (Use **#AARPsalutesVets** when sharing)
<https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/99605/free-resources-veterans-jobs/>

3. **NEW: How Many LinkedIn Connections Do Veterans & Military Spouses Really Need?**
 (Posted on www.Military.com)
<https://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/how-many-linkedin-connections-do-veterans-really-need.html>

4. **Free Resources for Veterans with PTSD, Other Mental Health Challenges; Includes New AARP/Elizabeth Dole Foundation Emotional & Mental Health Support Pocket Guide**
 (Posted on www.AARP.org/Veterans - use **#AARPsalutesVets** when sharing)
<https://www.aarp.org/home-family/voices/veterans/info-2021/ptsd-resources.html>

5. **VA to Expand 3 Caregiver Programs by 2026; Help Veterans Age in Place**
 (Posted on AARP.org/Veterans - use **#AARPsalutesVets** when sharing)
<https://www.aarp.org/home-family/voices/veterans/info-2022/va-extends-caregiving-programs.html?intcmp=AE-HF-VC-VET-BB>

6. **NEW: 6 Military Veterans Who Competed in the Winter Olympics for Team USA**
 (Posted on www.Military.com)
<https://www.military.com/off-duty/2022/02/03/6-military-veterans-who-competed-winter-olympics-team-usa.html>

For all updated AARP resources & products, including VMF Health Navigator, visit VMF InfoNet:
<https://aarpsarex.sharepoint.com/sites/infonet/CSN/OCE/Toolkits/Pages/Veterans.aspx>



News from the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA)

VA to Add Rare Cancers To Its Presumed Service-Connected Military Environmental Exposure List

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) intends to propose adding certain rare respiratory cancers to the list of presumed service-connected disabilities in relation to military environmental exposure to particulate matter.

VA determined through a focused review of scientific and medical evidence there is biologic plausibility between airborne hazards, specifically particulate matter, and carcinogenesis of the respiratory tract, and that the unique circumstances of these rare cancers warrant a presumption of service connection.

Based on these findings, VA Secretary Denis McDonough is proposing a rule that will add presumptive service connection for several rare respiratory cancers for certain veterans. The cancers under consideration include:

- Squamous cell carcinoma of the larynx.
- Squamous cell carcinoma of the trachea.
- Adenocarcinoma of the trachea.
- Salivary gland-type tumors of the trachea.
- Adenosquamous carcinoma of the lung.
- Large cell carcinoma of the lung.
- Salivary gland-type tumors of the lung.
- Sarcomatoid carcinoma of the lung.
- Typical and atypical carcinoid of the lung.

“This is the right decision. The rarity and severity of these illnesses, and the reality that these conditions present a situation where it may not be possible to develop additional evidence prompted us to take this critical action,” said VA Secretary McDonough. “We’ll continue to hold ourselves accountable to veterans to provide more care, more benefits and more services to more veterans than ever before.

VA intends to focus its rule on the rare respiratory cancers above in veterans who served any amount of time in the Southwest Asia theater of operations and other locations. VA will invite and consider public comments as part of this process.

Once rulemaking is complete, VA will conduct outreach to impacted veterans and survivors to inform them about potential eligibility.

VA to Propose Rating Schedule Updates for Respiratory, Auditory, & Mental Disorders

VA is proposing changes to the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities--specifically pertaining to the respiratory, auditory and mental disorders body systems.



The proposed updates to the rating schedule for these conditions will enable VA to incorporate modern medical data and terminology to provide veterans with more accurate and consistent decisions. Proposed updates include:

- Modernizing the evaluative rating criteria for sleep apnea, using developments in medical knowledge to evaluate it based on its responsiveness to treatment, bringing the rating criteria for sleep apnea more closely in line with the stated purpose of the rating schedule.
- Evaluating tinnitus (ringing in the ears) as a symptom of the underlying disease which causes it, rather than as a stand-alone disability.
- Evaluating mental health conditions based on a more robust and holistic approach that assesses how impactful the disability is to cognition, interpersonal relationships, task completion, life activities and self-care.

Additionally, the proposed evaluation criteria include a 10% minimum evaluation for having one or more service-connected mental health conditions and will no longer require “total occupational and social impairment” to attain a 100% evaluation.

“Veterans who currently receive compensation for a service-connected condition in these body systems will not have their disability rating impacted when the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities is updated,” said Thomas Murphy, Northeast district director, performing the delegable duties of the undersecretary for benefits. “Updating the rating schedule allows veterans to receive decisions based on the most current medical knowledge relating to their condition.”

By incorporating modern medical data in the assessment of disabilities and how they impact earning capacity, veterans will receive evaluations which more accurately compensate them for their service-connected disabilities. No change to a veteran’s current rating would occur due to these proposed changes. If the proposed changes are finalized, veterans who currently receive compensation for a service-connected condition can apply for increased compensation, but no reductions shall be made unless an improvement in the Veteran’s disability is shown to have occurred.

The public has 60 days to provide comments to VA regarding the two proposed updates via the Federal Register notices...at either of the following two links:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/02/15/2022-02049/schedule-for-rating-disabilities-ear-nose-throat-and-audiology-disabilities-special-provisions>

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/02/15/2022-02051/schedule-for-rating-disabilities-mental-disorders>



First Women Complete VA's VetBizLadyStart Veteran Entrepreneurship Program

Graduates from the Department of Veterans Affairs' Women Veteran-Owned Small Business Initiative recently finished the VetBizLadyStart program, paving a way for their future in the federal marketplace.

The inaugural 14-week program provides women transitioning out of the military the tools and resources needed to manage and grow their small businesses in government contracting.

Training modules and small group discussions were hosted by successful women mentors from the government and commercial sector. The initiative works to bridge the gap between economic disparities by providing disadvantaged populations equal access to contracts.

VA Chief of Staff Tanya Bradsher attended the ceremony.

“The graduation marks a step toward fulfilling President Biden’s recent Executive Order advancing racial equity in underserved communities” Bradsher said. “What better way to answer the call than a program that brings results for our women Veterans, who in turn can use these tools to become successful business contractors, bringing opportunities back to those in their communities.”

The EO aims to identify and remove barriers in the federal government that impact the ability of individuals within underserved socioeconomic categories to seek viable economic opportunities.

According to the Small Business Administration, only 15% out of 2.5 million Veteran-owned business are owned by women Veterans. The Women Veteran-Owned Small Business Initiative, part of VA’s Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization, is focused on using VetBizLadyStart to increase awareness of opportunities for women-owned small businesses to increase these numbers.

VetBizLadyStart is a federally funded program and collaborates with the Women’s Business Centers of the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia’s Old Dominion University. Entrepreneurship programs are offered through each organization to assist women in preparing for procurement.

Local Help for Entrepreneurial-Minded Women Veterans...and All Veterans

The New Mexico Veteran’s Business Outreach Center (VBOC), the business development division of DVS, was created in 2010 through an ongoing grant by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) as the first state-managed program to help entrepreneurial-minded veterans, transitioning active-duty personnel, and their spouses. New Mexico’s VBOC can help with everything from business planning, start-up and expansion funding, marketing, franchising, purchasing of a business--and anything else a small business needs to launch and grow. For more information, contact VBOC Director Rich Coffel at richardL.coffel@state.nm.us or (505) 220-9932; or VBOC Veterans Business Counselor Johnny Martinez at johnny.martinez@state.nm.us or (505) 469-8501.



DVS Offices Are Open for In-Person Assistance—By Appointment Only

DVS offices are open for in-person visits for veterans or their eligible dependents for assistance with filing VA claims, filing for state veterans benefits, or for anything that a veteran or his/her family may need help. DVS has formed partnerships with federal, state, local, and private agencies dedicated to helping veterans and their families.

All DVS office visits are on an appointment-only basis. Office hours are Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm, Monday-Friday. Veterans or their eligible

dependents **must** make an appointment with a DVS veterans service officer (VSO) via the contact information on the following page. With the COVID-19 virus and new variants still posing a health threat, DVS is requiring visitors to wear a protective facemask. DVS staff will observe COVID-19 six-foot social distancing, and clean & disinfect offices in-between customer visits.

DVS VSOs are also continuing to offer the same service by email or phone. Veterans from anywhere in the state can contact *any* DVS VSO for assistance.

Below are the locations and contact information for the fifteen DVS offices and nineteen VSOs, the DVS women veterans program (an option for women veterans), the DVS Tribal/Pueblo Liaison, the Angel Fire, Fort Stanton, and Gallup State Veterans Cemeteries, and the New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) for veterans who want to open, expand, or purchase a business—or secure government contracts.

Alamogordo

VSO: David Henley

411 10th Street #107

(575) 937-5620

david.henley1@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Otero, Lincoln,**

Albuquerque (Downtown)

Temporarily vacant. For in-person help, contact the Albuquerque NE Heights office. Or contact any DVS office for email or phone assistance.

Albuquerque (Downtown)

Temporarily vacant. For in-person help, contact the Albuquerque NE Heights office. Or contact any DVS office for email or phone assistance.

Albuquerque (NE Heights)

Jesus Palomino

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE

(505) 681-6998

jesus.palomino1@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Bernalillo, Sandoval, Socorro, Torrance, Valencia**

Albuquerque (NE Heights)

5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE

Temporarily vacant. For in-person help, contact the Albuquerque NE Heights office. Or contact any DVS office for email or phone assistance

Carlsbad

Dagmar Youngberg

101 N. Halagueno

(575) 988-5900

dagmar.youngberg@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Eddy, Chaves, Lea**

Clovis

Matt Barela

904 W. Sixth St.

(575) 825-9602

matthew.barea@state.nm.us

Counties served: **Curry, DeBaca, Quay, Roosevelt**

Farmington

Please contact any DVS office for email or phone assistance...or to make an appointment for in-person assistance during regularly-scheduled outreach visits.

Gallup

Durrell Tsosie

908 E. Buena Vista Ave./Room 1A

(505) 218-0348

durrell.tsosie@state.nm.us

Counties served: **McKinley, Catron, Cibola, San Juan**

(more offices on next page)

Gallup
Benjamin Stewart
908 E. Buena Vista Ave./Room 1A
(575) 386-7911
benjamin.stewart@state.nm.us
McKinley, Catron, Cibola, San Juan

Las Cruces
Rosa Bycenski
2024 E. Griggs Ave.
(505) 216-8782
rosa.bycenski@state.nm.us
Counties served: Doña Ana, Grant, Sierra

Las Vegas, NM
Martín Márquez
917 Douglas Ave.
(575) 520-5079
martinM.marquez@state.nm.us
San Miguel, Catron, Colfax, Guadalupe, Harding, Mora, Union

Roswell
Danielle Thompson
1600 SE Main St./Suite "A"
(575) 416-2284
danielle.thompson@state.nm.us
Counties served: Chaves, Lincoln

Women Veterans Program
Robin Wilson (Program Mgr.)
5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE (ABQ)
(505) 372-9106
robin.wilson@state.nm.us

Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery
Randy Myklebust (Supervisor)
34 Country Club Rd.
(505) 225-4341

Grants
Temporarily vacant. Please contact the any DVS office for phone or email assistance.

Las Cruces
Miguel Martinez
2024 E. Griggs Ave.
(505) 216-8782
miguel.martinez1@state.nm.us
Counties served: Doña Ana, Grant, Sierra

Las Vegas, NM
Arturo Marlow
917 Douglas Ave.
(505) 331-8838
arturo.marlow@state.nm.us
San Miguel, Catron, Colfax, Guadalupe, Harding, Mora, Union

Santa Fe
Nick McKenzie
Bataan Memorial Bldg./1st floor
407 Galisteo St./Room 134
(505) 218-3125
nicholas.mckenzie1@state.nm.us
Counties served: Santa Fe, Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Taos

Pueblos, Nations, & Tribal Liaison
Beverly Charley
San Juan College Veterans Center 4601 College Blvd./Room 1715-B
(575) 241-3322
beverly.charley@state.nm.us

Ft. Stanton State Veterans Cemetery
Stephen McConnell (Supervisor)
1398 State Highway 220
(505) 383-4381

Hobbs
Mark Woffindale
2120 North Alto St.
(575) 392-5290
mark.woffindale@state.nm.us
Counties served: Lea, Chaves, Eddy

Las Cruces
Vincent Tellez
2024 E. Griggs Ave.
(505) 216-8782
vincent.tellez@state.nm.us
Counties served: Doña Ana, Grant, Sierra

Rio Rancho
Dustin Newsom
1500 Idalia Rd./Bldg. D, Room 2041
(505) 221-7190
dustin.newsom@state.nm.us
Counties served: Sandoval, Los Alamos

Silver City
Chris Teran
Western New Mexico University
Juan Chacon Bldg./Room 138-A
1000 West College Ave.
(575) 313-5627
christopher.teran@state.nm.us
Counties served: Grant, Hidalgo, Luna

Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC)
Rich Coffel (Director)
5201 Eagle Rock Blvd. NE (ABQ)
(505) 220-9932
richardL.coffel@state.nm.us

Gallup State Veterans Cemetery
Gilbert Lopez (Supervisor)
333 National Cemetery Dr.
(505) 905-9771