



# The Guardian

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

[www.nmdvs.org](http://www.nmdvs.org) • Facebook: NMDVSHHealthcare2015 • Twitter: @NMDVS • Instagram: NewMexicoVeterans

## Discussion on VA's Proposal to Close Four New Mexico CBOCs Highlights DVS Quarterly Briefing



DVS Secretary Sonya Smith was joined by DVS division directors on March 31 at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial in Albuquerque to present the latest DVS public quarterly briefing.

This was the first briefing since last August, as subsequent briefings were cancelled due to a statewide rise in COVID-19 cases in the fall and winter. Secretary Smith began by discussing a VA Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission Report released last month that proposes putting

four New Mexico Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) on a list of proposed closures of 174 CBOCs nationwide.

The four targeted New Mexico CBOCs are all in northern New Mexico communities: Española, Gallup, Las Vegas, and Raton. The AIR Commission report identifies these clinics as serving areas with declining populations or usage, and that VA believes the closures will allow it to consolidate and strengthen veteran health care nationwide. Additionally, the report also proposes closing all PTSD treatment programs currently at the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center in Albuquerque...and moving it all to a yet-to-be-built facility in the Phoenix, Arizona area.

“This has the potential to interrupt the entire health care system in the state, because the system is already stressed as it is,” said Secretary Smith—the anger and disbelief palpable in her voice. “Every single hospital and clinic in the state is already dealing with staff shortages. So veterans simply can’t turn to non-veteran facilities in their areas for their healthcare.”

Secretary Smith added that the full AIR committee hasn’t even been formed yet, so no movement on anything is imminent anytime soon.

“The commission is supposed to schedule public hearing in affected areas,” she said. “But we’re not going to wait for them. We are all going to band together, and by the time they get here, we’re going to let them know...loud and clear...that this cannot and will not happen here in New Mexico.”

*(continued on next page)*

“We don’t have many alternatives up here,” said Vietnam War veteran and Española resident David Pineda during a Q&A session. “Are we here in Española...or Taos...or Raton...or all of the other small towns up here...supposed to go all the way to VA clinics in Santa Fe...or Albuquerque?”

Secretary Smith shook her head in agreement, and said the key will be to turn anger into action by contacting other veterans in these communities and even across the state. She implored veterans to show up at future briefings, meetings, and town halls—many of which will be attended by lawmakers, other important public figures, and the media.

“It’s OK to be upset,” she said. “But being upset and not doing anything about it won’t do any good. We need everyone to work on this serious threat to us here in New Mexico. Let them know in Washington that this can’t happen here.”

State Representative Harry Garcia, a United States Marine who saw action in Vietnam and whose district includes Gallup, also attended the briefing—sitting in the audience, he said, as a concerned veteran and not a politician. He echoed Secretary Smith’s comments about taking action.

“We all need to put in more effort to get more veterans to know about this situation, and then come to these briefings,” he said. “I’m here to help you out. But I need your input, and your voices. We must stop this.”

Secretary Smith wrapped up her presentation with assurances that DVS will be scheduling or participating in many more public listening sessions over the course of the year—and beyond, and that DVS will inform the veteran community when plans are finalized.



## **DVS Secretary Smith Participates in CBOC Closure Discussion Hosted by U.S. Senator Ben Ray Lujan**

DVS Secretary Smith shared the same concerns at a panel discussion hosted by U.S. Senator Ben Ray Lujan (D-New Mexico) on April 20 at New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas (NM). *(left photo; standing, 2nd from left)*

“I want everyone to know that this is a process, with a lot of things that still have to happen,” she told the crowd and fellow panelists—one of whom was newly appointed New Mexico VA Health Care Director Robert McKenrick.

*(continued on next page)*

“Nothing is going to close today or tomorrow...or a year from now...or even five...even 10-years. So this is our chance here in New Mexico to get together to try and change minds and stop this from happening.”

Senator Lujan echoed Secretary Smith’s observations, adding that he expects the committee to be finalized shortly, and the first commission hearing to take place by mid-May in regions that would be affected by the closures. He also said there will be equally important hearings in the senate.

“I have already expressed my objection to the closures of each of the four CBOCs in New Mexico,” he said. “This will give every U.S. senator a chance to ask questions--hard questions...about the need for these CBOC closures.”

He also strongly disagreed with the idea of veterans going to non-VA healthcare facilities, or relying on telehealth.

“I’m against this move towards privatizing and outsourcing VA health care,” he said. I’ve yet to run into a single veteran who is in favor of this. We should improve access to veteran health care--not privatize or outsource it.”

And the senator pointed out that, for many rural-area veterans, remote or telehealth care is not an option.

“There is that assumption that these veterans can access telehealth care—especially our elderly veterans. Not everyone is technologically proficient,” he said. “Not everyone has a computer, or the internet. So this is going to be a problem for many.”

According to the senator, these are the important benchmark dates coming up for the commission:

- January 31, 2023--deadline to file its report with the president of the United States
- February 15—deadline for the president to approve the list
  - If the president approves it, the commission has 45 days to begin closure procedures
  - If the list is rejected, the commission will have another 15 days to revise it
- January, 2026—deadline for Congress to submit funding request

NMVAHCS Director McKenrick, the former deputy director at the Greater Los Angeles VA Healthcare System who began his new position here in New Mexico only eight days earlier, thanked everyone for the opportunity to hear their concerns.

“Continue to raise your voice at every opportunity possible,” he said. “I am going to take all of this back to Washington. I look forward to engaging with all of you because your voices need to be heard.”

### **Upcoming Scheduled CBOC Discussions Hosted by DVS**

*\*more details to be announce shortly by DVS via news release and email*

Española (May 6/10am)  
Northern NM College

Gallup (May 13)  
\*TBA

Raton (May 20)  
\*TBA

Las Vegas, NM (June 10)  
\*TBA





## Veterans Property Tax & Exemption “Curbside Service” Day in Albuquerque

DVS hosted a veterans property tax exemption & waiver “drive-up/curbside service” day on March 24 at its Albuquerque Northeast Heights office parking lot. Veterans and unmarried widows of veterans, from the comfort of their vehicles, provided the verification documents to DVS staff, who took the paperwork inside and, upon verification, brought out the tax

Certificate needed by the Bernalillo County Assessor’s Office. DVS has produced a short video showing this unique curbside process. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9jwb1YvM5E4>)

DVS has scheduled another Veterans Property Tax Exemption/Waiver in-office “Service Day” on April 25 in Edgewood, from 10am-3pm at the Edgewood Senior center, located at 114 Quail Trail. As with all veterans property tax exemption/waiver service days, proof of veteran status is required: A DD-214, National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) form 56-16, or Public Health Service (PHS) form 1867. If you’re filing for a disabled veteran tax waiver, please also bring the VA award letter declaring a 100% permanent and total service-connected disability.

For proof of New Mexico residency, please bring one of the following: A current NM driver’s license,

## 96-Year Old Files for His First Veterans Property Tax Exemption

96-year old U.S. Air Force veteran John Rumancik of Albuquerque (*photo/holding exemption certificate*) and his wife Lucy, also 96 years old (*far left*) dropped by the DVS Albuquerque NE Heights office on April 19 to file for the \$4,000 veterans property tax exemption.



It was the first time filing for the couple, who have been married for 70-years. Former Staff Sgt. Rumancik was a U.S. Army Air Corps B-24 Liberator “tail gunner” on bombing missions over Germany and France in World War II. After the war Rumancik returned to his Pittsburgh, PA-area home and worked with the U.S. Postal Service. The couple moved to Albuquerque shortly after John retired in 1986.

Assisting the couple with the filing process was DVS VSO Dustin Newsom (*standing in center, in black shirt*). The Rumanciks were also warmly greeted by DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith (*center, in blue jacket*), and DVS VSOs Martín Márquez (*back row, far left*), Dayle Badwarrior (*2nd from right*), and Jesus Palomino (*far right*).

# Las Cruces Veterans Property Tax Exemption, Waiver “In-Office” Service Day



DVS and the Doña Ana County Assessor's Office teamed up to host a veterans property tax exemption and waiver service day at the assessor's office on April 20. Fifty-two veterans and unmarried widows of veterans were able to get their property tax exemption or waiver on the spot from on-site county assessor's office staff. *(Left photo: DVS Veterans Service Officer Vince Tellez verifying veterans status and state residency . RIGHT PHOTO: Vince Tellez works with fellow Las Cruces-based VSO Rosa Bycenski to finalize a veterans property tax certificate)*

## Veterans Benefits Outreach Stops

DVS is scheduled to make veterans benefits outreach stops in the communities listed below...for information or help with filing VA claims, receiving state veterans benefits, or help with any issues affecting a veteran and his or her family.

Apr. 29	<b>Albuquerque</b> -Loma Colorado Public Library	755 Loma Colorado Blvd.NE	10am-3pm
May 4	<b>Ruidoso</b> -Ruidoso Senior Community Center	501 Sudderth Dr.	10am-3pm
May 9	<b>ABQ</b> -North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center	7521 Carmel Ave. NE	10am-2pm
May 18	<b>ABQ</b> -West Side Community Ctr.	1250 Isleta Blvd. SW	10am-4pm
May 31	<b>ABQ</b> -Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Ctr.	1501 San Pedro SE	10am-2pm





## DVS Joins Effort to Restore Historic Albuquerque Cemetery

DVS has agreed to help lead an effort to restore the Albuquerque Historic Fairview Cemetery, which has fallen into a severe state of disrepair ever since it closed a decade ago.

On a bright and sunny Saturday morning, DVS staff brought some heavy equipment to a volunteer cleanup day on April 2. Nearly 50 volunteers also showed up to help clear weeds, pick up trash, and spread mulch

throughout the 17.5-acre cemetery, which was Albuquerque's first city-managed cemetery when it opened in 1881. More than 500 military veterans are buried at this cemetery—including veterans of our nation's Civil War. The cemetery's non-profit management team believes many more may be buried in unmarked graves. DVS has produced a video showing the cleanup effort,;

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSFFnAmwpBg>) with more details about this historic cemetery—the final resting place for more than 12,000 souls. The public is invited to the next volunteer cleanup day: May 7, from 9am-noon. Volunteers are encouraged to bring your own shovels/rakes/hoes, weed whackers, wheelbarrows, water, a hat, sturdy work gloves, sunglasses or goggles/protective eyewear, and sunscreen. Pickup trucks or towed utility trailers would also be appreciated to help spread mulch and haul gathered debris to an on-site dumpster. For more information, please contact Gail Rubin at (505) 363-7514.

## DVS Presents First-Ever Southern New Mexico Honor Guard Conference

DVS presented the first ever Southern New Mexico Honor Guard Conference on April 21 in Las Cruces at the Sonoma Ranch Golf Course.

The conference, presented by DVS, the New Mexico National Guard, and AARP New Mexico, provided instruction and coaching for the state's all-volunteer honor guards—those who render military honors at the funerals of veterans. The three host agencies annually present a late-summer conference in Albuquerque. But this year, DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith decided to host a second conference in Las Cruces to make it easier for southern based honor guards to receive the valuable training and coaching provided by an NMNG Honor Guard.

DVS has produced a video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYcxHjMLWjQ>) showing highlights of this conference. More information about the late summer Albuquerque conference will be provided once the plans have been finalized.







## Military Funeral Information

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, in collaboration with the **National Cemetery Scheduling Office (NCSO)** in St Louis, Missouri has put together an **INFORMATION SHEET** for **Special Accommodation burials for Religious Reasons**.

### 1. NATIONAL CEMETERY SCHEDULING OFFICE (Special Accommodations Procedures)

Funeral Homes or family members must call the **National Cemetery Scheduling Office** at (800)535-1117 to schedule a veteran's burial. They need to state that they are "**Requesting a Special Accommodation for burial for Religious Reasons**." This statement must be provided to the answering agent at the NCSO. This will alert the agent to expedite the religious request. The requestor should provide as much information as possible to the NCSO agent regarding the veteran. A copy of the veteran's DD214 should be part of the information provided. If a copy of the DD214 is not available contact the National Personnel Records Center at the National Archive. (see instructions below) Should you need assistance contact National Cemetery Scheduling Office Supervisor: Eldredge Harmon (314)-416-6778.

### 2. NATIONAL ARCHIVE OFFICE (Records Request) [archives.gov](https://www.archives.gov)

When requesting a veteran's service records, i.e., DD214, contact the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis, Missouri. An electronic request can be made at any time for a veteran's services records by visiting the National Archives website: [archives.gov](https://www.archives.gov)



**Note:** Please **DO NOT** submit a request to both the NCSO and NPRC—that will slow things down as the record(s) cannot be in two places at once.

### "EMERGENCY" REQUESTS AND DEADLINES

If your request is urgent (e.g. funeral) and there is a deadline associated with your request, please provide this information in the "**Purpose**" section of the Standard Form 180 and **fax it to the Customer Service Team at (314) 801-0764**.

### 3. MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS:

As of Jan 1, 2000, all eligible veterans, including retirees, are entitled to military funeral honors. Information on how to obtain military funeral honors and related information can be found at the following links: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/leaders-service-providers/casualty-assistance/military-funeral-honors> (Family Members) <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/leaders-service-providers/casualty-assistance/funeral-directory-and-planner-resources> (Funeral Directors) or call toll free (800) 342-9647.

For Further Assistance Contact: **DVS** Cemetery and Memorial Bureau Chief David Walker (505) 670-5824 [david.walker@state.nm.us](mailto:david.walker@state.nm.us) Diana Myklebust Business Operations (505) 231-9811 [diana.myklebust@state.nm.us](mailto:diana.myklebust@state.nm.us)



## 80th Anniversary of the Fall of the Bataan Peninsula Commemorated In Ceremonies in ABQ, Santa Fe

The 80th anniversary of the fall of the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines during World War II was commemorated by the New Mexico National Guard in front of the Bataan Memorial Building in Santa Fe on April 9.

The annual ceremony honors the 1,800 men of the New Mexico National Guard's 200th and 515th Coast Artillery Units who were part of the 75,000 U.S. and Filipino service members ordered to surrender to Japan on April 9, 1942. U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Edward King, the commanding general of the U.S. and Philippine forces on the Bataan Peninsula, gave the order. His depleted and outgunned troops were pinned down on the peninsula, and he feared imminent defeat and a catastrophic loss of lives.

The New Mexico National Guardsmen had arrived in the Philippines earlier in the year for advanced training. But Japan launched a surprise attack just hours after launching the Pearl Harbor surprise attack, and the Guardsmen waged a spirited defense before the surrender. The American and Filipino prisoners were then imprisoned by their Japanese captors. Many prisoners endured the brutal 60-mile "Bataan Death March" to their imprisonment, or were crammed aboard "hell ships" taking them to forced factory labor and mining operations in Japan and Japanese territories.

Less than half of the 1,800 New Mexicans were alive by the time Japan surrendered to the U.S. 3-1/2 years later, on September 2, 1945—bringing an end to World War II.

At this year's Bataan Remembrance Day ceremony, DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith read a proclamation from Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham proclaiming the day as Bataan Remembrance Day throughout the state. (*right photo*)



"Whereas the surrender order came over the objections of the soldiers themselves, who preferred to fight until the end rather than surrender," read Secretary Smith. "And whereas these heroes went on to live productive lives after returning home, many did so while suffering physically and emotionally from their ordeal."

Other guest speakers were Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernandez, Santa Fe Mayor Alan Webber, and Brig. Gen. Miguel Aguilar, the acting adjutant general of New Mexico. The four guests laid a wreath at the base of the Eternal Flame Monument—built after the war by surviving National Guard service members as a tribute to all who served in Bataan. (*continued on next page*)





“That legacy of honor that General Nava (former Adjutant General Kenneth Nava, who retired last December 31) used to talk about is alive and well today,” said Gen. Aguilar. “Their (Bataan veterans) spirit lives within us and always will. This ceremony, and what they did for this nation, will endure long after all of us are gone.”

Also attending the ceremony was Ann Overmier (*photo at left/seated at far left*), whose husband Bill was among the surviving New Mexico National

Guardsmen. He had been an annual attendee of the ceremony before passing away last August at the age of 101. She received a standing ovation upon her introduction.

### April 2 Ceremony in Albuquerque

A week earlier, the Bataan Corregidor Memorial Foundation of New Mexico and the Filipino-American Foundation of New Mexico hosted its annual Bataan Remembrance ceremony on April 2 in Albuquerque at Bataan Memorial Park.

Mrs. Overmier and DVS Cabinet Secretary Smith (*right photo/center, in black dress*) were guests of honor—as was former New Mexico Adjutant General Nava. In his keynote address, Maj. Gen. Nava emphasized the incredible importance for us to ‘never forget’ the sacrifice of the defenders of Bataan and Corregidor.



“To the foundation, thank you for what you are doing to keep their legacy alive,” he said. “As Adjutant General of New Mexico, I stressed to our soldiers and airmen that it was our duty to keep the stories of these men alive and implement the lessons learned from their incredible sacrifice. The men and women of the New Mexico National Guard are the living legacy of them. Remember Bataan!”

Myrna Simpson, president of the Filipino-American Foundation of New Mexico, spoke about the significance of the U.S. and Philippine flags flying together at the ceremony.

“The Filipino flag and the U.S. flag are here, side by side today, because it represents what happened in the Philippines,” she said. “Americans and Filipinos fought side by side. We appreciate the sacrifice and contributions of the American and Filipino Soldiers. We will always be here together with the Bataan Corregidor Foundation. They may be gone--but they will never be forgotten.”

There are only three surviving members of the 200<sup>th</sup> and 515<sup>th</sup> Coast Artillery Units:

- Richard J. Daly (lives in Santa Fe)
- Valdemar de Herrera (Alamogordo)
- Don “Nano” Lucero (Augusta, ME)





## American Legion Post 95 Celebrates 75th Anniversary

DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith (*left photo*) attended an April 14 ceremony in Albuquerque celebrating the 75th birthday of William Mason Post 95/American Legion.



ABOVE PHOTO: Chris Sedillo leads the American Legion Post 13 Honor Guard in posting the Colors.

(From L to R:) Post 95 Commander/former American Legion Dept. of NM Commander Evon Harrison, American Legion Dept. of NM Chaplain Aide and AL Post 95 member Karen Street, former Dept. of NM and AL Post 95 Commander Milton “BJ” Johnson.



AL Post 95 Sergeant-at-Arms Carl Green and his wife, AL Post 95 Auxilliary Historian Pauline, also celebrated and were honored on their 39th wedding anniversary.



(From L to R:) Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller, NMVA Health Care System Deputy Director Sonja Brown, DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith, American Legion Dept. of NM Chaplain Aide and Post 95 member Karen Street, and Post 95 member Alexander “AC” Cole.





# N.M. Native American Veterans Collaboration

**Attention all Native American Veteran Representatives:**

## “Building Relationships Between DVS and Pueblos, Nations & Tribes”

**Thursday, May 5, 2022**

**10:00am – 2:00pm**

**Santa Fe**

Santa Fe Community College  
6401 Richards Ave. /Main Bldg--Room 412

Join the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS)  
for a presentation and discussion about the agency's  
commitment to working with issues important to  
New Mexico's tribes, pueblos and native nations.



For more information: Contact DVS Tribal Liaison Beverly Charley at (575) 241-3322  
or [vetdvs.triballiaison@state.nm.us](mailto:vetdvs.triballiaison@state.nm.us)





## 2022 Albuquerque Metro Public Safety Day

Federal, state, and local public safety and law enforcement agencies--along with the New Mexico National Guard--will have personnel and equipment on display for 2022 Metro Public Safety and Recruitment Day on in Albuquerque on May 7 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Isleta Amphitheater parking lot, located at 5601 University Boulevard SE.



2018 Metro Public Safety Day

Dozens of law enforcement and military vehicles, helicopters, boats, and other equipment will be on display and available to climb aboard for a "hands on" look. This free family-friendly event is presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) and Bernalillo County to provide an opportunity for the public to meet first responders, law enforcement and military personnel, and learn how they serve and protect the citizens of New Mexico.

Many of the participating agencies will also be recruiting to fill job openings, so anyone interested in a first responder or law enforcement career is encouraged to bring a résumé. For more information, contact DVS Events Coordinator Joseph Dorn at (505) 861-9117 or [josephm.dorn@state.nm.us](mailto:josephm.dorn@state.nm.us).



## Have you ever served?

### Join us June 11<sup>th</sup> for the Women Veterans Conference

We'd also like to salute your service by featuring you in our June newsletter.

For more conference information, and where to send your uniform picture contact

Robin Wilson, Women Veteran Program Manager, NM Department of Veterans Services

505-372-9106 cell [Robin.Wilson@state.nm.us](mailto:Robin.Wilson@state.nm.us) email

[www.nmdvs.org](http://www.nmdvs.org)





## Request For Information About 2022 Memorial Day Events

DVS is seeking your input to help compile the agency's annual list of statewide Memorial Day Ceremonies and events. This list will be put on the DVS website and sent to the media for publication or broadcast in communities throughout New Mexico.



Please Email information about Memorial Day/Memorial Day Weekend ceremonies and activities in your area...with the following information:

- date of event
- city
- nature of event (i.e. parade/ceremony/church service, etc.)
- time of event
- venue & address
- sponsor of event (VFW/American Legion Chapter, city of Santa Fe, other organization etc.)
- point of contact (POC) and a phone number (*no email addresses*)

Please include all of the above information. DVS will not publish an event sent with an incomplete response. This information is needed when responding to inquiries about an event. DVS thanks you for your assistance!

### VFW Post 9516 Seeking Volunteer Installers for Kitchen Equipment

FW Post 9516 in Questa, a village in northern Taos County about 20-miles from the Colorado state line, has finally received badly needed kitchen equipment.

The post, according to Mayor John Ortega, is "back in business" again after a long period of relative inactivity. But it is having trouble finding or attracting qualified volunteers to install the equipment. Mayor Ortega has reached out to DVS to put the word out—and to contact him at (575) 586-0694 or [jortega@villageofquesta.org](mailto:jortega@villageofquesta.org).



# 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.





aarp.org/veterans #aarpsalutesvets

## ***Veterans, Military and their Families***

### **Veteran Caregivers Will Not Lose Benefits During Reassessment Period**

([AARP.org/Veterans](https://www.aarp.org/Veterans) – use **#AARPsalutesVets** & **#Caregivers**)

<https://www.aarp.org/home-family/voices/veterans/info-2022/caregiver-support-reassessment-period.html>

### **New Mobile App Offers Veterans Convenient Access to VA Health and Benefits**

(Posted 03/28/22 on [VA.gov](https://www.va.gov))

<https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/101836/va-mobile-app/>

### **National Medal of Honor Museum Breaks Ground** ([AARP.org/Veterans](https://www.aarp.org/Veterans) – use **#AARPsalutesVets** & **#MedalOfHonor**)

<https://www.aarp.org/home-family/voices/veterans/info-2022/national-medal-of-honor-museum.html?intcmp=AE-HF-VC-VET-BB>

### **Only Woman in History to Receive the Medal of Honor**

([AARP.org/Veterans](https://www.aarp.org/Veterans) - **#AARPsalutesVets**, **#WomensHistoryMonth**, **#MedalOfHonor**)

<https://www.aarp.org/home-family/voices/veterans/info-2021/mary-walker-medal-of-honor.html?intcmp=AE-HF-VC-VET-BB>

## **Final Notes:**

March 29 was National Vietnam War Veterans Day. Please check out Sprinklr and national social channels for new and refreshed content to salute those who served. **#AARPsalutesVets**, **#VietnamVeterans** and **#WelcomeHome** are all appropriate hashtags for this week's postings. With the return of in-community events, be sure to check out the following useful VMF materials to order from fulfillment – PLEASE observe state office order limits:

1. **Military Caregiving Guide** (full 44 pages) **D20474** : Order Limit 350 p/state office
2. **Spanish Military Caregiving Handbook** (12 pages) **D20575** : Order Limit 25 p/state office
3. **English Military Caregiving Handbook** (12 pages) **D20521** : Order Limit 500 p/state office
4. **Vets Health Benefits Navigator** **D20745 (0921)** : Order Limit 75 p/state office
5. **Financial Workbook for Veteran & Military Caregivers** **D20616** : Order Limit 65 p/state office

## **APRIL: AARP's *Protect Yourself & Your Family from Fraud***

18: NEW-Veterans Fraud Center Pre-Rollout VMF ALL Staff Videoconference

20: NEW Veterans Fraud Center Rollout for earned and social media

22: "Reporting for Duty" Episode #8 release on War Horse Military News

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>

6TH ANNUAL CAR SHOW

SUNDAY, MAY 1  
10AM - 2PM

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!



# 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 28-30**

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

**<http://www.VeteransWellnessAndHealing.org>**

email or call us at:

**[info@veteranswellnessandhealing.org](mailto:info@veteranswellnessandhealing.org)**





**What:** Taxpayer Advocate Service Problem Solving Day for Military and New Mexico Veterans

**When:** Thursday, May 12, 2022, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

**Where:** Telephone Appointments (info below)

**Partners:** [New Mexico Legal Aid Low Income Taxpayer Clinic](#)  
[Social Security Administration](#)  
[New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department](#)

The Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS) will be available to assist veterans with tax problems they've been unable to resolve on their own with the IRS. Our goal is to provide personalized, step by step guidance. If your tax problem meets our criteria, we'll assign a Case Advocate to work directly with you.

If you'd like an appointment with TAS or one of the partners listed above, please call TAS at 505-737-6308 or 505-837-5505 no later than May 9, 2022, to arrange an appointment

The Taxpayer Advocate Service is an **independent** organization within the Internal Revenue Service. TAS helps taxpayers resolve tax problems, recommends changes to prevent future tax problems, and protects taxpayer rights. TAS's **services are free** to taxpayers who are:

- Experiencing a financial hardship or having financial difficulties because of a tax problem;
- Trying, but haven't been able to resolve an IRS tax problem; or
- Believing an IRS system or procedure isn't working.

Learn more about TAS at [www.TaxpayerAdvocate.irs.gov](http://www.TaxpayerAdvocate.irs.gov).





The Albuquerque Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) will hold its annual *Memorial Service and Honoring Ceremony* to honor veteran and surviving spouse members on Saturday, May 14, at 10am, at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial Amphitheater, located at 1100 Louisiana Boulevard SE.

The chapter was unable to present the last two annual remembrance programs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, the chapter will honor the 37 members-- Including 22 retired veterans-- who have passed away since the last ceremony in 2019.

The ceremony will featured the New Mexico Army National Guard state support chaplain, Buglers Across America, the Valencia High School JROTC Color Guard, and The Enchanters Chorus from Albuquerque.

All military service organizations and current and prior uniformed service veterans are invited by the chapter to join it in honoring and remembering those who served their country in one of the uniformed services, wives and family team members who also chose to serve and supported the careers of active duty officers, and noncommissioned officers and civilian patriot associates who work with the Albuquerque MOAA chapter to advocate for and support active, reserve and National Guard members, their families, and uniformed service retirees.

For more information:

Michael Houck, LTC (Ret) USA

2d Vice President-Albuquerque Chapter MOAA

[2ndvice@albuhoa.org](mailto:2ndvice@albuhoa.org) (505) 271-6454





## WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT®

**Will Be Available at  
the Santa Fe Vet  
Center to meet with  
Post 911 Veterans  
May 20th 2022  
1100**

**Please Join us for  
lunch**

### **Wounded Warrior AVAILABLE SERVICES:**

**Adaptive Sports  
Benefits Service  
Combat Stress Recovery  
Community Partners  
Family Support  
Veteran-Focused Services  
Benefits Assistance  
Veterans Service officer  
Community-Based Care**

**(Supportive and Completely Confidential)**

### **LOCATION**

Santa Fe Vet Center  
2209 Brothers Road, Suite 110  
Santa Fe New Mexico 87505

### **FOR INFO CONTACT**

Phillip Chavez  
Outreach Specialist  
Office (505) 988 6562  
Cell: (505) 595 4839  
Email- [phillip.chavez2@va.gov](mailto:phillip.chavez2@va.gov)





## News from VA



**Denis McDonough**  
VA Secretary

### VA Secretary Denis McDonough Statement on VA Budget As Proposed by President Biden

The Biden-Harris administration submitted to Congress the president's budget for fiscal year 2023.

This budget delivers critical resources to help VA serve veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors as well as they have served our country — and it will allow VA to continue providing more care, more services, and more benefits to more veterans than any time in its history.

In outlining his [Unity Agenda](#), the president identified supporting veterans as a key priority. His budget request supports the importance of ensuring veterans have timely access to high quality services and benefits.

To fulfill this promise, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) total FY 2023 budget request is \$301.4 billion, an 10.6% increase above the 2022 Enacted Budget (with rescissions). This includes a discretionary request of \$139.1 billion (with medical care collections), an 18.8% increase above the 2022 Enacted Budget (with rescissions). The 2023 mandatory funding request totals \$161.3 billion, an increase of \$5.1 billion or 3.3% above the 2022 Enacted Budget.

The president's 2023 budget request for VA includes:

- **Support VA medical care.** The budget provides \$122.7 billion (with collections), 21.3% above the 2022 enacted budget, to meet the medical needs of veterans. In addition to fully funding inpatient, outpatient, mental health and long-term care services, it supports programs that improve VA health care quality and delivery, including investments in training programs for clinicians, health professionals and medical students. The budget also further supports VA's preparedness for regional and national public health emergencies.
- **Improve veterans' mental health care services.** The budget provides \$13.9 billion for VA mental health care, which offers a system of comprehensive treatments and services to meet the needs of each veteran and the family members involved in the veteran's care. Consistent with the president's vision for addressing the national mental health crisis, it focuses on increasing timely access to quality mental health care and lowering the cost of mental health services for veterans, with the goal of helping veterans take charge of their treatment and live full and meaningful lives.

*(continued on next page)*

- **Prioritize veteran suicide prevention.** The president made reducing military and veteran suicide a priority and strengthening veteran suicide prevention is a top clinical priority for the secretary. To help address these priorities, the budget provides \$497 million to support the administration's veteran suicide prevention initiatives, including implementation of: the Veterans Crisis Line's 988 expansion initiative (a new national three-digit emergency telephone number to access crisis call centers across the country for suicide prevention); increased focus on suicide prevention public health efforts in communities, a lethal means safety campaign; and the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program to enhance community-based prevention strategies.
- **Increase women veterans' health care.** The budget invests \$9.8 billion for all of women veterans' health care, including \$767 million towards women's gender specific care. More women are choosing VA health care than ever before, with women accounting for over 30% of the increase in veterans enrolled over the past five years. Investments support comprehensive specialty medical and surgical services for women veterans. Additionally, VA proposes to increase access to infertility counseling and assisted reproductive technology and to eliminate copayments for contraceptive coverage. It also improves the safety of women veterans by supporting implementation of the zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment and assault at VA facilities.
- **Address environmental exposures.** The budget increases resources for hiring additional claims processors and advancing claims automation and modernization efforts to speed processing new presumptive disability compensation claims related to environmental exposures during military service. It also invests \$51 million within VA research programs and \$63 million within the VA medical care program to increase scientific understanding of and clinical support for veterans and health care providers regarding the potential adverse impacts from environmental exposures during military service.
- **Support cancer moonshot and precision oncology.** The budget invests \$81 million in research and \$167 million in medical care funds for precision oncology to provide the best possible cancer care for veterans and support the [cancer moonshot's](#) goal to end cancer as we know it today. Funds support research and programs that address cancer care, rare cancers and cancers in women, as well as genetic counseling and consultation that advance tele-oncology and precision oncology care.
- **Invest in human infrastructure.** This budget will allow us to invest in people and technology to improve the hiring experience for applicants, managers, and human resource professionals; support an additional 28,963 full-time equivalent personnel; develop and implement staffing models throughout VA; promote strong labor relations with our national unions; and lead our post-pandemic occupational safety and health planning and programs.

The budget makes smart investments while also reducing deficits and improving our country's long-term fiscal outlook. We are grateful to Congress and President Biden for their strong support of our veterans, which this budget demonstrates. This is great news for the veterans we serve, because it means VA can continue delivering the world-class, timely care and benefits that they deserve.

Please visit [VA Budget Office](#) or [FY 2023 budget](#) for more information.



## VA Establishes Presumptive Service Connection For Nine Additional Respiratory Cancers

VA is adding nine rare respiratory cancers to its list of presumed service-connected disabilities due to military environmental exposures to fine particulate matter.

The following list of rare respiratory cancers have been added to VA's regulations through an Interim Final Rule published in the Federal Register on April 26, 2022:

- 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.



VA determined through a focused review of scientific and medical evidence there is biological plausibility between airborne hazards and carcinogenesis of the respiratory tract — and the unique circumstances of these rare cancers warrant a presumption of service connection. The rarity and severity of these illnesses and the reality these conditions present, is a situation where it may not be possible to develop additional evidence, prompted VA to take this action.

“Last year we made promises to fundamentally change and improve how we establish and expedite presumptions — now we’re keeping them,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “We are taking a new approach to presumptives that takes all available science into account, with one goal in mind — getting today’s veterans — and veterans in the decades ahead — the benefits they deserve as fast as possible.”

VA will begin processing disability compensation claims for Veterans who served any amount of time in the [Southwest Asia theater of operations](#) beginning Aug. 2, 1990, to the present, or Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Syria or Djibouti beginning Sept. 19, 2001, to the present.

Any veteran who has or had one of the listed cancers at any time during or after separation from military service may be eligible for disability compensation benefits. VA will contact impacted Veterans and survivors to inform them about their eligibility and will provide information on how to apply.

Veterans, survivors or dependents who had claims previously denied for any of these respiratory cancers are encouraged to file a [supplemental claim](#) for benefits. If you are a veteran, survivor, or dependent applying for the first time, file a new claim [here](#).

To apply for benefits, Veterans and survivors may visit [VA.gov](#) or call toll-free at 800-827-1000.