



The Guardian

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

www.nmdvs.org

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June 8 Deadline to Register For The 2022 New Mexico Women Veterans Conference



Registration will close on June 8 at 5pm for the 2022 New Mexico Women Veterans Conference in Albuquerque on Saturday, June 11 at the Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) Workforce Training Center, at 5600 Eagle Rock Avenue NE.

The conference, from 8am-3:30pm, is presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS), is free for women veterans and transitioning active-duty women service members.

Representatives from DVS, the New Mexico VA Health Care System, and the Albuquerque VA Regional Office will be among the more than 20 agencies scheduled to be there with information about VA, state and other veterans' benefits—including benefits specifically for women veterans.

Doors open for check-in at 8am, when a free self-serve breakfast will be provided featuring breakfast burritos, pastries, fresh fruit, coffee/tea, and orange juice. Later, a free buffet-style lunch will also be provided featuring traditional New Mexican cuisine catered by Garcia's Kitchen of Albuquerque.

According to the latest VA data, almost 11% (2,045,000) of our nation's 19.1 million veterans are women. Here in New Mexico, 16,600 of our state's 148,300 veterans are women—also 11% of the veteran population. But many who have served in the military are not signing up for the benefits they've earned through their military service because they incorrectly believe they don't qualify for benefits because they :

- didn't serve in combat
- didn't make a career out of the military/serve more than 20-years
- are not male/benefits are only for males who've served

The conference seeks to inform unregistered women veterans about their benefits, and update those who have signed up but are unaware of new/additional benefits.

Though the conference is free, pre-registration is required and can be done by contacting DVS Women Veterans Program Manager Robin Wilson at robin.wilson@state.nm.us or (505) 372-9106.

Women Veterans Day is June 12

The 2022 New Mexico Women Veterans Conference is a day before *Women Veterans Day*.

Though not an official holiday or day of remembrance, it is a day observed by many states—New Mexico included—annually pass proclamations marking its observance to officially honor our women veterans.

The date marks the anniversary of President Harry Truman signing the *Women's Armed Services Integration Act* on June 12, 1948, allowing women to serve as permanent, “regular” members of the United States Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and the recently-formed Air Force. Previously, women were relegated to serving in civilian support positions such as nursing, laundering, mending clothing and cooking. Despite this segregation, many served in war zones alongside their male compatriots, and some even dressed as men during the Civil War and fought on the front lines.



Here in New Mexico, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham has issued a proclamation commemorating the day, which reads:

WHEREAS women have a long yet mostly unknown history of military service to our nation, dating back to their volunteer service in support of the Continental Army in the battle for our country's independence; and

WHEREAS women were officially recognized as a part of the United States Armed Forces since the creation of the Army Nurse Corps in 1901; and

WHEREAS, on June 12, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed the *Women's Armed Services Integration Act*, allowing women to serve as regular members of the military' and

WHEREAS more than 10% of our nation's 19-million Armed Forces veterans are women. 16,600 live in New Mexico; and

WHEREAS women veterans in New Mexico excel in leadership and hard work, as they serve the state as doctors, engineers, educators, business leaders, and in many other important capacities; and

WHEREAS the state of New Mexico is grateful for our women veterans who, as with all veterans, selflessly served with dedication, honor, and bravery in service to our state and country.

NOW, THEREFORE I, Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor of New Mexico, now hereby declare June 12, 2022, as

Women Veterans Day

throughout the state of New Mexico.

To celebrate Women Veterans Day, DVS asked women veterans in New Mexico to submit photos of themselves from their service days. The department would like to thank all women for their service and sacrifice for our country. *(photos listed alphabetically...after the DVS staff)*



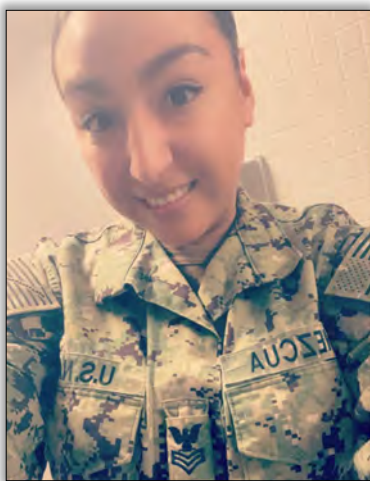
DVS Cabinet Secretary
TSgt Sonya Smith
USAFR (1986-1999)



DVS Women Veterans
Program Manager
CAPT Robin Wilson
USN (1991-2010)



DVS Veterans
Service Officer
OS3 Danielle Thompson
USN (2007-2011)



PO1 Dezideria Amezcua
USN (2015-present)



Capt. Susan Bontly
USAF (1982-1987)



CTR1 Jenny Brizal
USN (2000-2010)



CSM Liz Bryant
NMARNG (1980-2018)



PO3 Carleen Cherino
USN (1989-1997)



CPT Meagan Chopito
USAR (2010-present)



PO3 Amanda Cordero
USN (2011-2016)



Cpt Kathryn Cordova
USMCR (1969-1973)



YN2 Mary Cox USN
(1959-1963)



SPC4 Gina DeAguiro
USA (1968-1971)



Cpl Lori English USMC
At right
(1968-1970)



O3E Rose Fenton
USN (1987-2017)



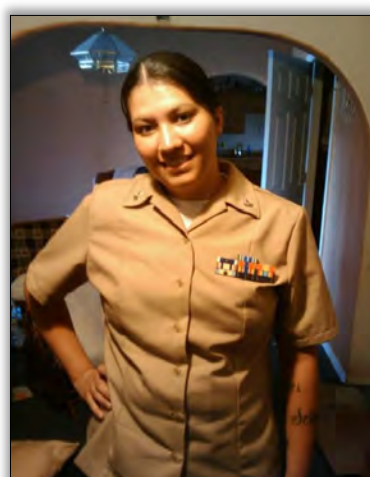
CDR Patricia Finley
USN Nurse (1987-2008)



SPC Kelly Fitzpatrick
USA (1976-1980)



Capt Carol Gaines
USMC (1959-1964)



PO1 Victoria Haddox
USN (2005-2019)



SPC Jan Herrbach
USA (1974-1978)



SPC Destinie Jaramillo
NMARNG (2010-2017)



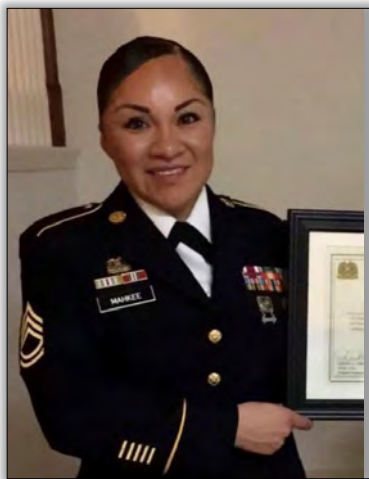
MAJ Jan Jourdain
USA (1978-1994)



LTC Yolonda Joyner
USA (1981-2006)



Capt. Laurel Lampela
USAF (1979-1989)



SFC Helena Mahkee
USA (2001-2021)



SrA Michelle Martinez
USAF (1996-1999)



SGT Carolyn McClary
USA 2003-2012



LCpl Rosalie Moreno
USMC (1966-1968)



SMSgt Linda Mortensen
USAF (1983-2011)



MM3 Kathy Natachu
USN (1989-1996)



SSgt Valeri Ogilvie
USAF 1982-1993



SrA Nicole Olonovich
USAF 2003-2008



1LT Solange Pihut
USA (2014-2022)



SGT Laura Reich
USAR 1982-1987



CAPT Claudia Risner
USN (1981-2019)



Sgt Iris Ruiz
(at left)
NMANG (2010-current)



COL Christine Sautter
USA Nurse (1985-2011)



Cpl Jonella Seymore
USMC (1990-1994)



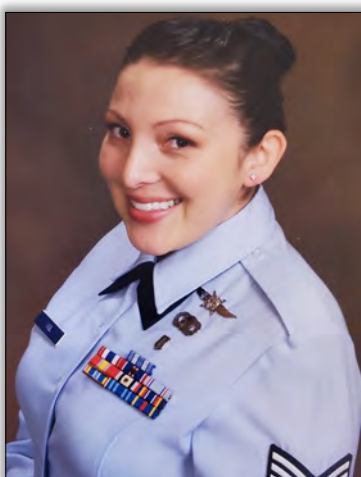
Lt Col Renee Sussman
USAF (1978-1998)



SPC Mariah Sweeney
NMARNG (2018-present)



CPO/HM Deb Tallent
USN (1975-2009)



MSgt Sheila Vigil
USAF (2005-current)



**PFC Angela
Waseta-Rivera**
USA (1993-1995)



(L) SPC Jessica Watters
NMARNG (2010-2016)

(R) SPC Pashense Warford
NMARNG (2013-2019)



Sgt Lea White
USMC (1985-1989)



PO3 Joan Wittig
USN 1989-1993



SSgt Beth Wojahn
USAF 1989-1999



Terresa Dudley
USMC (1981-1984)



CMSgt Vickie Mares
NMANG (35 years)





DVS Cancels Its Memorial Day Ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) has cancelled the scheduled Memorial Day ceremony on May 30 at its Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire.

The decision was made out of concerns over the Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak wildfire in northern New

Mexico, which started April 6 in nearby San Miguel County and continues to burn in the direction of Angel Fire and the Moreno Valley area. More than 311,000 acres have been burned, and containment is at 40%.

State fire officials are urging people in southern Colfax and Taos Counties, and parts of San Miguel, Mora and northeastern Santa Fe counties to remain on high alert and to monitor news about road closures and evacuation notices.

“The situation is still very critical in this part of northern New Mexico,” said DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith. “The safety of everyone there is first and foremost on the minds of everyone here at the Department of Veterans Services.”

DVS will proceed with presenting I am Memorial Day ceremonies at its Fort Stanton and Gallup State Veterans Cemeteries.

“Before you go out to enjoy the day with family and friends, I ask that you remember that Memorial Day is more than just the end of school...or the unofficial start of summer.” she said. “Please remember the “REAL” intent of Memorial Day: To pause...even if just for a moment...to thank—even silently--the men and women who’ve lost their lives while actively serving our country.”

You can hear more of what Secretary Smith said about Memorial Day in this brief [Memorial Day video message](#). (to watch the video, simultaneously press “Ctrl” while clicking on the link)

On the next page is a list of other ceremonies in the state—based on information provided to DVS. *(Please note: There may be ceremonies that are not on this list because DVS was not notified of the event)*

2022 Memorial Day Events In New Mexico

<u>City</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Point of Contact</u>	<u>Phone #</u>
May 28 (Saturday)					
Fort Bayard	gravesite flag-placing	8am	Fort Bayard National Cemetery	Phil Torres	(505) 350-8561
Las Cruces	gravesite flag-placing	8am	Masonic Cemetery	Joe Montoya	(575) 571-7728
Santa Fe	gravesite flag-placing	8am	Santa Fe National Cemetery	Denise Baker	(505) 988-6400
May 29 (Sunday)					
Corrales	Gravesite flag-placing	9am	San Isidro Cemetery (Corrales)	Terry Brown	(505) 350-1641
Questa	Ceremony	1pm	Carlos Cisneros Veterans Memorial	Joe Vigil	(505) 553-1427
Tijeras	Ceremony	10am	Luis Garcia Park	Nicolas Kennedy	(505) 281-1220
May 30 (Monday-Memorial Day)					
Albuquerque	pre-ceremony concert	9am	New Mexico Veterans Memorial	Kay Coleman	(505) 489-9054
Albuquerque	Ceremony	10am	New Mexico Veterans Memorial	Kay Coleman	(505) 489-9054
Albuquerque	Ceremony	9am	Historic Fairview Cemetery	Gail Rubin	(505) 363-7514
Belen	Ceremony	10am	Belen Veterans Memorial	Frank Ortega	(505) 236-3618
Clovis	Ceremony	11am	Lawnhaven Cemetery	Valentino Martinez	(575) 791-0211
Clovis	Lunch (vets/active duty)	1pm	Elks Lodge #1255	Valentino Martinez	(575) 791-0211
Deming	Ceremony	11am	Mountain View Cemetery	Thom Barry	(575) 546-8385
Edgewood	Ceremony	10am	Venus Park	Rick Thompson	(505) 720-6176
Fort Bayard	Ceremony	10am	Fort Bayard National Cemetery	Phil Torres	(505) 350-8561
Fort Stanton	Ceremony	11am	Fort Stanton State Veterans Cemetery	Stephen McConnell	(505) 205-6707
Gallup	Ceremony	11am	Gallup State Veterans Cemetery	Gilbert Lopez	(575) 921-3494
Isleta Pueblo	Ceremony	9am	Isleta Veterans Cemetery	Fred Lujan	(505) 573-3733
Las Cruces	Wreath-Laying	730am	W. Picacho-Rio Grande River crossing	Martha Short	(575) 339-8400
Las Cruces	Ceremony	9am	Hillcrest Cemetery	Joe Montoya	(575) 571-7728
Pecos	Wreath-Laying	9am	Pecos Cemetery	Am. Leg. Post 70	(505) 469-4988
Portales	Ceremony	10:30am	Portales Cemetery	Randy Dunson	(575) 760-3341
Roswell	Ceremony	10am	Memory Lawn	Stephen Lee	(720) 272-1455
Roswell	Ceremony	1pm	South Park Cemetery	Stephen Lee	(720) 272-1455
Santa Fe	Ceremony	10am	Santa Fe National Cemetery	Denise Baker	(505) 988-6400
Santa Fe	Ceremony/Luncheon	Noon	VFW Post 2951	Gilberto Romero	(505) 699-6472
Shiprock	gravesite flag-placing	6am	Shiprock Cemetery	Mark Decker	(505) 947-5179
Shiprock	ceremony	11am	Shiprock Cemetery	Mark Decker	(505) 947-5179
Shiprock	Ceremony	1pm	Victory Life Church	Victory Life Church	(505) 436-5952
Zuni Pueblo	ceremony	10am	Zuni Fairgrounds	Zuni Veterans Program	(505) 782-7280

KNME (PBS TV) Memorial Day Programming Notes



**New Mexico PBS / KNME -- Ch. 5.1 & Ch. 5.4
presents**

Veterans - Related & Memorial Weekend programs May 28 – June 1, 2022

For Those Who Serve / Served, and Their Families, Friends & Communities

For more details, please visit www.nmpbs.org

Programs are available for free streaming following the broadcast on the PBS Video App

SHRAPNEL DOWN: MY KOREAN WAR STORY

Ch. 5.4 - Saturday, May 28, 11:30 a.m.; Monday, May 30, 10:30 p.m.

In 1952, Gunner's Mate Bill Rector was serving on the USS Los Angeles during the height of the Korean War. Using an 8mm camera, Bill documented his war experiences, including battles during the Blockade of Wonsan - the longest naval blockade in modern history.

D-DAY: OVER NORMANDY

Ch. 5.4 - Saturday, May 28, 2:00 p.m.; Ch. 5.1 - Wednesday, June 1, 10:00 p.m.

Some of the most sweeping views of the landing beaches in Normandy, captured by one of France's top aerial drone camera companies, with archival footage from June 6, 1944.

THEY VOLUNTEERED FOR THIS: MERRILL'S MARAUDERS

Ch. 5.4 - Saturday, May 28, 3:00 p.m.; Tuesday, May 31, 10:00 pm

Narrated by television news icon Tom Brokaw, this hour-long film focuses on one of WWII's most heroic and least talked about units - "Merrill's Marauders," the volunteers who fought in Burma in 1944-1945 under the legendary Gen. Frank Merrill, and received the Congressional Gold Medal in 2020 for their sacrifice and accomplishments.

NATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY CONCERT (2022)

Ch. 5.1 - Sunday, May 29, 7:00 p.m. & 8:30 p.m.;

Ch. 5.4 - Tuesday, May 31, 7:00 p.m. & 8:30 p.m.

Tune in to the annual broadcast of America's national night of remembrance. The multi-award-winning event honors the military service of all our men and women in uniform, their families and those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. *(more programming on next page)*

AMERICAN VETERAN – 4-part series – Back-To-Back on One Night

Ch. 5.4 - Sunday, May 29, 6:30 p.m. - 10:30 p.m.

The Crossing - 6:30 p.m.

As recruits take the oath to serve, they leave the civilian world to become a soldier, sailor, marine, airman or woman. Narrated by TV host, and former Marine, Drew Carey.

The Mission - 7:30 p.m.

Hosted by Senator Tammy Duckworth.

The Return - 8:30 p.m.

Hosted by actor, Vietnam War veteran and Native American activist Wes Studi.

The Reckoning - 9:30 p.m.

Veterans ask how we can move America forward. Hosted by Army veteran, actor and motivational speaker J. R. Martinez.

LIFELINE: PEARL HARBOR'S UNKNOWN HERO

Ch. 5.4 - Sunday, May 29, 10:30 pm; Monday, May 30, 1:00 pm

Narrated by actor Gary Sinise, this program tells the story of how U.S. Navy sailor Joe George became an unlikely hero when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on December 7, 1941, and how he was recognized with a Bronze Medal for his actions more than 70 years later.

SKY BLOSSOM: DIARIES OF THE NEXT GREATEST GENERATION

Ch. 5.1 - Sunday, May 29, 11:00 p.m.

During World War II, troops would look up and say, "Here come the Sky Blossoms" - paratroopers rushing to their aid. Today, a new generation is answering that call for help. This program captures their stories.

UNSETTLED HISTORY: AMERICA, CHINA AND THE DOOLITTLE TOKYO RAID

Ch. 5.1 - Monday, May 30, 9:00 p.m.; Ch. 5.4 - Wednesday, June 1, 9:00 p.m.

This program examines a key moment in American/Chinese history from the perspectives of the children of both the "Doolittle Raiders" and the Chinese villagers who aided in their rescue.

REGISTRY

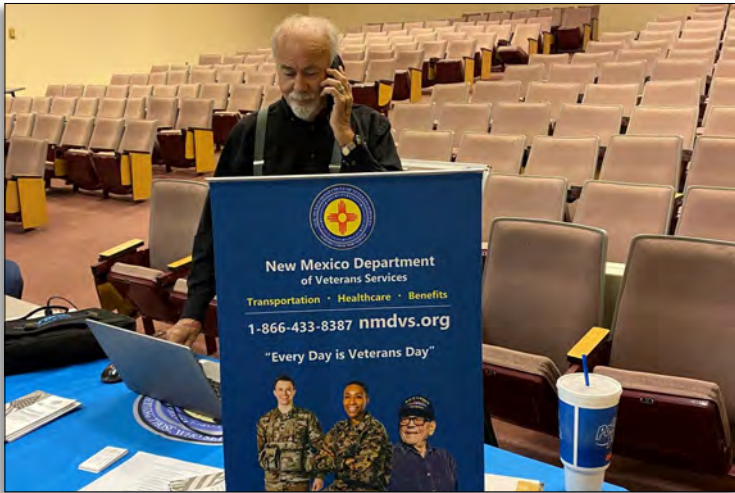
Ch. 5.1 - Monday, May 30, 10:00 p.m.; Ch. 5.4 - Wednesday, June 1, 9:00 a.m. & 10:00 p.m.

This film breaks open the hidden history of the US Army's Military Intelligence Service (MIS) during World War II -- a story made possible because of a few aging Japanese American veterans with a little Internet savvy and a lot of determination.

NOVA "Great Escape at Dunkirk"

Ch. 5.1 - Wednesday, June 1, 9:00 p.m.

Join archaeologists and divers recovering remains of ships and planes lost during World War II's epic Dunkirk operation. Discover new evidence of the ingenious technology that helped save Allied forces from defeat by the encircling Germans.



DVS Assisting Veterans Displaced by Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak Wildfires

DVS staff is offering the use of computers at the Las Vegas (NM) evacuation center to veterans and their families displaced by the Hermits Peak or Calf Canyon wildfires.

The evacuation center is at the old Memorial Middle

School Lecture Hall #110, at 947 Old National Road. DVS veterans service officers (VSOs) will be every day from 10am-3pm with laptop computers, printers, and Wi-Fi access points for veterans to file FEMA claims, or to seek assistance from other federal, state, and local agencies. Staff can also help veterans file for state veterans benefits or VA claims. This free computer use will continue for as long as the evacuation center is open.

TOP PHOTO: DVS Las Vegas-based Veterans Service Officer Martín Márquez tests the WiFi signal of a DVS laptop for use by veterans displaced by the Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak wildfire.

RIGHT PHOTO: DVS Las Vegas-based Veterans Service Officer Arturo Marlow with additional laptops, printers, and paper for use by displaced veterans to file for FEMA and other assistance claims.



LEFT PHOTO: After helping veterans file claims during the day, DVS VSO Arturo Marlow has been spending evenings and some weekends delivering water to many of the more than 3,000 firefighters battling the fire in Mora County. It's part of his "second job" as a volunteer firefighter with the Mora Volunteer Fire Department.

Off-Duty Firefighters Lend a Hand at the Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery



Six firefighters from San Diego, California, spent part of May 27 helping out with duties at the DVS-managed Angel Fire State Veterans Cemetery.

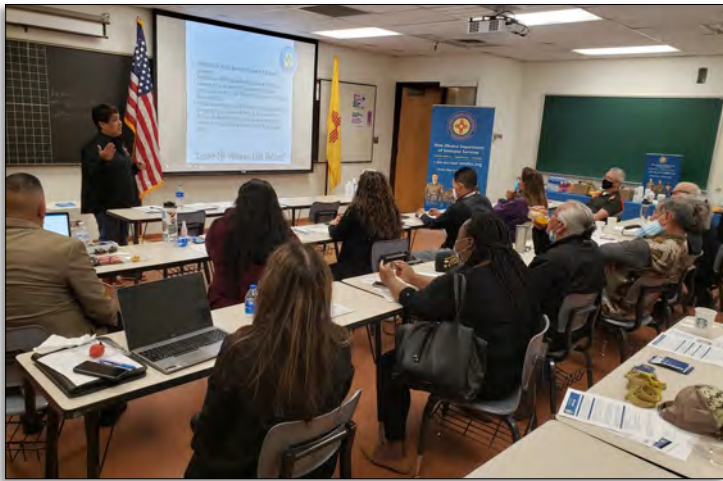


The group is part of the contingent of 3,000 firefighters battling the Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak fire about a half-hour away in Mora County. It was their day off after fighting the blaze for six straight days. The group decided to visit the cemetery and see if staff could use any help, and maybe learn some new things, because veterans are important to them.

Sean Cox has been a firefighter for 23 years with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). He was glad to help because his father, grandfather, and uncles all served in the Army and the U.S. Marine Corps. Mathew Fuentes was a Marine from 2006 to 2010 and is now in his ninth season as a USFS firefighter. Miguel Angel Menza has been a Wildland Fire Fighter for 5 seasons now. Albert “Jay” Harmon served in the Arm from 2005-2012—serving 2 tours in Afghanistan--and is now in his fourth season as a USFS firefighter. Ryan Burton is a technician aide serving his first fire season with the Forrest Service.

According to Cemetery Supervisor Randy Mykelbust, the firefighter’s unit meets every morning at the cemetery parking lot to go over the day’s plans before heading east and over the Sangre de Cristo Mountains into the fire zone. He was pleasantly surprised when they showed up on their day off—telling him they “wanted to do something different.”

“They did a fantastic job—even helping us install two upright headstones,” said Mykelbust, who said the men also helped with pond maintenance. “It was an honor to get to know these hard-working guys who put their lives on the line while in the military—and now, fighting wildfires. They’re just great, great guys.”



DVS Meets With Representatives From Northern NM Native American Veterans Groups

Representatives from northern New Mexico's Native American communities were invited by DVS to its latest *Native American Veterans Collaboration* meeting on May 5 at Santa Fe Community College.

As with the inaugural series of monthly meetings that began last month, DVS Pueblos, Nations, and Tribal

Liaison Beverly Charley outlined ways DVS can help tribal nations. Key points raised were the agency's role as the "point agency" for helping veterans and their families not only with filing VA claims, but also with any other issues through its strong partnerships/referral links to numerous federal, state, local, and Native American agencies.

Another key point brought up by one of the attendees was the lack of On the Job (OJT) training and apprenticeships programs on tribal lands or through Native American businesses available for veterans to use their GI Bill® federal education benefit.

"We are keenly aware of this," said State Approving Agency Directory Kathy Snyder, who leads the DVS division responsible for ensuring compliance with VA GI Bill standards for educational institutions, trade schools, and OJT opportunities. "I am working with some pueblos right now to change this, because we know that there are Native American veterans who qualify for GI Bill benefits—but don't want to go to college, and instead would love to use their benefit to learn a trade."

The next tribal collaboration meeting is a virtual "Zoom" presentation on June 3. DVS will send the online link information shortly. The next in-person briefing is scheduled for July 14 at Zuni Pueblo. DVS will have more information as soon as plans are finalized.

Native American Veterans

The US Department of Defense estimates there are currently over 24,000 active duty Native service members in the U.S. Armed Forces. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, about 143,000 veterans identified themselves as American Indian or Alaska Native. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) there are 9,700 Native American veterans here in New Mexico—about 6% of the state's overall veteran population of 148,000.

DVS recognizes the need to reach out to our state's veterans—many of whom live in highly rural areas not easily accessible by federal or state agencies to offer assistance. DVS Pueblos, Nations, and Tribal Liaison Beverly Charley's sole purpose within the agency is to reach out to Native American veteran. She is tasked with educating them about their benefits, and helping them with other challenges in their lives—offering them and their families the strength of a state agency to find solutions. Beverly is constantly on the road, visiting as many veterans as she can. She can also be contacted by phone or email: (575) 241-3322 or beverly.charley@state.nm.us

Gallup-Area Veterans Briefed on Proposed VA CBOC Closures

DVS held an agency briefing in Gallup on May 13 at the Veterans Helping Veterans office.

Before having each agency director give an update on agency events, DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith gave an update and opened the floor for questions about VA’s proposed plan to close 170 community-based o outpatient clinics (CBOCs) nationwide—including the Gallup clinic. That proposal comes from a report by VA’s Assets and Infrastructure Report (AIR) commission, which announced the plan earlier this spring.



“The big news is that the nine-person AIR commission hasn’t even been filled yet—it still needs one more person, so nothing has even begun to happen,” she told a capacity crowd. “As I’ve said in other meetings, this gives us time to rally support...to mobilize...and strongly voice our opposition to the VA to this plan which I believe will seriously affect veteran health care here in New Mexico.”

Secetary Smith pointed out that the committee only has eight months left to file its report and send it to Congress for its approval—a report which most in Congress are dead-set against.

“The AIR commission is mandated to personally visit every single community that will be affected by this plan,” she said. “But the committee hasn’t even been formed yet. So keep up the pressure—contact your congressman or woman, and let them know how strongly you feel about this.

Secretary Smith promised a “strong reaction” from veterans when committee members visit New Mexico. She also pointed out that all five members of New Mexico’s congressional delegation are opposed to this plan. She promised that DVS will work with the delegation to continue to mobilize support against the AIR commission recommendation.

AIR Commission Report Frequently-Asked Questions (FAQs)...and answers

See page 25 for frequently asked questions...and answers...from VA.

Upcoming DVS Briefings

Las Vegas, NM	June 10	10am-noon	Luna Community College
*Española	TBD		
*Raton	TBD		

*DVS will send more information in the coming weeks

Scheduled DVS June Outreach Visits



DVS has scheduled the following veterans benefits outreach visits in June. DVS staff will have information about state veterans benefits, and can help veterans or unmarried widows of veterans file VA claims.

<u>Date</u>	<u>City/Venue</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Time</u>
Jun. 2	Capitan -Capitan Public Library	101 East 2nd St.	
Jun. 6	Rio Rancho -Meadowlark Senior Center	4330 Meadowlark Lane SE	10am-2pm
Jun. 6	Casa Blanca-K'awaika Senior Center	9 Bartree Rd.	10am-noon
Jun. 14	Albuquerque -Bear Canyon Senior Center	4645 Pitt St. NE	10am-2pm
Jun. 24	Ro Rancho -Loma Colorado Public Library	755 Loma Colorado Blvd. NE	10am-2pm
Jun. 28	Albuquerque -VAMC Lobby Outreach	1501 San Pedro Dr. SE	10am-2pm

DVS is also scheduled to make veterans property tax exemption/waiver ‘service stops” in the following communities.

Jun. 1	* Albuquerque -Bernalillo County Assessor's Office	415 Silver Ave. SW	10am-2pm
Jun. 27	* Tucumcari -Quay County Courthouse	301 South 3rd St.	10am-2pm
Jul. 6	* Los Lunas -Valencia County Assessor's Office	444 Luna Ave.	10am-2pm

At these locations, staff will help veterans or unmarried widows of veterans file for the waiver—which gives a \$4,000 exemption off the taxable value of a veteran’s home....or the exemption, which eliminates the total property tax bill for veterans rated by the VA as 100% permanent-and-total service connected disabled.

Unmarried widows of veterans can also apply for the exemption or waiver. 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 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 Pitches In On Latest Cleanup Day at Historic Albuquerque Cemetery

DVS brought the heavy equipment once again, for the latest volunteer cleanup day at the Historic Albuquerque Fairview Cemetery on May 7. (RIGHT PHOTO: DVS Gallup State Veterans Cemetery Supervisor Gilbert Lopez; BELOW CENTER PHOTO: DVS Cemetery Program Manager Dave Walker)



DVS joined the effort after learning of more than 500 veterans, including those from the Civil War, buried among the 12,000 laid to rest at the city's oldest cemetery, which opened in 1881. The public is invited to the next volunteer cleanup day: June 4, from 8:30am-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.



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.
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SALUTE TO SERVICES



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SUNDAY, MAY 29

GATES OPEN: 5:00 PM - GAME TIME: 6:05 PM

\$12 PER PERSON! (RESERVED LEVEL TICKET)
USE PROMO CODE: SERVICE

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GRAND OPENING

SPECIAL
GUESTS

DAY

FOOD
BOOTH

ZUNI VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK

June 10, 2022
10AM - 1PM

**In Honor of All Zuni
Veterans Who Served**

This event is open to the
community

Must bring your own chairs



Zuni Transit will provide transportation to anyone
interested, Pick ups will be along any of their normal routes.



Veterans Legal Clinic

June 14, 2022

Virtual Telephone Clinic

Save the
date!
Location
TBD

Sept 13, 2022

November 8, 2022

- Family Law (divorce, custody/visitation, child support)
- Consumer Rights
- Bankruptcy
- Landlord-Tenant
- Foreclosure
- Employment
- Tax
- Wills/Probate
- General Civil

Clinic is on a sign-up only basis.

Help is contingent on volunteer attorneys.

If you have any further questions, please contact the Veterans Justice Outreach Program at 505-206-9086.



State Bar of New Mexico
Young Lawyers Division



The 1st National Veteran Women In Ag. Conference

July 6, 2022 - July 7, 2022

9:00 am - 5:00 pm (CST)

1701 N Martin Luther King Ave Oklahoma City, OK 73111
NWIAA Headquarters

**FREE Registration online at www.NWIAA.org
under the events tab!**

RESOURCES:

- USDA/FSA- Veteran Programs
- USDA-NRCS Resource Programs for developing your Ag. business
- Grants, Loans, & Additional Tangible Resources
- Land Ownership & Retention
- Mental & Physical Health Resources
- Women & Children Equality Inclusion Act
- Farm Tour

If you would like to participate or be a sponsor please contact us using the information provided below:

For any questions, please contact us at (202) 643-0590 or at Womeninag@gmail.com





aarp.org/veterans #aarpsalutesvets

Veterans, Military, and their Families

NEW STORY/VIDEO: From the Battlefield to the Newsroom: How a Marine Continues to Serve

<https://www.aarp.org/home-family/voices/veterans/info-2022/thomas-brennan-reporting-for-duty.html?intcmp=AE-HF-VC-VET-BB>

10 Things You Didn't Know about VA Home Loan Program

<https://www.aarp.org/home-family/voices/veterans/info-2022/va-home-loan-program.html?intcmp=AE-HF-VC-VET-BB>

NEW: What Veterans Should Know about Advance Care Plan

(Posted on 05/03/22 on **VA.gov**)

<https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/102785/what-you-should-know-about-advance-care-planning/>

VA: Veteran Caregivers Won't Lose Benefits During Reassessment Period

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

Fraud Attacks Soar for Veterans, Military; AARP Launches New Veterans Fraud Center as part of Operation Protect Veterans

<https://www.aarp.org/home-family/voices/veterans/info-2022/fraud-military-community.html?intcmp=AE-HF-VC-VET-BBStory>

**For all updated AARP resources & products, including
VMF Health Navigator, visit VMF InfoNet:**

<https://aarpsharex.sharepoint.com/sites/infonet/CSN/OCE/Toolkits/Pages/Veterans.aspx>



News from the VA

VA's Proposal to Close Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCS) Across the Country

Frequently-Asked Questions

(from VA's website)

On March 14, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released its [Assets and Infrastructure Review \(AIR\) report](#). According to VA, the report focused on improving access to and quality of care for veterans by ensuring VA's clinical infrastructure reflects the needs of veterans, including utilizing existing partnerships with academic affiliates.

What is AIR?

When Congress passed the MISSION Act in 2018, it required that VA undergo an asset and infrastructure review (AIR) to study the current and future health care needs of veterans across America, and to evaluate VA's health care infrastructure to ensure VA is *ready and able to continue to provide veterans with world-class access and outcomes*.

As part of the congressionally mandated AIR process, VA will submit recommendations to the AIR Commission that will:

- Cement VA as the primary, world-class provider and coordinator of veterans health care for generations to come.
- Build a health care network with the right facilities, in the right places, to provide the right care for all veterans, including underserved and at-risk veteran populations in every part of the country—making sure that our facilities and services are where the veterans are.
- Ensure that the infrastructure that makes up the Department of Veterans Affairs in the decades ahead reflects the needs of the 21st century veterans—not the needs and challenges of a health care system that was built, in many cases, 80 years ago.
- Strengthen our roles as the leading health care researchers in America and with our academic partnerships to remain the leading health care training institution in America.

This is a three-step process:

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- First, VA conducted market assessments – studies of every VA market across the country designed to understand the makeup of our veterans by health care needs, age, race, gender, era they served, and where they live.
- Second, VA used those market assessments to inform recommendations for the future of VA's health care infrastructure. The secretary announced the recommendations on March 14, and they are available at <https://www.va.gov/aircommissionreport>.
- Third, the AIR Commission (a bipartisan, presidentially appointed and congressionally approved group), the president of the United States, and Congress will review those recommendations and determine whether or not they will be accepted and implemented.

During the AIR Commission's review, the commission will hold public hearings, visit VA facilities, meet with employees and partners—and most importantly, listen to veterans—to assess those recommendations. At the conclusion of that work, the AIR Commission will transmit the recommendations, with any changes it deems necessary, to the president.

The president will then determine whether or not he wants to submit those recommendations to Congress. If he does submit them, Congress can then accept those recommendations as a whole by inaction or reject those recommendations as a whole by passing a joint resolution of disapproval.

What does this mean for veterans?

There will be changes in markets across the country, but VA is not leaving any market. Between outpatient care, strategic collaborations, and referrals to the community, VA will continue to deliver timely access to world-class care to every veteran, in the community and in rural areas, in every corner of the country.

Will the AIR Process require me to get a new mental health or primary care provider?

There will be no immediate changes. Through the AIR process, VA intends to increase access and improve outcomes for veterans, not to direct veterans away from providers they trust. Veterans will always be at the center of VA decision-making, and throughout the development of the AIR recommendations has sought to propose changes that will make a positive impact on veterans now and into the future.

Did Veterans/VSOs get to contribute as part of this process?

Yes. From March to June 2021, VA hosted virtual listening sessions across the country to hear from the veterans and the communities VA serves. Sessions were focused on hearing about veterans' experiences with VA health care and their vision for its future. Feedback from the listening sessions were considered when developing recommendations that the secretary will submit to the AIR Commission. The commission will hold public hearings, visit VA facilities, meet with our partners, and listen to veterans to assess those recommendations. VA has engaged with VSOs throughout the entire process, updating them on progress and considering their feedback on methodology and data sources. In addition, VA sought veteran and VSO feedback when developing the decision criteria that will be used in the AIR commission recommendations.

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Why is the AIR process necessary?

The median age of VA's hospitals is 58 years old, and much of VA's health care infrastructure was built in the 1940s and 1950s to meet the needs of World War II veterans. The AIR process will ensure that the infrastructure that makes up VA in the decades ahead reflects the needs of the 21st century veterans—not the needs and challenges of a health care system that was built, in many cases, 80 years ago.

What does this mean for VA employees?

In the short run, AIR will have no major impact on VA employees. In the long run, AIR recommendations could indeed impact VHA facilities and staff, but it's too early to know exactly what or where those impacts might be. VA recognizes that it is not its infrastructure that cares for veterans or saves their lives—it is the VA Workforce, VA's incredible public servants. Through this process, VA is not only looking to invest in its physical infrastructure, but VA is also actively looking to invest in the VA Workforce, because they are a critical part of VA's future.

What is the AIR Commission's process for consideration of the AIR Report recommendations?

The *MISSION Act* requires the AIR Commission to conduct public hearings on the recommendations in regions affected by any of the Secretary's recommendations to close a VHA facility. Hearings may also be held in regions where the Secretary recommends modernization or realignment. The *MISSION Act* requires that the public hearings have witnesses, including a veteran and local public official.

In making its recommendations, the commission may change any recommendation made by the Secretary if the commission determines that the Secretary deviated substantially from the final criteria. The commission may then change the recommendation to be consistent with the final criteria. They must also publish a notice of the change to the Federal Register and conduct public hearings on the proposed change.

By January 31, 2023, the commission must submit its recommendations to the President and must justify any recommendation that is different from the recommendations made by the Secretary.

What is the difference between a recommendation and complementary strategy?

Recommendations are specific opportunities for modernization and realignment of VHA facilities in each market that the Secretary submitted for consideration by the AIR commission. If approved, recommendations are mandatory actions.

Complementary strategies supplement VA's recommendations to the AIR Commission and support a high-performing integrated delivery network in each market. Complementary strategies are additional discretionary actions VA anticipates taking to enhance the recommendations.

Were specific metrics used to determine which facilities should be opened, closed, or modernized? If so, what metrics were used?

There is no single metric that is used to determine whether to open, close, or modernize VA facilities. VA's aim is to deliver high quality care in locations that are accessible to veterans. VA's recommendations were developed pursuant to Section 203 of the *MISSION Act*, which required VA to establish specific criteria to use in the development of the recommendations.

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In May 2021, VA released criteria that specified the key sets of metrics used in the recommendations. VA engaged with multiple stakeholder groups, including veterans and veterans service organizations, to better understand their perspectives and used their input to develop the Section 203 criteria.

The decision criteria include veterans' need for care & services and the market's capacity to provide them (demand), accessibility of care for veterans (access), impact on mission, providing the highest quality whole health care (quality), effective use of resources for veteran care (cost effectiveness), and ensuring a safe and welcoming health care environment of care (sustainability). All recommendations have been formulated to meet the criteria and the AIR Commission will evaluate the recommendations on the criteria.

In addition to the decision criteria, the recommendations were developed with consideration of each market's unique needs to ensure veterans have access to high quality care now and in the future. The recommendations are the result of years of research and analysis conducted to assess VA's current infrastructure and determine how to invest resources to maintain and improve veteran health care.

Does the AIR Report include recommendations to close VA facilities?

There have been no announcements or decisions regarding any VA facilities closing, anywhere. The report recommends modernizing VA's health care system to get care closer to where veterans live. In some cases that includes recommendations to close facilities and invest in modern facilities in locations in that market convenient to veterans that look to maintain or improve their access to care.

VA recognizes that it's not the infrastructure that cares for veterans or saves their lives—it's the VA Workforce, the incredible public servants. VA is not only looking to invest in physical infrastructure but also actively looking to invest in the VA Workforce, because they are a critical part of VA's future. VA aims to build a health care network with the right facilities, in the right places, to provide the right care for all veterans, including underserved and at-risk veteran populations in every part of the country—making sure that facilities and services are where the veterans are.

Recommendations in the report to close a facility are based on multiple data points that may include a facility's age, the existing and projected veteran demand for health care services in the local area, and the potential to leverage local partnerships to deliver the best care to veterans. Among the criteria used to develop recommendations is "access"—a requirement that all recommendations maintain or improve access to care. The AIR Commission's review process will include determining if VA's recommendations meet all criteria to include the access criteria.

How will VA prioritize and fund projects that result from the AIR Process?

If approved, the MISSION Act requires VA to begin implementing recommendations no later than three years after the date on which the President transmits the report to Congress. The MISSION Act also established an AIR account to support future appropriations for implementation of the recommendations. During the implementation, VA would develop a process for prioritization and funding of projects.

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Why was the release of the AIR Commission recommendations postponed?

Spread of the Omicron variant impacted everyone's work and lives, especially those who work in health care settings. VA's staff needed to be focused on providing care to veterans and keeping our staff safe. It was vitally important to the Secretary and VA leaders across the enterprise that market assessment findings and recommendations were discussed with staff before they were published in the Federal Register. In the context of staff's ongoing, heroic response to the Omicron variant, more time was needed to communicate with staff about the recommendations before they were published.

What are the next steps after the AIR Commission's review?

After the AIR Commission completes its review and submits its recommendations to the President, the President has the opportunity to review the recommendations and transmit a report to the commission and Congress containing approval or disapproval of the recommendations.

If the President disapproves of the recommendations, the AIR Commission has an opportunity to respond and resubmit recommendations to the President for approval. If the President disapproves again, the process terminates.

If the President approves of the recommendations, the President will submit them to Congress with certification of approval. Congress will have the opportunity to disapprove the recommendations by introducing and passing a joint resolution of disapproval on the recommendations as a whole. If no action is taken within a specified timeframe the recommendations will be considered approved.

Is the AIR Commission similar to a BRAC?

This is not a "stay or go" process. VA will remain in health care markets and look to strengthen the delivery of care to veterans. The Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) focused on closure and realignment. In contrast, the AIR process is focused on increasing access and improving outcomes for veterans regardless of care location and strengthening VA's ability to provide health care in every market, with VA services remaining the preferred method of delivering care. In the places where there are changes, VA will be shifting toward new infrastructure, or different infrastructure that accounts for how health care has changed, that matches the needs of a market, that strengthens VA's research and education missions, and that—most of all—ensures that the veterans who live in that location will have access to the world-class care they need, when they need it.

What are market assessments?

Market assessments are an initiative for each of VA's markets, providing analysis and insights that informed recommendations to the AIR Commission. Market assessments used a variety of data to inform the analysis, including but not limited to information regarding market geography and demographics, current and future market demand, veteran access, quality of care, facility conditions, and health care resources—such as federal and community provider data—that exist in the broader market. Analysis is also significantly informed by input from local VA medical facilities, including site visits and more than 1,800 interviews with field staff.