

**The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services**

**Michelle Lujan Grisham** *Governor*

**Sonya L. Smith** *Cabinet Secretary*

United States military veterans and active service members were admitted free to the 2022 New Mexico State Fair in Albuquerque on September 13 on *Military & Veterans Day at the State Fair.*

The annual day at the fair is presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) and the State Fair to honor and thank the men and women who have served or are currently serving our country in the U.S. military.

Throughout the day, DVS along with more than three dozen veterans and community service organizations had tables along the fairgrounds’ “Main Street” to dispense information about services available for veterans and their families.

The day was highlighted by an 11 a.m. ceremony on the main stage, where Lieutenant Governor Howie Morales was among the guest speakers. He said as a proud son of a Vietnam War Army veteran, he is proud to help Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and DVS to serve the state’s veterans and their families.  
  
“Thank you for keeping us safe and for protecting our freedoms,” said the lieutenant governor. “No matter what, we’re going to be there to provide services for you. The health care that you may need, the employment opportunities that should be there, and the opportunities to connect for a better life. This is so fully deserved and earned.”

Secretary Smith echoed the lieutenant governor’s pledge, saying she works the best agency in state government—the one with the best mission.  
  
“Our sole focus is to serve our veterans and their families,” she said. “That’s what we do…because to everyone here at DVS, every day is Veterans Day.”

New Mexico VA Health Care System Director Robert McKenrick urged veterans to help spread the word about the PACT Act that President Joe Biden recently signed into law, which finally opens up VA health care for Post-9/11 and Vietnam War veterans who have developed health issues linked to exposures to toxics from burn pits and other toxic materials while in service.

“There are now more than 20 new presumptive conditions that veterans can get VA health care for,” he said. “This is your new mission—to help all of us up here get the word out about this great new law.”

Military & Veterans Day at the State Fair also coincided with *Albuquerque Navy Week.* The city is one of 13 non-traditional “Navy cities” across the country that the U.S. Navy brings sailors and officers to educate the public about itself.

“You might be asking yourself, “’Why are we here in Albuquerque? We don’t have a base on the Rio Grande!” he jokingly said. “What we do is protect our seven seas. Nearly three billion dollars’ worth of goods are exported every year from New Mexico, and 90-percent of it is transported by ship. What we do is ensure safe commercial passage on our high seas.”

Members of Gold Star Mothers of New Mexico, the service group comprised of mothers of sons or daughters killed during active military service, reading the names of the 95 service members from New Mexico since the global war on terror began in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C.

“The reading of these names is a tradition at the conclusion of this ceremony,” said American Gold Star Mothers of New Mexico Vice President Pat Merville. “Thank you for allowing us to read aloud the names, keeping the memory of them alive.”

DVS has produced a [short video montage](https://youtu.be/rzQdSU9XcJI) of pictures from the day’s events.

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