

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) took part in the Native American Training Institute's 2024 Veterans' Symposium on April 19-20 at the Isleta Resort & Casino.

DVS staff was joined by representatives from the New Mexico VA Health Care System and the Indian Health Service to present information and answer questions about VA and state veterans' benefits—with an emphasis on benefits and programs available for Native American veterans. Several "breakout sessions" were hosted by DVS staff which concentrated on specific subjects such as how and where to file VA and state benefits claims, help for women veterans, help for veteran-owned small businesses, transportation for veterans, and outreach to Native American pueblos and tribal nations.



In his welcoming address, DVS Cabinet Secretary Jamison Herrera (*below photos*) thanked the veterans and spouses for attending and taking the time to learn about the important benefits available for them. Referring to a current American Legion slogan, he urged audience members to take the information learned in the conference back with them to their communities.

"Be the one. Today and tomorrow, you're going to get a lot of valuable information. Be the one to call and check up on your veteran friends and make sure they're doing OK," said Secretary Herrera. "Be the one to ensure that whatever information that you gather today, that you go back and share it with your friends, your communities, your tribes, your chapter houses...your pueblos, or your native nations. We have to understand that we sometimes have to carry the water for our friends...and bring it to them...rather than bring them to the water."





TOP PHOTO: During free periods, DVS staff was busy answering questions from veterans who stopped by the DVS tables outside the conference room. DVS staff, in black outfits from L to R: Veterans Business Outreach Center Director Johnny Martinez (in front of wall, with neck brace), Veterans' Service Officer Diana Powers, Veterans' Service Officer Ronn Saavedra, and Field Services Division Director Robin Wilson.



ABOVE PHOTO, from L to R: DVS Women Veterans Program Manager Theresa Figueroa, VBOC Director Johnny Martinez, Deputy Secretary Eric James, Cabinet Secretary Jamison Herrera, Tribal Liaison Beverly Charley, Veterans' Service Officer Mathew Zamora, and Social Worker Therese Castillo