



The Guardian

The monthly newsletter of the New Mexico Dept. of Veterans' Services
August-September, 2024

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Unclaimed Remains of 42 Veterans to be Laid to Rest With Military Honors on September 19



(photo is from last year's Forgotten Heroes Funeral)

The unclaimed cremated remains of 42 veterans will be laid to rest during the 2024 Forgotten Heroes Funeral Honors Ceremony on September 19.

A brief memorial ceremony is scheduled for 9 a.m. in Albuquerque at Calvary Church at 4001 Osuna Road NE. The 42 urns will then be loaded into two hearses for burial at the Santa Fe National Cemetery, at 501 North Guadalupe Street, for an 11 a.m. funeral service and interment.

The New Mexico Forgotten Heroes Program

The 39 male and three women veterans will be buried with military honors courtesy of New Mexico's Forgotten Heroes Funeral Program, created by the New Mexico Department of

Veterans' Services (DVS), Bernalillo County, and the New Mexico National Guard to provide a military funeral for honorably discharged veterans who, upon death, are unclaimed by family or friends.

The program was developed in 2010 through a collaboration by DVS, Bernalillo County, and the State Office of the Medical Investigator to provide military funerals for unclaimed deceased Bernalillo County veterans whose cremated remains had been kept in possession by local funeral homes. The goal was to provide a funeral befitting someone who had sacrificed to serve our country as a member of the United States military—but had gone unclaimed upon death. The program was then introduced the following year to the remaining 32 counties in New Mexico.

For all unclaimed deceased citizens in New Mexico, county officials work with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to identify any that were honorably discharged military veterans. Counties then notify DVS of these unclaimed cremains. DVS then collaborates with the Santa Fe National Cemetery and the New Mexico National Guard to provide a military funeral in late summer or early fall for these cremains of unclaimed veterans.

DVS also works with New Mexico State Police, Albuquerque Police, and law enforcement agencies from Bernalillo, Sandoval, and Santa Fe Counties to temporarily close street and freeway intersections to allow a smooth transport of urns by hearse to the Santa Fe National Cemetery. Law enforcement motorcycle units and veterans' service organization motorcycle riders provide an escort for the hearses.

The public is invited to serve as "family" at these funerals—with the governor, lieutenant governor, or DVS cabinet secretary delivering the eulogy, ensuring that no honorably discharged veteran is ever alone and forgotten upon death.

Upcoming DVS Veterans' Benefits Outreach Visits in Sep. & Oct.

DVS is scheduled to make the following September and October outreach visits at the locations listed below. Veterans and/or their eligible dependents are encouraged to stop by to file for--or ask information about--VA disability ratings, VA medical or mental health care, retiree pensions, military burials, and many other VA benefits.

Staff can also help with applying for state veterans' benefits such as the veterans' \$4,000 property tax exemption, waiving the property tax assessment for veterans rated 100% permanent and total disabled, disabled veteran fishing and hunting licenses, veterans' license plates, and many more state veterans' benefits.

Please bring a copy of your DD Form 214 Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, which are necessary for filing all veterans' benefits claims. DVS can help assist veterans file for lost or misplaced DD 214s.

Artesia	Sep. 19	United Veterans Center/402 W. Hermosa	9am-3:30pm
Cannon AFB	Sep. 10 & 24	Military & Family Readiness Center	3-4pm
Deming	Sep. 11	Veterans Food Bank/4045 Overhill Dr. NW	10am-2pm
Deming	Sep. 25	Deming Senior Center/800 South Granite	10am-12:30pm
Gallup	Sep. 10 & 24	Veterans Helping Veterans/908 E. Buena Vista	10am-noon
Raton	Sep. 18	Raton CBOC/1493 Whittier St.	10am-2pm
Ruidoso	Sep. 4	Ruidoso Community Ctr/501 Sudderth Dr.	10am-3pm
Santa Rosa	Sep. 11	Guadalupe County Veterans' Ctr/720 Lake Dr.	10am-2pm
Socorro	Sep. 10 & 24	Forget Me Not Veteran Ctr/705 N. California	9am-3pm

Artesia	Oct. 17	United Veterans Center/402 W. Hermosa	9am-3:30pm
Cannon AFB	Oct. 1, 22, 29	Military & Family Readiness Center	3-4pm
Eunice	Oct. 10	Eunice Public Library/1003 Avenue	9-11:30am
Gallup	Oct. 8 & 22	Veterans Helping Veterans/908 E. Buena Vista	10am-noon
Jal	Oct. 10	Woolworth Community Library/100 E. Utah Ave.	1-3:30pm
Lovington	Oct. 17	Lovington Library/115 Main St.	9-11:30am
Mora	Oct. 2	VFW Post 1131/ 2825 NM Hwy 518 (mile marker 28.5)	1-5pm
Raton	Oct. 16	Raton CBOC/1493 Whittier St.	10am-2pm
Socorro	Oct. 8 & 22	Forget Me Not Veteran Ctr/705 N. California	9am-3pm
Tatum	Oct. 17	Tatum Public Library/323 E. Broadway	1:3:30pm

The following are weekly outreach stops:

Santa Fe	T & Th	Santa Fe Vet Center/2209 Brothers Rd.	8am-2pm
Truth or Consequences	Wed.	State Veterans Home/992 S. Broadway	9am-4pm

As a reminder, veterans and their eligible dependents can always contact any of the 17 DVS field offices statewide listed on the back two pages of this newsletter. Each office is staffed by nationally certified veterans' service officers (VSO), who can also offer assistance by phone or email.

New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center “Boots to Business” Classes For This Fall



The New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC)—the veterans business development division of the New Mexico Department of Veterans’ Services— will present “Boots to Business” introduction to entrepreneurship classes this fall in the following communities listed below.

The classes are for transitioning active-duty service members, veterans/National Guard/Reserve members, and spouses who are interested in starting their own business or growing an existing operation. Classes are from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on both days. You must have on-base privileges to attend the two classes marked with an asterisk (*).

City	Dates	Venue/Address
*Holloman AFB	Sep. 12-13	HAFB Airman & Family Readiness Center https://sba.my.site.com/s/b2b-course-information
*Cannon AFB	Sep. 19-20	CAFB Airman & Family & Readiness Center https://sba.my.site.com/s/b2b-course-information
Albuquerque	Sep. 26-27	VBOC Office/Pinetree Corporate Ctr./Bldg. 2 (4801 Indian School Road NE) https://sba.my.site.com/s/b2b-course-information
Rio Rancho	Oct. 22,29 Nov. 12, 19	Rio Rancho Regional Chamber of Commerce (4201 Crestview Dr. SE) <i>This is a four-week course. Please call the VBOC at (505) 469-8501 for more information or registration</i>

The Boots to Business Program



These free two-day introduction to entrepreneurship courses will present information about the key elements of small business ownership and expansion, techniques for evaluating the feasibility of business concepts, and the steps needed to develop an all-important business plan—a “must” for anyone looking to start or expand a business.

The classes will also introduce a broad spectrum of entrepreneurial business concepts, how to access resources available for obtaining start-up or expansion capital, technical assistance, and how to pursue federal contracting opportunities.

To register for these classes, please go to the blue registration links found below each listing.

For additional information about the Boots to Business program, or the New Mexico VBOC, contact VBOC Business Advisor Austin Walker at a.walker@dvs.nm.gov or (505) 469-8501.

The VBOC is also presenting the following *FREE* event this fall...for veteran-owned businesses, entrepreneurial-minded service members, veterans, and their spouses:



THE POWER OF VETERAN OWNED BUSINESS
 U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

VBOC

VETERANS BUSINESS OUTREACH CENTERS

**NEW MEXICO VETERAN-OWNED
 BUSINESS SUMMIT**

October 29-30, 2024
**More details to follow at www.nmvboc.org*

POWERED BY



U.S. Small Business
 Administration

The New Mexico Veteran's Business Outreach Center (VBOC)

The VBOC is funded by a U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) grant managed by DVS to help veterans, transitioning active service members, National Guard & Reserve members, and their spouses who are interested in starting or growing a small business. It can help with everything from business planning, start-up and expansion funding, marketing, landing federal contracts, and anything else a small business needs to launch and grow. DVS was the first state agency in the nation funded by the SBA to offer this “one-stop-shop” when the SBA launched this grant program in 2010.

The VBOC is located in the DVS Albuquerque office at 4801 Indian School Road NE/Building 2. Drop-in visits for business counseling are welcome—but scheduling an appointment is strongly recommended. For information about the VBOC, contact Director Johnny Martinez at johnny.martinez@dvs.nm.gov or (505) 469-8501.

Recap of the 2024 Summer Honor Guard Conference

The 2024 Summer Honor Guard Training Conference concluded on April 23 at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial in Albuquerque with a competition between honor guards that was graded by a panel of judges.

BELOW TWO PHOTOS: First place in the Small Group competition (two or three-persons) was awarded to VFW Post 951 from Shiprock. *(right photo, from L to R: New Mexico Dept. of Veterans' Services (DVS) State Cemetery Program Bureau Chief David Walker, Post 951 Past Commander Mark Decker, current Post Commander Lester Light, Sr. Vice Commander Tommie Yazzie, and DVS State Cemetery Program Business Operations Specialist Diana Myklebust.*



ABOVE TWO PHOTOS: American Legion Post 12 out of Santa Fe took top honors in the medium group competition (no more than six members). *(lower-left photo, standing—from L t R: DVS's David Walker, Gary Bland, Mile Luna, Gloria Valdez, Patricia Finley, Leo Gorospe, and DVS' Diana Myklebust. KNEELING: Dan Nava, Terry Becker.*



ABOVE TWO PHOTOS: In the large group competition (more than six members), Marine Corps League “El Perro Diablo” Detachment 478 captured first place. *(right photo, from L t R: DVS State Cemetery Program Bureau Chief David Walker...Detachment 478 members Larry Rodriguez, Don Marquez, Jesse Rodriguez, Andres Rivera, Frank Brennan, Joe Mendiola, Art Duarte, Jeffery Eakman, Clemente Morales, Ed Clark...and State Cemetery Program Business Operations Specialist Diana Myklebust.*

MIDDLE RIGHT PHOTO: First place in the “live” bugle competition went to Russ McDuffie, from Albuquerque/*Bugles Across America.*

This was the second of two annual honor guard conferences this year presented by DVS, the New Mexico National Guard, and AARP -New Mexico to provide a learning opportunity for New Mexico’s volunteer honor guards. A similar conference was presented this spring in Las Cruces.

Instruction was provided by New Mexico National Guard Honor Guard members on the proper procedure of the draping of the American flag over the casket, the flag-fold, rifle volley, bugle rendition of Taps, and the presentation of the folded flag to family at the funerals. While the National Guard has honor guards to provide this free service, these volunteer honor guards provide a critical service for veterans in New Mexico--which is the fifth largest state in the nation.



“Our state is simply too large for one entity to cover,” said DVS State Cemetery Program Bureau Chief David Walker, who helps supervise the honor guard program here in New Mexico. “These training conferences ensure that our all-volunteer honor guards get the instruction and training they need to be able to provide the very best ‘final salute’ for our deceased veterans and their families.”

For more information about the Honor Guard Program, contact David Walker at david.walker@dvs.nm.gov or (505) 670-5824.

Remains of Two Battle of Bataan POWs Laid to Rest in New Mexico

The repatriated remains of two New Mexico Army National Guard members who died while in Japanese captivity during World War II were recently laid to rest back home here in New Mexico.

On August 8, former Army Sgt. Samuel Prince was interred with military honors at the Mission Garden of Memories Cemetery in his hometown of Clovis. He died on September 22, 1942, while held captive by Japanese forces at the Cabanatuan prison camp in the Philippines. He was 28 years old. Sgt. Prince was among the 1,800 New Mexico National Guard members who were part of 75,000 American and Filipino soldiers that surrendered to Japan on April 9, 1942, on the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines. The surrendered soldiers were then forced to endure a torture-filled 65-mile walk on what came to be known as the Bataan Death March on their way to brutal prison camps.

Sgt. Prince was buried in a common grave at the prison camp. Following the war, the American Graves Registration Service exhumed the grave's remains and relocated them to a site near Manila. Efforts to identify the remains continued for decades. Using the latest in DNA testing technology, Sgt. Prince's remains were finally identified four months ago and then repatriated to family members in Clovis.

"The family feels the same way I do," said James "Buddy" Prince, Samuel's nephew. "We're just glad to have the closure."



Former NMARNG Sgt.
Samuel Prince



On July 26, former New Mexico Army National Guard Pfc. Manuel Trujillo was laid to rest with military honors at the Santa Fe National Cemetery. The Santa Fe native was 22 years old when he died on July 26, 1942, as a POW held at the Cabanatuan prison camp. As with Sgt. Prince, Pfc. Trujillo was a member of the 200th Coast Artillery Unit that surrendered to the Japanese force.

Trujillo was buried in another common grave at the prison camp. After the war, his remains were also exhumed and moved to the same Manila American Cemetery facility that received Sgt. Prince's remains. Pfc. Trujillo's remains were positively identified in July of 23 and repatriated to family in Santa Fe in time for a reinterment on the 82nd anniversary of his death.

NMNG Brig. Gen. Matthew Henry, the deputy adjutant general of New Mexico, presented the folded casket flag to Trujillo's family during the funeral (*lower left photo*), and then presented a Bronze Star and Purple Heart medals (*lower right photo*) to Manuel Trujillo, Pfc. Trujillo's nephew and namesake, at a post-funeral reception.



Former NMARNG Pfc.
Manuel Trujillo





Veterans, Active Service Members Get Free Admission on Military & Veterans Day @ the NM State Fair

Military veterans, National Guard, Reserve, and active-duty service members will be admitted free to the New Mexico State Fair on *Military and Veterans Day at the State Fair* on Tuesday, September 10.

This annual day at the state fair in Albuquerque is presented by the New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services (DVS), the New Mexico National Guard, and the New Mexico State Fair to honor and thank the men and women who are serving or have served our country as members of the United States military.

Veterans must show their valid New Mexico driver's license with a veterans' designation, a VA Veterans' Health ID card, or a copy of their DD-214 Separation Papers at the gate to obtain the free admission. Active service members must show a valid DoD/Uniformed Services ID card. Non-veteran/non-military spouses or family members are not eligible for the free admission.

In addition to the numerous rides and attractions at the state fair, DVS, the New Mexico National Guard, the VA, and three dozen other veterans' and community service organizations will have booths and exhibits along "Main Street" for veterans and their families to stop by and pick up information about veterans' benefits and services.

There will be a brief 11am ceremony on the main stage to honor our men and women in uniform, which will conclude with a tribute to the 90 New Mexicans who have lost their lives while in service in the Middle East since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America. Fairground gates open at 10am. Parking is available at Gates 1 and 8. Parking fees start at \$5.00 (\$10), with preferred parking available as well. General parking is also available in parking lots off Louisiana Blvd. and Central Avenue.

Korean War Veteran Honored at DVS Annual Staff Conference

DVS Cabinet Secretary Jamison Herrera presented a plaque, a DVS cabinet secretary coin, and a state flag to former U.S. Army Cpl. Claudio Rael at the conclusion of the agency's annual all-staff training conference on July 24 in Albuquerque.

The Korean War veteran, who would go on to celebrate his 96th birthday two days later, was honored by DVS for his military service for our country, and for helping honor fallen veterans long after his own service ended. The native and long-time resident of Questa in northern Taos County plays a prominent role in hosting a unique Memorial Day display in his hometown.



For the past two decades, Rael and his family graciously allow the use of a large plot of family-owned land for the placement of a thousand eight-foot-tall American Flags to the service and sacrifice of U.S. service members—and especially, our nation's fallen veterans. The family takes care of the plot throughout the year to ensure it provides a presentable platform for this popular public annual patriotic display.

DVS invited Rael's family and friends for what DVS Cabinet Secretary Jamison Herrera said was a special way for the staff to conclude its annual training conference. *(continued on next page)*

“For him to want to continue to serve and honor his fellow veterans speaks volumes about veterans helping veterans—ensuring that there is still a voice for those who are no longer with us,” said Secretary Herrera. “We here at DVS, and the rest of New Mexico, truly value you as one of our great citizens and heroes.”

Rael, who spent the bulk of his post-service life as a rancher and employee of the former Molycorp mining facility in Questa, was clearly moved. He managed to say a whisper-like “Thank you very much” before being honored with a lengthy standing ovation by DVS staff and his friends and family. Everyone then joined in singing happy birthday to wrap up the presentation and DVS conference.

BELOW PHOTOS: Shortly before the Rael presentation, DVS Cabinet Secretary Jamison Herrera presented four Internal staff awards to the following DVS employees in recognition of their outstanding work over the past fiscal year (Jul. 1, 2023-Jun. 30 2024)



LEFT PHOTO: State Benefits Eligibility Interviewer Rosalie Hodges was named DVS Rookie of the Year. The award is given to an employee who is in their probationary period, or is a temporary employee... who is a rock star at their job, who exceeds job performance levels, has a great work ethic, and has excellent customer service skills.



DVS Northwest Region VSO Supervisor Robert Guinn was given the “Groot Award.” This is presented to a DVS employee who, like the Marvel superhero character “Groot,” is resilient and “rooted” in the community they serve. The recipient is a team player and has the “do whatever it takes to succeed in their mission” attitude.



DVS Southeast Region VSO Supervisor Matt Barela with the “Wise One” (AKA the “Yoda” Award). This is given to one who is knowledgeable in their job, and is someone that others seek for advice, guidance and mentorship.



DVS HR Specialist Lori Gutierrez was presented with the Employee of the Year award, given to an employee in recognition of their outstanding performance, agency-wide contributions, and overall leadership qualities.

DVS Veterans' Service Officer Spotlight: John Livingston



John Livingston
DVS Gallup-based VSO

This month's DVS VSO Spotlight shines on John Livingston, the DVS veterans' service officer based in Gallup.

John was born and raised in Gallup. Shortly after graduating from high school, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and spent the majority of his 16-year naval career as an operations specialist aboard four Arleigh Burke-class destroyers: USS Benfold, Higgins, Halsey, and Sterett. He returned to New Mexico to serve the last 3-1/2 years of service as a successful recruiter in Farmington and back in his hometown of Gallup.

His naval career, which took him all over the world and found him working alongside men and women from all walks of life, instilled a strong sense of service not only to our country, but also to his fellow service men and women.

In May of 2022 John jumped at the chance to come to DVS to help veterans not only in his hometown, but throughout McKinley County, the pueblos in the region, and his fellow Navajo nation veterans—in New Mexico and eastern Arizona. If there is a veteran-related event in the area, said DVS Field Services Division Director Robin Wilson, you can pretty much count on John being there...staffing a table...gladly passing out benefits information to veterans and family members who stop by.

“John is the consummate professional—and a powerhouse for the DVS field services division,” said DVS Field Services Division Director Robin Wilson. “He is deeply rooted in many communities throughout his region. John’s knowledge of the VA claims process and the law as it pertains to veterans’ benefits makes him an exceptional advocate for veterans and their families. We are proud to have him on the DVS team!”



“It’s been so rewarding personally for me to help veterans and their families. They are my brothers and sisters—and neighbors,” said John. “I look at this as another way for me to continue to serve—but in a different form. I feel like I owe everyone my very best effort.”



Ray Seva
Retiring DVS PIO

A Message from Outgoing Public Information Officer Ray Seva

Yes, you read that correctly. **Outgoing.** I am retiring from DVS and state government on August 30 after sixteen immensely satisfying years serving as the agency's public information officer (PIO). This is my last newsletter.

As I mentioned to my boss Cabinet Secretary Jamison Herrera when I informed him of my decision to retire, all good things must come to an end. I told him it was most definitely a good thing I had going for me here at DVS! Serving as the agency's PIO has been the best job I've ever had.

My previous career was certainly exciting! I spent 25 years working in local TV news before I was hired on August 25, 2008, as the DVS PIO. I came from KOB-TV, where for four years I was the station's Santa Fe bureau chief--covering everything from La

Bajada Hill to the Colorado state line. Prior to this, I worked for 21 years in local TV news in California in San Jose, San Francisco, and my hometown of San Diego...as a news/sports videographer, editor, writer, sports producer, special projects producer, and newscast producer. I got to meet and do stories about some of the biggest sports stars (I'm a BIG sports fan), political figures, business leaders, and celebrities who came through the Bay Area in the 1980s and 1990s. So, yeah—that was fun. I had a blast.

However, the past 16-years at DVS have been infinitely more **satisfying** and **fulfilling**. I was blessed to work for a state agency that serves the 10% of the American population who are *real* heroes...and whom I hold in even higher regard than athletes and celebrities: veterans--the men and women who have served and protected our country. I like to think I have helped many veterans learn about their earned VA and state veterans' benefits.

I've always been a strong supporter of those who've served in the military. Though I am not a veteran, I grew up a "Navy brat." My dad was a retired U.S. Navy submarine "COB" who served during Korea and Vietnam wars. My mom was a long-time civilian RN at Balboa and Cubi Point Naval hospitals. The fathers of most of my childhood friends were also in the Navy (naval service is HUGE in the Filipino community...the result of the U.S. Navy's prominent role in driving the Japanese occupation out of the Philippines during World War II, and bringing an end to the war.)

After moving to Santa Fe with my wife and young daughter for the KOB-TV job in 2004, it was pretty much my destiny, then, to eventually work at DVS. I constantly pitched coverage of veterans' events to my producers, and found myself thinking, "Hmmm...wouldn't it be cool to work at DVS one day and use my communications skills for veterans' causes???" When the PIO position became vacant in 2008, I jumped at the chance to apply. I know my late parents would've been extremely proud of me for making this move...and shifting my focus from chasing ambulances, crime scenes, and celebrities...to telling veterans' stories, and educating them about their benefits.

But as with those athletes I once covered who one day knew it was time to hang up the cleats, it's time for me to log off the DVS laptop. No—I'm not leaving for another job. Nothing can top these past sixteen years. I'm going to "chill" for a little bit...and then see what my boss...er, my wife...wants me to do around the house. I see some travel in the future...visiting friends and family back in California. I will then work on developing some video/film projects with my wife—a longtime special education teacher by trade...but on the side, a longtime scriptwriter/documentary/short film maker. We've talked about eventually doing this. It's gonna be fun. I think. (LOL)

DVS will be hiring my replacement shortly. In the meantime, if you need to reach DVS please contact Secretary Herrera's executive assistant Shannon.quintana@dvs.nm.gov or (505) 795-5716. The new PIO email will be dvs.pio@dvs.nm.gov, which staff will check and respond to accordingly. To veterans and their families, thank you for your service and your sacrifice. Thank you for keeping me and MY family safe. And thank you for your cooperation, patience...and friendship. I am a better man having worked for you.



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



VA launches updated Burn Pit Registry

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced the launch of a [redesigned Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry](#) (Burn Pit Research Registry).

This new database combines veteran and service member data to help VA better understand, research, and ultimately improve treatment for the health challenges facing Veterans exposed to airborne hazards and burn pits during their military service.

Participating in or opting out of the registry does not impact nor determine eligibility for veterans' individual VA health care or benefits. Those who do not wish to participate in the registry can opt out by completing this [online form](#).

“The Burn Pit Registry is fueling groundbreaking research and enabling VA’s ability to identify and proactively address health challenges that toxic-exposed veterans face at a population level,” said Under Secretary for Health Shereef Elnahal, M.D. “While the registry does not impact an individual veteran’s health care or benefits, it does serve as a catalyst for advancing new and innovative treatments for the veteran population as a whole — including informing decisions related to presumptive conditions, more precise predictive medicine, and proactive veteran care. This redesign massively expands the registry and reduces the participation requirements for veterans, paving the way for critical research in the coming years.”

This redesigned version of the registry will incorporate extensive veteran feedback, expands participation criteria, automatically includes participants in the registry, and simplifies participation requirements.

Veterans and service members (living or deceased) who, according to DOD records, served in the military campaigns or theater of operations listed below during the designated time frame will be automatically included:

- Operations and Campaigns: Desert Shield and Desert Storm; Iraqi Freedom; Enduring Freedom; and New Dawn
- Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Djibouti, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, waters of the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, Red Sea, Syria, Uzbekistan, and Egypt between Aug. 2, 1990, and Aug. 31, 2021
- Somalia since Aug. 2, 1990
- The Southwest Asia theater of military operations and Egypt any time after Aug. 2, 1990
- Afghanistan, Djibouti, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Uzbekistan, or Yemen any time after Sept. 11, 2001
- Associated airspaces with the countries listed above as well as the waters of the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, and the Red Sea

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This list is in addition to those who were based or stationed at a location on or after Sept. 11, 2001, where an open burn pit was used in Afghanistan, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Egypt, or Syria. The data included in the registry includes deployment locations, military personnel information, and demographics to include gender, race, and ethnicity.

No medical information will be stored in the registry. Veteran and service member data will be accessible only to select VA epidemiologists and researchers and institutional review board-approved researchers. It will be used to conduct research on the cohort over a period of time. The results will inform the policy decision-making efforts of VA executive leaders, including those related to presumptive conditions.

To learn more, visit www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/registry.asp.

New VA Dashboard Has Latest PACT Act Data

VA has released a new [dashboard](#) highlighting the impact of this historic law for Veterans and their survivors.

Key results for toxic-exposed Veterans and their survivors to date include:

More than 1 million Veterans and their survivors have received disability compensation benefits under the PACT Act: VA has

delivered more than \$6.8 billion in earned PACT Act benefits to veterans and their survivors. VA is delivering these benefits to veterans at the [fastest rate in the nation's history](#), on pace to break last year's record of claims processed by more than 27%.

Nearly 740,000 Veterans have enrolled in VA health care: Since Aug. 10, 2022, 739,421 Veterans have enrolled in VA health care — a 33% increase over the previous two-year period. This includes more than 333,767 enrollees from the PACT Act population (Vietnam, Gulf War, and Post-9/11 Veterans).

More than 5.6 million veterans have been screened for toxic exposures: 5,690,117 veterans have received free, 10-minute screenings for toxic exposures from VA under the PACT Act — a critical step to catching and treating potentially life-threatening health conditions as early as possible.

Record numbers of veterans are applying for earned benefits: Thanks to the [largest outreach campaign in VA history](#), Veterans and survivors are applying for their earned benefits at record rates.

Over the past two fiscal years, VA has received 4,414,334 claims for disability compensation benefits (including 1,774,158 claims with PACT Act conditions) — 29.8% more than the two fiscal years prior. There was an all-time record number of applications in 2023, and Veterans and survivors are on pace to break that record in 2024.

With the increase in enrollments under the PACT Act, VA is on track to deliver over 127 million health care appointments in 2024, representing a 6% increase over last year's all-time record number of appointments. Average wait times for new patient appointments have decreased by 8% in primary care and 9% in mental health compared to the previous year.

Additionally, VA has processed 400,000 more [priority group](#) upgrades for enrolled veterans since the signing of PACT Act compared to the two years prior. This includes more than 800,000 Veterans who were in priority groups 7 and 8 who received upgrades, meaning they are now eligible for more VA services without copays.



VA Creates Website and Call Center to Help Veterans Fight Fraud

VA has launched website and call center designed to protect veterans, service members, and their families from fraud and scams.

These new resources-- [VSAFE.gov](https://www.vsafe.gov) and 1-833-38V-SAFE (1-833-388-7233) will help inform veterans and their families of common fraud schemes, giving them tools to protect themselves, and provide an outlet

for reporting and further assistance. This new effort ensures that there is no “wrong door” approach for veterans and service members to access reporting tools and resources to combat fraud.

Fraud prevention resources are particularly critical at a time when VA is delivering more care and more benefits to more veterans than ever before under the PACT Act, which was signed into law by President Biden two years ago. This influx of new benefits may make veterans, service members, and families targets for scam artists.

“Predatory actors are constantly looking for new ways to exploit new and evolving technologies to target service members, compromising their personal data and financial stability as well as their military readiness,” said Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Director Rohit Chopra. “The VSAFE initiative is a key component of a whole-of-government collaboration to protect veterans from fraudsters and scammers, and the CFPB is committed to working with our partners in this important effort.”

Key new resources include:

- **Launching a centralized website for support and reporting:** VSAFE.gov is a fraud prevention, response, and reporting information hub. Information from across federal agencies can be accessed in one place, making it easy for Veterans, service members, and their families to find out more about different kinds of fraud, to get assistance, and to report.
- **Opening a centralized call line for veteran and service member complaints:** VSAFE is standing up a single shared call line, 833-38V-SAFE, to aid in the “no wrong door” approach. Veterans, service members, and their families and survivors can call one single number to get help with fraud, scam, and predatory practice related concerns. Depending on the kind of issue facing the caller, callers will be routed to the correct federal agency to address their specific concerns.
- **Creating common call center training materials to ensure veterans and service members are routed to the relevant agency no matter which federal agency they initially call:** VSAFE agency fraud call centers have been trained to connect callers to the best agency to handle their report and provide help. These coordinated responses are guided by joint reference materials utilized by agency representatives. This approach minimizes confusion, and gets veterans, service members, and their family members routed to the best support as effectively and efficiently as possible.

VA encourages veterans, transitioning service members, and their families to remember they do not need to pay anything to apply for VA health care or benefits. Instead, at no cost, they can safely apply directly with VA through VA.gov or with a [VA-accredited service representative](#).

Additionally, VA is sending cease and desist letters to predatory actors, conducting public outreach to educate veterans about the risks, launching this new one-stop-shop resource page for Veterans, creating a [veteran fraud protection resource kit](#), and much more. All veterans, service members, and their families are encouraged to visit [VSAFE.gov](https://www.vsafe.gov) to learn more and what to do if experiencing fraud.



Veterans Community Bulletin Board

The following pages 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.

Please note:

- 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.

Are you a Veteran ready to begin living your best life?

Experience a complimentary week full of mindful education, body rejuvenation and uplifting comradery with fellow veterans and their partners in the mountains of New Mexico. Learn valuable therapeutic and holistic tools while leaning in to Post Traumatic Growth.



APPLY TODAY!
Download an application on our website.

Serving veterans and their families since 2009.
YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

2024 RETREAT SCHEDULE

April 28- May 5

June 2-9

August 18-25

October 20-27



Retreats include **FREE** lodging, meals, and activities like massage therapy, acupuncture, yoga, horseback riding and more!
*Travel is participants responsibility.

Eligibility for attendance:
1) Veterans diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress
2) Must bring a support partner
3) Must be free from drug/alcohol abuse for at least 12 months
*Note: New Mexico veterans have first priority. Veterans from other states will be accepted as funds allow.

OUR CONTACT



505-501-8337



www.veteranswellnessandhealing.org



retreats@vethealingcenter.org



P.O. Box 805, Angel Fire, NM 87710

Veterans' Health Administration New Mexico VA Healthcare System

Pueblo of Isleta Veteran Outreach Event

This is a veterans' public event. All veterans, their families, and caretakers are cordially invited!



Where: Pueblo of Isleta Veterans Center,
4001 NM-314, Los Lunas NM 87031

When: Friday, August 23, 2024.

Time: 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. (set up time 9:00 am).

We invite all veterans, their families and caregivers to learn more about VA Health Care, Veterans Benefits and other VA Resources.

If you would like to sign up for VA Healthcare or benefits, bring a copy #4 of your DD-214 discharge document, Medicare or other health insurance cards, and a copy of last year's income taxes.

*POC: Mr. Terry L. Obago, Program Manager, Southwest Tribal Veterans Program,
New Mexico VA Healthcare System 505-256-5407 or email: terry.obago@va.gov*

Albuquerque Indian Health Services

Presents 2024...

1ST ANNUAL HEALTH FAIR



**THURSDAY,
AUGUST 29TH**

2nd Floor Waiting Room
801 Vassar Dr SE, Albuquerque,
NM 87106

8:30am to 12:30pm

This is a community event designed for patients of Albuquerque Indian Health Services to encourage healthy lifestyles, prevent and manage disease and connect you to resources

Get Free Screenings & Information

- Blood pressure*
- Diabetes*
- Women's health*
- Behavioral health*
- Dental health*
- Adult/Child Immunizations*
- Colorectal screening*
- Sexual Health Prevention*
- Alcohol & Tobacco Resources*
- Domestic Violence Resources*
- Health Insurance Resources*



**Enjoy
Music!
Raffles!
Snacks!
Giveaways!**



“Your Body, Your Responsibility”



SAVE THE DATE

WEDNESDAY, September 11, 2024

NMVAHCS Community Mental Health Summit

8:30 am – 12:30 pm

Raymon G. Murphy Department of Veteran Affairs Medical Center
1501 San Pedro Drive, Southeast
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Purpose: The purpose of the VA Community Mental Health Summit is to foster partnerships and collaboration between community stakeholders and VA Medical Centers. The underlying principle is to recognize that truly Veteran-centered, recovery-oriented care requires active and ongoing cooperation with community partners.

*Formal Invitation and Full Agenda to Follow
Participation by virtual means will be available.*



**IN HONOR OF OUR
VETERANS**

**“Veterans Claims & Benefits Workshop”
- Free of Charge -**

Veterans, spouses, or family members, do you need to file a disability or a dependent’s claim? Need to apply for VA medical benefits? Bring a Valid ID, copies of your DD214, medical records, a summary statement to support your claim, and military and dependent documents and VA Disability Award Letters. Service Officers will be present to assist you.

Other Veteran Services:

VA Eligibility, <i>MyHealthVet</i> & Travel	VA CDCE Seeking Volunteer Drivers
VA Home-Based Primary Care	Las Cruces Veterans Counseling Center
NM Department of Veterans Services	NM Workforce Connection
Military Officers Association of America	Women Veterans of New Mexico
Nationwide Medicare Help	NM State Commission for Deaf & Hard of Hearing

**Wednesday, September 11, 2024 – 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
St. Genevieve’s Parish Hall – 1025 E. Las Cruces Ave., Las Cruces, NM**

If you need a ride, please contact Don at (616) 717-2393

For more information contact Jerry – (575) 339-3526

Sponsored by DAV – St. Genevieve’s Catholic Church – Golden Corral



**CROWNPOINT AGENCY
VETERANS
STAND DOWN**



SEPTEMBER 13, 2024 0900 – 1500 HRS

**NTU WELLNESS CENTER
LOWERPOINT ROAD, STATE HWY 371
CROWNPOINT, NM 87313**



- **VA CLAIMS AND BENEFITS**
- **NEW MEXICO VA HEALTH CARE ENROLLMENT**
- **TRAINING & EDUCATION**
- **MENTAL HEALTH & COUNSELING**
- **STATE CASE MANAGEMENT RESOURCES**
- **VETERAN HOUSING INFORMATION FEDERAL & LOCAL**
- **LOCAL & NATIONAL RESOURCES**
- **ON SITE SCREENING**
- **NAVAJO NATION OUTREACH PROGRAMS**

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

SPONSORED BY NAVAJO NATION VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT EASTERN AGENCY OFFICE @ (505) 786 – 2030
SPONSORS ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THEFT, ACCIDENTS, INJURIES, ETC**



Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship (V-WISE)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship (V-WISE) is a premier training program in entrepreneurship designed to empower women veterans and military spouses/partners to find their passion and learn the business savvy skills necessary to turn an idea or start-up into a growing venture.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- ▶ Honorably discharged women veterans of any military branch and service era, including National Guard and Reserve components;
- ▶ Active duty women service members of any military branch, including National Guard and Reserve components;
- ▶ Women spouses/same-sex life partners of above (including widowed spouses/partners)

DON'T MISS THIS!

▶ SALT LAKE CITY 2024

- ▶ PHASE I (ONLINE) - Sept. 16-Oct. 4
- ▶ PHASE II (IN PERSON) - Oct. 11-13

POWERED BY:



U.S. Small Business
Administration

COST AND LOGISTICS

A \$75 registration fee includes educational materials, two nights of lodging during residency, and most meals. In addition to the registration fee, participants are responsible for their travel to/from Phase II in Salt Lake City.

TOPICS ADDRESSED

- ▶ ACCOUNTING
- ▶ BUSINESS PLANS
- ▶ ECONOMICS
- ▶ HUMAN RESOURCES
- ▶ FINANCING
- ▶ ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET
- ▶ LEGAL ISSUES
- ▶ OPERATIONS
- ▶ MARKETING
- ▶ PROFIT MODELS

APPLY NOW!

CLICK
HERE

ivmf.syracuse.edu/vwise



JACQUELINE "JACKIE" LOPEZ

U.S. Air Force veteran;
Co-Founder, Premier Enterprise
Solutions, LLC; V-WISE Graduate,
Vet100 Honoree

**"I left V-WISE armed
with information and
inspired to move in the
direction of my dreams."**



EUGENIA GARDNER

Military Spouse; Founder & CEO,
CommunisPR; Author of *PLANT:
A Military Spouse's Guide to
Cultivating Life*; V-WISE Graduate

**"I didn't have a strategy
and V-WISE gave me
all of those tools, and
also the confidence
to know how to be
an entrepreneur."**



HESPERUS



Rainforest
Innovations



ENTREPRENEURSHIP BOOTCAMP FOR NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS

SEPTEMBER 23 - 26, 2024 (Monday-Thursday)

Lobo Rainforest Building | 101 Broadway Blvd. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87102

DESCRIPTION

The University of New Mexico is partnering with Hesperus to bring an Entrepreneurship Bootcamp to Native American Veterans in New Mexico and the Southwest Region of the United States.

Offered only to Native American Veterans, the Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans (EBV-NAV) is a unique program created to leverage the skills, resources, and infrastructure of higher education to offer cutting-edge, experiential training in entrepreneurship and small business management to Native American Veterans in New Mexico and the Southwest Region of the United States.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

- *Financing • Legal Issues • Marketing • Design Thinking • Business Model Canvas*
- *Idea Recognition • Operations • Profit Models • Supply Chain • Personal Selling*
- *Leveraging Technology • Government Contracting*

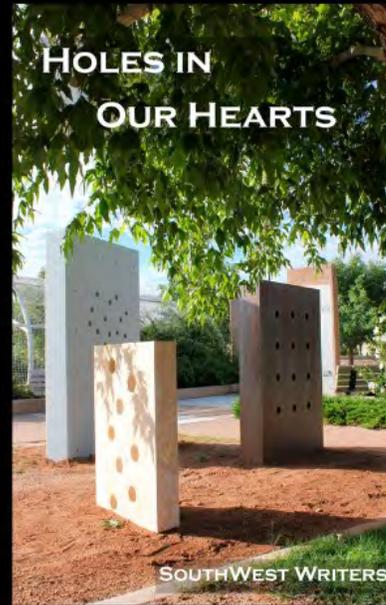
ELIGIBILITY

Native American Veterans from New Mexico or the Southwest Region of the United States that have a passion for business ownership.

COST

EBV-NAV is provided at no cost through the generous support of Hesperus and the University of New Mexico. Expenses covered by the program include transportation, lodging, and meals.

The program does not require use of GI bill or VOC-Rehab benefits.



NEW MEXICO ARTS & THE MILITARY 2024 MINI GRANTS Call For Proposals



New Mexico Arts, the state's arts agency, announces the *Arts & The Military 2024 Mini Grants* funding opportunity for arts organizations and veteran-focused organizations to create or expand opportunities for veterans and active-duty service members to engage with the arts.

Proposed projects should serve military and veteran audiences – including active-duty service members, reservists, National Guard members, veterans, their families and caregivers, and others. Projects could fall into three categories: Learning-Based, Audience-Based, or Capacity Building. Eligible applicants should be Federal 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organizations, units of government, schools, colleges, universities, and Indian tribal government entities. Organizations receiving New Mexico Arts funding in other grant programs can also apply for this Arts and the Military Grant opportunity. Deadline to apply: 5pm (MST) October 6, 2023.

Find the 2024 Arts & the Military Application and Guidelines at www.nmarts.org/nma-military/. For more information, contact Program Coordinator Kevin Lenkner at (505) 412-5791 or kevin.lenkner@dca.nm.gov.



**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
DEPARTMENT OF NEW MEXICO
2511 UTAH STREET NE
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87110
WWW.DAVNEWMEXICO.ORG**

2024 PROGRAM & EVENT INFORMATION SHEET



DAV FELLOWSHIP DINNER

LAST WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH 5-7PM
FRIENDS AND FAMILY WELCOME

DAV DEPARTMENT OF NEW MEXICO
2511 UTAH STREET NE
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87110
PLEASE RSVP AT:
WWW.DAVNEWMEXICO.ORG
(505) 294-6193



CROCHET & TEA

TUESDAYS, 1:30-3:00PM
FRIENDS AND FAMILY WELCOME

DAV DEPARTMENT OF NEW MEXICO
2511 UTAH STREET NE
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87110
PLEASE RSVP AT:
WWW.DAVNEWMEXICO.ORG
(505) 294-6193



SUPPORT GROUP & SOCIAL HOUR

MONDAYS, 2-3PM
FRIENDS AND FAMILY WELCOME

DAV DEPARTMENT OF NEW MEXICO
2511 UTAH STREET NE
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87110
PLEASE RSVP AT:
WWW.DAVNEWMEXICO.ORG
(505) 294-6193



CLOTHING CLOSET FREE CLOTHING FOR VETERANS

DAV DEPARTMENT OF NEW MEXICO
2511 UTAH STREET NE
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87110
PLEASE VISIT:
WWW.DAVNEWMEXICO.ORG
(505) 294-6193



FOOD PANTRY FREE FOOD FOR VETERANS

DAV DEPARTMENT OF NEW MEXICO
2511 UTAH STREET NE
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87110
PLEASE VISIT:
WWW.DAVNEWMEXICO.ORG
(505) 294-6193

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT OUR ASSISTANT CHAPLAIN, ALLISON VAZQUEZ @ ALLISONNMDAV@GMAIL.COM



DVS Field Offices in New Mexico

DVS has field offices throughout the state that are staffed with nationally accredited veterans service officers. DVS VSOs are dedicated to helping veterans with filing VA claims, applying for state veterans benefits, or with helping with anything else a veteran or their family needs with.

Office hours are Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm, (excluding holidays). Though this service is free, appointments are required and can be made by contacting the VSOs below. **Please note: VSOs can also provide help by phone or email for any veteran or eligible dependent calling or emailing from anywhere in**

Alamogordo/Southeast NM

David Henley

411 10th Street #107
(575) 937-5620

david.henley@dvs.nm.gov

Albuquerque Metro Area

May Chavez (*ABQ metro supervisor*)

Pinetree Corporate Center/Bldg. 2
4801 Indian School Rd. NE/2nd floor
(505) 527-2302

helen.chavez@dvs.nm.gov

Albuquerque (Downtown)

Ronn Saavedra

Dennis Chavez Federal Bldg.
500 Gold Ave. SW/3rd floor
(505) 525-3331

ronald.saavedra@dvs.nm.gov

Albuquerque (VA Hospital)

DVS staff (9am-4pm)

Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical
Ctr. 1501 San Pedro Dr. SE

(*no appointment needed*)

(505) 383-2400

Belen/ABQ Metro & Central NM

Rob Miller

Belen Business Center
719 South Main St.

(505) 537-9339

rob.miller@dvs.nm.gov

Carlsbad/Southeast NM

Dagmar Youngberg

101 N. Halagueno
(575) 988-5900

dagmar.youngberg@dvs.nm.gov

Clovis/Southeast NM

Matt Barela (*SE region supervisor*)

904 W. Sixth St.
(575) 825-9602

matthew.barela@dvs.nm.gov

Clovis/Southeast NM

Ben Padilla

904 W. Sixth St.
(505) 537-1445

ben.padilla@dvs.nm.gov

Farmington/Northwest NM

Leo Esquibel

San Juan College Vet Center 4601
College Blvd./Room 1715-B

(505) 916-4835

leo.esquibel@dvs.nm.gov

Gallup/Northwest NM

John Livingston

908 E. Buena Vista Ave/Room 1A
(505) 389-8731

john.livingston@dvs.nm.gov

Grants/Northwest NM

April Ball

551 Washington Ave.
(505) 521-8132

april.ball@dvs.nm.gov

Hobbs/Southeast NM

Fred Solis-Littlejohn

2120 North Alto St.
(575) 241-0714

fred.solis-little@dvs.nm.gov

Las Cruces/Southwest NM

Miguel Martinez (*supervisor*)

2024 E. Griggs Ave.
(575) 644-6869

miguel.martinez@dvs.nm.gov

Las Cruces/Southwest NM

Vincent Tellez

2024 E. Griggs Ave.
(505) 361-5298

vincent.tellez@dvs.nm.gov

Las Cruces/Southwest NM

Clint Anderson

2024 E. Griggs Ave.
(505) 216-8782

clint.anderson@dvs.nm.gov

(continued on next page)

Las Vegas, NM/Northeast NM**Arturo Marlow** (*supervisor*)

917 Douglas Ave.

(505) 331-8838

arturo.marlow@dvs.nm.gov**Las Vegas/Northeast NM****Jimmy Saiz**

917 Douglas Ave.

(505) 520-5079

jimmy.saiz@dvs.nm.gov**Rio Rancho/Northeast NM****Dustin Newsom**

Sandoval County Admin. Bldg.

1500 Idalia Rd./Bldg. D/room 2041

(505) 221-7190

dustin.newsom@dvs.nm.gov**Roswell/Southeast NM****Danielle Thompson**

1600 SE Main Street /Suite A

(575) 416-2284

danielle.thompson@dvs.nm.gov**Santa Fe/Northeast NM****Phillip Hernandez**

Bataan Memorial Bldg.

407 Galisteo St./1st Floor, Rm 134

(505) 218-3125

phillip.hernandez@dvs.nm.gov**Silver City/Southwest NM****Clarissa Sierra**

Western New Mexico University

1000 West College Ave.

Juan Chacon Bldg./Rm. 138A

(575) 313-5627

clarissa.sierra@dvs.nm.gov**Taos/Northeast NM****Leticia “Lety” Cano**

Health & Human Service Bldg.

145 Roy Rd.

(505) 709-5263

leticia.cano@dvs.nm.gov**Tribal Liaison****Beverly Charley**

San Juan College Veterans Center

4601 College Blvd./Room 1715-B

(575) 241-3322

beverly.charley@dvs.nm.gov**NM Veterans Business****Outreach Center (ABQ)****Johnny Martinez** (*Director*)

Pinetree Corporate Center/Bldg. 2

4801 Indian School Rd. NE/2nd floor

(505) 372-9106

johnny.martinez@dvs.nm.gov**Woman Veterans Program***Temporarily vacant...with a new hiring imminent.***the DVS tribal liaison focuses on educational outreach and claims-filing assistance for Native American veterans***the VBOC provides assistance for veterans and spouses who are looking to open a small business, expanding an existing operation, or securing federal contracts*