

DIVISION OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

MISSION

The Division of Veterans' Affairs assists veterans, members of the armed forces and their families and dependents in securing benefits earned through military service. The Division coordinates veterans' programs and services offered by other State agencies, works closely with the Federal Department of Veterans' Affairs and advocates State and Federal actions to meet veterans' needs. The Division serves more than 1.3 million New Yorkers who are veterans, as well as their dependents and those on active duty.

ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING

The Division is headed by a Director who is appointed by the Governor. The Division's central office is in Albany, with regional offices in New York City, Malta in Saratoga County, and Buffalo. The Division is also supported by a network of approximately 70 community field offices in nearly all of the State's counties and New York City.

Approximately 84 percent of the Division's workforce is paid for by State tax dollars from the General Fund and 16 percent are supported by Federal Medicaid and Veterans' Education funds. The Division will have 113 employees in 2003-04.

FISCAL BACKGROUND AND BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The Executive Budget recommends \$13.1 million for the Division of Veterans' Affairs to fund administration and veterans' counseling services. For 2003-04, under the host agency concept, the Office of General Services will provide administrative support (human resources, payroll, procurement) to the Division. This will permit the Division to focus on its main mission, serving the State's veterans and their families. The Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance Program will be maintained at the \$5 million level. In addition, State aid is continued for local county and city veterans' service agencies, which defrays the operating costs of these organizations, and Federal appropriations are maintained to match actual Federal support for the Veterans' Education Program.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

During 2003-04, the Division of Veterans' Affairs will operate three principal programs. The largest provides veterans' counseling and claims services through a statewide network of State veterans' counselors — who are all veterans — and support staff. The counselors help veterans complete applications for benefits and services, and file for Federal, State, local and private veterans' benefits. They also access the services provided by Veterans' Affairs Medical Centers, senior centers, State Veterans' Homes and local nursing homes, and public assistance offices.

The Division of Veterans' Affairs continues to maintain its community outreach activities through senior citizens' seminars and similar forums for women veterans. It is also the driving force behind the Interagency Veterans' Council, a consortium of Federal, State and local agencies and non-profit organizations that meets periodically to address and resolve problems and concerns within the veteran community. The Division is also collaborating with various state agencies to better identify veterans and their dependents on public assistance, to assist them in securing Federal veterans' benefits to which they are entitled, and to advise senior citizens of veterans' benefits and services that could improve the quality of their lives.

The Division of Veterans' Affairs is responsible for securing a substantial portion of the nearly \$1 billion in recurring Federal VA payments made directly to New York State veterans and their dependents. During the 2001-02 operating period, State veterans' counselors filed 7,500 VA benefit claims, averaging 150 claims per year per counselor. Claims filed by State veterans counselors produce approximately \$60 million in new and recurring Federal VA

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

benefits annually. On average, each State veterans' counselor generates \$1.2 million a year in new awards for veterans and their dependents. They also assist constituents in obtaining additional veterans benefits, including VA medical care, various other Federal, State and local economic assistance, tax exemptions and a variety of other benefits offered in recognition of military service.

The Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance Program, which serves more than 3,800 visually impaired veterans and unremarried surviving spouses, was enhanced in 2000 when the value of the annuity was doubled from \$500 to \$1,000.

Staff of the Veterans' Education Program investigate and certify post-secondary educational and vocational institutions for eligibility for student veterans' education benefits.

The Division intends to pursue a new partnership with the Federal Department of Veteran's Affairs Health Administration to obtain reimbursement for counseling and outreach services by State veterans' counselors at VA medical centers and clinics.

ALL FUNDS APPROPRIATIONS (dollars)

Category	Available 2002-03	Appropriations Recommended 2003-04	Change	Reappropriations Recommended 2003-04
State Operations	7,929,000	7,549,000	(380,000)	2,744,000
Aid To Localities	7,808,910	5,575,000	(2,233,910)	0
Capital Projects	0	0	0	0
Total	15,737,910	13,124,000	(2,613,910)	2,744,000

ALL FUND TYPES PROJECTED LEVELS OF EMPLOYMENT BY PROGRAM FILLED ANNUAL SALARIED POSITIONS

Full-Time Equivalent Positions (FTE)

Program	2002-03 Estimated FTEs 03/31/03	2003-04 Estimated FTEs 03/31/04	FTE Change
Administration			
General Fund	12	10	(2)
Higher Education			
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	12	12	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program			
General Fund	96	91	(5)
Total	120	113	(7)

STATE OPERATIONS ALL FUNDS FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS BY FUND TYPE APPROPRIATIONS (dollars)

Fund Type	Available 2002-03	Recommended 2003-04	Change
General Fund	5,647,000	5,267,000	(380,000)
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	2,282,000	2,282,000	0
Total	7,929,000	7,549,000	(380,000)

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

STATE OPERATIONS ALL FUNDS FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS BY PROGRAM APPROPRIATIONS (dollars)

Program	Available 2002-03	Recommended 2003-04	Change
Administration			
General Fund	816,000	723,000	(93,000)
Higher Education			
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	1,518,000	1,518,000	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program			
General Fund	4,831,000	4,544,000	(287,000)
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	764,000	764,000	0
Total	<u>7,929,000</u>	<u>7,549,000</u>	<u>(380,000)</u>

STATE OPERATIONS - GENERAL AND OFFSET FUNDS SUMMARY OF PERSONAL SERVICE APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES 2003-04 RECOMMENDED (dollars)

Program	Total		Personal Service Regular (Annual Salaried)	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Administration	618,000	(93,000)	618,000	(93,000)
Veteran Counseling Services Program	4,387,000	(287,000)	4,387,000	(287,000)
Total	<u>5,005,000</u>	<u>(380,000)</u>	<u>5,005,000</u>	<u>(380,000)</u>

STATE OPERATIONS - GENERAL AND OFFSET FUNDS SUMMARY OF NONPERSONAL SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE UNDISTRIBUTED APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES 2003-04 RECOMMENDED (dollars)

Program	Total		Contractual Services	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Administration	105,000	0	105,000	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program	421,000	0	371,000	0
Total	<u>526,000</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>476,000</u>	<u>0</u>

Program	Maintenance Undistributed	
	Amount	Change
Administration	0	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program	50,000	0
Total	<u>50,000</u>	<u>0</u>

STATE OPERATIONS - OTHER THAN GENERAL FUND AND OFFSET FUNDS SUMMARY OF APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES 2003-04 RECOMMENDED (dollars)

Program	Total		Personal Service	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Higher Education	1,518,000	0	940,000	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program	764,000	0	0	0
Total	<u>2,282,000</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>940,000</u>	<u>0</u>

Program	Nonpersonal Service		Maintenance Undistributed	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Higher Education	578,000	0	0	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program	500,000	0	264,000	0
Total	<u>1,078,000</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>264,000</u>	<u>0</u>

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

**AID TO LOCALITIES
ALL FUNDS FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS BY FUND TYPE
APPROPRIATIONS
(dollars)**

Fund Type	Available 2002-03	Recommended 2003-04	Change
General Fund	7,808,910	5,575,000	(2,233,910)
Total	7,808,910	5,575,000	(2,233,910)
Adjustments:			
Prior Year Deficiency			
Veterans Affairs, Division of			
General Fund	350,000		
Appropriated 2002-03	8,158,910		

**AID TO LOCALITIES
ALL FUNDS FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS BY PROGRAM
APPROPRIATIONS
(dollars)**

Program	Available 2002-03	Recommended 2003-04	Change
Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance			
General Fund	5,000,000	5,000,000	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program			
General Fund	1,475,000	575,000	(900,000)
Community Projects			
General Fund	1,333,910	0	(1,333,910)
Total	7,808,910	5,575,000	(2,233,910)