

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 nearly 1.2 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 and Buffalo. The Division staffs a network of approximately 70 community based access points in nearly all of the State's counties and New York City. The Division will have 113 employees in 2005-06.

FISCAL BACKGROUND AND BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The Executive Budget recommends \$14.6 million for the Division of Veterans' Affairs to fund administration, veterans' services and benefits. The Office of General Services will continue to provide administrative support, permitting 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 and Federal appropriations for the Veterans' Education Program are maintained.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

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

The Division of Veterans' Affairs is responsible for securing a substantial portion of the more than \$1 billion annually in recurring Federal VA payments made directly to New York State veterans and their dependents. During the 2003-04 operating period, State veterans' counselors filed 8,350 benefit claims, averaging more than 150 claims per year per counselor. Claims filed by State veterans counselors produce approximately \$61 million in new and recurring Federal benefits annually. On average, each State veterans' counselor generates nearly \$1.4 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. Additionally, with the enactment of the New York Patriot Plan in 2003, State veterans' counselors help to ensure that active duty military personnel and their families receive the supplemental benefits to which they are now entitled.

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The Blind Veteran Annuity Program provides visually impaired veterans and eligible surviving spouses with monthly assistance. The Governor approved legislation in 2004 to add an annual cost of living increase to the \$1,000 benefit paid to each recipient. Beginning in January 2005, an annual increase tied to Federal increases in veterans' compensation will maintain the value of the annuity. In 2005-2006, this program will assist more than 4,200 recipients.

The Veterans' Education Program certifies post-secondary educational and vocational programs as providing quality education and training to veterans eligible for G. I. benefits. During 2003-04, more than 8,000 programs were approved for use by veterans receiving benefits.

The Division of Veterans' Affairs also 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.

ALL FUNDS APPROPRIATIONS (dollars)

Category	Available 2004-05	Appropriations Recommended 2005-06	Change	Reappropriations Recommended 2005-06
State Operations	7,827,000	8,487,000	660,000	1,687,000
Aid To Localities	5,775,000	6,130,000	355,000	0
Capital Projects	0	0	0	0
Total	13,602,000	14,617,000	1,015,000	1,687,000

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

Full-Time Equivalent Positions (FTE)

Program	2004-05 Estimated FTEs 03/31/05	2005-06 Estimated FTEs 03/31/06	FTE Change
Administration			
General Fund	10	10	0
Higher Education			
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	12	12	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program			
General Fund	91	91	0
Total	113	113	0

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

Fund Type	Available 2004-05	Recommended 2005-06	Change
General Fund	5,471,000	6,212,000	741,000
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	2,356,000	2,275,000	(81,000)
Total	<u>7,827,000</u>	<u>8,487,000</u>	<u>660,000</u>

Adjustments:

Transfer(s) From	
Special Pay Bill	
General Fund	(206,000)
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	(74,000)
Appropriated 2004-05	<u>7,547,000</u>

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

Program	Available 2004-05	Recommended 2005-06	Change
Administration			
General Fund	782,000	844,000	62,000
Higher Education			
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	1,592,000	1,775,000	183,000
Veteran Counseling Services Program			
General Fund	4,689,000	5,368,000	679,000
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	764,000	500,000	(264,000)
Total	<u>7,827,000</u>	<u>8,487,000</u>	<u>660,000</u>

STATE OPERATIONS - GENERAL AND OFFSET FUNDS SUMMARY OF PERSONAL SERVICE APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES 2005-06 RECOMMENDED (dollars)

Program	Total		Personal Service Regular (Annual Salaried)	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Administration	737,000	62,000	737,000	62,000
Veteran Counseling Services Program	4,938,000	415,000	4,938,000	415,000
Total	<u>5,675,000</u>	<u>477,000</u>	<u>5,675,000</u>	<u>477,000</u>

STATE OPERATIONS - GENERAL AND OFFSET FUNDS SUMMARY OF NONPERSONAL SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE UNDISTRIBUTED APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES 2005-06 RECOMMENDED (dollars)

Program	Total		Contractual Services	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Administration	107,000	0	107,000	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program	430,000	0	380,000	0
Total	<u>537,000</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>487,000</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>

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**STATE OPERATIONS - OTHER THAN GENERAL FUND AND OFFSET FUNDS
SUMMARY OF APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES
2005-06 RECOMMENDED
(dollars)**

Program	Total		Personal Service	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Higher Education	1,775,000	183,000	1,055,000	64,000
Veteran Counseling Services Program	500,000	(264,000)	0	0
Total	<u>2,275,000</u>	<u>(81,000)</u>	<u>1,055,000</u>	<u>64,000</u>

Program	Nonpersonal Service		Maintenance Undistributed	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Higher Education	720,000	119,000	0	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program	500,000	0	0	(264,000)
Total	<u>1,220,000</u>	<u>119,000</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(264,000)</u>

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

Fund Type	Available 2004-05	Recommended 2005-06	Change
General Fund	5,775,000	6,130,000	355,000
Total	<u>5,775,000</u>	<u>6,130,000</u>	<u>355,000</u>

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

Program	Available 2004-05	Recommended 2005-06	Change
Administration			
General Fund	200,000	200,000	0
Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance			
General Fund	5,000,000	5,000,000	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program			
General Fund	575,000	930,000	355,000
Total	<u>5,775,000</u>	<u>6,130,000</u>	<u>355,000</u>