

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 1.1 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 a workforce of 112 in 2007-08.

FISCAL BACKGROUND AND BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The Executive Budget recommends \$15.4 million in new appropriations for the Division of Veterans' Affairs including a \$300,000 increase for the Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance Program to accommodate the annual cost-of-living benefit increase. State aid is continued for county and city veterans' service agencies and Federal appropriations for the Veterans' Education Program are maintained. 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.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The Veterans' Counseling Program, the largest of the Division of Veterans' Affairs' four programs, provides benefits counseling and claims services through a statewide network of State veterans' benefits counselors. The counselors — who are all veterans — help veterans complete and file applications for Federal, State, local and private veterans' benefits. Veterans' counselors 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 \$1.25 billion annually in recurring Federal VA compensation and pension payments made directly to New York State veterans and their dependents. State veterans' counselors file more than 8,600 benefit claims annually that result in approximately \$65 million in new and recurring Federal benefits. The average compensation award for each veteran represented by State veterans' counselors exceeds \$11,500 annually. State veterans' counselors also assist constituents in obtaining additional veterans benefits, including VA medical care, various other Federal, State and local economic assistance, tax exemptions and

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

a variety of other benefits offered in recognition of military service. Additionally, with the enactment of New York Patriot Plans in 2003, 2004, and 2005, State veterans' counselors help to ensure that active duty military personnel and their families receive the supplemental benefits to which they are now entitled.

The Veterans' Counseling Program also oversees State assistance to county and city veterans' service agencies. Fifty-seven counties and seven cities receive reimbursement for a substantial portion of their costs associated with programs serving veterans.

The Blind Veteran Annuity Program provides visually impaired veterans and eligible surviving spouses with monthly assistance. In 2007-08, this program will assist more than 4,300 recipients. Legislation approved in 2004 provided for an annual cost of living increase to maintain the value of the benefit paid to each recipient.

The Veterans' Education Program certifies post-secondary educational and vocational programs as providing quality education and training to veterans eligible for Federal G. I. education benefits. The program staff reviews and approves thousands of programs for use by veterans, ensuring a wide variety of career training and educational opportunities for veterans and eligible dependents and survivors.

The Division of Veterans' Affairs continues to maintain its community outreach activities through senior citizens' seminars and similar forums for women veterans. In addition, it is 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 also collaborates with other 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 2006-07 | Appropriations Recommended 2007-08 | Change | Reappropriations Recommended 2007-08 |
|-------------------|----------------------|--|---------|--|
| State Operations | 8,530,000 | 8,737,000 | 207,000 | 2,500,000 |
| Aid To Localities | 6,330,000 | 6,630,000 | 300,000 | 852,000 |
| Capital Projects | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 14,860,000 | 15,367,000 | 507,000 | 3,352,000 |

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

| Program | Full-Time Equivalent Positions (FTE) | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------|
| | 2006-07 Estimated FTEs 03/31/07 | 2007-08 Estimated FTEs 03/31/08 | FTE Change |
| Administration | | | |
| General Fund | 9 | 9 | 0 |
| Higher Education | | | |
| Special Revenue Funds - Federal | 12 | 12 | 0 |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | | | |
| General Fund | 91 | 91 | 0 |
| Total | 112 | 112 | 0 |

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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

| <u>Fund Type</u> | <u>Available 2006-07</u> | <u>Recommended 2007-08</u> | <u>Change</u> |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| General Fund | 6,230,000 | 6,383,000 | 153,000 |
| Special Revenue Funds - Federal | 2,300,000 | 2,354,000 | 54,000 |
| Total | <u>8,530,000</u> | <u>8,737,000</u> | <u>207,000</u> |

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

| <u>Program</u> | <u>Available 2006-07</u> | <u>Recommended 2007-08</u> | <u>Change</u> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Administration | | | |
| General Fund | 802,000 | 827,000 | 25,000 |
| Higher Education | | | |
| Special Revenue Funds - Federal | 1,800,000 | 1,854,000 | 54,000 |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | | | |
| General Fund | 5,428,000 | 5,556,000 | 128,000 |
| Special Revenue Funds - Federal | 500,000 | 500,000 | 0 |
| Total | <u>8,530,000</u> | <u>8,737,000</u> | <u>207,000</u> |

**STATE OPERATIONS - GENERAL FUND
SUMMARY OF PERSONAL SERVICE APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES
2007-08 RECOMMENDED
(dollars)**

| <u>Program</u> | <u>Total</u> | | <u>Personal Service Regular (Annual Salaried)</u> | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|---|----------------|
| | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Change</u> | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Change</u> |
| Administration | 712,000 | 22,000 | 712,000 | 22,000 |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | 5,061,000 | 123,000 | 5,061,000 | 123,000 |
| Total | <u>5,773,000</u> | <u>145,000</u> | <u>5,773,000</u> | <u>145,000</u> |

**STATE OPERATIONS - GENERAL FUND
SUMMARY OF NONPERSONAL SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE UNDISTRIBUTED
APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES
2007-08 RECOMMENDED
(dollars)**

| <u>Program</u> | <u>Total</u> | | <u>Supplies and Materials</u> | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Change</u> | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Change</u> |
| Administration | 115,000 | 3,000 | 11,000 | 1,000 |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | 495,000 | 5,000 | 50,000 | 1,000 |
| Total | <u>610,000</u> | <u>8,000</u> | <u>61,000</u> | <u>2,000</u> |

| <u>Program</u> | <u>Travel</u> | | <u>Contractual Services</u> | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Change</u> | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Change</u> |
| Administration | 16,000 | 0 | 57,000 | 1,000 |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | 119,000 | 1,000 | 266,000 | 2,000 |
| Total | <u>135,000</u> | <u>1,000</u> | <u>323,000</u> | <u>3,000</u> |

| <u>Program</u> | <u>Equipment</u> | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Change</u> |
| Administration | 31,000 | 1,000 |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | 60,000 | 1,000 |
| Total | <u>91,000</u> | <u>2,000</u> |

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

**STATE OPERATIONS - OTHER THAN GENERAL FUND
SUMMARY OF APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES
2007-08 RECOMMENDED
(dollars)**

| Program | Total | | Personal Service | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Amount | Change | Amount | Change |
| Higher Education | 1,854,000 | 54,000 | 1,086,000 | 31,000 |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | 500,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | <u>2,354,000</u> | <u>54,000</u> | <u>1,086,000</u> | <u>31,000</u> |

| Program | Nonpersonal Service | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| | Amount | Change |
| Higher Education | 768,000 | 23,000 |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | 500,000 | 0 |
| Total | <u>1,268,000</u> | <u>23,000</u> |

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

| Fund Type | Available 2006-07 | Recommended 2007-08 | Change |
|------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| General Fund | 6,330,000 | 6,630,000 | 300,000 |
| Total | <u>6,330,000</u> | <u>6,630,000</u> | <u>300,000</u> |

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

| Program | Available 2006-07 | Recommended 2007-08 | Change |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Administration | | | |
| General Fund | 200,000 | 200,000 | 0 |
| Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance | | | |
| General Fund | 5,200,000 | 5,500,000 | 300,000 |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | | | |
| General Fund | 930,000 | 930,000 | 0 |
| Total | <u>6,330,000</u> | <u>6,630,000</u> | <u>300,000</u> |