

DIVISION OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

MISSION

The core mission of the Division of Veterans' Affairs is to link veterans, members of the armed forces and their families and dependents to various economic, medical and social benefits and services available as the result of active duty military service. The Division's professional counseling staff prepares, presents and prosecutes claims including applications for monthly compensation and pension awards, education benefits, burial benefits, vocational rehabilitation training, health care, nursing home care, tax exemption and other services.

The Division will continue to offer accessible professional assistance to nearly 1 million veterans and their dependents, as well as to thousands of New Yorkers currently on active military duty.

ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING

The Division is headed by the Director who is appointed by the Governor. The Division's central office is in Albany, with regional and claims processing offices in New York City and Buffalo. The Division maintains a network of 72 local points of access, both full-time and itinerant, where the veterans community can obtain information and assistance from the Division's veterans counseling staff.

The Division maximizes its presence in the veterans community by establishing office locations that are readily accessible to veterans, such as United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers and community outpatient clinics. More than half of the Division's veterans counselors are assigned to multiple offices, and the Division has recently added mobile counseling services, further expanding outreach efforts to veterans and their families.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The Executive Budget recommends **\$16.9 million All Funds** (\$14.4 million General Fund; \$2.5 million Other Funds) in new appropriations for the Division of Veterans' Affairs. This is a net decrease of **\$ 1.1 million** from the 2009-10 budget. The Executive Budget projects a staffing level of **103** for the Division, a decrease of two positions from 2009-10.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The largest of the Division of Veterans' Affairs three principal programs is the Veterans' Counseling Program. In State fiscal year 2009-10, new claims for Federal benefits that provide direct, economic, and generally recurring, assistance to veterans and their families, generated more than \$82 million in VA payments for compensation and pension for disabled and low-income veterans and dependents.

Claims filed and awards issued during the current 2009 calendar year are on a pace to match or exceed those of recent years. The Division of Veterans' Affairs' VA accredited counseling staff is responsible for securing and maintaining a substantial portion of the \$1.38 billion in Federal VA benefits paid annually to veterans and dependents in New York State.

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The Division, in collaboration with other State, Federal, local and not-for-profit agencies, continues its efforts to assist returning active duty military personnel. The Division continues to collaborate with the Division of Military and Naval Affairs and the Office of Mental Health with regard to behavioral health screening for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury. This provides the Division an opportunity to disseminate information about benefits and familiarize veterans and their families with services offered by the agency's counseling staff.

On, November 11, 2008, the Governor signed Executive Order No. 12, establishing the New York State Council on Returning Veterans and Their Families. This Council was formed to develop strategies to improve services provided to returning veterans needing assistance with human, social and economic challenges. The Council has explored new approaches for helping returning veterans and their families address problems and concerns in such areas as finances and insurance, family relationships, health and mental health care, substance abuse issues, employment and complex medical injuries. The development of a comprehensive strategy to help returning veterans and their families is one the Division's highest priority.

The Division continues to partner with the New York State Department of Health and the State University of New York at Stony Brook to assist veterans and eligible dependents in gaining admission to the State Veterans Home Program that operates five long-term healthcare facilities around the State.

State Veterans Counselors, each of whom is a veteran, also assist veterans in accessing the VA's network of health care, state veterans homes and nursing homes, as well as local public assistance and private venues that offer programs or services to assist veterans and their families. Without these essential employees, veterans and their families could be required to seek other forms of public health care.

The Division is now fully hosted by the Office of General Services, administratively as well as continuing to upgrade the agency's information technology program with enhanced software and distribution of updated equipment.

VETERANS' EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Veterans' Education Program staff – located in Albany and New York City – investigates and certifies post-secondary educational and vocational institutions as providing quality education for veterans seeking to utilize their Federal education benefits to attend such facilities. The Veterans Education Bureau also is responsible for approving on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs.

BLIND ANNUITY PROGRAM

The Blind Annuity Program provides visually impaired veterans and eligible surviving spouses (who are not re-married) an annual annuity which is paid in monthly installments. The statute creating the annual adjustment provides for an increase of one to four percent each year. The Division of Veterans' Affairs processes applications and authorizes awards with administrative support provided by the Office of General Services. Currently there are more than 4,500 annuitants receiving benefits.

SUPPLEMENTAL BURIAL BENEFIT PROGRAM

Families of members of the armed forces killed in combat, or who die while serving in a hostile theater of operation are eligible for a Supplemental Burial Benefit. This benefit, established in 2003 via the Governor's Patriot Plan II, provides a maximum reimbursement of \$6,000 to help families offset the costs of funeral and burial expenses. The Division processes applications and authorizes payment of the benefit to qualified individuals responsible for burial costs.

GOLD STAR PARENT ANNUITY

The Division also awards annual annuities to "Gold Star Parents" in the amount of \$500 per parent, not to exceed \$1,000 per veteran. Any parent of a deceased veteran who is a resident of New York State and has an income at or below 200 percent of the Federal poverty level, may be identified as a "Gold Star Parent" and be eligible for the annuity.

**ALL FUNDS
APPROPRIATIONS
(dollars)**

Category	Available 2009-10	Appropriations Recommended 2010-11	Change	Reappropriations Recommended 2010-11
State Operations	9,261,000	8,417,000	(844,000)	3,820,000
Aid To Localities	8,743,200	8,446,000	(297,200)	0
Capital Projects	0	0	0	0
Total	18,004,200	16,863,000	(1,141,200)	3,820,000

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

Full-Time Equivalent Positions (FTE)

Program	2009-10 Estimated FTEs 03/31/10	2010-11 Estimated FTEs 03/31/11	FTE Change
Administration			
General Fund	3	(1)	(4)
Higher Education			
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	11	11	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program			
General Fund	91	93	2
Total	105	103	(2)

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

Fund Type	Available 2009-10	Recommended 2010-11	Change
General Fund	7,295,000	6,451,000	(844,000)
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	1,966,000	1,966,000	0
Total	9,261,000	8,417,000	(844,000)

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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

<u>Program</u>	<u>Available 2009-10</u>	<u>Recommended 2010-11</u>	<u>Change</u>
Administration			
General Fund	941,000	538,000	(403,000)
Higher Education			
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	1,966,000	1,966,000	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program			
General Fund	6,354,000	5,913,000	(441,000)
Total	<u>9,261,000</u>	<u>8,417,000</u>	<u>(844,000)</u>

STATE OPERATIONS - GENERAL FUND SUMMARY OF PERSONAL SERVICE APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES 2010-11 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	408,000	(378,000)	408,000	(378,000)
Veteran Counseling Services Program	5,411,000	(168,000)	5,386,000	(168,000)
Total	<u>5,819,000</u>	<u>(546,000)</u>	<u>5,794,000</u>	<u>(546,000)</u>

<u>Program</u>	<u>Holiday/Overtime Pay (Annual Salaried)</u>	
	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Change</u>
Administration	0	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program	25,000	0
Total	<u>25,000</u>	<u>0</u>

STATE OPERATIONS - GENERAL FUND SUMMARY OF NONPERSONAL SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE UNDISTRIBUTED APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES 2010-11 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	130,000	(25,000)	11,000	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program	502,000	(273,000)	70,000	(50,000)
Total	<u>632,000</u>	<u>(298,000)</u>	<u>81,000</u>	<u>(50,000)</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	82,000	(15,000)
Veteran Counseling Services Program	116,000	(23,000)	216,000	(50,000)
Total	<u>132,000</u>	<u>(23,000)</u>	<u>298,000</u>	<u>(65,000)</u>

<u>Program</u>	<u>Equipment</u>	
	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Change</u>
Administration	21,000	(10,000)
Veteran Counseling Services Program	100,000	(150,000)
Total	<u>121,000</u>	<u>(160,000)</u>

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

**STATE OPERATIONS - OTHER THAN GENERAL FUND
SUMMARY OF APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES
2010-11 RECOMMENDED
(dollars)**

Program	Total		Personal Service	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Higher Education	1,966,000	0	1,161,000	0
Total	1,966,000	0	1,161,000	0

Program	Nonpersonal Service	
	Amount	Change
Higher Education	805,000	0
Total	805,000	0

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

Fund Type	Available 2009-10	Recommended 2010-11	Change
General Fund	8,243,200	7,946,000	(297,200)
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	500,000	500,000	0
Total	8,743,200	8,446,000	(297,200)

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

Program	Available 2009-10	Recommended 2010-11	Change
Administration			
General Fund	799,000	799,000	0
Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance			
General Fund	5,720,000	5,720,000	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program			
General Fund	1,427,000	1,427,000	0
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	500,000	500,000	0
Community Projects			
General Fund	297,200	0	(297,200)
Total	8,743,200	8,446,000	(297,200)