

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES

COMMISSIONER'S 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

TO

GOVERNOR TIMOTHY M. Kaine

AND

THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

December 28, 2009



Serving those who served.

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Commissioner's Message

I take great pride in submitting this annual report on behalf of the men and women of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS). We are privileged to serve those who stood on the front line of freedom. From Omaha Beach to the mountains of Afghanistan, from the Korean DMZ to the jungles of Vietnam, and, now, Iraq and Afghanistan, Virginia's veterans have earned the lasting tribute of a grateful nation and Commonwealth. It is the mission of DVS to ensure that these honored veterans receive the benefits, support, quality care, and recognition they have earned through service and sacrifice.

Nearly 820,000 veterans call Virginia home and represent more than 10 percent of Commonwealth's population. I am pleased to report that in fiscal year 2009 (FY09) DVS continued to make substantial progress in serving Virginia's veterans. In FY09, the agency:

- Improved the financial security of Virginia's veterans by filing 24,334 disability compensation claims, more than a seven percent increase over FY08. Approximately 60 percent of these claims were approved by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Awarded \$1.7 million in funding to five regional consortia which will provide services at the community level to veterans with combat stress and traumatic brain injuries and their families.
- Provided greater access to post-secondary educational opportunities by providing support and supervision for 898 approved educational programs.
- Provided 122,600 patient days of care at the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center and the Virginia Veterans Care Center in Roanoke.
- Served the memorial needs of Virginia's veterans by performing 886 burials at Virginia's two state veterans cemeteries, more than a ten percent increase over FY08.

These great strides would not have been possible without the strong, bi-partisan support of the executive and legislative branches of our government; without the guidance of the Board of Veterans Services, the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations, and the Veterans Services Foundation, and, especially, without the forceful advocacy of Virginia's veterans. DVS will continue to work with this broad-based coalition to better meet the needs of Virginia's veterans.

Fiscal year 2010 marks the seventh year of operation for the Department of Veterans Services. A year from now, I look forward to reporting to you on the operation the agency's core functions, continued progress with the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, development of an electronic claims processing system, opening of a third veterans cemetery, progress on a third veterans care center, and the continued delivery of quality service to our veterans.

Vincent M. Burgess
Commissioner

Comments from the Chairman, Board of Veterans Services

2009 has been a tough year for the Department of Veterans Services. Despite budgetary constraints, I am proud of how much we have accomplished. The Department of Veterans Services, under the leadership of Commissioner Vince Burgess in concert with the Board of Veterans Services and its sister boards, continues to improve its services to Virginia's veterans despite financial difficulties. The economy has worsened and at the close of the year there is not much relief in sight. The Department will survive although some projects might be delayed.

The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program led by Catherine Wilson, has established three Regional Offices that cover northern, western and central, and southern Virginia. Through a competitive grant process, VWWP provided funding to five regional collaborative consortia of community mental health, brain injury, and rehabilitative services specialists. Each consortia has partnered with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) and military and community resources to connect veterans and families with local services for assistance. VWWP has initiated a statewide needs assessment to learn about the gaps in services for veterans and their families who struggle with combat stress or traumatic brain injury. The program has also established powerful executive and advisory committees to explore partnerships and resources that can assist Virginia veterans and reduce redundancy of services.

Our Automated Claims Processing System (formerly TurboVet) effort has not come to fruition. A study was completed showing that there are solutions in the field although none comes close to the original proposals that had been demonstrated in our Virginia trial program two years ago. Again, budgetary constraints and efforts to team with other agencies have slowed us a little.

The Joint Leadership Council, arguably the most effective advocacy group in the Commonwealth, once again achieved the majority of its goals. When its proposals passed in the legislature, they were usually with no opposition. The proposal that didn't become law passed through the Senate without budgetary comment and, thus, the House of Delegates declined to discuss it.

Our state-owned veterans cemeteries are solvent although the older ones are having and will continue to have staffing problems as long as the budget shortfalls occur. Equipment is wearing out and needs to be replaced or overhauled. This will continue to be a problem. The new Southwest Virginia Cemetery should become operational in late 2010.

The care centers are largely operationally self-sufficient due to VA monies and individual funds from disability payments, Medicare and Medicaid in some cases. We are awaiting funds from the VA to build the third care center in Hampton, co-located with the Hampton VAMC.

The Veterans Service Foundation has become quite effective this year as its new leadership asserts itself and identifies potential financial benefactors to assist us in caring for our veterans.

In summary then, much is being done to serve Virginia's veterans, but we need to do much more. The Department is alive and well and will continue to serve Virginia's 820,000 veterans. We

continue to be the most non-partisan/bi-partisan agency in Virginia and expect the new administration to be as pro-veteran as was Governor Kaine's.

Paul E. Galanti
Chairman

Board of Veterans Services—as of December 1, 2009

Paul E. Galanti – Chairman
Thad A. Jones – Vice Chairman
John A. Anderson
Delegate Mark L. Cole
Delegate M. Kirkland Cox
Paris Davis
Senator John S. Edwards
J. Pat Green
Samuel Metters
Senator Toddy Puller
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Alfredo Sample
Bettye H. Simmons
S. Judson Stanley
Max W. Taylor
Delegate Vivian E. Watts
Daniel D. Boyer, *ex officio*
David N. Richardson, *ex officio*
Vincent M. Burgess, *ex officio*

Comments from the Chairman, Joint Leadership Council

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) is comprised of 23 veterans service organizations (VSOs) representing over 250,000 members across the Commonwealth of Virginia. The JLC provides a way for VSOs to collaborate with the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) on assessing and prioritizing veterans' issues and to let policymakers know which issues are of most concern to Virginia's 820,000 veterans.

As I look back on 2009, I am pleased with what we have accomplished. The General Assembly acted on four of our six legislative issues. But, much remains to be done, and our efforts will likely be impacted by the faltering economy.

Fiscal year 2009 marked the sixth year of operation for the JLC, and the end of the fiscal year resulted in significant turnover in Council membership due to term limits. The Governor reappointed six members, appointed nine alternates to primary membership, and appointed eight new members. All members were administered the Oath of Office at the August meeting. One VSO, WAVES, dropped out and a new VSO, Vietnam Veterans of America, joined.

As a mature organization, the JLC undertook an internal review of our operation. The Constitution and By-Laws were reviewed and updated to reflect the current state of JLC operations. We also formed a team to review the six JLC Powers and Duties set forth in the Code of Virginia. The team reviewed the six powers and summarized how well the JLC was meeting its duties. In general, the JLC is doing an excellent job of meeting its current obligations, but taking on additional obligations would strain the capacity of a volunteer organization.

In June, the JLC achieved one of its important non-legislative objectives. One of our VSOs, the Marine Corps League, worked with several groups to formulate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide funeral honors for unclaimed veterans' cremated remains. Getting agreement from the Virginia Funeral Directors Association (VFDA) was crucial to the process. Several agencies working together were able to do so, and the MOU was signed at the Virginia Funeral Directors Association (VFDA) convention on June 16, 2009. Successful implementation of the MOU will require the coordination of DVS, JLC, VFDA, and VSOs.

The JLC, now entering its seventh year, continues to be a dynamic, serious, and dedicated organization. We strive to work cooperatively with several state agencies. As we have done for the past several years, the JLC develops a set of budget and legislative recommendations for the Governor and General Assembly's consideration. Our legislative issues are the result of careful consideration, lively discussion, and reasoned debate among the 23 VSOs represented on the JLC. We try to balance the Commonwealth's financial situation with the needs of Virginia's veterans. We hope these thoughtful, deliberative efforts, coupled with an improvement in the state budget situation, will lead to increased resources to support Virginia's 820,000 veterans.

Respectfully,
Daniel D. Boyer, Jr., Chairman
Colonel, USAF (Ret)

 Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations – as of December 1, 2008

Veterans Service Organization	JLC Member	Alternate
Air Force Association	Jeffrey Platte	Harold Barton
American Ex-Prisoners of War	George Coker	
American Legion	Brett Reistad	Dale Chapman
AMVETS	Bruce Brown	
Association of the United States Army	Donald Kaiserman	
Disabled American Veterans	David Martinez	Daniel Miller
Fleet Reserve Association	Abe Zino	Edward McNamee
Korean War Veterans Association	James Jones	John Dozier
Legion of Valor of the US, Inc.	Roger Dimsdale	Richard Rinaldo
Marine Corps League	Bruce Steeley	John Bonnell
Military Order of the Purple Heart	Robert Fairchild	Thomas Gimble
Military Order of the World Wars	William Townsley	Earl Johnson
Military Officers Association of America	Raymond Edwards	John Clickener
National Association for Uniformed Services	Thomas Moran	
Navy Seabee Veterans of America	Frank Driscoll	
Non Commissioned Officers Association	Matthew Dailey	Richard Schneider
Paralyzed Veterans of America	David Coffield	Yusaf Shakir
Reserve Officers Association	Carmen Gentile	Thomas Stephen
Roanoke Valley Veterans Council	Lloyd Jackson	Daniel Karnes
Veterans of Foreign Wars	Daniel Boyer	Kim DeShano
Vietnam Veterans of America	George Corbett	Charles Montgomery
Virginia National Guard Association	Michael Coleman	John Velleca
Women Marines Association	Jenny Holbert	Marie Juliano
Chairman, Board of Veterans Services, <i>ex officio</i>	Paul Galanti	Thad Jones
Chairman, Veterans Services Foundation, <i>ex officio</i>	David Richardson	Robert Archer
Commissioner of Veterans Services, <i>ex officio</i>	Vincent Burgess	

Comments from the Chairman, Veterans Services Foundation

The Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) made significant strides in support of the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) programs and services during FY 2009.

In carrying out fundraising responsibilities, the VSF Trustees Development Committee pursued supporting the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) as a top priority to meet the FY09 goal of raising \$150,000. At the end of FY09, the VSF-DVS team had raised over \$112,000 in contributions for VWWP and combined with a grant had exceeded the FY09 goal. The Committee also has been active in supporting other DVS programs and has supported raising an additional amount of over \$68,000.

During December 2008, the status of the Foundation and its relationship to DVS was addressed. A Memorandum of Understanding was developed that clarified the respective responsibilities of each organization. The Memorandum was adopted on March 4, 2009. The Memorandum has proven its effectiveness; however, revenue shortfalls during the latter part of the year and projections of further shortages have placed increased priority on the Foundation's capacity to financially support itself sooner than was envisioned. The Foundation is in the process of meeting this challenge.

The Trustees Finance Committee has administered the Veterans Services Fund, maintained Fund integrity, refined VSF-DVS Joint Policies, clarified the Trustees' relationship with the DVS Finance structure, ensured accountability transparency, and provided funding for veterans services and programs.

The Foundation is looking forward to meeting new challenges, supporting Virginia's veterans and their families, the Department of Public Safety, and the Governor.

Sincerely,

David N. Richardson
Chairman of the Board of Trustees
Veterans Services Foundation

Veterans Services Foundation – as of December 1, 2009

David N. Richardson – Board Chair

Robert A. Archer – 1st Vice-Chair

Meade A. Spotts – 2nd Vice-Chair

James P. Boyd

Supriya Christopher

Juanita Farrow

Leroy P. Gross

Donald L. Hall

Adam Harrell, Sr.

William M. Lechler

Frederic H. Leigh

David A. Orso

Leo C. Wardrup, Jr.

Randall L. West

Frank G. Wickersham, III

Kathleen Wilder

Daniel D. Boyer, *ex officio*

Paul E. Galanti, *ex officio*

Vincent M. Burgess, *ex officio*

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission

The Department of Veterans Services serves Virginia's veterans and their beneficiaries by ensuring they receive the benefits, support, quality care, and recognition they have earned through service and sacrifice.

Vision

Become the benchmark for the delivery of quality veterans programs at the state level and help ensure Virginia veterans receive the federal benefits to which they are entitled

Values

- **Service:** *Provide exemplary service to Virginia's veterans and their families*
- **Dedication:** *Bring an enduring commitment to helping Virginia's veterans and their families*
- **Excellence:** *Be the best at what we do*
- **Innovation:** *Seek new and better ways to reach and serve Virginia's veterans and their families*
- **Transparency:** *Communicate with all stakeholders in a direct and sincere manner*
- **Stewardship:** *Support a climate of ownership at the lowest possible level*

Department Overview

Since 1942, Virginia has shown its respect and honor to veterans by serving them as effective advocates. Prior to 2003, veterans services in Virginia were fragmented among the former Department of Veterans Affairs, which operated the benefits and cemeteries programs; the Virginia Veterans Care Center, which was operated by a series of contractors under the supervision of a Board of Trustees; and the Department of Education, which oversaw the activities of the State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training. In 2003, these services were consolidated under one agency, known as the Department of Veterans Services (DVS).

DVS is organized into five service delivery branches – benefits, the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, veterans education, care centers, and cemeteries – plus an administrative section. Integral components of the Department of Veterans Services team are the Board of Veterans Services, the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations, the Veterans Services Foundation, and the Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee, which all work collaboratively to support the effective delivery of services to Virginia's veterans.

The Benefit Services section assists veterans and their dependents in obtaining compensation and pension benefits from the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs. DVS operates 20 field offices throughout the Commonwealth.

The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program serves veterans, members of the National Guard and Armed Forces Reserves not in active federal service, and their family members. The program coordinates support services for veterans with stress-related and traumatic brain injuries resulting from service in a combat area and ensures that these veterans and their families receive timely assessment, treatment, and support.

The State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training (SAA) reviews and approves post-secondary education programs operating in the Commonwealth, ensuring the programs meet strict federal qualification guidelines. Veterans may use their G.I. Bill and other educational benefits only at programs approved by the SAA.

The Virginia Veterans Care Center, located adjacent to the Salem VA Medical Center, is a 240-bed facility that provides long-term skilled care and assisted living services to veterans. The Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center, located adjacent to the McGuire VA Medical Center, is a 160-bed facility that provides long-term skilled care to veterans.

Virginia's veterans cemeteries provide burial and perpetual care services to veterans and eligible dependents. The Virginia Veterans Cemetery, in Amelia, is a 127-acre facility. The Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery, in Suffolk, is a 74-acre facility. A third cemetery, located adjacent to the U. S. Department of Army Radford Arsenal in Dublin, is under construction and expected to be operational in late 2010.

The Board of Veterans Services (BVS) is responsible for formulating policies, developing procedures, reviewing department budget submissions, and making recommendations for the

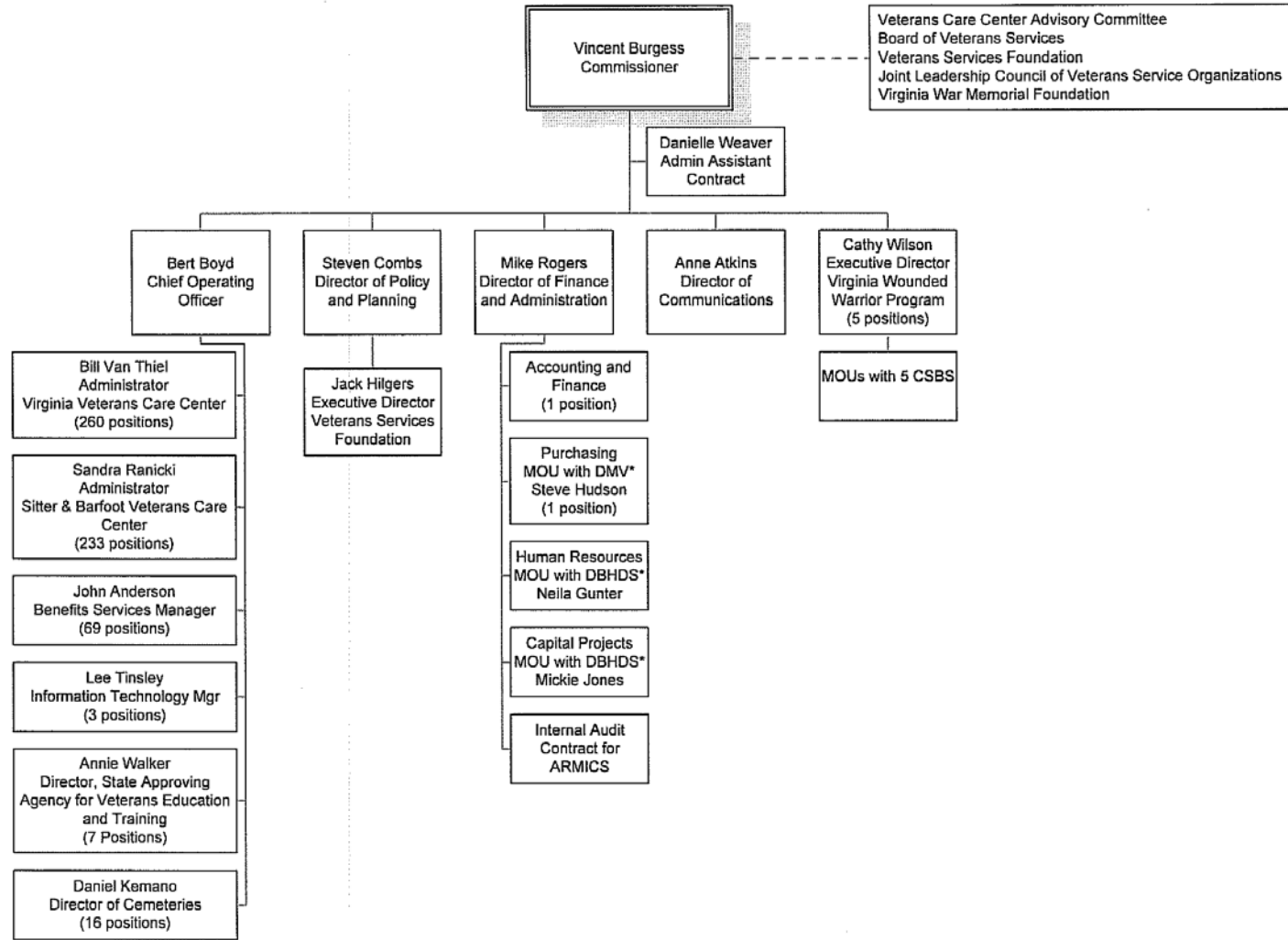
efficient and effective delivery of veterans services, as well as studying all matters affecting the welfare of Virginia's veterans.

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) advises DVS on matters of concern to veterans and their families.

The Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) is responsible for administering the Veterans Services Fund and for working with the agency to identify additional revenue sources for veterans programs.

The Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee advises the DVS commissioner on matters pertaining to the administration of veterans care centers.

Department of Veterans Services



*Services provided by outside agencies or contracts, as DVS has adjusted its operations to accommodate budget reductions

11/19/2009

Benefits Services

Mission

Assist Virginia's veterans and their dependents in obtaining benefits to which they are entitled under federal, state, and local laws.

Services and Organization

The federal government, through the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), provides many benefits and services to those who served this nation in times of war and peace. Among these benefits and services are compensation for service-connected disability or death, income-based pensions, medical care, educational benefits, and home purchase assistance.

The Benefits Services section of DVS assists Virginia's veterans in gaining access to the benefits to which they are entitled through their service and sacrifice. While veterans service representatives (claims agents) are able to help many veterans over the phone, much of the assistance takes place at a field office or itinerant contact point. During these face-to-face contacts, veterans service representatives guide veterans through the myriad steps required to file a USDVA claim.

Developing a solid claim is more than a matter of completing the application. Supporting documents, sometimes decades old, must be retrieved from federal and state archives. The process is labor-intensive. A veterans service representative may spend an hour interviewing a veteran, but then spend 20 hours or more finding records and completing the necessary supporting documentation. All of this hard work pays off if the USDVA approves the claim.

In FY09, the Benefit Services section operated 20 field offices across the Commonwealth: in Accomac, Alexandria, Big Stone Gap, Bristol, Cedar Bluff, Charlottesville, Danville, Front Royal, Hampton, Lynchburg, Portsmouth, Quantico, Roanoke, South Hill, Staunton, Tidewater, and Wytheville, plus offices co-located at each of the three VA Medical Centers in Virginia (McGuire, Salem, and Hampton).

The field offices were staffed by 35 full-time veterans service representatives and 23 full-time administrative assistants. Service areas are detailed in Table 1. The number of veterans service representatives and administrative assistants assigned to each field office depends on available resources and the number of veterans expected to be served.

In addition to serving veterans at the 20 field offices, the Benefit Services section also assists veterans at itinerant service points. The itinerant service points are, in effect, satellite field offices, with space provided by federal, state, and local government agencies and private organizations, including veterans service organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion. Because the organizations often provide the space at no charge, the itinerant service points allow DVS to reach and serve a greater number of veterans without incurring the cost of fixed operating facilities. Beginning July 1, 2005, all veterans service representatives were required to provide itinerant service at least one day per week.

The Benefit Services section is headed by the Director of Benefit Services, who is assisted by district managers who provide guidance and supervision to the field offices. The Director of Benefit Services, three district managers, and claims examiners also provide assistance during the claims appeals process.

Resources

	FY08	FY09	FY10
Budget	\$3,415,343	\$3,378,384	\$3,139,749
Authorized Positions	69	69	69

Activities

The Benefits Services section helped Virginia veterans file 24,334 claims in FY09, of which 60.2 percent were approved by the USDVA. If approved by the USDVA, a claim results in two types of awards: monthly compensation based on the level of disability and a retroactive award back to the claim date.

While most retroactive (or retro) awards are relatively small, some exceed \$50,000 and can even reach the six-figure level. Seventy-six retro awards exceeded \$50,000 in FY09, for a total value of \$16.3 million. Eighteen awards exceeded \$100,000 for a total value of \$ 2.5 million. In FY09, a total of 2,131 retro awards for Virginia veterans were approved by the USDVA, representing almost \$33.4 million. Claims activity is shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Veterans service representatives and administrative assistants had 137,251 contacts with Virginia veterans in FY09. This number does not reflect the number of individual veterans served, since individual veterans often have multiple contacts with veterans service representatives, but gives an indication of the level of contact the section has with veterans. Sixty percent of the contacts took place over the phone, 34 percent occurred in one of the 20 field offices, with the remaining six percent taking place at one of the itinerant service points. Contact activity is shown in Tables 4 and 5.

As noted previously, helping a veteran file a claim can be a lengthy process. Thirty minutes spent with a veteran during a walk-in visit may translate into several hours spent gathering necessary documents and completing required forms. Though some phone contacts can be handled rather quickly, such as a referral to another office or source of information, most involve questions about pending claims or possible entitlement to benefits. While inquires into the status of pending claims may require little time with the client, significant time is often required to obtain a response from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. A five-minute phone conversation with a veteran can easily translate into 30 minutes or more spent obtaining the information the veteran has requested.

If a phone call concerns possible entitlement to federal benefits, the complexity of benefit eligibility rules means that a veterans service representative can spend significant time on the phone with a client obtaining the information necessary to determine potential eligibility. Frequently, a veterans service representative will complete the entire claims process over the phone and through the mail, as some clients are in poor health or lack the transportation needed to reach a field office or itinerant point.

A comparison between FY08 and FY09 shows an increase in client contacts in FY09. In FY08 there were 137,093 contacts and 137,251 contacts in FY09. The number of claims filed on behalf of Virginia’s

veterans also increased in FY09, with 24,334 claims filed in FY09 versus 22,736 filed in FY08, more than a nine percent increase. In FY09, veterans services representatives visited 59 different itinerant locations and made 7,661 contacts with veterans during those visits.

Table 1
Benefit Services Section Field Office Service Area – FY2009

<u>Field Office</u>	<u>Counties Served</u>	<u>Cities Served</u>
Accomac	Accomack and Northampton	
Alexandria	Arlington and Fairfax	Alexandria
Big Stone Gap	Dickenson, Lee, Scott and Wise	Norton
Bristol	Russell, Scott, Smyth, and Washington; Sullivan, TN	Bristol, VA and Bristol, TN
Cedar Bluff	Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell	
Charlottesville	Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson, and Orange	Charlottesville
Danville	Pittsylvania	Danville
Front Royal	Clarke, Fauquier, Frederick, Page, Rappahannock, Shenandoah, and Warren	Winchester
Hampton and Hampton VA Medical Center	Charles City, Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, Mathews, and York	Hampton, Newport News, Poquoson, and Williamsburg
Lynchburg	Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Buckingham, Campbell, Cumberland, and Prince Edward	Bedford, Lynchburg, and Madison Heights
McGuire VA Medical Center (Richmond)	Amelia, Chesterfield, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Essex, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, King and Queen, King William, Lancaster, New Kent,	Colonial Heights, Hopewell, Petersburg, and Richmond

	Middlesex, Powhatan, Prince George, Richmond, and Surry	
Portsmouth	Southampton, Sussex, and Isle of Wight	Chesapeake, Franklin, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach
Quantico	Caroline, Culpeper, King George, Prince William, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and Westmoreland	Falls Church and Fredericksburg
Roanoke	Alleghany, Blacksburg, Botetourt, Buchanan, Christiansburg, Clinton Forge, Craig, Floyd, Franklin, Montgomery, Radford, Rocky Mount, Pulaski, and Roanoke	Covington and Roanoke
Salem VA Medical Center	Henry, Patrick, Moneta	Collinsville, Salem
South Hill	Brunswick, Charlotte, Greensville, Halifax, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nottoway, Southampton, and Sussex	Emporia and South Boston
Staunton	Augusta, Bath, Highland, Rockbridge, and Rockingham	Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, and Waynesboro
Tidewater (Norfolk)	Southampton, Sussex, and Isle of Wight	Chesapeake, Franklin, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach
Wytheville	Bland, Carroll, Giles, Grayson, Hillsville, Pulaski, and Wythe	Galax and Wytheville

Table 2
Claims Submitted to USDVA - Sorted by Month

MONTH	NEW			REOPEN			21-8416			EVR			TOTAL CLAIMS		
	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09
JULY	1,326	1,329	1,461	365	384	493	37	25	33	14	6	14	1,742	1,744	2,001
AUGUST	1,393	1,543	1,462	380	433	511	16	29	38	13	4	2	1,802	2,009	2,013
SEPTEMBER	1,324	1,299	1,530	343	367	496	23	21	37	10	6	10	1,700	1,693	2,073
OCTOBER	1,348	1,281	1,446	360	375	471	17	15	29	16	3	8	1,741	1,674	1,954
NOVEMBER	1,181	1,207	1,181	315	387	388	23	30	25	14	9	5	1,533	1,633	1,599
DECEMBER	1,014	1,104	1,190	292	306	423	34	46	39	8	12	15	1,348	1,468	1,667
JANUARY	1,301	1,547	1,375	358	504	460	428	349	312	231	176	185	2,318	2,576	2,332
FEBRUARY	1,181	1,456	1,453	320	417	488	320	278	322	190	168	229	2,011	2,319	2,492
MARCH	1,453	1,513	1,620	347	425	535	65	95	126	65	42	48	1,977	2,075	2,329
APRIL	1,232	1,511	1,332	328	417	468	55	66	88	17	28	33	1,632	2,022	1,921
MAY	1,376	1,280	1,407	330	401	465	32	38	45	10	13	10	1,748	1,732	1,927
JUNE	1,378	1,279	1,502	340	473	464	23	28	47	10	11	13	1,751	1,791	2,026
TOTALS	15,507	16,349	16,959	4,078	4,889	5,662	1,073	1,020	1,141	598	478	572	21,303	22,736	24,334

Terms used in table:

New: A first-time claim.

Reopen: Reopen a denied claim or make a modification to an existing claim, such as for a new medical condition or disability or an increase in an established disability.

21-8416: The VA Form 21-8416 is used to report a claimant's medical expenses for the previous year, so that the claimant may claim partial reimbursement for medical expenses. Veterans service representatives frequently assist claimants in completing this form.

EVR: Eligibility Verification Report. Submitted annually by some pension recipients to verify income and continuing eligibility. Veterans service representatives frequently assist pension recipients in completing this form.

Table 3
Claims Submitted to USDVA - Sorted by Field Office

MONTH	NEW			REOPEN			21-8416			EVR			TOTAL CLAIMS		
	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09
ACCOMAC	377	316	328	25	50	63	27	51	30	15	11	17	446	398	438
ALEXANDRIA	357	379	269	263	457	279	6	13	5	0	0	0	627	849	553
RICHMOND/AMELIA	329	211	76	217	103	48	29	37	14	16	6	2	594	357	140
BIG STONE GAP	729	880	974	107	35	90	65	64	53	29	33	20	922	1,012	1,137
BRISTOL	1,024	977	775	70	68	78	137	138	113	87	68	78	1,334	1,251	1,044
CEDAR BLUFF	953	876	1,192	306	385	305	83	58	63	45	27	45	1,394	1,346	1,605
CHARLOTTESVILLE	292	306	438	25	76	47	56	40	26	35	22	39	411	444	550
DANVILLE	371	674	671	19	51	211	35	19	21	35	9	13	459	753	916
FAIRFAX	128	154	0	37	48	0	2	3	0	3	2	0	167	207	0
FRONT ROYAL	465	466	830	98	32	199	21	12	33	14	6	18	599	516	1,080
HAMPTON VAMC	60	433	448	16	162	146	1	0	1	0	0	2	76	605	597
HAMPTON	1,638	1,582	1,748	683	603	755	23	20	20	18	20	17	2,362	2,225	2,540
LYNCHBURG	489	452	413	51	23	104	132	107	104	65	52	51	741	634	672
MCGUIRE VAMC	333	694	1,295	453	800	355	0	4	37	10	13	24	797	1,511	1,711
NORFOLK	213	451	362	31	81	84	1	0	0	0	0	0	245	532	446
PORTSMOUTH	0	0	555	0	0	74	0	0	9	0	0	4	0	0	642
QUANTICO	439	286	440	89	148	258	3	0	15	2	3	7	532	437	720
ROANOKE	500	475	217	115	106	313	16	31	9	9	15	5	640	627	544
SALEM VAMC	74	360	435	31	241	430	4	56	178	0	8	15	110	665	1,058
SOUTH HILL	430	441	497	132	131	190	116	106	96	79	65	67	758	743	850
STAUNTON	1,014	881	843	150	211	160	172	196	220	69	68	96	1,418	1,356	1,319
TIDEWATER	4,440*	4,160*	3,764	1,142*	958*	930	78*	64*	56	42*	44*	52	5,705*	5,226*	4,802
WYTHEVILLE	852	885	389	18	120	543	66	31	38	25	6	0	966	1,042	970
TOTALS	15,507	16,349	16,959	4,078	4,783	5,662	1,073	1,008	1,141	598	478	572	21,303	22,736	24,334

* Includes claims activity for the Portsmouth Benefits Office.

Terms used in table:

New: A first-time claim.

Reopen: Reopen a denied claim or make a modification to an existing claim, such as for a new medical condition or disability or an increase in an established disability.

21-8416: The VA Form 21-8416 is used to report a claimant's medical expenses for the previous year, so that the claimant may claim partial reimbursement for medical expenses. Veterans service representatives frequently assist claimants in completing this form.

EVR: Eligibility Verification Report. Submitted annually by some pension recipients to verify income and continuing eligibility. Veterans service representatives frequently assist pension recipients in completing this form.

Table 4
Client Contacts - Sorted by Month

MONTH	WALK-INS			PHONE			ITINERANT POINTS			TOTAL CONTACTS		
	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09
JULY	3,828	3,582	3,995	7,802	6,913	7,143	837	640	570	12,467	11,135	11,708
AUGUST	3,751	4,391	4,025	7,728	7,663	6,958	444	469	797	11,923	12,523	11,780
SEPTEMBER	3,572	3,566	4,131	6,981	6,876	7,275	377	501	657	10,930	10,943	12,063
OCTOBER	3,898	3,656	3,936	7,101	6,892	7,329	548	475	693	11,547	11,023	11,958
NOVEMBER	3,228	3,414	3,200	7,010	6,358	5,618	310	450	551	10,548	10,222	9,369
DECEMBER	3,082	2,803	3,367	6,021	5,947	6,507	229	464	563	9,375	9,214	10,437
JANUARY	3,676	4,439	3,936	7,363	7,896	6,900	935	665	548	11,974	13,000	11,384
FEBRUARY	3,541	4,098	3,956	6,598	7,719	6,743	791	762	706	10,930	12,579	11,405
MARCH	4,061	4,156	4,189	7,172	7,750	7,543	723	726	731	11,901	12,632	12,463
APRIL	3,497	4,122	3,929	6,650	7,408	7,010	751	618	600	10,888	12,148	11,539
MAY	3,758	3,474	3,874	6,945	6,845	6,622	631	551	611	11,334	10,870	11,107
JUNE	3,731	3,715	4,134	6,724	6,382	7,270	1,106	707	634	11,561	10,804	12,038
TOTALS	43,623	45,359	46,672	84,095	84,565	82,918	7,682	7,026	7,661	135,378	137,093	137,251

Terms used in table:

Office Walk-Ins: Number of clients who visit a DVS field office

Phone: Number of phone calls received by DVS field offices

Itinerant Point: Number of clients who visit an itinerant service point

Table 5
Client Contacts - Sorted by Field Office

	WALK-INS			PHONE			ITINERANT POINTS			TOTAL CONTACTS		
	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09
ACCOMAC	1,136	1,215	1,279	3,077	2,647	2,872	196	80	89	4,409	3,942	4,240
ALEXANDRIA	914	891	555	1,871	4,483	2,625	288	282	53	3,030	5,656	3,233
AMELIA/RICHMOND	1,730	522	29	8,606	3,604	809	983	545	430	11,319	4,671	1,268
BIG STONE GAP	2,270	2,513	2,611	3,261	3,198	2,850	294	254	208	5,825	5,965	5,669
BRISTOL	2,142	2,183	2,114	3,407	3,407	2,890	107	114	113	5,656	5,704	5,117
CEDAR BLUFF	2,835	2,271	2,340	2,923	2,806	2,430	186	150	168	5,944	5,227	4,938
CHARLOTTESVILLE	1,239	986	1,253	2,267	1,587	1,853	88	20	108	3,594	2,593	3,214
DANVILLE	1,241	2,136	2,236	1,222	3,308	2,904	234	581	500	2,697	6,025	5,640
FAIRFAX	213	375	0	877	601	0	133	41	0	1,223	1,017	0
FRONT ROYAL	1,141	619	1,029	1,759	1,606	2,349	198	189	250	3,098	2,414	3,628
HAMPTON VAMC	211	2,187	2,252	323	977	1,620	0	27	1	236	3,191	3,873
HAMPTON	4,523	4,016	4,536	2,793	2,527	3,346	230	104	213	7,844	6,647	8,095
LYNCHBURG	1,386	1,318	1,307	3,357	3,569	3,896	239	182	187	4,982	5,069	5,390
MCGUIRE VAMC	2,623	5,124	4,788	1,864	2,784	3,722	43	259	270	4,573	8,167	8,780
NORFOLK	314	784	1,000	232	608	724	40	33	214	586	1,425	1,938
PORTSMOUTH	0	0	1,474	0	0	2,151	0	0	167	0	0	3,792
QUANTICO	1,020	982	1,163	3,122	2,332	2,884	178	41	312	4,320	3,355	4,359
ROANOKE	1,269	942	884	4,547	4,367	2,170	159	111	217	5,965	5,420	3,271
SALEM VAMC	201	717	1,122	351	2,162	3,236	63	315	278	615	3,194	4,636
SOUTH HILL	688	734	776	1,715	1,712	1,980	386	385	404	2,789	2,831	3,160
STAUNTON	2,741	2,765	2,744	3,314	2,615	2,767	534	598	557	6,589	5,978	6,068
TIDEWATER	12,302*	11,158*	10,504	31,436*	32,871*	31,167	3,048*	2,646*	2,457	46,774*	46,675*	44,128
WYTHEVILLE	1,484	978	724	1,771	878	1,594	55	71	425	3,310	1,927	2,743
TOTALS	43,623	45,416	46,720	84,095	84,649	82,839	7,682	7,028	7,621	135,378	137,093	137,180

* Includes contact activity for the Portsmouth Benefits Office.

Terms used in table:

Walk-Ins: Number of clients who visit a DVS field office

Phone: Number of phone calls received by DVS field offices

Itinerant Point: Number of clients who visit an itinerant service point

Virginia Wounded Warrior Program

Mission

To establish an integrated, comprehensive and responsive system of services for veterans, Guardsmen and Reservists with combat/operational stress conditions or traumatic brain injury (TBI) and their families through a network of public and private partnerships.

Services and Organization

The 2008 General Assembly unanimously approved legislation creating the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP). VWWP serves veterans, members of the National Guard and Armed Forces Reserves not in active federal service, and their family members. The program coordinates support services for veterans with stress-related and traumatic brain injuries resulting from service in a combat area and ensures that these veterans and their families receive timely assessment, treatment, and support.

In April 2009, the VWWP awarded \$1.7 million to five regional consortia of community services boards, brain injury services providers, and other public and private service providers offering services across the Commonwealth. These consortia enhance the existing array of services in their communities based on ongoing assessment of local needs. The Virginia Department of Veterans Services operates the VWWP in cooperation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the Department of Rehabilitative Services.

Resources

	FY08	FY09	FY10
Budget	N/A	2,372,078	1,964,246
Positions	N/A	5	5

Activities

The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program boasts an overwhelming record of success in its first year of operation. Among its major accomplishments are (1) funding and establishing five regional consortia across the Commonwealth that are actively serving and reaching out to veterans and their families, (2) establishing an Interagency Executive Strategy Committee and Advisory Committee, (3) conducting a comprehensive needs assessment, and (4) providing state-wide and regional training.

Five regional consortia comprised of community services boards, brain injury services providers and VA healthcare resources have hired regional coordinators. These coordinators work with a consortia of providers who offer an array of community-based services based on their levels of funding and on the availability of community resources. Among the services that may be provided are assessment and screening, case management, outpatient treatment, rehabilitative services, family support, and linkage to other supportive services.

To continue forward progress and to establish a long-term vision the VWWP has embraced multi-level strategic planning and management. This effort is designed to ensure that the program is sustained and enhanced for the long-term. Unprecedented communication and partnerships have already been established and fostered throughout the Commonwealth. VWWP is already viewed as a model state-funded program for assisting veterans with combat stress and traumatic brain injuries and their families.

VWWP has been an efficient and effective steward of the general funds allocated for FY 2009-10. FY09 funds were spent on administration, outreach, training, needs assessment, and grants to the regional consortia. More than 70 percent of VWWP FY09 funds were allocated to the community. FY10 fund distribution will be based on successful outcomes of existing investments in the community and projects that will help sustain or enhance the VWWP effort. Additionally, the VWWP obtained a grant from the Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative Trust Fund, in partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Education, Partnership for People with Disabilities. This three year, \$398,000 grant will fund the majority of community and statewide training.

The Veterans Services Foundation coordinated a number of events with veterans services organizations and other groups, contributing the proceeds to VWWP. Policies and procedures to ensure accountability for distributed funds have been established. VSF funds are being used for veterans who need help with transportation, overnight accommodations, daily living supplies, and other necessities.

State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training

Mission

Enable access to post-secondary education opportunities for veterans and eligible family members.

Services and Organization

Operating under a contract with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training (SAA) reviews, evaluates, and approves post-secondary education and training programs offered by educational institutions, businesses, and industries in the Commonwealth of Virginia. After a program has been approved, veterans and other persons eligible for benefits under Titles 38 and 10 of the U.S. Code may enroll and receive financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The SAA ensures compliance with state and federal regulations through on-site visits to active institutions and establishments.

The SAA has a secondary mission of making veterans and eligible family members aware of veterans education and training programs. Outreach activities are conducted at job fairs, military bases in the Commonwealth, and at veterans events hosted by DVS.

With just seven full-time employees, the SAA has responsibility for providing supervision and support for 898 education and training institutions. While some institutions only offer one program, in many cases an institution offers multiple programs, each requiring separate approval. The institution with the most approved programs is George Mason University with 386 programs.

Resources

	FY08	FY09	FY10
Budget	\$617,619	\$704,223	\$704,223
Positions	7	7	7

Activities

As part of its mission to review, evaluate, and approve post-secondary education and training programs, the SAA performs two types of approval actions: program approval and other approval. Program approval actions deal with initial or revised approval of an educational program, while other approval actions focus on revisions to a previously approved publication or document containing program or policy information.

The SAA performed 4,693 program approval actions between October 2008 and September 2009, with 4,511, or 96 percent, being approved, and 182 being disapproved. During the same period, SAA handled 1,022 other approval actions, of which 952, or 93 percent, were approved and 70 were disapproved. Table 6 shows program approval actions, while Table 7 details other approval actions. Data is presented for federal fiscal year 2009 since SAA activity is tracked on that basis.

A key element of the review, evaluation, and approval process is the supervisory visit, in which an SAA official visits the educational institution and meets with key staff members. SAA's contract with the USDVA called for visits to 392 (90 percent) of the 435 active institutions in FFY09. The SAA exceeded this goal, making supervisory visits to 429 facilities (100 percent). The approvals for six schools were withdrawn prior to the supervisory visit. Supervisory visit activity is detailed in Table 8.

During the past year, the SAA staff assumed additional responsibility for providing direct service to veterans in follow up to implementation of the new Post 911 G. I. Bill. Staff assisted veterans by researching issues ranging from overdue payments, in-state tuition eligibility, the impact of the G. I. Bill on other financial aid awards, and by counseling veterans on their educational benefits. Table 9 illustrates some of the increased workload resulting from the Post 911 G. I. Bill.

Table 6
State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training
Program Approval Actions: FFY06, FFY07, FFY08

	IHL			NCD			APP			OJT			LIC/CERT		
Oct - Dec	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
Number of Applications Received	1,148	1,113	893	560	431	475	6	12	7	4	1	7	2	45	0
Number Approved	1,078	1,033	878	502	365	458	6	12	5	4	1	7	2	10	0
Number Disapproved	70	80	15	58	66	17	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	35	0
Percentage of Applications Approved	93.9%	93%	98%	89.6%	85%	96%	100%	100%	71%	100%	100%	100%	100%	22%	N/A

	IHL			NCD			APP			OJT			LIC/CERT		
Jan - Mar	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Number of Applications Received	409	288	864	134	248	364	6	26	5	4	3	4	0	3	1
Number Approved	377	271	846	88	237	328	6	26	3	4	3	4	0	3	1
Number Disapproved	32	17	18	46	11	36	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Percentage of Applications Approved	92.2%	94%	98%	65.7%	96%	90%	100%	100%	60%	100%	100%	100%	N/A	100%	100%

	IHL			NCD			APP			OJT			LIC/CERT		
Apr - Jun	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Number of Applications Received	509	960	393	417	589	482	0	15	11	0	11	3	3	0	2
Number Approved	491	932	380	396	546	441	0	15	11	0	11	3	3	0	2
Number Disapproved	18	28	13	21	43	41	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Percentage of Applications Approved	96.5%	97%	97%	95%	93%	91%	N/A	100%	100%	N/A	100%	100%	100%	N/A	100%

	IHL			NCD			APP			OJT			LIC/CERT		
Jul - Sep	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Number of Applications Received	839	996	737	659	586	422	10	9	5	0	6	8	0	0	11
Number Approved	769	944	726	575	558	395	10	8	5	0	6	8	0	0	11
Number Disapproved	70	52	11	84	28	27	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Percentage of Applications Approved	91.7%	95%	99%	87.3%	95%	94%	100%	89%	100%	N/A	100%	100%	N/A	0	100%

	IHL			NCD			APP			OJT			LIC/CERT		
	FFY 07	FFY 08	FFY 09	FFY 07	FFY 08	FFY 09	FFY 07	FFY 08	FFY 09	FFY 07	FFY 08	FFY 09	FFY 07	FFY 08	FFY 09
Totals for Federal Fiscal Year															
Number of Applications Received	2,905	3,357	2,887	1,770	1,854	1,743	22	62	28	8	21	22	5	48	13
Number Approved	2,715	3,180	2,830	1,561	1,706	1,622	22	61	24	8	21	22	5	13	13
Number Disapproved	190	177	57	209	148	121	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	35	0
Percentage of Applications Approved	93.5%	95%	98%	88.2%	92%	93%	100%	98%	86%	100%	100%	100%	100%	27%	100%

IHL = Institute of Higher Learning

NCD = Non-College Degree Program

APP = Apprenticeship Program

OJT = On the Job Training Program

LIC/CERT = Licensing/Certification Program

Table 7
State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training
Other Approval Actions: FFY06, FFY07, and FFY08

	IHL			NCD			APP			OJT			LIC/CERT		
Oct - Dec	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
Number of Applications Received	63	75	69	55	107	91	23	22	29	69	64	46	2	6	0
Number Approved	52	65	62	46	95	84	23	22	27	69	64	46	2	5	0
Number Disapproved	11	10	7	9	12	7	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
Percentage of Applications Approved	82.5%	87%	90%	83.6%	89%	92%	100%	100%	93%	100%	100%	100%	100%	83%	N/A
Jan - Mar	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Number of Applications Received	29	45	78	43	87	115	22	43	38	0	86	94	0	2	1
Number Approved	25	40	73	36	83	102	22	43	36	0	86	94	0	2	1
Number Disapproved	4	5	5	7	4	13	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Percentage of Applications Approved	86.2%	89%	94%	83.7%	95%	87%	100%	100%	95%	N/A	100%	100%	N/A	100%	100%
Apr - Jun	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Number of Applications Received	87	78	63	72	108	48	13	31	19	53	94	77	3	0	1
Number Approved	52	73	60	66	91	29	13	31	19	53	94	77	3	0	1
Number Disapproved	35	5	3	6	17	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Percentage of Applications Approved	59.8%	96%	95%	91.7%	84%	60%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0	100%
Jul - Sep	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Number of Applications Received	75	74	69	117	113	76	39	24	29	62	116	72	0	0	7
Number Approved	64	63	66	96	106	67	39	23	29	62	116	72	0	0	7
Number Disapproved	11	11	3	21	7	9	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Percentage of Applications Approved	85.3%	85%	96%	82.1%	94%	88%	100%	96%	100%	100%	100%	100%	N/A	N/A	100%

	IHL			NCD			APP			OJT			LIC/CERT		
	FFY 07	FFY 08	FFY 09	FFY 07	FFY 08	FFY 09	FFY 07	FFY 08	FFY 09	FFY 07	FFY 08	FFY 09	FFY 07	FFY 08	FFY 09
Totals for Federal Fiscal Year	07	08	09	07	08	09	07	08	09	07	08	09	07	08	09
Number of Applications Received	254	272	279	287	415	330	155	120	115	184	360	289	5	8	9
Number Approved	193	241	261	244	375	282	155	119	111	184	360	289	5	7	9
Number Disapproved	61	31	18	43	40	48	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	1	0
Percentage of Applications Approved	76%	89%	94%	85%	90%	85%	100%	99%	97%	100%	100%	100%	100%	88%	100%

IHL = Institute of Higher Learning

NCD = Non-College Degree Program

APP = Apprenticeship Program

OJT = On the Job Training Program

LIC/CERT = Licensing/Certification Program

Table 8
State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training
Supervisory Visits: FFY06, FFY07, and FFY08

	IHL			NCD			APP			OJT			LIC/CERT		
Oct - Dec	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
Number of Visits	35	20	19	9	12	20	4	10	20	3	8	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
	IHL			NCD			APP			OJT			LIC/CERT		
Jan - Mar	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Number of Visits	13	50	44	18	31	30	6	13	17	13	20	21	N/A	N/A	N/A
	IHL			NCD			APP			OJT			LIC/CERT		
Apr - Jun	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Number of Visits	81	61	75	32	38	35	9	16	17	19	27	29	N/A	N/A	N/A
	IHL			NCD			APP			OJT			LIC/CERT		
Jul - Sep	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Number of Visits	40	35	41	21	22	23	18	5	12	5	27	26	N/A	N/A	N/A
	IHL			NCD			APP			OJT			LIC/CERT		
Totals for Federal Fiscal Year	FFY 07	FFY 08	FFY 09	FFY07	FFY 08	FFY 09	FFY 07	FFY 08	FFY 09	FFY 07	FFY 08	FFY 09	FFY 07	FFY 08	FFY 09
Number of Visits	169	166	179	80	103	108	37	44	66	40	82	76	326	N/A	N/A

IHL = Institute of Higher Learning
 NCD = Non-College Degree Program
 APP = Apprenticeship Program
 OJT = On the Job Training Program
 LIC/CERT = Licensing/Certification Program

Table 9
State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training
Increased Workload in Response to Post 911 G. I. Bill

Activity	FY08	FY09
Email & telephone inquiries	356	637
Governor's Office inquiries	4	8
Requests for application for a new facility	48	65
Active schools (facilities in which a veteran actively attends)	433	472

Virginia Veterans Care Center

Mission

Provide affordable, high quality, and comprehensive nursing and domiciliary care to Commonwealth of Virginia veterans residing in the Virginia Veterans Care Center.

Services and Organization

Opened on Veterans Day 1992, the Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC) provides state-of-the-art long-term health care for up to 240 veterans. Of the facility's 240 beds, 180 are dedicated as skilled nursing care beds, including 60 dedicated to the care of Alzheimer's patients. There are 60 beds serving assisted-living (domiciliary care) patients.

The Care Center provides on-site physical therapy, respiratory therapy, and podiatry care, as well as many other ancillary health care services. The Care Center also offers amenities such as a wheelchair accessible nature trail and deck, library, chapel, solariums, and barbershop. The Virginia Veterans Care Center is located adjacent to the Salem VA Medical Center, a 288-bed facility that provides a wide range of health care services.

With 260 authorized positions in FY09, the Care Center is the largest section in the Department of Veterans Services (DVS). The Care Center's largest operating divisions are nursing, housekeeping, and dietary.

Volunteers play an important part in Care Center operations, assisting in many areas of patient care. The facility interacts with approximately 30 veterans service organizations (VSOs) and more than 120 individual volunteers, who, in addition to donating generously of their time, also donate both money and materials to improve the welfare of Care Center residents.

Working in conjunction with the VSOs and individual volunteers, staff members hold numerous activities for VVCC residents, including two carnivals for residents and their families. Attendance at each of the carnivals averages between 300 and 400 participants. The VVCC was pleased to again host a stop-over and dinner for more than 380 veterans on their way to Washington D.C. as part of the annual Run-For-The-Wall event. The bikers visited with VVCC residents, shared experiences, and showed off their bikes.

Each year, the VVCC conducts Operation Holiday Spirit (OHS) and raises approximately \$20,000 in donations to purchase Christmas gifts for all Care Center residents. As of December 14, 2009, OHS has a balance of approximately \$15,000. The funds will provide gifts and activities for the residents, and will ensure that every resident receives a gift for Christmas.

The Virginia Veterans Care Center receives no operating monies from the General Fund, operating entirely on revenues generated through services provided to the veteran population. Revenue sources include Medicaid, Medicare, per diem payments from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and private funding sources. Per diem payments from the USDVA accounted for approximately 28 percent of VVCC revenues in FY09. Of the balance, 29 percent of the funding for

care was provided by Medicaid, nearly 28 percent by private funds, and nearly 10 percent by Medicare.

The Virginia Veterans Care Center provided 60,203 patient days of nursing care and 17,252 patient days of assisted living care to Virginia veterans in FY09. The patient day measure is used for billing purposes and to track occupancy. A patient day is one day spent by one patient in the Care Center. Dividing the number of patient days in a given month by the number of days in that month gives the average occupancy for the period in question.

Resources

	FY08	FY09	FY10
Budget	\$16,264,000	\$19,229,752	\$18,701,737
Positions	254	260	260

Activities

The Virginia Veterans Care Center had a 92 percent average occupancy level in FY09 – with an average of 92 percent of the nursing care and 79 percent of the assisted living beds being occupied. Table 10 shows Care Center patient days and occupancy levels.

In July 2009, the USDVA conducted the annual survey/inspection of all of the departments of the Virginia Veterans Care Center. The Care Center was found to be in full compliance with all 158 USDVA standards.

In January 2009, the Virginia Department of Health, Office of Licensure and Certification conducted a standard survey of the Virginia Veterans Care Center. Five level 2 (no actual harm) deficiencies requiring a plan of correction were cited.

In order to comply with Executive Orders 48 and 82, the Care Center contracted with a company to upgrade building, electrical, heat and air conditioning systems, and to initiate water conservation measures. These changes will provide an improved environment for the veterans, families, and staff, and they are projected to enhance operational efficiencies, reduce costs and conserve resources. However, the project has been placed on hold. A facility upgrade and expansion project, funded jointly by the Commonwealth and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is currently in progress.

Table 10
Virginia Veterans Care Center
Patient Days and average occupancy level - FY07, FY08, and FY09

MONTH	PATIENT DAYS NURSING			AVERAGE # OF NURSING BEDS OCCUPIED			OCCUPANCY LEVEL: NURSING			PATIENT DAYS ASSISTED LIVING			AVERAGE # OF ASSISTED LIVING BEDS OCCUPIED			OCCUPANCY LEVEL: ASSISTED LIVING		
	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09
July	5,362	5,298	5,065	173	171	163	96%	95%	91%	1,691	1,769	1,463	55	57	47	91%	95%	79%
August	5,419	5,291	5,082	175	171	164	97%	95%	91%	1,680	1,777	1,466	54	57	47	90%	96%	79%
September	5,184	5,034	4,879	173	168	163	96%	93%	90%	1,619	1,721	1,392	54	57	46	90%	96%	77%
October	5,456	5,140	5,082	176	166	164	98%	92%	91%	1,705	1,780	1,436	55	57	46	92%	96%	77%
November	5,261	5,107	4,806	175	179	160	97%	95%	89%	1,674	1,727	1,464	56	58	49	93%	96%	81%
December	5,404	5,318	5,034	174	172	162	97%	95%	90%	1,606	1,795	1,462	52	58	47	86%	97%	79%
January	5,473	5,296	4,995	177	171	161	98%	95%	90%	1,620	1,797	1,388	52	58	45	87%	97%	75%
February	4,874	4,813	4,654	174	166	166	97%	92%	92%	1,513	1,575	1,265	54	54	45	90%	91%	75%
March	5,387	5,161	5,139	174	166	166	97%	92%	92%	1,690	1,617	1,421	55	52	46	91%	87%	76%
April	5,120	4,885	5,008	171	163	167	95%	90%	93%	1,718	1,575	1,449	57	53	48	95%	88%	81%
May	5,237	4,923	5,394	169	158	174	94%	88%	97%	1,838	1,601	1,523	59	52	49	99%	86%	82%
June	5,138	4,866	5,291	171	162	176	95%	90%	98%	1,744	1,515	1,532	58	51	51	97%	84%	85%
Annual Maximum Capacity	65,700	65,700	65,700	180	180	180	100%	100%	100%	21,900	21,900	21,900	60	60	60	100%	100%	100%
Total Patient Days	63,315	61,132	60,429							20,098	20,249	17,261						
Monthly Average	5,276	5,094	5,036	173	167	166	96%	93%	92%	1,675	1,687	1,438	55	55	47	92%	92%	79%

Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center

Services and Organization

The Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC), a single-level facility opened in 2008, features 160 single-occupancy rooms in three nursing units and is located on the campus of the McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond. The care center has two 60-bed skilled nursing care units and one 40-bed Alzheimer's/dementia unit with enclosed courtyards.

In January 2008, SBVCC successfully completed all inspections and requirements for licensure by the Virginia Department of Health and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. This certified the facility to accept both Medicare and Medicaid. In March 2008, the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs inspected SBVCC. All criteria were met and the facility became VA-certified.

SBVCC reached full occupancy beginning March 2009. As of October 27, 2009, 373 veterans have been admitted. Many of these residents came to the Center for short-term therapy and rehabilitation in order to return home.

For the year ending June 30, SBVCC collected \$12,552,313 in revenue. Since July 1, 2009, the Care Center has collected \$5,108,801 in revenue. On April 1, 2009, the facility converted to a new web-based clinical and billing software that greatly enhances productivity, improves the accuracy of the receivable balances, and continues to enable faster collections.

The design of SBVCC reflected the latest in health care facility design and research when it was built. All rooms are single occupancy to limit the spread of infectious diseases and assure residents a level of privacy essential to their mental well-being. Each room has a floor-to-ceiling window, private bath and walk-in shower. The Alzheimer's unit features a wander garden and interconnected hallways allowing residents to move around freely in a safe and secure environment.

The facility provides physical, occupational, and speech therapy, as well as therapeutic recreation, social and spiritual activities, and other amenities such as an on-site pharmacy, a fully equipped barber and beauty shop, activity and game rooms, resident lounges in each nursing unit, courtyards and an outdoor walking trail. Veterans may be admitted as long-term residents or on a short-term basis for rehabilitation as they transition from hospital care to home.

The 114,000-square foot facility was built using a combination of funds provided by the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Commonwealth of Virginia. The U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs put up 57 percent of the construction cost and the state funded the remainder. Total cost for the facility was \$25,866,000.

To be eligible for admission, a veteran must have an honorable discharge and must be a Virginia resident at the time of admission. Veterans may also qualify if they were Virginia residents at the time they entered the military.

The Care Center is named for two Congressional Medal of Honor recipients: Colonel Van T. Barfoot and Colonel Carl L. Sitter. Barfoot was awarded the Medal of Honor as a sergeant in the

U.S. Army for extraordinary heroism in the face of point blank fire on May 23, 1944, near Carano, Italy. Sitter received the Medal of Honor as a captain in U.S. Marines where he was the commanding officer in action against enemy aggressor forces at Hagaru-ri, Korea, on November 29 and 30, 1950.

Resources

	FY08	FY09	FY10
Budget	\$11,630,339	\$14,420,453	\$14,880,468
Positions	233	233	233

Of the 233 full-time classified positions budgeted, 208 have been filled.

Activities

SBVCC occupancy fluctuates between 95% and 100%, averaging 96.8 percent of the facility’s capacity. Table 11 documents the Care Center’s patient days nursing and average occupancy level.

Table 11
Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center
Patient days and average occupancy level - FY09

MONTH	PATIENT DAYS			AVERAGE # OF NURSING BEDS OCCUPIED			OCCUPANCY LEVEL: NURSING		
	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY07	FY08	FY09
July			2,053			66			41%
August			2,491			80			50%
September			2,768			92			58%
October			3,247			105			65%
November			3,503			117			73%
December			3,930			127			79%
January	101	4,208		4	136		3%	85%	
February	437	4,127		15	147		9%	92%	
March	729	4,591		24	148		15%	93%	
April	1,058	4,633		35	154		22%	97%	
May	1,607	4,761		52	154		32%	96%	
June	1,807	4,598		60	153		38%	96%	
Annual Maximum Capacity	58,400	58,400		160	160		100%	100%	
Total Patient Days	5,739	44,910		60	153		38%	96%	
Monthly Average	820	3,456		28	115		18%	72%	

Cemetery Services

Mission

Provide a dignified final resting place for veterans and eligible dependents at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Amelia and the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk.

Services and Organization

The Cemetery Services section of DVS operates Virginia's two state-owned veterans cemeteries – the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia and the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery. A third cemetery, adjacent to the U. S. Department of the Army, Radford Army Ammunition Plant, is under construction and should be completed in late 2010. These state-operated cemeteries provide veterans and eligible family members with a dignified and honorable final resting place.

The cemeteries accommodate three types of interments: in-ground burial of casketed remains, in-ground inurnment of cremated remains, and above ground inurnment of cremated remains in a columbarium. Cremated remains are inurned in the same manner and with the same honors as casketed remains.

In-ground burials of casketed remains at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia are marked with upright marble headstones, with one garden section having flat granite markers. At the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery, casketed remains are marked with upright granite headstones. Ground inurnments are marked with flat granite markers at both cemeteries, while above ground (columbarium) inurnments are marked by an inscribed marble niche cover at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery and an inscribed granite niche cover at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery.

Any member of the U.S. armed forces who dies on active duty, anyone retired from military service, or any veteran discharged under conditions other than dishonorable or undesirable is eligible for interment in a Virginia veterans cemetery. Also eligible for burial, if they meet certain requirements, are members of the reserve forces and the National Guard, commissioned officers of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, some American merchant mariners, and some others.

Dependents, including the legal spouse (or widow or widower) and/or an unmarried minor child under age 21, are also eligible to be buried in a Virginia veterans cemetery. In addition, an unmarried adult child, who, before the age of 21, became permanently incapable of self-support because of physical or mental disability, may also be interred.

There is no charge for the gravesite/columbarium or necessary interment services for a qualified veteran at a Virginia veterans cemetery. The Commonwealth furnishes the gravesite, opens and closes the grave, orders a grave marker from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, places the grave marker, and furnishes perpetual care of the gravesite without charge. The veteran and his or her eligible dependent, however, must purchase a casket as well as a vault or grave liner for in-ground burials or a plastic, stone (marbleized) or metal urn for cremated remains. Wooden urns are acceptable for above ground placement.

For each veteran buried in a state-operated veterans cemetery, DVS receives a \$300 reimbursement, called a plot allowance, from the USDVA. Dependents are charged an amount equal to the USDVA plot allowance. These monies, representing from 25 to 30 percent of the section’s annual budget, are used to fund both current operations and maintenance projects. The bulk of the section’s budget comes from the Commonwealth’s General Fund.

To eliminate any administrative difficulties that may occur at the time of death, veterans are encouraged to complete a pre-application for burial in a Virginia veterans cemetery. While DVS will not assign a specific gravesite when a pre-application is submitted, the pre-application process ensures that all required paperwork has been submitted and verified. At present, 1,467 pre-applications are on file at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia while the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery has 2,729 pre-applications on file. The pre-application process is free of charge.

The Cemetery Services section is led by the cemeteries director who oversees all operations at both cemeteries and coordinates the construction process for Virginia’s third cemetery, the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery.

DVS cemeteries staff consists of 16 authorized positions although currently total employment for both cemeteries is 13 full-time positions. The Albert G. Horton Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery has 11 assigned positions (including the Cemeteries Director). The Virginia Veterans Cemetery has five assigned positions. Due to budget constraints, two positions at the Albert G. Horton Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery and one full-time position at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery are not filled.

Resources

	FY08	FY09	FY10
Budget	\$797,060	\$834,539	\$811,725
Positions	16	16	16

Activities

The Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia was dedicated in May 1997, with the first burial service conducted on June 17, 1997. The Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia currently has 28 acres developed with an additional 99 acres – representing three additional phases – available for future development. The average annual burial/inurnment rate at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia has been approximately 225 burials per year, with 248 burials performed in FY09. If the average burial rate remains between 200 and 250 burials per year, the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia should be in full operation for another 80 years.

Phase One of the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery was dedicated on November 1, 2004, and encompasses 29 of 74 acres available on this site. The first burial service was conducted on December 13, 2004. Construction of three additional phases will be completed as needed. The annual burial/inurnment rate at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery averages 550 burials per year. If this rate remains relatively constant, the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery should be in full operation for approximately sixty years.

Both cemeteries host Memorial Day services sponsored by local veterans groups. The cemeteries hold Open House events on Veterans Day designed to inform veterans, family members, friends, and members of the public of the burial benefits available to veterans and eligible family members. Cemetery tours and assistance with completing pre-application documents are provided during business hours, Monday through Friday. The cemeteries are staffed on holidays (Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Memorial Day, and Veterans Day) to assist families who may be visiting a loved one's gravesite.

The Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia performed 248 burials in FY09 compared with 213 in FY08, while the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery performed 638 burials in FY09 compared with 591 burials in FY08. Table 12 shows burial activity from FY97 through FY09.

Table 12
Cemetery Burials FY1997 – FY2009

Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia

	FY97	FY98	FY99	FY00	FY01	FY02	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	FY08	FY09
July	N/A	5	6	8	9	13	16	14	18	16	26	17	26
August	N/A	9	8	12	13	15	9	14	17	16	17	13	23
September	N/A	11	3	9	5	17	10	10	16	20	17	15	19
October	N/A	5	8	9	13	19	14	23	17	15	22	25	21
November	N/A	7	7	8	6	13	18	11	20	18	22	13	9
December	N/A	14	7	7	8	16	16	19	18	14	18	22	20
January	N/A	7	8	10	12	11	19	17	16	19	20	15	18
February	N/A	9	6	12	12	11	13	15	11	25	18	16	13
March	N/A	12	9	11	12	18	18	13	16	21	19	19	19
April	N/A	9	8	12	10	12	8	15	12	23	18	19	29
May	N/A	3	9	17	12	16	12	13	11	23	13	18	28
June	2	4	12	9	9	14	16	15	16	21	18	21	23
Total	2	95	91	124	121	175	169	179	188	231	228	213	248

Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery, Suffolk

	FY05	FY06	FY07	FY08	FY09
July	N/A	42	40	54	36
August	N/A	40	39	31	51
September	N/A	39	32	35	48
October	N/A	28	29	49	49
November	N/A	35	37	40	36
December	34	37	41	52	65
January	47	36	48	60	59
February	29	51	47	56	54
March	40	43	58	51	62
April	44	40	38	55	59
May	28	46	50	44	53
June	33	41	51	64	66
Total	255	478	510	591	638

Administrative Services

Mission

Support the delivery of quality services to Virginia’s veterans.

Services and Organization

The Administrative and Support Services section provides accounting, budget, human resources, information technology, payroll, contracting/procurement, and marketing and communications support services to the agency’s service-delivery programs.

During FY09, the Administrative and Support Services section was comprised of 16 authorized positions; however, only six of those positions are filled.

Resources

	FY08	FY09	FY10
Budget	\$2,662,373	\$1,987,051	\$1,611,090
Positions	19	16	16

Budget and Legislative Highlights

Veterans issues continued to enjoy the strong, bi-partisan support of the executive and legislative branches in fiscal year 2009. Budget and legislative highlights of FY09 include:

- Passage of legislation allowing DVS to proceed, subject to the availability of sufficient non-general funds, with development of an automated claims processing system for veterans disability claims. This was the top legislative objective of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC).
- Passage of legislation entering Virginia into the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children, which removes barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families because of frequent moves and deployment of their parents (JLC objective 2).
- Passage of resolutions that would provide real estate tax relief for 100% disabled veterans. Because the tax relief involves a change to the Virginia Constitution, identical resolutions must pass the 2010 General Assembly and be approved by the voters.
- Commission of a study on homeless veterans by the Joint Legislative Audit Review Commission (JLARC).

Table 13
DVS Budget FY08, FY09, FY10

Program	FY08	FY09	FY10
Benefit claims ²	\$3,415,343	\$3,378,384	\$3,139,749
Virginia Wounded Warrior Program ³	N/A	\$2,522,078	\$2,114,246
Education and Training	\$622,859	\$704,223	\$704,223
Long-term care ⁴	\$26,470,237	\$28,535,091	\$33,657,205
Cemeteries	\$797,060	\$834,539	\$811,725
Virginia War Memorial ⁵	N/A	\$247,313	\$234,473
Administration	\$2,274,063	\$1,844,539	\$1,611,090
Total	\$33,579,562	\$37,916,167	\$42,122,711

Notes:

1. Includes FY08, FY09, and FY10 budget reductions
2. Includes \$100,000 in FY09 and FY10 for Automated Claims Processing System
3. The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program was authorized by the 2008 General Assembly. Includes \$150,000 (NGF) appropriation each year for private donations
4. Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center accepted its first residents in January 2008 and was fully operational in June 2009
5. DVS began providing administrative and financial management services in July 2008

Table 14
DVS Funding as Approved by the 2009 General Assembly

PROGRAM	FUND SOURCE					PROGRAM - PERCENTAGE OF DVS BUDGET
	GENERAL FUND	SPECIAL (FEE FOR SERVICE)	DEDICATED SPECIAL (PRIVATE DONATIONS)	FEDERAL TRUST (FEDERAL CONTRACT)	PROGRAM TOTAL	
Benefit Claims	\$3,139,749	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,139,749	7.43%
Virginia Wounded Warrior Program	\$1,964,246	\$0	\$150,000	\$0	\$2,114,246	5.00%
Education and Training	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$704,223	\$704,223	1.67%
Long-term care	\$0	\$26,560,091	\$75,000	\$7,022,114	\$33,657,205	79.62%
Cemeteries	\$535,625	\$51,100	\$0	\$225,000	\$811,725	1.92%
Virginia War Memorial	\$234,473	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$234,473	0.55%
Administration	\$795,899	\$815,191	\$0	\$0	\$1,611,090	3.81%
DVS Total	\$6,669,992	\$27,426,382	\$225,000	\$7,951,337	\$42,272,711	100.00%
Fund type as a percentage of DVS budget	15.78%	64.88%	0.53%	18.81%	100.00%	

Table 15
DVS Staffing, FY08 and FY09 Authorized / FY09 Actual

STAFFING BY AGENCY			
AREA	FY08—AUTHORIZED	FY09—AUTHORIZED	FY09—ACTUAL
Benefits	69	69	59
Education and Training	7	7	7
Virginia Wounded Warrior Program	n/a	5	5
Long-term Care Centers	487	493	430
Cemeteries	16	16	13
Virginia War Memorial	n/a	3	3
Central administration	23	16	7
Totals	602	609	524

Program Highlights

Agency Outreach

Events

DVS actively participates in numerous events throughout the year—veterans service organization conventions, community events for veterans, stand downs for homeless veterans, dedication ceremonies, and a variety of other events. In many cases, benefit services representatives attend these events as well as personnel from the care centers, the cemeteries, the State Approving Agency and the Virginia Wounded Warrior program. During FY09, the agency was represented at 587 events. Table 13 shows outreach activity for FY08 and FY09.

During FY09, DVS held open houses at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia and the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery on both Memorial Day and Veterans Day, hosted the Wreaths Across America ceremonies at both cemeteries, conducted the groundbreaking ceremony for the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery, and partnered with the Departments of Rehabilitative Services and Behavioral Health and Development Services to host the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program Summit: Painting a Moving Train.

Table 16
DVS Participation in Outreach Events—FY 08 and FY09

MONTH	BENEFITS		VWWP		EDUCATION & TRAINING		VVCC		SBVCC		CEMETERIES		TOTALS	
	FY08	FY09	FY08	FY09	FY08	FY09	FY08	FY09	FY08	FY09	FY08	FY09	FY08	FY09
JUL	6	7	n/a	2	7	3	4	3	n/a	2	3	3	20	20
AUG	10	8	n/a	7	7	6	0	3	n/a	0	0	1	17	26
SEP	14	6	n/a	26	11	6	4	2	n/a	3	0	2	29	44
OCT	9	6	n/a	17	3	2	4	2	n/a	3	2	1	18	32
NOV	9	22	n/a	9	4	4	3	2	n/a	3	2	3	18	42
DEC	1	8	n/a	35	2	2	1	3	n/a	2	0	1	4	50
JAN	7	15	n/a	43	3	5	2	2	n/a	4	4	2	16	71
FEB	8	7	n/a	37	3	5	2	3	n/a	2	4	3	17	56
MAR	5	7	n/a	44	7	7	3	4	n/a	3	5	3	20	66
APR	13	7	n/a	52	10	5	1	1	n/a	2	7	4	31	73
MAY	17	9	n/a	30	2	0	1	3	n/a	6	3	3	23	48
JUN	8	11	n/a	31	3	7	2	1	n/a	3	0	5	13	59
TOTALS	107	113	n/a	335	62	52	27	29	n/a	33	30	31	226	587

Media Relations and Publications

Between July 2008 and June 2009, the agency issued 25 news releases and fielded more than 50 media calls. The agency received positive coverage on the two veterans cemeteries, the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center, the Post 911 GI Bill, and the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery groundbreaking. In late July, the agency purchased radio air time to run an ad encouraging veterans to contact the agency with questions about the new Post 911 G. I. Bill.

Direct Mail

DVS receives copies of the DD214 for nearly all military service personnel recently discharged in Virginia and uses this information to send letters to these veterans. During FY09, DVS sent out 5,256 letters. The letters thank the military service personnel for their service, describe the services provided by DVS, and are signed by the Commissioner. An agency brochure is included with each letter.

Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery

The Commonwealth has entered into an agreement with USDVA to receive \$7.2 million in federal grant funding from the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, State Cemetery Grants Program to construct and operate Virginia's third state-operated veterans' cemetery. The Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery will serve roughly 60,000 veterans and family members living in Southwest Virginia. The grant requires the Commonwealth to operate the cemetery for a minimum of 20 years.

The grant will fund construction of the first of four phases of the cemetery. The cemetery is located on an 80-acre parcel of land transferred from the Department of the Army, Radford Arsenal to the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2008. Phase 1 construction will cover 24 acres and includes the main entrance area, full casketed and cremation burial areas, a columbarium, a memorial garden and scatter garden areas, roads, an assembly area, committal shelter, cemetery office, maintenance complex, and supporting infrastructure. Interment areas will include 5,167 standard burial plots; 2,750 pre-placed crypts; 500 in-ground cremation spaces, and 625 columbarium niches.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held on October 19, 2009. Completion is slated for late 2010.

ARMICS

In response to the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (SOX) which was enacted after a surge in fraudulent activity in the private sector, the Virginia Department of Accounts issued the requirement for an Agency Risk Management and Internal Control Standards (ARMICS) self assessment by each agency. This requires each agency to review and/or establish and maintain internal agency controls in order to more effectively manage risk and maintain accountability. As designed, this is a three-part process in which an agency assesses its current internal control operations, identifies processes and transactions used, and develops a corrective plan of action. The assessment of current internal controls was positive and timely and was submitted for the year ending June 30, 2009.

Audit Points

As anticipated, some of the audit points identified in the FY 2008 audit report were a continuation of points identified in the FY2007 audit. While not desired, this was expected since there were more than 20 comments in the previous report. All but two were cleared. One additional comment was received during the FY 2008 audit. The APA returned in December 2009 to conduct the FY2009 annual audit and the report is expected to be delivered in March 2010.

Financial Management System

During calendar year 2007, DVS purchased a Mitchell Humphrey and Company Financial Management System (FMSII). FMSII includes four system modules: general ledger, accounts payable, purchasing, and cost accounting. The system's major advantage is the ability to exchange and transfer relevant information between systems, thus reducing the redundancy of effort required to move from one system to another (e.g., from FMSII to CARS, or from our cash receipts systems into FMSII). Also, once a transaction is posted, all relevant information is updated and current facts and figures are readily available in real time.

The system has increased managers' access to detailed and current information which, in turn, has allowed better management and use of available resources. While one of the major goals for the system is elimination of duplicate work required to produce annual Medicaid and Medicare cost reports, this part of the system does not yet work. Nor does the purchasing ledger, which is on hold until VITA completes their hardware upgrades.

Mitchell Humphrey believes these modules work properly; however, since the agency is caught between Mitchell Humphrey and VITA, we are not able to reach a satisfactory conclusion. All parties involved are aware of the problems and are working to correct them as quickly as possible.

Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

The original continuity of operations plan (COOP) was finalized and submitted to the Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) in early November 2007. The plan identifies the essential functions provided by DVS administrative and fiscal staff. The goal of the plan is to ensure that all agency programs will receive essential support functions to maintain ongoing operation if an emergency situation threatens the location of the administrative/fiscal functions.

Since that time DVS has updated the key elements of the original plan and will submit a totally revised plan in April 2010. DVS has updated the names and contact information of all first responders. Additionally, the agency's two veteran nursing homes and its two veteran cemeteries have submitted full versions of their COOP plans to the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM). In 2009, all DVS telework and remote work sites provided nearly 30 COOP plans for the H1N1 virus scenario.

By mid-February 2010, all DVS remote sites and facilities will provide individual COOP plans. These plans will be submitted to VDEM in mid-April 2010 along with the COOP plans for our central administration sites.

In addition to a maintenance schedule to keep the COOP plans viable, they detail the activation and relocation of the administrative/fiscal functions, alternate operations guidance, and a plan to reconstitute essential functions within 12 hours of an emergency event and to maintain essential functions in an emergency situation for up to thirty days.

Executive Order 19

In response to Executive Order 19, 27 initiatives were presented under the broad categories of technology, workforce development, outreach, and quality of life. Progress has been made in implementation of many of these initiatives. However, the most significant accomplishments have been in development of the automated claims processing system, behavioral health care for wounded warriors, and workforce development.

Automated Claims Processing System

The initiative to develop an automated claims processing system for veterans benefits proposes developing a simple, complete, and secure web-based system that will enable DVS to manage the complex administrative processes involved with submitting disability compensation and pension claims with the federal government. An automated system for the electronic preparation of veterans' disability claims will simplify the claims development process, resulting in claims that are more complete, more accurate, and present the necessary supporting information in a clear and consistent manner.

In early 2009, DVS, in partnership with the Virginia Information Technology Agency (VITA), employed a contractor to execute a Request for Information (RFI). The RFI process solicited market response to identify business case criteria, potential vendor tools, methodology, system requirements, and budgetary requirements. To create the RFI, DVS asked for participation from four veterans service organizations that prepare VA claims in Virginia, the Chair of the Board of Veterans Services, and a representative from the VA Regional Benefits Office in Roanoke.

A draft RFI was created and posted for vendors' responses. Approximately 30 vendors—ranging in size from small to large—responded. The process culminated with a report summarizing market place response, identifying the three best fit strategies and the rationale for each. Those strategies include custom applications, commercial off-the-shelf applications, and software-as-a-service applications.

After further discussions with vendors, DVS has identified a need to first update its antiquated claims processing database. DVS has taken the initial steps to procure a web-based SQL relational database system. The agency anticipates deploying the new database by mid 2010. Development time for the full automated claims processing system will take approximately 1.5 years and will cost between \$2.8 million and \$3.5 million.

Virginia Wounded Warrior Program

The 2008 General Assembly unanimously approved legislation creating the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP). VWWP serves veterans, members of the National Guard and Armed

Forces Reserves not in active federal service, and their family members. The program coordinates support services for veterans with stress-related and traumatic brain injuries resulting from service in a combat area and ensures that these veterans and their families receive timely assessment, treatment, and support.

In April 2009, the VWWP awarded \$1.7 million to five regional consortia of community services boards, brain injury services providers, and other public and private service providers offering services across the Commonwealth. These consortia enhance the existing array of services in their communities based on ongoing assessment of local needs. The Virginia Department of Veterans Services operates the VWWP in cooperation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the Department of Rehabilitative Services.

Workforce Development

In August 2008, the Veterans Workforce Development Taskforce presented recommendations for a comprehensive workforce development initiative for veterans in Virginia with special emphasis on veterans with disabilities and those returning from the Global War on Terror. To move forward with the report's recommendations, DVS, in partnership with the Virginia Community College System, engaged a contractor to look for low cost steps that Virginia can take to improve employment opportunities for veterans and to create an action plan for implementation. It was particularly important that the contractor identify opportunities that take advantage of current state resources, organizational structures, and agency missions.

This work resulted in five key recommendations for state agencies:

1. Partner with Virginia's OneStop system in serving veterans and employers of veterans;
2. Track veteran use of Virginia's automated job search tool, the Virginia Workforce Connection/Virtual OneStop System;
3. Increase awareness of these resources internally among employees in agencies serving veterans and among veteran service organizations;
4. Create an electronic assessment tool to assist veterans in identifying civilian careers that will build on their military occupations; and
5. Explore ways to track and support veteran employment goals through the state's performance management methodology.

In response to these recommendations, the Virginia Community College System will fund and make enhancements to the Virginia Education Wizard (Wizard), a web-based tool that assists users in exploring careers, college enrollment, and financial aid for career development. Enhancements will include a landing page, career exploration tool, and career profile tool designed specifically for veterans and linking to the Military Occupation Specialty codes. DVS anticipates receiving \$25,000 in funding and a matching amount from the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program to use in marketing the Commonwealth's multiple career planning and job placement resources for veterans.

Looking to the Future

As evidenced by the 2007, 2008, and 2009 General Assembly sessions, the support of Governor Kaine and the General Assembly, and the cooperation of all state agencies, veterans issues have more support than they have had for several decades. During the coming year, DVS looks forward to working with the administration of Governor-elect Bob McDonnell on development of an electronic claims processing system and growth of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program. We also look forward to dedicating the third state-operated veterans cemetery in Dublin, and continued development of a third veterans care center co-located at the Hampton VA Medical Center as well as expansion of the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center.