

DIVISION OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

MISSION

The Division of Veterans' Affairs assists veterans, members of the armed forces and their families and dependents in securing benefits earned through military service. The Division coordinates veterans' programs and services offered by other State agencies, works closely with the Federal Department of Veterans' Affairs and advocates State and Federal actions to meet veterans' needs. The Division serves more than 1.4 million New Yorkers who are veterans, as well as their dependents and those on active 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 offices in Albany, Hauppauge and Buffalo. The Division is also supported by a network of approximately 60 community field offices in nearly all of the State's counties and New York City.

The Division will have a workforce of 128 employees during 2000-01. Approximately 86 percent of these positions are paid for by State tax dollars from the General Fund and 14 percent of the staff are supported by Federal Medicaid and Veterans' Education funds.

FISCAL BACKGROUND AND BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The 2000-01 recommendation of \$9.0 million for the Division of Veterans' Affairs will fund veterans' counseling services at current levels, and will increase funding for the Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance Program to \$1.8 million, an increase of \$100,000. In addition, State aid to local county and city veterans' service agencies, which defrays the operating costs of these organizations, is continued. Federal appropriations are reduced to equal actual Federal support for the Veterans' Education Program.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

During 2000-01, the Division of Veterans' Affairs will operate four principal programs. The largest provides veterans' counseling and claims services. A statewide network of approximately 60 State Veterans' Counselors — all veterans — and 28 support staff review eligibility and help veterans complete applications for benefits and services, obtain necessary documentation and file for Federal, State, local and private veterans' benefits. Counselors also serve constituents through outreach to Veterans' Affairs Medical Centers, senior centers, State Veterans' Homes and local nursing homes, public assistance offices and correctional facilities.

The Division of Veterans' Affairs continues to maintain its community outreach activities through senior citizens seminars and similar forums for women veterans, and is the driving force behind the Interagency Veterans' Council, a consortium of Federal, State and local agencies and non-profit organizations that meets periodically to address and resolve problems and concerns within the veteran community. The Division is also collaborating with the New York State Department of Health and the United States Department of Veterans' Affairs in constructing a 252-bed long-term health care facility for veterans in the Lower Hudson Valley.

The Division of Veterans' Affairs is responsible for securing a substantial portion of the nearly \$1 billion in recurring Federal VA payments made directly to New York State veterans and dependents. During 1998, State Veterans' Counselors made more than 158,000 contacts — an average of over 2,600 a year per counselor — and provided some 275,000 services, filing nearly 14,000 applications for benefits for New York's veterans and dependents. In doing so, State Veterans' Counselors obtained 5,200 VA benefits awards worth approximately \$50 million in Federal payments, most of which are recurring.

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Effective April 1, 1999, the Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance Program was extended to include all eligible surviving spouses. As a result, the Division received a dramatic increase in the number of applications, with a nearly 50 percent increase in the number of annuitants receiving the monthly benefit. To meet the increased workload, the Division streamlined its application process and utilized electronic technology to ensure effective and efficient program administration.

The agency will continue to maintain the New York State Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, which was created in 1984 as a living memorial to citizens who served in the Armed Forces during the war in Southeast Asia. The memorial includes a courtyard in honor of those killed or missing in action, an information resource room, and an art gallery that features a revolving art exhibit and educational programs. Memorial staff also provide educational outreach programs to school districts.

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

ALL FUNDS APPROPRIATIONS

| Category | Available 1999-00 | Appropriations Recommended 2000-01 | Change | Reappropriations Recommended 2000-01 |
|-------------------------|----------------------|--|---------------------|--|
| State Operations | \$6,561,000 | \$6,510,300 | -\$50,700 | \$2,913,400 |
| Aid To Localities | 5,188,951 | 2,525,000 | -2,663,951 | ..... |
| Capital Projects ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| Total | <u>\$11,749,951</u> | <u>\$9,035,300</u> | <u>-\$2,714,651</u> | <u>\$2,913,400</u> |

ALL FUND TYPES LEVELS OF EMPLOYMENT BY PROGRAM ANNUAL SALARIED POSITIONS

| Program | Available 1999-00 | 2000-01 Recommended Average Fill Level | | | Change |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|--|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| | | Personal Service (Regular) | Maintenance Undistributed | Total Recommended 2000-01 | |
| Administration | | | | | |
| General Fund | 12 | 12 | ..... | 12 | ..... |
| Higher Education | | | | | |
| Special Revenue Funds - Federal | 13 | 13 | ..... | 13 | ..... |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | | | | | |
| General Fund | 103 | 103 | ..... | 103 | ..... |
| Total | <u>128</u> | <u>128</u> | <u>.....</u> | <u>128</u> | <u>.....</u> |

STATE OPERATIONS ALL FUNDS FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS BY FUND TYPE APPROPRIATIONS

| Fund Type | Available 1999-00 | Recommended 2000-01 | Change |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| General Fund | \$5,097,000 | \$5,149,300 | +\$52,300 |
| Special Revenue Funds - Federal | 1,464,000 | 1,361,000 | -103,000 |
| Total | <u>\$6,561,000</u> | <u>\$6,510,300</u> | <u>-\$50,700</u> |

**STATE OPERATIONS
ALL FUNDS FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS BY PROGRAM
APPROPRIATIONS**

| <u>Program</u> | <u>Available 1999-00</u> | <u>Recommended 2000-01</u> | <u>Change</u> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Administration | | | |
| General Fund | \$701,200 | \$701,200 | .... |
| Higher Education | | | |
| Special Revenue Funds - Federal | 1,200,000 | 1,097,000 | -\$103,000 |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | | | |
| General Fund | 4,395,800 | 4,448,100 | +52,300 |
| Special Revenue Funds - Federal | 264,000 | 264,000 | .... |
| Total | <u>\$6,561,000</u> | <u>\$6,510,300</u> | <u>-\$50,700</u> |

**STATE OPERATIONS — GENERAL AND OFFSET FUNDS
SUMMARY OF PERSONAL SERVICE APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES
2000-01 RECOMMENDED**

| <u>Program</u> | <u>Total Personal Service</u> | | <u>Personal Service Regular (Annual Salaried)</u> | |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------|---|------------------------|
| | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Change</u> | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Change</u> |
| Administration | \$596,200 | .... | \$596,200 | .... |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | 4,331,100 | -\$8,700 | 4,331,100 | -\$8,700 |
| Total | <u>\$4,927,300</u> | <u>-\$8,700</u> | <u>\$4,927,300</u> | <u>-\$8,700</u> |

**STATE OPERATIONS — GENERAL AND OFFSET FUNDS
SUMMARY OF NONPERSONAL SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE UNDISTRIBUTED
APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES
2000-01 RECOMMENDED**

| <u>Program</u> | <u>Total</u> | | <u>Supplies and Materials</u> | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Change</u> | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Change</u> |
| Administration | \$105,000 | .... | \$15,000 | .... |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | 381,000 | +\$61,000 | 30,000 | .... |
| Total | <u>\$486,000</u> | <u>+\$61,000</u> | <u>\$45,000</u> | <u>....</u> |

| <u>Program</u> | <u>Travel</u> | | <u>Contractual Services</u> | |
|--|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Change</u> | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Change</u> |
| Administration | \$27,000 | .... | \$52,000 | .... |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | 58,000 | .... | 213,000 | +\$61,000 |
| Total | <u>\$85,000</u> | <u>....</u> | <u>\$265,000</u> | <u>+\$61,000</u> |

| <u>Program</u> | <u>Equipment</u> | | <u>Maintenance Undistributed</u> | |
|--|------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Change</u> | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Change</u> |
| Administration | \$11,000 | .... | .... | .... |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | 15,000 | .... | \$65,000 | .... |
| Total | <u>\$26,000</u> | <u>....</u> | <u>\$65,000</u> | <u>....</u> |

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

STATE OPERATIONS — OTHER THAN GENERAL FUND SUMMARY OF APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES 2000-01 RECOMMENDED

| Program | Total | | Personal Service | |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| | Amount | Change | Amount | Change |
| Higher Education | \$1,097,000 | -\$103,000 | \$695,000 | -\$5,000 |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program | 264,000 | .... | .... | .... |
| Total | <u>\$1,361,000</u> | <u>-\$103,000</u> | <u>\$695,000</u> | <u>-\$5,000</u> |

| Program | Nonpersonal Service | | Maintenance Undistributed | |
|--|---------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| | Amount | Change | Amount | Change |
| Higher Education | \$402,000 | -\$98,000 | .... | .... |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program ..... | .... | .... | \$264,000 | .... |
| Total | <u>\$402,000</u> | <u>-\$98,000</u> | <u>\$264,000</u> | <u>....</u> |

AID TO LOCALITIES ALL FUNDS FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS BY FUND TYPE APPROPRIATIONS

| Fund Type | Available 1999-00 | Recommended 2000-01 | Change |
|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| General Fund | \$5,188,951 | \$2,525,000 | -\$2,663,951 |
| Total | <u>\$5,188,951</u> | <u>\$2,525,000</u> | <u>-\$2,663,951</u> |

AID TO LOCALITIES ALL FUNDS FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS BY PROGRAM APPROPRIATIONS

| Program | Available 1999-00 | Recommended 2000-01 | Change |
|---|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance General Fund | \$1,700,000 | \$1,800,000 | +\$100,000 |
| Veteran Counseling Services Program General Fund | 1,295,000 | 725,000 | -570,000 |
| Community Projects General Fund | 2,193,951 | .... | -2,193,951 |
| Total | <u>\$5,188,951</u> | <u>\$2,525,000</u> | <u>-\$2,663,951</u> |