

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 1.3 million New Yorkers who are veterans, as well as their dependents and those on active duty.

ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING

The Division is headed by a Director who is appointed by the Governor. The Division's central office is in Albany, with regional offices in New York City, Malta in Saratoga County, 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.

Approximately 85 percent of the Division's workforce are paid for by State tax dollars from the General Fund and 15 percent are supported by Federal Medicaid and Veterans' Education funds.

FISCAL BACKGROUND AND BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The 2002-03 recommendation of nearly \$13.7 million for the Division of Veterans' Affairs will fund veterans' counseling services at current levels. The Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance Program will be increased to \$5 million to address enrollment growth. In addition, State aid is continued for local county and city veterans' service agencies, which defrays the operating costs of these organizations, and Federal appropriations are increased to match actual Federal support for the Veterans' Education Program.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

During 2002-03, the Division of Veterans' Affairs will operate three principal programs. The largest provides veterans' counseling and claims services through a statewide network of approximately 56 State veterans' counselors — all veterans — and 28 support staff. The counselors help veterans complete applications for benefits and services, file for Federal, State, local and private veterans' benefits, and access the services provided by 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. It is also the driving force behind the Interagency Veterans' Council, a consortium of Federal, State and local agencies and non-profit organizations that meets periodically to address and resolve problems and concerns within the veteran community. The Division is also collaborating with various state agencies to better identify veterans and their dependents on public assistance to assist them in securing Federal veterans' benefits to which they are entitled, and to advise senior citizens of veterans' benefits and services that could improve the quality of their lives.

The Division of Veterans' Affairs is responsible for securing a substantial portion of the more than \$900 million in recurring Federal VA payments made directly to New York State veterans and their dependents. During 2000, State veterans' counselors made more than 100,000 contacts — an average of approximately 1,800 per counselor, filed 6,000 VA benefit claims for approximately \$36 million in Federal payments, most of which are recurring.

Effective October 1, 2000, the Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance Program, which serves more than 4,000 visually impaired veterans and unremarried surviving spouses, was enhanced by raising the value of the annuity from \$500 to \$1,000.

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

The Division intends to pursue a new partnership with the Federal Department of Veteran's Affairs Health Administration to obtain reimbursement for counseling and outreach services by State veterans' counselors at VA medical centers and clinics.

ALL FUNDS APPROPRIATIONS (dollars)

Category	Available 2001-02	Appropriations Recommended 2002-03	Change	Reappropriations Recommended 2002-03
State Operations	7,137,000	7,929,000	792,000	2,323,000
Aid To Localities	4,475,000	5,725,000	1,250,000	0
Capital Projects	0	0	0	0
Total	11,612,000	13,654,000	2,042,000	2,323,000

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

Full-Time Equivalent Positions (FTE)

Program	2001-02 Estimated FTEs 03/31/02	2002-03 Estimated FTEs 03/31/03	FTE Change
Administration			
General Fund	13	13	0
Higher Education			
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	13	13	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program			
General Fund	102	98	(4)
Total	128	124	(4)

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

Fund Type	Available 2001-02	Recommended 2002-03	Change
General Fund	5,647,000	5,647,000	0
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	1,490,000	2,282,000	792,000
Total	7,137,000	7,929,000	792,000

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

Program	Available 2001-02	Recommended 2002-03	Change
Administration			
General Fund	856,000	856,000	0
Higher Education			
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	1,226,000	1,518,000	292,000
Veteran Counseling Services Program			
General Fund	4,791,000	4,791,000	0
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	264,000	764,000	500,000
Total	7,137,000	7,929,000	792,000

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**STATE OPERATIONS - GENERAL AND OFFSET FUNDS
SUMMARY OF PERSONAL SERVICE APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES
2002-03 RECOMMENDED
(dollars)**

Program	Total		Personal Service Regular (Annual Salaried)	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Administration	751,000	0	751,000	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program	4,674,000	0	4,674,000	0
Total	<u>5,425,000</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>5,425,000</u>	<u>0</u>

**STATE OPERATIONS - GENERAL AND OFFSET FUNDS
SUMMARY OF NONPERSONAL SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE UNDISTRIBUTED
APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES
2002-03 RECOMMENDED
(dollars)**

Program	Total		Contractual Services	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Administration	105,000	0	105,000	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program	381,000	0	331,000	15,000
Total	<u>486,000</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>436,000</u>	<u>15,000</u>

Program	Maintenance Undistributed	
	Amount	Change
Veteran Counseling Services Program	50,000	(15,000)
Total	<u>50,000</u>	<u>(15,000)</u>

**STATE OPERATIONS - OTHER THAN GENERAL FUND AND OFFSET FUNDS
SUMMARY OF APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES
2002-03 RECOMMENDED
(dollars)**

Program	Total		Personal Service	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Higher Education	1,518,000	292,000	940,000	208,000
Veteran Counseling Services Program	764,000	500,000	0	0
Total	<u>2,282,000</u>	<u>792,000</u>	<u>940,000</u>	<u>208,000</u>

Program	Nonpersonal Service		Maintenance Undistributed	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Higher Education	578,000	84,000	0	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program	500,000	500,000	264,000	0
Total	<u>1,078,000</u>	<u>584,000</u>	<u>264,000</u>	<u>0</u>

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

Fund Type	Available 2001-02	Recommended 2002-03	Change
General Fund	4,475,000	5,725,000	1,250,000
Total	<u>4,475,000</u>	<u>5,725,000</u>	<u>1,250,000</u>

Adjustments:	
Recommended Deficiency	
Veterans Affairs, Division of	
General Fund	(350,000)
Appropriated 2001-02	<u>4,125,000</u>

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

Program	Available 2001-02	Recommended 2002-03	Change
Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance			
General Fund	3,750,000	5,000,000	1,250,000
Veteran Counseling Services Program			
General Fund	725,000	725,000	0
Total	<u>4,475,000</u>	<u>5,725,000</u>	<u>1,250,000</u>