

DIVISION OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

MISSION

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

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

ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING

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

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

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The 2011-12 Executive Budget recommends **\$16.3 million** in All Funds spending (\$13.8 million General Fund, and \$2.5 million Other Funds) to support ongoing agency activities. This is a decrease of **\$0.6 million (-3.6 percent)** All Funds from the 2010-11 Enacted Budget, which is entirely attributable to a 10 percent reduction in the agency's operating budget. The Executive Budget reduces each agency's General Fund State Operations budget by 10 percent. These savings are intended to be achieved through administrative efficiencies in non-personal service and negotiated workforce savings that minimize layoffs to the extent possible. Local grants remain unchanged at the prior year's level.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The largest of the Division of Veterans' Affairs programs is the Veterans' Counseling Services Program. In State fiscal year 2009-10, new claims for Federal benefits that provide direct assistance to veterans and their families, generated more than \$108 million in new and recurring VA for compensation and pension payments for disabled and low-income veterans and dependents.

Based on the number of claims filed and awards issued during calendar year 2010, overall benefits flowing into New York State are on a pace to match or exceed those of

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recent years. The Division of Veterans' Affairs' VA accredited counseling staff is responsible for securing and maintaining a substantial portion of the \$1.50 billion in Federal VA benefits paid annually to veterans and their dependents in New York State.

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

On, November 11, 2008, the New York State Council on Returning Veterans and Their Families was established. This Council was formed to improve upon the way services are provided to returning veterans who often require assistance with human, social, and economic challenges. The Council has explored new approaches for helping returning veterans and their families address problems and concerns in such areas as: personal finance, family relationships, physical and psychological care, substance abuse treatment, employment, and complex medical injuries. The Division continues to partner with the New York State Department of Health and the State University of New York at Stony Brook to assist veterans and eligible dependents in gaining admission to the State Veterans Home Program that is comprised of five long-term healthcare facilities around the State.

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

VETERANS' EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Bureau of Veterans' Education staff are located in both Albany and New York City, and investigate and certify post-secondary educational and vocational institutions to enable veterans seeking to utilize their Federal benefits to further their education. The Veterans Education Bureau also is responsible for approving on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs.

BLIND ANNUITY PROGRAM

The Blind Annuity Program provides visually impaired veterans and eligible surviving spouses (who are not re-married) an annual annuity which is paid in monthly installments. The Division of Veterans' Affairs processes applications and authorizes awards, with more than 4,500 individuals currently receiving benefits.

SUPPLEMENTAL BURIAL BENEFIT PROGRAM

Families of members of the armed forces killed in combat, or who die while serving in a hostile theater of operation may be eligible for the Supplemental Burial Benefit. Established in 2003, this benefit provides a maximum reimbursement of \$6,000 to help families offset the costs of funeral and burial expenses.

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GOLD STAR PARENT ANNUITY

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

ALL FUNDS APPROPRIATIONS (dollars)

Category	Available 2010-11	Appropriations Recommended 2011-12	Change	Reappropriations Recommended 2011-12
State Operations	8,417,000	7,772,000	(645,000)	3,932,000
Aid To Localities	8,446,000	8,526,000	80,000	0
Capital Projects	0	0	0	0
Total	<u>16,863,000</u>	<u>16,298,000</u>	<u>(565,000)</u>	<u>3,932,000</u>

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

Program	Full-Time Equivalent Positions (FTE)		
	2010-11 Estimated FTEs 03/31/11	2011-12 Estimated FTEs 03/31/12	FTE Change
Administration			
General Fund	(1)	(1)	0
Higher Education			
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	11	12	1
Veteran Counseling Services Program			
General Fund	87	87	0
Total	<u>97</u>	<u>98</u>	<u>1</u>

The above table does not reflect layoffs that may be necessary in the absence of negotiated workforce savings.

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

Fund Type	Available 2010-11	Recommended 2011-12	Change
General Fund	6,451,000	5,806,000	(645,000)
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	1,966,000	1,966,000	0
Total	<u>8,417,000</u>	<u>7,772,000</u>	<u>(645,000)</u>

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

Program	Available 2010-11	Recommended 2011-12	Change
Administration			
General Fund	538,000	484,000	(54,000)
Higher Education			
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	1,966,000	1,966,000	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program			
General Fund	5,913,000	5,322,000	(591,000)
Total	<u>8,417,000</u>	<u>7,772,000</u>	<u>(645,000)</u>

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STATE OPERATIONS - GENERAL FUND SUMMARY OF PERSONAL SERVICE APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES 2011-12 RECOMMENDED (dollars)

Program	Total		Personal Service Regular (Annual Salaried)	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Administration	367,000	(41,000)	367,000	(41,000)
Veteran Counseling Services Program	4,871,000	(540,000)	4,848,000	(538,000)
Total	<u>5,238,000</u>	<u>(581,000)</u>	<u>5,215,000</u>	<u>(579,000)</u>

Program	Holiday/Overtime Pay (Annual Salaried)	
	Amount	Change
Administration	0	0
Veteran Counseling Services Program	23,000	(2,000)
Total	<u>23,000</u>	<u>(2,000)</u>

STATE OPERATIONS - GENERAL FUND SUMMARY OF NONPERSONAL SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE UNDISTRIBUTED APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES 2011-12 RECOMMENDED (dollars)

Program	Total		Supplies and Materials	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Administration	117,000	(13,000)	10,000	(1,000)
Veteran Counseling Services Program	451,000	(51,000)	63,000	(7,000)
Total	<u>568,000</u>	<u>(64,000)</u>	<u>73,000</u>	<u>(8,000)</u>

Program	Travel		Contractual Services	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Administration	14,000	(2,000)	74,000	(8,000)
Veteran Counseling Services Program	104,000	(12,000)	194,000	(22,000)
Total	<u>118,000</u>	<u>(14,000)</u>	<u>268,000</u>	<u>(30,000)</u>

Program	Equipment	
	Amount	Change
Administration	19,000	(2,000)
Veteran Counseling Services Program	90,000	(10,000)
Total	<u>109,000</u>	<u>(12,000)</u>

STATE OPERATIONS - OTHER THAN GENERAL FUND SUMMARY OF APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES 2011-12 RECOMMENDED (dollars)

Program	Total		Personal Service	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Higher Education	1,966,000	0	1,161,000	0
Total	<u>1,966,000</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1,161,000</u>	<u>0</u>

Program	Nonpersonal Service	
	Amount	Change
Higher Education	805,000	0
Total	<u>805,000</u>	<u>0</u>

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

<u>Fund Type</u>	<u>Available 2010-11</u>	<u>Recommended 2011-12</u>	<u>Change</u>
General Fund	7,946,000	8,026,000	80,000
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	500,000	500,000	0
Total	8,446,000	8,526,000	80,000

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

<u>Program</u>	<u>Available 2010-11</u>	<u>Recommended 2011-12</u>	<u>Change</u>
Administration			
General Fund	799,000	799,000	0
Blind Veteran Annuity Assistance			
General Fund	5,720,000	5,800,000	80,000
Veteran Counseling Services Program			
General Fund	1,427,000	1,427,000	0
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	500,000	500,000	0
Total	8,446,000	8,526,000	80,000