

CLAYTON COUNTY VETERANS' AFFAIRS MEETING
CLAYTON COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING/CONFERENCE ROOM 1
600 Gunder Road NE, Elkader, Iowa 52043
December 8, 2025 at 7:30 a.m.

The Veterans Commission Meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. on December 8, 2025 at the Clayton County Office Building Meeting Conference Room #1.

I.) Roll Call: Commissioners Clark, Torkelson, and Jordan, Veterans Service Officer, were present.

II.) Approval of Minutes: A motion to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2025 meeting was made by Clark and seconded by Torkelson. Motion carried unanimously.

III.) Public Comments: No comments were noted.

IV.) Budget Review: Jordan distributed the current Fiscal Budget for Period Ending: November 30, 2025. The Veterans Affairs Office began the current fiscal year on July 1, 2025. \$102,019.00 is the yearly budget for 2025-2026. \$4783.22 was spent during the month of November with 74.04% remaining in the budget for the year. Clark made the motion to approve the budget, Torkelson seconded the motion; the motion carried unanimously.

V.) Old Business:

- a). EARL Transit was not a solution in covering a veteran's trip for ongoing medical care. EARL Transit did reduce the cost of transportation for veterans.
- b). Jordan reported that our application for "Keys to Progress Veteran Vehicle Giveaway Program Business Automobile" was not selected and the VSO would apply again next year.
- c). The distribution of Veterans' Movie Tickets was discussed. Jordan would reach out again to the theatre to see if movie tickets could be purchased for 2026.
- d). Inquiry was made regarding van drivers. The drivers are Ted, Beth and Scott. Jordan said that at the current time, he had no applications. VSO and Commission Members would address this issue with Legion Posts and other Veterans to see if there was any interest.

VI.) New Business:

- a). Information was shared regarding GROVE Hub, Growing Rural Outreach through Veteran Engagement Center in collaboration with the VHA Office of Rural Health and VA Health Services Research. Veterans and Caregivers can bring their wisdom, individual knowledge and live experience to help improve VA and Veteran healthcare by engaging with VA researchers. Opportunities for engagement may include individual partnership, regular engagement group meetings with researchers, or helping with other research activities to ensure VA research is putting Veterans First. They are looking for Veterans who will: Share perspectives, insights, and information in constructive ways; Demonstrate interest in a variety of topics and perspectives; Listen well, respect differing opinions, and speak comfortably in a group; Look for opportunities to partner and collaborate on finding solutions; Maintain open and productive communication; Respect the limitations of the research environment in meeting their own individual needs. Veterans who serve on the board can expect to: 1. Meet with VA researchers and other rural Midwestern Veterans during regularly scheduled virtual meetings every other month. 2. Provide feedback on VA research, educational, and quality improvement projects with the intent of improving care and resources for rural Veterans. 3. Evaluate aspects of programs and materials to ensure they are relevant and useful to rural Veterans and caregivers and, 4. Be compensated for their time and effort (up to \$300.00 annually). Participating in the Rural Midwest Panel (RMVP) requires a two-year commitment. Group members are required to attend virtual meetings on a bi-monthly basis, review all materials distributed between sessions, and

contribute to constructive discussions that incorporate a range of perspectives and viewpoints. Veteran Engagement Center in collaboration with the VHA Office of Rural Health and VA Health Services Research are seeking female veterans and caregivers to participate in the rural Midwest veteran engagement panel to share their perspectives, insights, and offer constructive ways to improve how the VA healthcare system operates. Participation in the panel discussions helps researchers make or propose recommendations that are centered around Veteran's needs. Interested persons may learn more about this opportunity at <https://www.hsrdr.research.va.gov/veteranengagement/grove/grovehub.cfm>. Veterans would be encouraged to meet face-to-face with the VSO and Commissioners to discuss problems they may be experiencing with rural healthcare. Clark indicated that veterans are having problems with refilling prescriptions through the internet. The VSO and Commission Members wondered about having Social Workers present at each clinic to assist Veterans in the rural area.

b). Clark indicated that he would **not** be renewing his contract as a Commission Member. VSO will contact the Auditor's Office to see if there is renewed interest in Commission Member position. Discussion was held regarding sending canvas letters to Legion Posts and/or other Veteran organizations advertising position.

c). Clark discussed the proposed site of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Giard off Hwy. 18. The Scouting Organization has recently placed a flagpole in the area where the new memorial will be built. The Northeast Iowa Vietnam Veterans Memorial will contain a granite wall that lists all the names of those lost in the Vietnam War from Clayton County, IA. The memorial project is currently in the planning stage, with community leaders and local veterans working together to finalize design details and fundraising efforts. The goal is to break ground for the Memorial in Spring 2026 providing a lasting tribute for families and future generations to honor those who served and sacrificed.

d). VSO Jordan presented proposed budget for Clayton County Veterans Affairs Office FY 2027. Commissioners reviewed and did not provide any recommendations.

e). The November Statistical Report was distributed. Twenty-five total number of calls were received this month re: Veteran related concerns. Seventeen total office visits from Veterans. Zero home visits for Veterans, and one outreach event.

VII. Review and approval of Claims:

VIII. Confirmation of the Next Meeting: Next meeting will be on January 12, 2026, at 7:30 a.m.

IX. Adjournment: Torkelson made the motion to adjourn, Clark seconded the motion; Motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Gerrie Torkelson

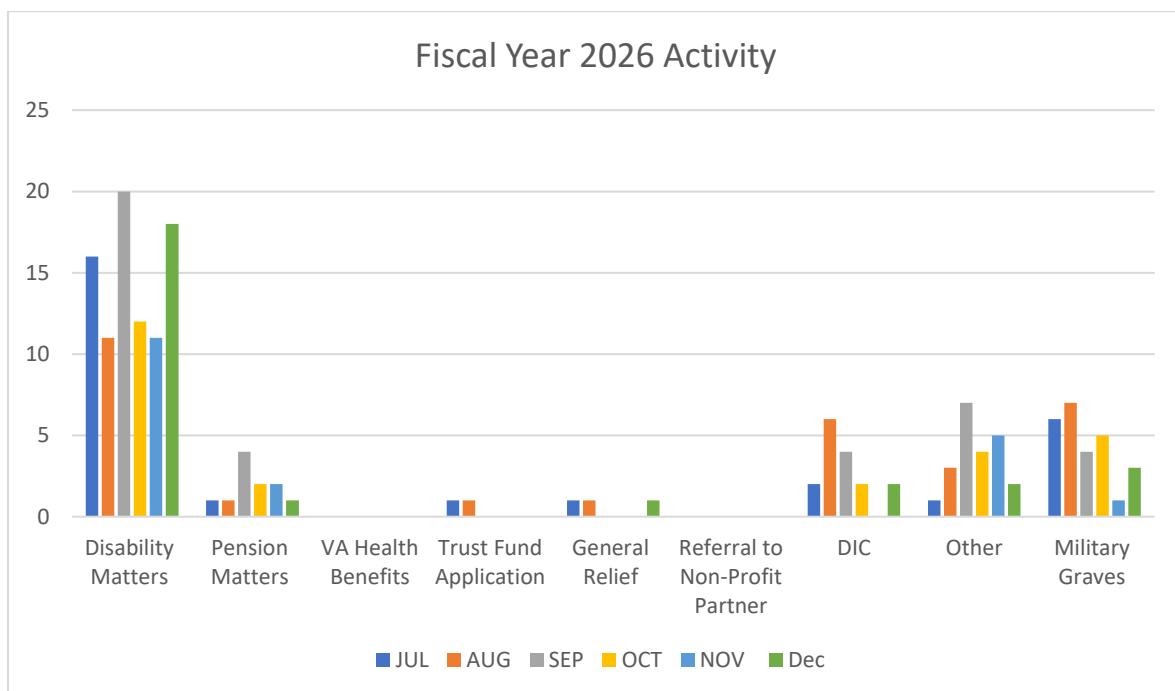
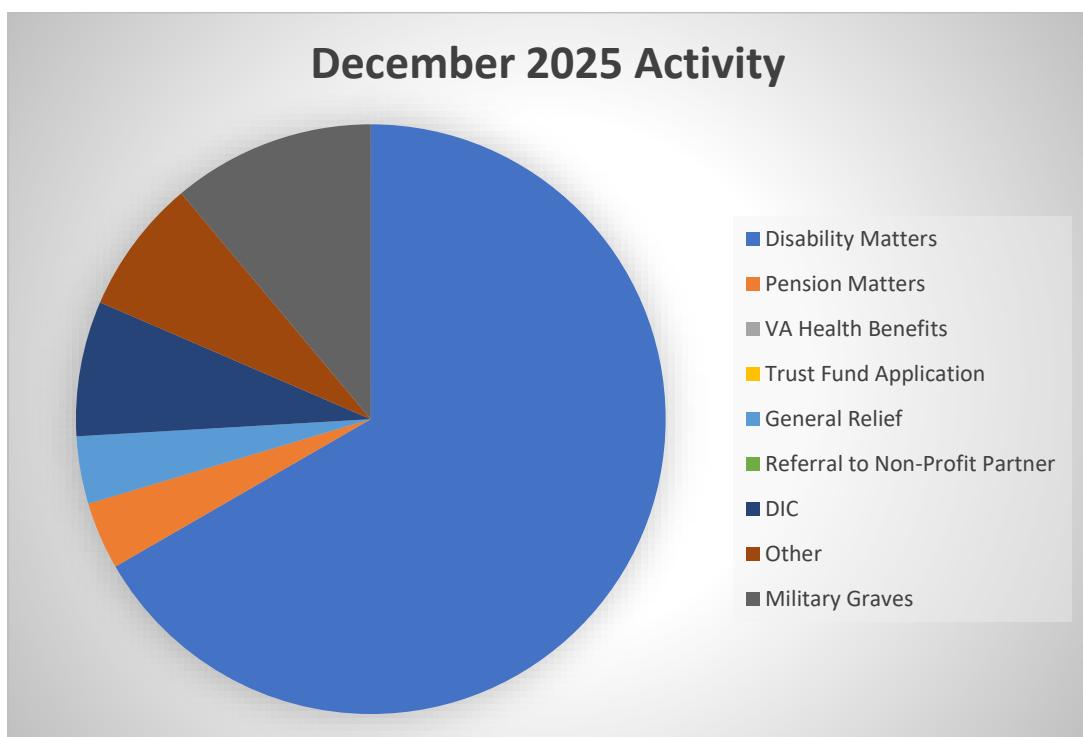
December Report

30 total number of calls received this month re: Veteran related concerns.

16 total office visits from Veterans.

1 home visit(s)

1 training(s)



VA & State Updates:

Executive Order Restores GI Bill Eligibility: Executive Order 14184 reinstated service members discharged under the military's COVID-19 vaccine mandate. Military departments have been instructed to begin updating discharges of service member who were involuntarily separated solely for declining that COVID-19 vaccine and whose service was characterized as less than fully honorable. This characterization made the service member ineligible for GI Bill education benefits. VA has taken steps to notify Veterans who discharge has already been upgraded that they may now qualify for GI Bill education benefit. Veterans who believe they were improperly discharged or whose record still reflect an error relating to the COVID-19 vaccine mandate, may request a review by a Discharge Review Board or a Board for Collection of Military or Naval Records. Information on how to apply may be found at <https://www.milreviewbds.mil/>.

Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act: Ties VA benefits to Social Security COLA.

Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2025, cost-of-living increases for disability and survivor benefits will now automatically match Social Security every year without separate votes. That change began Dec. 1 and stops benefits from lagging behind inflation.