



Annual Report 2017

John Carney, Governor
Jeffrey Bullock, Secretary of State
Larence Kirby, Executive Director
William Farley, Chairman

*Veterans **FIRST** in the First State*

**State of Delaware
Department of State
Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs
(302) 739-2792
www.veteransaffairs.delaware.gov**



Mission Statement

The Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs is dedicated to advancing information, providing benefits and creating opportunities for service members, veterans and their families in recognition of their service to the Nation and their value to our community.

Introduction

The Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs, a Department of State division, is dedicated to assisting Veterans and their family members obtain benefits and services through government and civic agencies. The Commission assists Veterans with disability compensation, employment, housing, legislative, and mental health concerns. Their focus is proving state-wide advocacy for 72,000 Veterans residing in Delaware. The Commission was established by the General Assembly in 1987.

- ✓ Represent Delaware in concert with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and other agencies on matters of mutual interest and concern.
- ✓ Maintain a repository for Delaware Veterans' "Statement of Service".
- ✓ Advise Delaware departments and agencies on all matters pertaining to Veterans and their family members.
- ✓ Utilize Veteran Service Officers to assist Veterans in each county.
- ✓ Manage two Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemeteries' operations.
- ✓ Provide administrative oversight to the Delaware Veterans Home.
- ✓ Initiate, review, and sponsor State legislation pertaining to Veterans.

The Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs consists of state employees: Executive Director, Accountant, Veteran Service Officers, Administrative Specialists, and Cemetery Personal. There are also 15 Commissioners (advisors), 10 serving from Veteran Service Organizations, and 5 serving at-large. Commissioners are appointed by the Governor for a four-year term.

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Executive Director

Larence Kirby advises a state-wide commission on communications with Veterans, service agencies, and legislative officials regarding issues impacting approximately 72,000 Delaware Veterans. He was appointed by the Secretary of State in November 2014.

Director Kirby oversees two Delaware Veteran Cemeteries and provides oversight to the Delaware Veterans Home. He counsels Veterans, Service Members, and families on education, employment, financial, and burial benefits. He advises on programs addressing Veteran homelessness, unemployment, suicide prevention, substance abuse, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders.

Director Kirby is a retired Command Chief Master Sergeant with 30 years active duty Air Force service. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for actions in Afghanistan and selflessly identified hundreds of combat casualties at Dover's Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations Center.

Director Kirby has two Masters Degrees, one in Counseling and one in Education and is a Licensed Professional Counselor of Mental Health in the State of Delaware.

Director Kirby is focused on assisting Veterans, ensuring they receive the services and compassion earned from defending our great nation.



Giving Back

Delaware Veterans Trust Fund, enacted in 2013, continues to provide emergency financial assistance for honorably discharged. In 2017 the fund assisted 72 veterans, providing \$82,982.00 toward utilities, rent/mortgage, vehicle, education, and medical assistance. The Friends of the Delaware Veterans Fund provided 501(c)3 coverage and led fundraising efforts. They encouraged business owners, sponsored fundraising events, and publicized the fund garnering financial contributions. They also hosted the fifth annual trust fund dinner which drew hundreds of donors. Citizens can donate directly to the commission, via state income taxes, or through the **delawareveteranstrustfund.com** website. Please note this assistance is for “**honorably**” discharged Delaware veterans as we work with network partners to provide assistance for other discharge categories and family members.



Delaware Joining Forces (DJF) is a state-wide network of “Veteran friendly” agencies and organizations. The network is two elements consisting of “face to face” meetings and an online directory. Each quarter DJF participants meet to present data about their agencies and to exchange information on assisting Veterans. These meetings allow “Veteran friendly” information to be communicated throughout the state. Participants are registered on the **delawarejoiningforces.com** website categorized into ten sections (i.e. employment, housing, mental health, etc.). The categories allow viewers to find a specific area of assistance provided by agencies. Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs hosts the online directory with application process to list recognized organizations. These organizations connect service members, veterans, and their families with public services, community groups, service providers, health care centers, veteran service organizations, and other agencies. The DJF website contains 160 service providers and recruitment is on-going. The goal is to have 300 providers then focus marketing toward Veterans in need of assistance.

DJF is part of the Joining Forces national initiative which works hand in hand with public and private sectors to ensure that Service Members, Veterans, and their Families have the tools they need to succeed throughout their lives.



*“No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another.”
- Charles Dickens*

Noteworthy

Veteran Homelessness in Delaware: In May 2015, Governor Markell challenged state leaders to address the state’s homeless Veteran situation. Dover Mayor Robin Christiansen and Commissioner Bill Farley led the Kent County/Delaware charge inspiring teamwork. The teams included the Delaware Housing Authority, Local Governments, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, the Homeless Planning Council of Delaware, the Delaware Continuum of Care, Supportive Services for Veterans Families, and the Commission. In November 2016, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development recognized

Delaware as the third state to “effectively” end veteran homelessness. Since January 2015, 728 homeless veterans have moved from homelessness to permanent housing and as of this printing there are 62 homeless veterans (44 living in sheltered situation and 18 living conditions unknown).

Transition Assistance Program Briefing: Director Kirby, through Dover Air Force Base leadership, incorporated a Commission brief during the monthly Transition Assistance Program. The Commission provides benefits information to transitioning Service Members preparing them for separation/retirement within the next 12 months. Understanding Veteran benefits is crucial in making the transition from military service to Veteran.

POW/MIA Chair Dedications: Both Veterans Memorial Cemeteries honored veterans by dedicating POW/MIA chair of honor. The stadium style chairs were placed at the Bear cemetery, in May, and at the Millsboro cemetery, in June. This is a small expression of gratitude towards the thousands who kept faith in our country as Prisoners of War and who are still Missing in Action.

Events

Legislative Hall Information Table (18 January): Commission leadership provided agency information and interfaced with state delegates during their annual Legislative Hall table display.

Cemetery Crypt Load Test (2 February): Cemetery Administrator Barbara Cooke, Cemetery Administrator Greg Bee, and Director Kirby witnessed this test at the Bear Memorial Cemetery. The crypts, used to contain caskets, were placed in the ground as part of the cemetery expansion project. Three crypts were placed in the ground, covered with earth, and subjected to the weight of heavy equipment confirming weight bearing abilities. The tests confirmed weight bearing and were successful.

Delaware National Guard Change of Command (12 February): Commission leadership witnessed Major General Vavala relinquish command to Major General Timmons. Governor Carney officiated the ceremony.

Senator Carper’s Veterans’ Summit (3 April): Commission leadership attended as Senator Carper and Veterans Affairs Secretary Shulkin addressed veteran agencies at the Wilmington VAMC. The leaders discussed information on national and local VA programs and concerns.

Veterans Center PTSD Group (31 March): Director Kirby toured the Georgetown Veterans Center and participated in the PTSD group therapy. He discussed assistance and presented commission challenge coins to participants and staff. The center is instrumental in treating mental health concerns and is a commission referral agency.

Veterans Summit (18 April): Director Kirby, Chairman Sarg, Vice Chairman Farley attended the summit hosted by Senator Carper at the Wilmington VA Medical Center. The gathering provided VA patient treatment/access information, patient quality of care information, and future considerations. Congressman Carney and Senator Coons were also in attendance, in addition to Department of VA and Military Affairs leaders.

Our Community Salutes (16 May): Director Kirby was the keynote speaker for this event. The evening recognized 44 high school seniors who enlisted in the Armed Forces and will be serving following graduation. Service Members and Veterans shared stories of military service and explained the pride of becoming part of service to our country.

Delaware Veterans Home 10th Anniversary Ceremony (12 June): Commission leadership attended this ceremony acknowledging the home's 10th anniversary. The skilled nursing facility provides care for up to 150 veterans and continues to honor their service.

POW/MIA Parkway Dedication (15 September): Commission leadership attended the opening of the parkway that connects West Dover to Route 13. The parkway was named in honor of our Prisoners of War and Missing in Action.

Gold Star Highway Dedication (25 September): Director Kirby attended the renaming of Route 202 to the Gold Star Highway. This roadway will honor those who lost family member service members in defense of our nation and Director Kirby provided comments.

World War I Monument Dedication (4 November): Commission leadership attended the unveiling of the World War I monument near Legislative Hall. Governor Carney and various state leaders were present to honor the 100th anniversary of the United States entering the Great War.

State of the Base (20 November): Commission leadership attended Dover Air Force Base's "State of the Base" briefing. Base leadership provided a mission overview followed by operational information.

Community Mental Health Conference (10 November): Director Kirby and Commissioner Sarg attended this event at the Chase Center. The event focused on mental health issues impacting Delawareans and Director Kirby presented comments on Veteran Mental Health concerns.

Capstones

Bear Cemetery Memorial Day Recognition (27 May): The Air Force Sergeants Association in conjunction with the Commission hosted this event. The ceremony recognized the efforts of Veterans in defense of our nation and those interred in the cemetery.

Delaware Memorial Bridge Memorial Day Recognition (30 May): The Korean War Veterans Association in conjunction with the Commission hosted this event. The ceremony recognized the sacrifices of New Jersey and Delaware Veterans as their names are located on the adjoining monument. Notable attendees included Governor Carney, U.S. Delegates, and multiple state leaders.

Flag Day Recognition (14 June): The America Veterans in conjunction with the Commission hosted this event. The ceremony recognized the adoption of the United States flag.

Freedom 5K Event (1 July): The Commission hosted its annual 5K race in Dover at Silver Lake Park. The race featured approximately 130 participants and generated donations for the Delaware Veterans Trust Fund.

Mental Health Summit (14 September): The commission co-sponsored this event and several members were in attendance. The summit focused on Veteran mental health issues, focusing on suicide prevention and the commission provided an information table.

Delaware Veterans Stand Down (22 September): Multiple commission personnel attended and supported this event at Schutte Park in Dover. The event gathered Veterans and connected them with various agencies and organizations for veteran assistance, information, dental care, meals, clothing, and networking.

Delaware Veterans Parade (4 November): Multiple commission personnel attended and supported this event in downtown Dover. The parade recognized Veterans from all eras and included multiple state participants.

Veterans Day Bridge Ceremony (11 November): The Disabled American Veterans in conjunction with the commission hosted this event at the War Memorial adjacent to the Delaware Memorial Bridge. The ceremony honored Delaware and New Jersey veterans who died in defense of our nation. Notable attendees included Governor Carney, U.S. Delegates, and multiple state leaders.

Wreaths Across America Recognition (11 December): Director Kirby, Chairman Farley, and multiple Commissioners attended this event at Legislative Hall. This ceremony is done in conjunction with other states to recognize Veteran service by laying a wreath at Veteran gravesites nationally. Director Kirby provided comments and Distinguished Guests placed ceremonial wreaths by five Veteran memorials.



Legislation

Joint Military Affairs Committee Meeting – Director Kirby, Chairman Sarg, Commissioner Carroll, Commissioner Lardizzone, and Commissioner Smith met with legislators in January to discuss two proposals. The discussion involved veterans’ eligibility for veteran cemetery interment and increasing “at-large” position within the commission ranks

House Bill 112 (Licenses Issued to Service Members and Spouses) – This bill retained the number of Commissioner at 15, but sought to increase the “at-large” .

House Bill 222 (Eligibility for Burial in the Delaware Veterans Cemeteries) – This bill clarified eligibility for burial and aligned the cemeteries under the rules from the National Cemetery Administration. The proposal was passed by the Senate and House then signed by the Governor Markell in May.

Governor’s Proclamation (Military Appreciation Day) – Governor Markell signed the bill on 18 May. The signing acknowledged the efforts of Service Members and Veterans throughout Delaware and was attended by Director Kirby, the Gold Star Families, the 512th Airlift Wing (Dover AFB), and the Vietnam Veterans Association.

Governor’s Signing (Bronze Medal Bill) - Governor Markell signed this bill on 15 Jun. The bill authorizes Bronze Star Medal recipients, who do not have the Valor device, to receive a license plate from the Department of Motor Vehicles. David Strawbridge, Delaware Technical and Community College, was instrumental in getting the bill signed as he and Director Kirby were in attendance.

House Bill 80 (Stolen Valor) Signing: Governor Markell signed the bill on 9 August. The bill adds to the crime of impersonation by including the impersonation of Service Members and Veterans of the Armed Forces to gain money, discounts, or tangible benefits. Director Kirby, Chairman Sarg, Vice Chairman Farley and multiple commissioners were in attendance.

Veterans Service Officers

State Veteran Service Officers provide assistance with information and application for Veterans' benefits including compensation and pension for service connected disabilities. The State Veterans Service Officers are accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to represent veterans and maintain professional membership with the National Association of County Veteran Services Officers. The Commission maintains a service officer in each county to assist Veterans with social service, federal Veterans Affairs, and referral information. Service Officers participate in outreach venues (job fairs) and visit state facilities (Vet Centers, Department of Labor, libraries) to assist Veterans to promote Commission activities.

CLAIMS INFORMATION

Year	Awarded	Millions Awarded Monthly	Millions Awarded Retro
2014	361	\$6.2	
2015	298	\$5.1	
2016	170	\$3.1	
2017	477	\$5.3	\$3.0

Our New Castle County position was vacant from May through December and our Kent County position was vacant from June through November. Our Sussex County service officer provided state-wide coverage during those absences and did an outstanding job.

Veterans Memorial Cemeteries



Bear Veterans Memorial Cemetery
2465 Chesapeake City Road
Bear, Delaware 19701
Phone: (302) 834-8046



Millsboro Veterans Memorial Cemetery
26669 Patriots Way
Millsboro, Delaware 19966
Phone: (302) 934-5653

Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemeteries are dedicated veteran benefits and utilized by the community as a beautiful memorial park. Each cemetery is the pride of the local community as Veterans appreciate having a final resting place among others who served. In January, the National Cemetery Administration, Vandemark & Lynch Architects, and Commission/Cemetery Leaders gathered for a Cemetery Expansion meeting. Both cemeteries were approved for expansion, increasing future interment capability for Veterans. The Bear Cemetery received 3400 double depth crypts (burials) and 1280 columbarium niches (cremations). The Millsboro Cemetery received 1133 double depth crypts. Both expansion projects were completed on time with no reported injuries.



INTERMENTS

Year	Bear Total	Bear Burial	Bear Cremins	Millsboro Total	Millsboro Burial	Millsboro Cremins
2013	748	505	243	312	175	137
2014	813	566	247	333	188	145
2015	825	566	259	364	205	159
2016	890	563	327	354	176	178
2017	879	567	312	370	173	197
All a/o Dec 17	18,308			4,832		

Partnerships

People’s Place II - Veterans Outreach Program continued to provide a valuable service to Delaware’s veterans. Funds for this program are provided through Assistance for Needy and Homeless Veterans with an annual budget of \$49,400. The funds are used to transport Veterans to medical appointments, visit incarcerated Veterans, and refer Veterans to substance abuse programs.

Veterans Outreach Program Services – FY 15	
Intake New Veterans	57
Follow-Up	386
Visits to Incarcerated	321

Veterans	
Referrals to Substance (Abuse) Programs	51
Transportation to Wilmington VAMC	272
Home Visits	62

Veterans Law Clinic, Widener University, School of Law was started in 1997 by Professor Tom Reed and has recovered over \$10M in monies owed to veterans. The clinic provided legal services for veterans assisting with Department of Veterans Affairs compensation/appeals, discharge reviews, expungements, and social service assistance.

In partnership, the Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs provided an annual stipend of \$49,500 to defray service costs. During FY 16, the Veterans Law Clinic worked 251 cases with the help of 31 interns enrolled in the program. Since October 2016, the Starbucks Military Monday Program has met monthly, at the downtown Wilmington Starbucks, to provide legal assistance to veterans.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families programs were developed by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Supportive service grants have been awarded to selected private non-profit organizations to assist low-income Veteran families residing in or transitioning to permanent housing. The Commission works closely with two organizations, the **Veterans Multi-Service Center** and **Connections**, to ensure Veteran assistance.

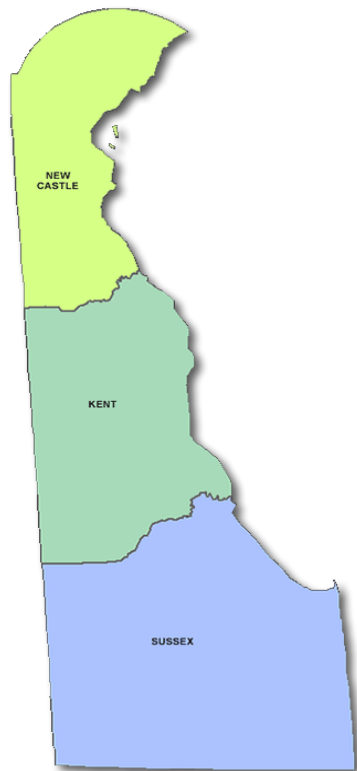
Veteran Data

Population 72,831 (source: FY Geographic Distribution of VA Expenditures)

New Castle – 31,785

Kent – 19,884

Sussex – 21,161



Number of Veterans – 72,831

Women Veterans – 6,856

Number of Military Retirees – 8,943

Number of Veterans Age 65 and Over - 36,759

Number of Veterans Receiving Disability Compensation – 12,543

Number of Enrollees in VA Health Care System – 26,695



Period of Service September 2015

World War II – 2,656

Korea – 6,017

Vietnam – 27,651

Gulf War – 22,972

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	
Distribution of Expenditures – FY 16 (in thousands)	
Total	\$422,278
Compensation & Pension	\$231,634
Medical Care	\$161,062
Education & Vocational Rehabilitation	\$37,030
Construction	\$3,183



Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs

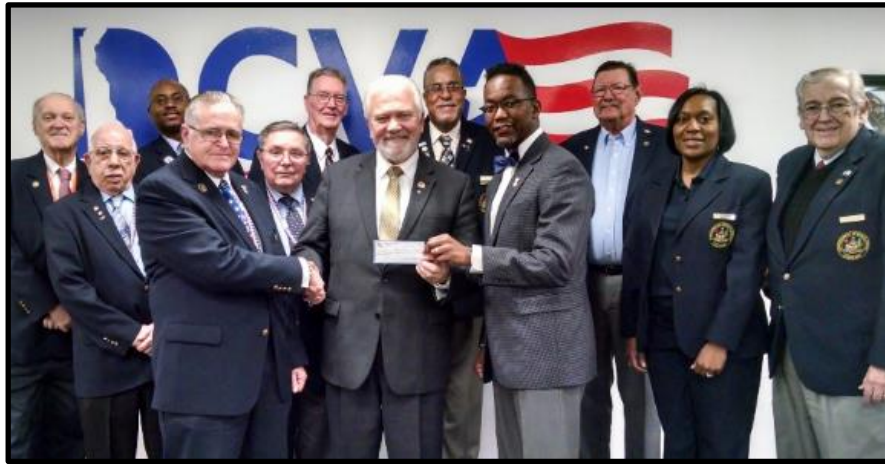
Budget by Appropriation – FY 17

Item	General Fund	Appropriated Special Fund	Non-Appropriated Special Fund	Total
Personnel	\$1,343,300	0	0	\$1,343,300
Travel	\$12,800	\$2,000	0	\$14,800
Contractual	\$221,600	\$82,000	0	\$303,600
Energy	\$54,400	0	0	\$54,400
Supplies	\$23,000	\$36,000	0	\$59,000
Veterans Trust Fund	\$25,000	0	0	\$25,000
Total	\$1,680,100	\$120,000	0	\$1,800,100

Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs

Actual Expense by Program – FY 17

Item	Dover Program 20143	Bear Cemetery 20144	Millsboro Cemetery 20145	Total
Personnel	\$363,700	527,500	253,400	\$1,144,600
Travel	\$13,400	\$1,200	0	\$14,600
Contractual	\$212,900	\$64,300	\$17,000	\$294,200
Energy	0	\$39,700	\$14,700	\$54,400
Supplies	\$18,200	\$26,300	\$9,600	\$54,100
Capital	0	0	0	0
Total	\$608,200	\$65,900	\$294,700	\$1,561,900



We are *honored* to serve
Delaware's *Veterans*

