

REPORT TO THE

VETERAN
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

DECEMBER 2024



REPORT TO THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

For the regularly scheduled quarterly virtual meeting on December 4, 2024.

This report can be downloaded at: www.oregon.gov/odva/Connect/Pages/Advisory-Committee.aspx

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE INFORMATION

Since the Advisory Committee was established in 1945, it has held a distinct and fundamental role in advising the Director and staff of ODVA. Advisory Committee members are military veterans appointed by the Governor, act as advocates for veteran issues, and represent veteran concerns across Oregon. The Advisory Committee is fortunate to have volunteer members from every generation of veterans and communities across this state who bring diverse talents and experiences. As an Advisory Committee, they are informed by the broader veterans' community that they serve. As such, all Oregon veterans, their families, and our partners are invited to attend and participate in the quarterly meetings held across the state.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS *See member bios [here](#)*

Robert “Bob” Van Voorhis, Vice Chair, USA.....	John Day
Christina Wood, Secretary, USAF.....	Portland
Christopher Waine, USA.....	Hermiston
Mary Mayer, USAF.....	Portland
Ashley Taylor, USA.....	Scappoose
Shawn Flynn, USA.....	Portland
Vacant Position	
Vacant Position	
Vacant Position	

COMMITTEE INFO AND CONTACT ONLINE

Learn more about the committee, meetings, or learn how to apply to be appointed by the Governor to serve as a member of the Veterans Advisory Committee.

Webpage: www.oregon.gov/odva/Connect/Pages/Advisory-Committee.aspx

Email: odva_vaac@odva.oregon.gov



OREGON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS LEADERSHIP

Dr. Nakeia Daniels, USADirector
Jamal Fox..... Deputy Director
Rex Emery..... Chief Operating Officer
Vacant..... Executive Assistant to the Director
Jay DeFillipo, USA.....Legislative Director
Nicole Hoeft.....Strategic Communications Director
Nicole Dolan..... Interim Chief Financial Officer
David Kampff, USAF.....Chief Information Officer
Jordan Osborn..... Interim Human Resources Director
Kelly Breshears.....Aging Veteran Services Division Director
Sheronne Blasi, USN..... Strategic Partnerships Director
Joseph Glover, USN..... Appeals & Special Advocacy Director

CONTACT ODVA ONLINE

Learn more about agency programs, access a staff directory, or learn about federal and state veteran benefits using the links below:

Website: www.oregon.gov/odva

Blog: www.oregondva.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/odvavet

Subscribe: <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/ORDVA/subscriber/new>

Order Veteran Benefit Magazines for your organization or self:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VeteransBenefitMagazine>



ADVISORY COMMITTEE QUARTERLY MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, December 4, 2024 | 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM | Held Virtually

- I. **CALL MEETING TO ORDER**
 - a. Pledge of Allegiance

- II. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**
 - a. Recognition and Installation of New Members
 - b. Recognition of Departed Members

- III. **NEW BUSINESS**
 - a. Temporary Suspension of Committee Bylaws
 - i. **Article V, Section 4(b)**: Terms of office ending July 1 and installation of new officers in September.
 - ii. **Article VII, Section 3**: Installation of new officers in September.
 - iii. **Article X, Section 1**: Annual meeting business requirements.
 - iv. **Article VII, Section 2(a)**: Timing of elections during the June meeting.

- IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - a. Approval of the [June 2024 VAC Quarterly Meeting Minutes](#)

- V. **ODVA DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

- VI. **GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADVISOR** – Doug Grafe

- VII. **ODVA REPORTS**
 - a. Legislative Briefing – Jay DeFillipo, Legislative Director
 - b. Aging Veteran Services – Kelly Breshears, Division Director
 - c. Appeals and Special Advocacy – Joe Glover, Division Director
 - d. Strategic Partnerships – Sheronne Blasi, Division Director

- VIII. **OLD BUSINESS**

- IX. **BUSINESS MEETING ADJOURNED**
 - a. Next Advisory Committee Quarterly Meeting
Date: March 5, 2025 | Time: 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM
Location: Virtual

VETERAN TOWN HALL

Following every quarterly business meeting, the VAC holds a Town Hall inviting the public to ask questions or share information with the committee and Director. This time is set aside for individuals to bring up broader veteran community issues. Community members are also invited to submit written public comments to the committee by emailing odva_vaac@odva.oregon.gov.

VETERAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER BIOS

Robert VanVoorhis, Vice Chair	Robert volunteered in 1966 for the US Army and proudly served with the 1/3rd Infantry Regiment (Old Guard) at Arlington National Cemetery and the 2/39th Infantry Regiment with the 9th ID in Vietnam. After college, he worked in software development and finance and served as a reserve deputy in King County. He is a life member of the VFW, American Legion, DAV, MOPH, and National Infantry Association. He served on the board of the SE District Oregon St. Elks and drives for John Day DAV/VA van transport.
Christina Wood, Secretary	Christina enlisted in the Air Force in 1998 as a Serbian Croatian Cryptologic Linguist, ultimately serving a decade in the military intelligence community before separating to follow her husband’s career overseas. While living at USAG Yongsan, Korea and USAG Wiesbaden, Germany she dedicated herself to the local nonprofit organizations supporting military families with morale, welfare, and scholarship support. Retiring to Oregon in 2015 she established a second career in nonprofit work. She is an active community volunteer focusing on public education and veterans’ advocacy issues. Christina, her husband, and their four incredibly adaptable “Army brats” call Portland home.
Christopher Waine	Chris served with the 1-25th Infantry Support Battalion out of Ft. Lewis WA where he worked as a wrecker operator providing field level repair and vehicle recovery for Deuce Four infantry’s Critical Response Team. He is semiretired and operates a business in Eastern Oregon. Chris is a lifetime member of Disabled Veterans of America and has over 15 years of personal experience navigating Veteran Benefits and Health Administrations.
Mary Mayer	Mary is a Vietnam era woman veteran and native of Portland, retired from the United States Air Force in 2002. Mary is involved with MOAA Portland Chapter, United Veteran Groups of Oregon (UVGO), Air and Space Forces Association and NCMA. She also has a history of serving veterans with her positions on numerous veteran committees and boards, in addition to other community involvement.
Ashley Taylor	Ashley is a Post 9/11 Army veteran from Columbia County, currently working on the Suicide Prevention Team at the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Ashley is also a veteran spouse and advocate of veteran’s behavioral health.

Shawn Flynn	Shawn served in the Army as an Airborne Ranger in the medical field. Residing in Multnomah County, he is the Chairman for Veterans Affairs Portland NAACP and NABVETS, specifically partnered to enhance VSO functions. He also works with black businesses to help them grow; financing, mentoring, connecting and recruiting.
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REPORT TO THE VETERAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE FROM DIRECTOR DR. NAKEIA DANIELS

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) has expanded our team, recently onboarding three executive leaders this quarter. These new leaders bring fresh perspectives and innovative ideas to strengthen our operational foundation and help drive positive change. Every position at ODVA plays a critical role in fulfilling our mission, and our new colleagues reflect our commitment to building a robust and dynamic agency.

I am excited to announce the appointment of Jamal Fox as ODVA's new Deputy Director. Jamal is settling well into his new position, and I am confident that he will provide strong partnership and leadership on our team. Jamal brings a depth of experience in both the public and private sectors, most recently serving as the Executive Director for the Oregon Board of Pharmacy. He has also served as city manager, adjunct professor, and social studies teacher. Previously appointed to the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs, where he served as chair for several years. Most importantly, Jamal grew up in a military family and has a deep connection to the veteran community. He is passionate about giving back to the community that shaped him and is eager to support and advocate for veterans and their families.

I am also pleased to welcome Rex Emery as ODVA's new Chief Operating Officer (COO). Rex brings over two decades of experience from the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA), where he advanced from leading Physical Plant Operations to managing the Business Services Department, overseeing Human Resources, Financial Services, and Information Services. At OYA, Rex was instrumental in implementing their 10-year capital construction plan, contributing to the Agency's strategic planning, and spearheading their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiative. Additionally, his experience as a private-sector business owner will provide valuable insights into ODVA's operational strategies. Rex will oversee several critical areas, including Financial Services, Information Services, Records and Information Management, Facility Services, and Human Resources, helping us further strengthen our leadership and service delivery.

Two other critical additions to our leadership team are Nicole Dolan, and Staci West, our new Chief Internal Auditor. Nicci has joined ODVA as Interim Chief Financial Officer with extensive financial experience including more than 20 years with both the Secretary of State and Oregon State University. Nicci has been instrumental in navigating our upcoming budget and fiscal responsibilities and identifying operational opportunities to support the Agency's mission. Staci West comes to ODVA after several years with Oregon Health Authority, Office of Program Integrity. While with OHA, Staci collaborated with the management team to create workgroups that coordinated communications amongst auditors, as well as facilitating the education of over half the Program Integrity Audit Unit in compliant coding practices.

New Veteran Advisory Committee Members

ODVA proudly welcomes Mary Mayer (US Air Force), Shawn Flynn (US Army), Ashley Taylor (US Army), Mario Smith (US Army), and Tim Smart (US Navy and Oregon Air National Guard) to the Veteran Advisory Committee (VAC). Each of you brings invaluable experiences, perspectives, and dedication that will strengthen our collective efforts to serve Oregon's veterans.

The VAC embodies the diversity of the veteran community it serves—spanning military branches, career fields, and lived experiences. This diversity is our strength, ensuring we represent and address the needs of all veterans across our state. From urban centers to rural communities, from older veterans to the newest generation of service members, the experiences you bring to this committee are vital in shaping our policies and programs.

We sincerely thank everyone in the veteran community who applied for these important roles. Your passion and dedication to serving your fellow veterans are genuinely inspiring. While these positions have been filled, we are pleased to retain all applications on file for two years to consider for future VAC vacancies.

Together, we reaffirm our commitment to ensuring every Oregon veteran feels seen, supported, and empowered. Thank you for stepping into this vital role and continuing service to our veteran community. We look forward to your insights and leadership in this mission.

2025-27 Agency Budget Development

ODVA's 2025-27 Agency Budget has been shaped by the Agency's strategic plan and Governor Kotek's priorities, emphasizing housing stability, behavioral health access, education, outreach to underserved veterans, and honoring veterans throughout their lives. Key proposals include expanded housing and behavioral health programs, continued support for veteran education, enhanced outreach to marginalized communities, preservation of veteran memorials, and targeted administrative and technological investments to strengthen agency operations. Despite state budget constraints, these investments aim to address the evolving needs of Oregon's veterans. The Governor's Budget will be released in December. ODVA will brief the committee at the next quarterly meeting during the 2025 Regular Session. The Governor's Budget will be posted on the [ODVA website](#) once released in December.

Oregon's Statewide Veterans Day Ceremony 2024



Veterans Day provides an opportunity for our nation to honor the men and women who have selflessly defended our freedom through military service. Communities across the country observe this day with ceremonies that recognize the sacrifices and service of our veterans.

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This year's Veterans Day event at Capitol Mall was marked by tremendous support and participation, even amid early morning rain. Governor Tina Kotek delivered a powerful and heartfelt tribute to

Oregon's veterans, emphasizing her steadfast commitment to honoring and supporting those who have served. Her presence underscored the state's deep gratitude for their sacrifices.

Joining the Governor were Senator Mark Meek, Colonel Ryan Barton (Oregon Air National Guard), and Major General Christopher Owens (Retired, Marine Corps), who also shared moving remarks recognizing the valor and dedication of our veterans.

We sincerely thank all who attended, including veterans, their families, and friends. It was an honor for ODVA to host this meaningful gathering and celebrate Oregon's veterans' service and sacrifices.

Launch of BeyondTheMilitaryUniform.com



Beyond the Military Uniform is a groundbreaking initiative launched by the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs to address the pressing issue of veteran suicide. Inspired by the ongoing support of Oregonians through the Oregon Charitable Checkoff Fund, this campaign fills a critical gap by providing the state's first centralized online resource for suicide prevention explicitly tailored for veterans and their support networks.

The campaign features a user-friendly website designed to empower veterans, their families, and community leaders with tools, connections, and resources to prevent crises before they arise. It includes a robust toolkit for individual and group use, fostering meaningful conversations, and building support networks.

Accompanied by a statewide media campaign, Beyond the Military Uniform raises awareness, destigmatizes seeking help in the form of community, camaraderie, and resources, and reaches diverse veteran demographics, including older veterans and women veterans, who are at higher risk for suicide. Advertising on billboards, radio, digital and print ads, and social media ensures that veterans and their loved ones learn about and access this life-saving resource wherever they live and work.

We urge the committee, veterans, families, and community members to explore and share broadly this critical resource at [BeyondTheMilitaryUniform.com](https://www.beyondthemilitaryuniform.com). Together, we can build a community of understanding, support, and hope for those who have served our nation. If you or a veteran that you know needs immediate assistance, the Veterans Crisis Line is available 24/7—Dial 988, then press 1.

For more information about this campaign please see the Strategic Partnerships Report on page 14.

10-year Anniversary of the Oregon Veterans' Home in Lebanon



On November 21, the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the Oregon Veterans' Home – Lebanon. Opening in 2014, this milestone highlighted the home's exceptional contributions to veterans and their families over the past decade.

ODVA Director Dr. Nakeia Council Daniels joined Kelly Odegaard (Westcare Management), Dr. Larry Mullins (Samaritan Health Services), and David Solomon (former OVHL Family Council President and American Legion Post 10 Commander) in reflecting on the home's achievements and recognizing the dedication of its employees, partners, and supporters.

The celebration included live music, refreshments, and opportunities to view exhibits such as the I Am Not Invisible (IANI) Exhibit, the Oregon Memorial Traveling Wall, and military uniform displays provided by VFW Post #66. ODVA extends its gratitude to all who participated in honoring this critical milestone for the Lebanon Veterans' Home.

Vietnam War Memorial Dedication



On November 22, the first phase of Oregon's new Vietnam Veterans Memorial was officially dedicated at the State Capitol's Willson Park. Governor Tina Kotek and state and local leaders joined veterans and community members to commemorate this long-overdue tribute to Vietnam War veterans.

The memorial recognizes the service and sacrifices of the 180,000 Oregonians who served during the Vietnam War, including the 790 who served our nation. Located at the corner of State and Cottage Streets NE, this beautifully designed space honors their courage and contribution during one of US history's most challenging and prolonged conflicts.

ODVA was proud to partner with other state agencies to support this tribute, ensuring that the legacy of Oregon's Vietnam War generation is preserved for future generations.



LEGISLATIVE

Jay DeFillipo, Legislative Director

As the end 2024 rapidly approaches and the holiday spirit descends upon us, the legislature is gearing up for the new biennium. Over the summer, agencies worked with the Governor's office as we got close to releasing the Governor's Recommended Budget. Part of this process is the Agency's recommended policy changes to update Oregon Revised Statutes to meet the needs of our veteran population. Once the Governor reviews these, they will be converted into legislative bills for the upcoming session.

In mid-December, there will be the final set of Legislative Days, during which the legislature will hold informal hearings to discuss important topics for the upcoming long session. ODVA will present an agency update before the Senate Interim Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal, and World Affairs Committee. This will get us ready for the long session.

With the session starting in early January, legislators have already begun to discuss initiatives they hope to address during the session. Increasing advocacy for underserved veterans, stemming the tide of veteran suicides, and ensuring the number of homeless veterans in the state declines are the focus of many of the proposals. Income tax relief for retired veterans and property tax forgiveness for disabled veterans are also expected to be addressed again during this session.

It is exciting to start work on an ODVA Home Loan refinance program in the rules space. After review by the DOJ and Legislative Council, the Agency is moving forward with establishing a Home Loan refinance program. Reviewing, writing, and propagating the rules will take a few months. Still, we are excited to see the start of this program as it will help veterans across the state with refinance options.

With Director Daniels at the helm, a new Deputy Director, and lots of unwavering support from the Governor's office, this upcoming session looks like a fantastic opportunity for positive change within the Agency and for veterans across the state.



AGING VETERAN SERVICES DIVISION

Kelly Breshears, Aging Veteran Services Director

The Aging Veteran Outreach Program, through the work of Aging Veteran Outreach Specialist Lacey Carter, provides services directed to aging veterans and their families throughout the State of Oregon. The Aging Veteran Outreach Program has continued to increase outreach efforts to aging veterans and their families through participation in a wide range of events and presentations. Additionally, veteran client representation in claims filed with the USDVA and program participation in community stakeholder and partner programs remain a significant focus.

Outreach events and activities completed or planned, beginning in January 2024 and continuing through the remainder of 2024, include:

- Portland Boat Show (Completed)
- Oregon State Salem Spring RV Show (Completed)
- PNW Sports Show (Completed)
- NW Agricultural Show (Completed)
- Central Oregon Sports Show (Completed with Veteran Volunteers)
- Tualatin Senior Resource Fair (Completed)
- 47th Annual Oregon Knife Show (Completed)
- Willamette Agate and Mineral Society Inc. River of Gems Show (Completed)
- Oregon Library Association Conference (Completed)
- Portland VA Caregiver Support Program's Annual Caregiver Summit (Completed)
- 3rd Annual Eugene BOOMERAMA 50+ Health & Age Less Living Expo (Completed)
- Oregon State University 47th Annual Gerontology Conference (Completed)
- PNW PGA Oregon Open (Completed with Veteran Volunteers)
- Congresswoman Salinas' Senior Resource Fair (Completed)
- AARP 2024 Aging Well Expo (Completed)
- Oregon Senior Games in Corvallis (Completed)
- Willamette Agate and Mineral Society Inc. End-of-Summer Show (Completed)
- Eugene Health and Wellness Expo (Completed)
- Age Well Expo in Klamath Falls (Completed)
- Oregon Health Care Association Annual Conference (Completed)
- Age Better Extravaganza (Completed)
- Oregon State Fall RV Show (Completed)
- Summerfield Veterans' Group Presentation (Scheduled)
- Veterans' Day Luncheon at the Center 50+ (Scheduled)
- Willamette Lutheran Retirement Community Veterans' Day Event (Scheduled)
- Canby Senior Center Presentation (Scheduled)
- Willamette Ag Expo (Scheduled)
- Oregon Knife Collectors Association Mini-Show (Scheduled)

We connected with a total of approximately 7,293 Oregonians through our events to educate individuals regarding veterans' benefits from January through October 2024 so far, and we still have more events scheduled that have yet to be completed in the remainder of the year!

Lacey remains a participating member in the Oregon Social Services Fraud Working Group, Together With Veterans NW organization, the ODVA Training Committee, and the Aging and Disability Resource Connection Advisory Council. Lacey also continues to act as a resource for the ODVA Veteran Volunteer Program. She represents the AVS Division as an evaluator for ODVA's Oregon Emergency Financial Assistance Program applications every quarter.

In addition to representing veterans and their loved ones served through the ODVA Conservatorship Program, Lacey has continued to expand her claim representation to those veterans and their eligible dependents residing in our Oregon Veterans' Homes (OVHs). Although the Program Directors in the OVHs are accredited Veteran Service Officers, their focus on claims is limited to more routine tasks. Lacey is tasked with providing more extensive and substantial claim representation for those residing in the OVHs long-term. Although this shift in claim representation to the Aging Veteran Outreach Program has not been fully realized, it is ongoing. It remains an important priority to ensure our most vulnerable veterans and their families, being served in programs under the AVS Division, are receiving the highest level of representation to obtain benefits they have earned, deserve, and often greatly need.

Aging Veteran Outreach with Aging Veteran Outreach Specialist Lacey Carter remains passionate and highly committed to delivering benefit education and claim representation to as many aging veterans and their families as possible in the coming year. Numerous different opportunities for engagement about benefits and services through traditional and non-traditional outreach and events are already scheduled for 2025.

If you would like an aging veteran benefits presentation or resource table at an event or want to connect with Lacey Carter directly, please email her at lacey.carter@odva.oregon.gov.



APPEALS AND SPECIAL ADVOCACY DIVISION

Joe Glover, Appeals and Special Advocacy Division Director

The Portland Appeals team is a team of four subject-matter expert Veterans Service Officers (VSO) whose primary responsibility is to conduct appeals in front of federally appointed judges at the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) as well as conduct Higher Level Review (HLR) hearings and Pre-Determination (Pre-D) Hearings with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). These hearings all require extensive research and skill-based solid knowledge of VA law.

At the BVA level, this program works to help Veterans, and their families receive benefits that they are entitled to due to military service, but specifically target advocacy focusing on assisting veterans and families after they have received a denial or a less-than-ideal outcome for disability benefits as well as medical billing and benefits sought and have filed a Notice of Disagreement with the BVA. These hearings are primarily conducted virtually, where a claimant can join the hearing from any internet-connected device. This Virtual Hearings model has been very effective in allowing claimants the opportunity to be able to conduct a hearing with minimal impact on home, family, or work life and has eliminated the need to drive to Portland to attend a hearing in person at the Portland VA Regional Office. During the pandemic, this virtual model was particularly critical to the safety of claimants and ODVA staff, who were able to hold these hearings uninterrupted while still being able to distance themselves in a protected social manner.

Through FY25, the Portland Appeals team has conducted 116 hearings.

Another key component of this program team is the advocacy work that is done through the mechanism known as the HLR. The pathway to the HLR is like a BVA appeal. Still, there is the additional requirement that no further evidence be submitted. For these HLRs, the Portland Appeals VSOs must argue the case's merits solely with the evidence of record. They must show that the VA either misapplied the law or overlooked key evidence in the file at the original time of the filing.

Through FY25, the Portland Appeals team has conducted 12 HLRS.

The third pathway that our Portland Appeals team assists veterans and their families is through a process known as a Pre-D hearing. When a veteran receives either a debt, a proposal for a reduction in benefits, or a proposal to deny medical benefits, the VBA will submit a proposal before a decision is made. When addressing a proposal, it is critical that it be addressed within 60 days. If done so within this timeframe, the Veteran or claimant can have a Pre-D hearing without an immediate loss of monetary or medical benefits. Pre-D hearings are critical, mainly when a veteran or claimant receives a debt notification, because this Pre-D hearing can not only argue the validity of the debt but can also assist the claimant with establishing a manageable repayment plan to help ensure that the claimant is not put into a dire financial hardship or houseless situation to repay the money owed.

Through FY25, the Portland Appeals team conducted 48 Pre-D hearings.

Portland Appeals Team Success Story:

ODVA first started working with a veteran in 2016, when he visited a county office to file for service connection for disabilities resulting from Agent Orange exposure. Unfortunately, because he was considered a "blue water sailor," he was denied service connection for cancers that are presumptive to the toxic defoliant.

In November 2022, the Veteran learned about the changes in Blue Water legislation and again visited the office to see if a new case could be made. The county office worked with him, obtained both "buddy statements" and medical evidence, and refiled them.

There was an initial denial, but the VSO submitted an HLR appeal to identify evidence in records that were overlooked establishing his Vietnam service. The hearing was conducted and ultimately was found in the Veteran's favor.

Two years after refiling and the appeal, the Veteran received a one-time retro payment of over \$300,000 and is service connected 100% Permanent & Total retroactive to 2016. He's now receiving VA disability dollars of approximately \$4,000/month.



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS DIVISION

Sheronne Blasi, Strategic Partnerships Division Director

The Strategic Partnerships Team is made up of Special Advocacy Coordinators (e.g., Tribal Veterans, Incarcerated Veterans, Campus Veterans); the Education team (e.g., Education Manager, the State Approving Agency (SAA) team, and the Veterans Educational Bridge Grant Coordinator); a Grants Coordinator and a Grants Specialist; and the Division Director.

The Strategic Partnerships Division also oversees ODVA pass-through funding to the counties, Oregon's federally recognized Tribes with an MOU with ODVA, and the National Service Organizations.

Grants the division is responsible for administering and monitoring grants that include Veteran Services Grant, Campus Veteran Resources Center Grant, Veterans Educational Bridge Grant, Oregon Veteran Emergency Financial Assistance Grant, Veteran Suicide Awareness & Prevention Grant, USDVA Highly Rural Transportation Grant, and the Rural Veteran Healthcare Transportation Grant (administered through an interagency agreement with the Oregon Dept. of Transportation).

The division also performs a lot of the Agency's work around Veteran suicide awareness and prevention, which we are highlighting in this quarter's report.

Background:

Unfortunately, Oregon faces a concerning trend in veteran suicides, with rates surpassing both the national average and the non-veteran population. According to the US Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) Oregon Veteran Suicide Data Sheet (2021), after accounting for age differences, the veteran suicide rate in Oregon was significantly higher than the national veteran suicide rate. It was substantially higher than the national non-veteran population suicide rate.

It is also important to note, however, that according to the USDVA 2020 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Report, between 2017 and 2018, the age- and sex-adjusted suicide rate among veterans with recent USDVA Veterans Health Administration use decreased by 2.4%, while among veterans who did not use USDVA care the rate increased by 2.5%. This data highlights the importance of suicide prevention efforts that connect veterans to earned benefits, including healthcare and behavioral healthcare.

Charitable Checkoff Funding to Address Veteran Suicide Awareness & Prevention:

Generous contributions received from Charitable Checkoff go directly to helping address this critical need for behavioral health support and suicide prevention efforts for Oregon's veterans. For the period of July 2023 through June 2024, ODVA received a total of \$248,976.

During the last two fiscal years, a portion of the funds received through Charitable Checkoff contributions have been distributed to Oregon counties, federally recognized Tribes, and public

universities and community colleges for Veteran Suicide Prevention and Awareness campaigns and related activities. These grants have allowed communities to engage directly with their local veterans and their friends and families about the importance of seeking assistance and the availability of federal, state, and local resources.

Additionally, ODVA recently launched a statewide outreach campaign to further raise awareness around the risks of veteran suicide and the efforts and opportunities to prevent these tragedies. The focus is connecting veterans to resources, activities, and community initiatives that support well-being and connection, including guidance on creating plans to seek help when needed. The campaign will connect veterans and their families to federal, state, and local behavioral healthcare resources.

Using Charitable Checkoff donations, ODVA hired a professional marketing firm to design, implement, monitor, and maintain this outreach campaign. The campaign's initial phase has been to conduct outreach to older veterans, women veterans, and veterans living in rural/highly rural parts of Oregon. We know that veterans living in more rural areas can experience feelings of isolation. Outreach was conducted through mailers, billboard ads, and radio ads.

The initial and future outreach is designed to drive veterans, their families, and others to a newly created resource website called BeyondtheMilitaryUniform.com

This website contains valuable information about ways in which veterans can connect to each other, resources on VA and community behavioral health supports, a behavioral health toolkit that the Veteran or their loved ones can use, and information about ODVA's related and supportive programming. Viewers can also make a recommendation for a resource by submitting it through the website.

ODVA intends for this outreach and resource campaign to be ongoing. We continue to meet regularly with the marketing team to review and discuss data analytics, adjust where needed, and will be planning the next phase of the campaign in early 2025.

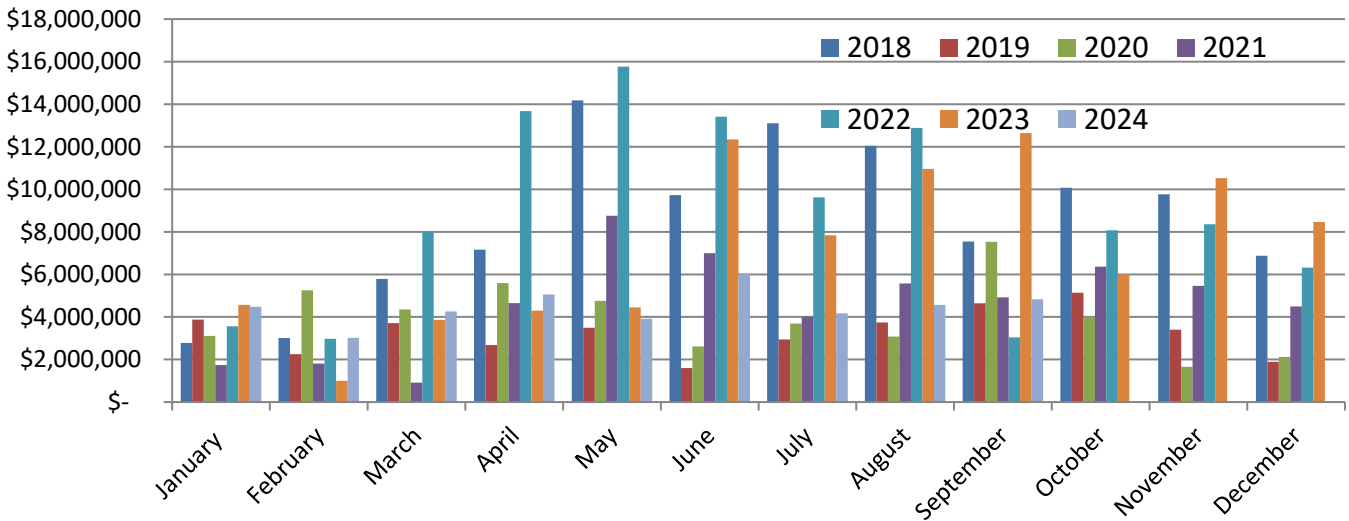


HOME LOAN PROGRAM REPORT

Cody Cox, Home Loan Program Manager

Home Loan Production Review

- Home Loan Program production for the 3rd Quarter 2024 was 35 loans for \$13.6 million. For the same period in 2023, production volume was 79 loans for \$31.4 million.
- The chart below shows a 2018 - 2024 monthly production comparison of dollar volume funded for the OrVet Home Loan program.



- At the end of the 3rd Quarter of 2024, ODVA has 1,559 loans in its portfolio, with a total amount under servicing of \$391,550,857. Of these, 1,501 loans and \$387,855,184 are 'new' loans. 'Old' loans were at 58 units totaling \$3,695,673. At the end of the 3rd Quarter of 2023, the ODVA had a total of 1,492 for \$356,275,977 under servicing. Year over year, our servicing portfolio increased by \$35,274,880, representing an increase of 9.80%.
- The current servicing portfolio is the most significant dollar amount of loans since 2013.

Loan Delinquency Review

- For the reporting period 09/30/2024, no State-Owned Properties/Real Estate Owned (SOP/REO) was in inventory. ODVA has not had any foreclosures for the past 5+ years.
- At the end of the 3rd Quarter of 2024, there are two loans in Foreclosure status. Our servicing portfolio remains strong, and the rest of the industry is showing signs of increased delinquencies.
- At the end of the 3rd Quarter of 2024, ODVA has one loan in bankruptcy status.
- The total of all loans reporting in the 90-day or greater delinquency position was at 8 units, expressed as 0.5% in unit delinquency on a portfolio of 1,559.

- ODVA portfolio performance shows a continued reduced delinquency rate compared to other Government Residential Loan Programs. The Mortgage Bankers Association publishes a quarterly National Delinquency Survey, and the following represents Oregon-specific comparative data from the most recently available third-quarter 2024 report. The delinquency rate expressed as a percentage of total loans (units) past due for the Federal Veterans Affairs home loan program in Oregon was 3.50%. FHA home loans in Oregon were at 7.64%. Conventional Prime home loans in Oregon were at 1.63%. All these delinquency rates have slightly decreased from the prior quarter. The exception is FHA loans, which reflect a slight increase. For this reporting period, the total delinquency for the ODVA home loan program was 1.2% at 18 units, which decreased from the prior quarter.

-END OF REPORT-

APPENDIX

Summary Of Programs

Aging Veteran Outreach: The Aging Veteran Outreach Coordinator position was established in 2017, and coordinates services directed at aging veterans residing in their homes or care facilities around the state. The position is integral to the Agency's mission to ensure aging and vulnerable veterans receive the highest quality and priority representation from an ODVA veteran service officer. The outreach coordinator works with the Department of Human Services and other agencies on aging in conjunction with the Federal VA to ensure each aging Veteran has applied for benefits and is receiving all entitlements through USDVA and other government and nonprofit entities.

More information: www.oregon.gov/odva/Resources/Pages/Aging-Veterans.aspx

Appeals and Claims: The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), involves a complex legal system. To qualify for benefits, veterans, their dependents, and survivors must file a claim against the United States by providing evidence they are eligible to receive the benefit through the submission of legal, military, and medical evidence.

ODVA employs state-certified and federally accredited Veterans Service Officers (VSOs), who are subject matter experts in Federal VA law (Chapter 38 United States Code and Chapter 38 Code of Federal Regulations). These VSOs represent veterans, their dependents, and survivors before the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA) in claims and appeals through a signed Power of Attorney.

More information: Email ORVets.Benefits@odva.oregon.gov

Campus Veteran Resource Center Grant: Senate Bill 143 (2017) established the Campus Veteran Resource Center Grant Program to support campus veteran resource centers and resource coordinators on the campuses of Oregon community colleges and public universities. The grant funds aim to help veterans successfully transition from military service to college life, succeed in college and complete educational goals, and transition from college to the workforce.

More information: www.oregon.gov/odva/agency-programs/grants/Pages/Campus-Grant.aspx

Conservatorship and Representative Payee Programs: In 1964, the Legislative Assembly authorized the Conservatorship program to manage the financial affairs of veterans who could not oversee their affairs and had no other recourse. Today, ODVA's Conservatorship Program provides professional fiduciary services to manage the income and assets of veterans and their dependents deemed incompetent by the Federal VA to manage their federal resources. Conservatorship clients are appointed to ODVA as Conservators by a circuit court judge.

Conservatorship helps to ease the burdens often associated with paying bills, collecting funds on debts owed to the Veteran, corresponding with creditors, and buying or selling real estate or other investments. Professional fiduciaries work closely with family members and other interested parties, such as guardians, to plan for the welfare and best interests of the Veteran.

In 2014, SB 251 clarified the law to allow ODVA to act as fiduciary and Representative Payee for veterans. Representative Payees serve veterans deemed incompetent by managing the Veteran's monthly income provided by the USDVA and the Social Security Administration. The Representative Payee applies for benefits, establishes budgets, and arranges payment for care and other bills for services for the client. The Representative Payee works with the USDVA, Social Security Administration, guardians, family members, social workers, and other responsible individuals to ensure the veterans' financial needs are met within their ability to pay.

Learn more: www.oregon.gov/odva/Benefits/Pages/Long-Term-Care.aspx

County Veterans Service Officers Program (CVSO's): ODVA's statewide partnership with counties began when the legislature appropriated money to aid counties in promoting services to veterans on a local level. It is an effective network of trained County Veterans Service Officers (CVSO) in all 36 counties who provide veterans, their eligible dependents, and survivors with VA benefits and claims representation.

CVSOs are not supervised by ODVA; however, the Agency provides initial and ongoing training, certification and accreditation, guidance and support, and outreach to the CVSOs. The ODVA Appeals Team in Portland handles most CVSO appeal cases for the USDVA.

Locate a County VSO: www.oregon.gov/odva/Services/Pages/County-Services.aspx

Highly Rural Transportation Grant: Highly Rural Transportation Grant: Since 2014, ODVA has administered the US Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) Highly Rural Transportation Grant (HRTG), which provides free transportation to and from VA and VA-authorized medical appointments for any veteran living in one of ten Oregon's VA defined highly rural counties. The agency partners with ODOT to distribute grant funding to its transportation district partners within each of the ten counties. Services include door-to-door pick-up and drop-off in ADA-compliant vehicles, with assistance in loading or unloading at no cost to the Veteran. The program runs year-to-year, and transportation services are subject to grant fund availability each federal fiscal year. As of the end of 2022, veterans living in highly rural counties have received free rides totaling more than 2 million miles.

Locate transportation: www.oregon.gov/odva/Services/Pages/Transportation-Services.aspx

Home Loan Program: A constitutional amendment approved by voters in 1944 established the Veterans' Home and Farm Loan Program to fund the purchase of homes and farms by Oregon residents who served in the armed forces during World War II. Persons who joined the armed forces on or after September 1, 1940, were eligible to receive loans if they served for at least 90 days after mobilization and were honorably separated, discharged, or furloughed into a reserve unit.

Today, this program provides low-interest rate mortgages on single-family, owner-occupied homes to qualified veterans. The Home Loan program is a historically self-supporting program that uses other funds. Revenues are derived from loan and contract repayments, proceeds from bond sales, fee and rental income, and investment earnings. No General Fund monies are used in its operations.

More information: www.oregon.gov/odva/Home-Loans/Pages/default.aspx

Houseless Veterans: The 2019-21 LAB established the Agency's first Houseless Veteran Coordinator. ODVA began the Houseless Veteran Program upon hiring its first Houseless Veteran Coordinator in June 2021. The Houseless Veteran Coordinator collaborates with federal, state, county, and tribal agencies, Veterans Service Officers, and community homeless service providers to meet the urgent and unique needs of Oregon's diverse veteran

communities. In addition to advocating for Oregon veterans experiencing houselessness or at risk of being houseless, the program provides direct service to veterans and their families seeking federal and state veterans' benefits, including access to local VA health care, documentation of service, as well as other available state benefits, and local homeless services organizations and low-income assistance programs.

More information: www.oregon.gov/odva/Resources/Pages/Homeless-Veterans.aspx

Incarcerated Veterans: First established in 2016 and codified by HB 4038 (2018), the Incarcerated Veterans Program is in its seventh full year of operation and has been highly successful. This program aims to work with veterans entering the state prison system and transitioning to release. Since the program began in August 2016, the ODVA Incarcerated Veteran Coordinators, in coordination with the Oregon Department of Corrections, met with over 3,500 individuals transitioning through the state prison system to determine veteran status and then provide assistance as needed to veterans and their families.

To facilitate a successful transition to the community and to reduce recidivism rates for veterans, the ODVA Incarcerated Veterans Coordinator also collaborates with the US Department of Veteran Affairs' re-entry social worker to meet with veterans when they are transitioning out of the prison system to identify available resources, ensure all possible benefit claims are filed and enroll veterans in Federal VA healthcare.

Learn more: www.oregon.gov/odva/Resources/Pages/Justice-Involved-Veterans.aspx

LGBTQ+ Veterans: Senate Bill 946 (2015) created the LGBTQ+ Veterans program that offers direct services to veterans in the LGBTQ+ community, assists with military records corrections, discharge upgrades, and service-connected claims work for VA benefits. The program also provides extensive outreach to LGBTQ+ veterans. It helps enroll veterans with specialized health care through a Veterans Health Administration LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator. Through these efforts, veterans within the LGBTQ+ community now receive trauma-informed and dignity-affirming care while also connecting these veterans with state and local services.

Learn more: www.oregon.gov/odva/Resources/Pages/LGBTQ-Veterans.aspx

National Service Organizations (NSO): ODVA partners with national veteran service organizations in Oregon that provide veteran benefit and claims representation, like state, county, and tribal Veterans Service Officers; however, they do not work under ODVA's Power of Attorney and are not trained and certified by ODVA. The American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the National Association of Black Veterans participate in this funding opportunity.

Oregon Veterans' Homes: The 1993 Legislative Assembly authorized the Director of Veterans' Affairs to establish and administer a State Veterans' Home to provide long-term care for needy, disabled veterans. The Dalles was selected as the first Oregon Veterans' Home location and opened in the fall of 1997. The 1995 Legislative Assembly laid the groundwork for establishing a second Veteran's Home to be operated by a non-government entity. The statute limits Oregon to two Veteran's homes until they are constructed and operated for a period of time to determine efficiency and feasibility. Cited in Lebanon, the second OVH opened in 2014. The 2011 Legislative Assembly, through HB 2578, gave authority to build a third Veterans' Home in Roseburg.

Care at the Oregon Veteran's Homes is an "earned benefit" available to veterans, their spouses, and parents who had a child die while serving in the United States Armed Forces. Qualifying veterans must have served as defined by the Federal VA to be eligible for this benefit. Both homes provide rehabilitative and long-term nursing services by staff whose knowledge and skills meet the unique needs of veterans. In addition, both homes have an

endorsed memory care community, which allows them to care for veterans with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

Learn about Oregon Veterans' Homes: www.oregon.gov/odva/Vets-Homes/Pages/default.aspx

Rural Veterans Healthcare Transportation Grant: During the 2019 Legislative session, and again in the 2021 session, ODVA was provided funding to create a veteran's healthcare transportation program for counties and tribes that are rural but do not meet the federal restrictions, defining the county as highly rural. Veterans are provided free rides to their healthcare and behavioral healthcare-related appointments and are not restricted to VA facilities. ODVA partners with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to administer this grant program.

Locate transportation: www.oregon.gov/odva/Services/Pages/Transportation-Services.aspx

State Approving Agency: In 2019, ODVA assumed Oregon's State Approving Agency (SAA) function under a contract with the USDVA. The SAA monitors and approves eligible schools and training facilities that administer federal GI Bill® education benefits to ensure compliance with applicable state and federal laws designed to protect the integrity of the GI Bill® program. ODVA receives federal funds primarily to cover salary-related costs, and some state funding supplements the program.

More information: www.oregon.gov/odva/agency-programs/Pages/SAA.aspx

Military Help Line: Military Help Line: Since 2017, ODVA has contracted with Lines for Life to provide a military and veterans crisis hotline that provides 24/7, confidential crisis supports for veterans and their loved ones. ODVA does not retain funds to administer this program.

Call the Lines for Life Military Helpline today: 1-888-457-4838 or www.linesforlife.org/get-help-now/services-and-crisis-lines/military-helpline/

Training, Certification and Outreach: ODVA is responsible for the training, certification, and accreditation of all counties, tribal, and state Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) operating under ODVA's power of attorney with the USDVA. Training is conducted on the latest Federal VA legal, medical, and process information and eligibility information about accessing Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and National Cemetery Administration (NCA) benefits.

ODVA trains and accredits VSOs to file defensible claims for disability compensation and pension benefits on behalf of veterans and their families. Claims are filed through ODVA's Powers of Attorney (POA) or a national service organization's POA, as the claims are legal documents reviewed and adjudicated by the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

More information: Email ORVets.Benefits@odva.oregon.gov

Tribal Veterans Service Officer Program (TVSO's): SB 80 (2017) directed ODVA to provide aid and assistance to federally recognized Indian tribes in Oregon regarding programs and services for Native American veterans overseen by the tribes. The legislation also codified efforts of the federal VA's Office of General Counsel, supporting the accreditation of tribal Veterans' representatives in Oregon.

The budget includes pass-through funding for a Tribal Veterans Service Officer (TVSO) Program to provide direct veteran VA benefits and claims representation through the federally recognized tribes in Oregon. ODVA partners with tribal governments with a Memorandum of Understanding with ODVA. As with County VSOs, Tribal VSOs are not supervised by ODVA; however, the Agency provides training, certification, accreditation, guidance and support, and outreach support to their programs. The majority of TVSO appeal cases are also handled by ODVA's Appeals office in Portland.

Locate a Tribal Veteran Services Office: www.oregon.gov/odva/Services/Pages/Tribal-Veteran-Services.aspx

Veteran Services Grant: House Bill 2891 (2017) established the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs Veteran Services Grant Fund. The grant funds aim to leverage existing programs and resources available to veterans in local communities. Eligible grant recipients are not-for-profit organizations, local and tribal governments, and other related entities that provide direct services to veterans in Oregon. Services provided free of charge to veterans include legal assistance, housing and services, outreach to tribal veterans, behavioral health services, peer-to-peer support services, and employment assistance programs.

More information: www.oregon.gov/odva/agency-programs/grants/Pages/Veteran-Services-Grant.aspx

Veteran Volunteer Program: Established by HB 2908 in 2017, the Veteran Volunteer Program, developed in 2018, was created to train and coordinate volunteer activity around the state to identify aging veterans who are not yet receiving veteran benefits and connect them with County or Tribal Veteran Service Offices to learn about potential state and federal earned benefits. Once a veteran has been referred to a local Veteran Service Office, volunteers provide follow-up to ensure that the veterans have access to any services or benefits needed. In addition to educating veterans about their earned benefits, volunteers provide vital information about other state resources such as food stamps, Medicaid, and housing programs for which veterans may qualify. While not trained VSOs, these volunteers help to guide veterans to the various offices where they can receive assistance.

Learn more about volunteering: www.oregon.gov/odva/Benefits/Pages/Volunteer-Program.aspx

Veterans Educational Bridge Grant: House Bill 2201 (2019) created the ODVA Veterans Educational Bridge Grant Program to assist veterans in education or training programs who experience an interruption in their degree or training progress due to the unavailability of necessary courses or student debt, preventing them from registering for classes. The bill also provided funding for a grant administrator to implement and oversee the grant program.

The grant program's purpose is to provide financial assistance to veterans who cannot receive GI Bill® benefit payments when classes or training hours are not available or have student debt preventing course registration. The Bridge Grant can help stabilize the Veteran's household finances until they are able to access classes or training hours, which will allow them to resume their benefit payments. The program aims to support veterans' successful completion of their academic programs and transition to civilian career and community life

More information: www.oregon.gov/odva/agency-programs/grants/Pages/Educational-Bridge-Grant.aspx

Veterans' Emergency Financial Assistance Program: Established by HB 3504 (2005), this program aims to provide a one-time grant to veterans or their immediate family members who need emergency financial assistance. Grants are awarded monthly to veterans who experience sudden and unanticipated financial instability. Most grant requests support keeping veterans in their homes by assisting with past-due monthly rent and mortgage payments, utility payments, home and vehicle repair, and dental and medical expenses. Applicants are also connected with a local county or tribal Veteran Service Officer for access to other veteran services and benefits and community resources to encourage financial stability.

Grant Application:

www.oregon.gov/odva/Documents/VS1024%20Oregon%20Veterans%E2%80%99%20Emergency%20Financial%20Assistance%20Program%20Application_02-2022.pdf

Women Veterans: House Bill 3479 (2015) created funding and authority for a program to improve outcomes for Oregon women veterans in five specific areas: outreach, advocacy, data, research, and policy. Focused outreach and advocacy are achieved via listening sessions and ongoing outreach to women veterans around Oregon to increase awareness of women veterans and their unique experiences, issues, and needs, as well as to assist in claims filing, especially related to difficult or challenging claims.

Learn more: www.oregon.gov/odva/Resources/Pages/Women-Veterans.aspx