

Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs
2009 Annual Report



31 December 2009

MSAR # 5564 SG §9-946, HB 3/Ch. 290, 2006

Which includes

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Executive Summary

In accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) is submitting its end of year report. According to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), as of August 2008, there are approximately 476,000 veterans in Maryland.

Maryland Veterans continue to face great challenges as they return home from their service to our nation. Severely wounded personnel, including those suffering Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), will be a stress on the US Department of Veterans Affairs health and benefits systems for decades to come. This is of even greater concern here in Maryland as we see high numbers of National Guard and other reserve component personnel participating in multiple deployments to overseas combat zones. At a time when the US Department of Defense and the US Department of Veterans Affairs continue to have difficulty providing timely services to many veterans in need, it is our intent to continue to provide safety nets, wherever possible, here in Maryland to augment and enhance needed support.

In an effort to provide for the current needs of Maryland veterans MDVA, in partnership with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), supports and participates in Maryland's Commitment to Veterans, the behavioral health initiative begun in October, 2008.

There are more than 400 monuments and memorials to veterans in Maryland and none are solely dedicated to Maryland women who have served or are serving in the uniformed services of the United States of America, although women veterans make up more than 10% of Maryland's veteran population. The Commission for the Establishment of a Maryland Women in Military Service Monument has been reestablished to continue the work of the previous commission. MDVA will participate in and staff this new term of the Commission.

Through persistent and expanded communication with the citizens of Maryland, and sustained collaboration with individuals, organizations, MDVA staff and commissions, we continue to develop, promote and support the interests of Maryland's veterans.

Outreach & Advocacy Program

The Outreach and Advocacy (O&A) Program is the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs' (MDVA) youngest program established by Maryland House Bill 3, 2006. O&A's mission is to find innovative ways to seek out and inform Maryland's veterans about benefits and services that are available from federal, state and local agencies and solicit feedback from veterans regarding their needs for additional services.

Staffing of O&A is currently at its authorized level of two. The Deputy Director position was filled in March, 2008; however, the Director subsequently took a position with the Maryland Military Department in June 2008, pending deployment to OEF/OIF with her National Guard Unit. The Deputy Director served as Acting Director until August 2008 at which time he was promoted to Director. In November 2008, the vacant Deputy Director position was filled.

In furtherance of O&A's mission we have undertaken an initiative, implemented last year, called the Veterans Muster. The Veterans Muster is an information fair whereby Maryland veterans and their families may stop by to learn about the benefits and services offered by federal, state and nonprofit agencies. These agencies are invited to participate by setting up and staffing a display table to provide veterans with information, MDVA also sets up a table and has staff present to answer veterans' questions including a Service Officer to directly assist veterans with filing claims for disability and compensation.

A Veterans Muster will be conducted in each county in the state and Baltimore City. To date, we have held fourteen (14) musters since April, 2008 and have served approximately 3000 veterans and their family members through this initiative. The musters are held on Saturday mornings in a location and venue that is central to the particular jurisdiction. The organizations that have provided venues have done so at no cost to MDVA, there is no cost to participating agencies and no cost to the veterans and family members.

We have also identified several large faith based organizations in Prince George's County (where there is the greatest population of veterans in the state) with the expectation of presenting information about benefits and services to their veteran membership. We were able to test this potential faith-based outreach initiative with the First Baptist Church of Guilford in Howard County where we made a presentation to their veteran membership and the response was overwhelming and the presentation was well received. O&A plans to continue to pursue outreach opportunities at churches, colleges & universities and other appropriate community organizations.

Outreach is also conducted through presenting periodic one hour classes and setting up a display table at the Maryland National Guard Reintegration Academy Program. These classes are attended by soldiers and airman returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) and sponsored by the Maryland National Guard Yellow Ribbon Program. The Maryland National Guard Reintegration Academy's training objectives are to educate every soldier and airman regarding the challenges of transitioning from deployment to community and family, how to address these challenges, and where to connect to the service

providers and resources available from various federal, state, and local agencies and non profit organizations.

The O&A staff also works, along with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), to support the Veterans Mental Health Initiative. This initiative involves getting veterans in need of behavioral health resources connected to the services of the USVA or a private behavioral health provider. To advance the outreach for this initiative, O&A recently obtained a list of approximately 90,000 names and addresses of Maryland veterans from the USVA Release of Names and Addresses (RONA) Program. This list includes names of veterans released from active duty since January, 2004 and veterans receiving USVA compensation, pension and education benefits. A mass mailing has been prepared with a letter thanking them for their service and requesting that they take a moment to complete and return an enclosed postage-paid card with their current contact information. This mailing will reach veterans across the state and provide them with an avenue to seek information about the benefits and services to which they are entitled.

O&A is responsible for the publication of the agency's eight page bi-annual newsletter, *The Maryland Veteran*, whose distribution has grown from 32,000 in fiscal 2008 to more than 58,000 during fiscal 2009. The newsletter is distributed through various means: direct mail to individuals and organizations via regular mail; email subscription list; handed out at events attended by MDVA staff; and it is available for download from our website. It is also made available at local community centers, veteran service organizations, chambers of commerce, senior centers, public libraries, and military bases in Maryland and Washington, D.C. We printed 32,000 newsletters in the last two issues and recently experienced that it is not sufficient to meet the demand. We try to distribute as many electronic copies when requested but we are still experiencing a large veteran population that still prefers a hard copy due to their inability to access the electronic version.

In addition to the newsletter, a comprehensive State Benefits & Information Guide was updated and published in summer 2008 and is distributed in the same manner as the newsletter. Current issues of the newsletter and benefits guide are also included with the Secretary's "Welcome Home" letters sent to recently discharged Maryland Veterans.

O&A maintains and manages the content on the MDVA website. Earlier this year we launched our new website in accordance with the state's new branding standards. The redesign enabled us to significantly improve the organization of the site and increase the information available. Feedback from constituents has been positive in that the website is more interactive and user-friendly. Currently, the site includes information regarding services available to Maryland's veterans with links to other state agencies and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Benefits Guides, our newsletters and other documents of interest have been posted to the website in an effort to remotely inform as many of Maryland's veterans and their families as possible. We averaged approximately 250,000 visits per month to our website since we launched the new format. This is an increase from average monthly visits of 135,000 prior to the new format launch.

In support of Outreach & Advocacy's mission, MDVA executive personnel from all of our programs assisted us by attending speaking engagements and making public appearances at multiple events in the past year. These included; Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day events; VSO conventions; MDVA Veterans Musters; and civic organizations' meetings. These encounters have greatly expanded the number of Maryland veterans and dependents contacted and informed of services and benefits available.

Outreach & Advocacy Program 2009 Highlights

- *The Maryland Veteran*, the Department's bi-annual newsletter, saw an increase in distribution from approximately 32,000 to over 58,000.
- MDVA is on Facebook thus reaching a greater number of Maryland veterans here and abroad. MDVA currently has 1,670 friends.
- Redesign of the MDVA website has resulted in doubling the number of visits since March, 2009.
- Direct mail to a list of approximately 90,000 names and addresses of Maryland veterans received from the USVA Release of Names and Addresses (RONA) Program

Service Program

The purpose of the Veterans Service Program is to assist veterans, their dependents, and survivors in the preparation, development, and resolution of claims for service-connected disability compensation, pension, death benefits, educational assistance, home loans, medical care, and other benefits available from federal, state and local organizations.

This year our service program obtained 813 new Powers of Attorney (POA) during the year. We hold the POA for approximately 9,700 Maryland veterans and survivors.

The service program responded to 65,547 requests for information from Marylanders and was responsible for filing 3,627 claims on behalf of veterans, dependents and survivors. The service program does not keep track of claims filed by category. All claims filed with the service program are processed within the month they are received

The Service Program was responsible for the receipt of \$15,166,082 in new compensation and pension benefits awarded to veterans represented by the department. It should be noted there is no direct correlation between claims filed and benefits received in a particular year. Many of the claims filed this year will not be decided until 2010, and a majority of the \$15.1 million in receipts was based on claims received in the prior year.

The national average USVA disability payment is \$8,890 per veteran yearly (this is based on data tabulated for FY 2005 and the latest available data from USDVA). The average disability payment to Maryland veterans is \$7,654, the 3rd lowest in the nation; this is down from \$7,944 in 2005 when Maryland ranked 36th in benefit payments. The State of Maryland has the lowest percentage of veterans who seek assistance through a Power of Attorney (POA's) in filing claims for benefits. Having a POA is one of the factors that affects rate of disability payment in a positive manner. Veterans with POA's receive greater disability payments than those who do not.

The Service Program is the repository for all DD-214s for Maryland veterans who were discharged since October 15, 1979. The service program received 14,154 DD-214s from July 2008 through June 2009. In an effort to reach recently discharge veterans, the program in October 2007, established a database to track all DD-214s received. Both the Governor and Secretary of the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs are using addresses in this data base to send welcome home letters to all honorably discharged veterans. Through this effort we anticipate more veterans will seek assistance through the Department when seeking USVA benefits. The data base will also be used by the service program's Women Veterans Coordinator to identify recently discharged women veterans and send them a letter regarding available services. In addition, the Women Veterans Coordinator is working with the Maryland National Guard, in both their Post Deployment Health Re-Assessment (PDHRA) and Reintegration programs. She is also working with the USVA Health Care System Veteran Centers in addressing the needs of women veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and sexual trauma issues.

The most valuable services offered to all veterans are the availability of claims assistance through the service program, admission to our veterans' home when necessary, burial in one of our five veteran's cemeteries, and a place to remember their service at one of our three memorials.

The Service Program staffing is currently at its authorized level of 16. Recruiting actions were completed, and 4 vacant positions were filled. Three new service officers were selected, and 3 new service offices were opened in Bel-Air, Hagerstown, and Charlotte Hall. The fourth vacant position filled was for the Office Secretary II position at our Prince Georges County office.

Our new full time office in Bel-Air opened on October 1, 2008, and the Charlotte Hall and Hagerstown offices opened in January, 2009. The Bel-Air office is under the full time supervision of our Northern/Eastern Area Supervisor located in Hurlock, and the Charlotte Hall and Hagerstown offices are under the supervision of the Western/Southern Area Supervisor located in Frederick MD. A new area supervisor position was established for the Southern/Western Service Area.

Service Program 2009 Highlights

- Charlotte Hall and Hagerstown Service Offices opened in January, 2009.
- Service program obtained 813 new Powers of Attorney.
- The service program received 14,154 DD-214s from July 2008 through June 2009.
- The service program responded to 65,547 requests for information from Marylanders.

Charlotte Hall Veterans Home (CHVH)

Located in St. Mary's County, Charlotte Hall Veterans Home (CHVH) is a 462 bed facility which provides assisted-living and skilled nursing care for Maryland Veterans and eligible spouses who are unable to take care of themselves due to age or disability.

The census as of January 2009 had 377 residents with 136 assisted living and 241 comprehensive nursing which included 14 non-veteran spouses. Subsequently, the December 2009 census for CHVH had 157 assisted living residents and 250 comprehensive nursing for a total of 407 which included 18 non-veteran spouses. The overall census increased nearly 5% since the beginning of 2009 and rose to an all time high of 407 residents in December 2009.

- The overall census increased nearly 5% since the first of the year.
- The overall census reached 400 for the first time ever on June 1, 2009.
- The December 1st total census of 407 equates to an overall occupancy level of 87%. Considering beds need to be available for transition of residents between assisted living and comprehensive care, in reality, we are closer to 90% occupancy.

During FY 2009 (July 1, 2008 thru June 30, 2009) CHVH received \$1,722,812 in Domiciliary Per Diem Reimbursement and \$6,046,399 in Comprehensive Care Reimbursement for a total of **\$7,769,211** through the USVA State Home Program Reimbursement

The vacant position of Administrative Assistant (contractual) has been filled. This position became vacant when the previous employee was awarded the position of Veterans Service Officer for the Charlotte Hall location. Also, we have contracted with a qualified Registered Nurse (RN) to serve as a consultant to provide expertise and oversight to the Quality Assurance and Best Practices Program at CHVH. Other identified services that will be included are shift/schedule and record inspections and support to investigating family complaints, if necessary.

Management Contract Request For Proposal (RFP)

RFP for Management Services was issued November 21, 2008 and a Pre-Bid Conference for the RFP was held December 4, 2008. Bids were initially due January 12, 2009. That date was adjusted to February 10th due to response time to answer questions raised by bidders. One bidder filed a bid protest at that time in regards to the pricing sheet. Adjustments were made to the pricing sheet to address the issue raised

On February 25th the RFP Evaluation Team met for kick-off discussions and the opening of the submitted technical proposals. One of the three bidders failed to include the Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) sub-contractor commitment. That bidder was eventually eliminated as a bid contender. In April the Evaluation Team continued to meet, visited two nursing care facilities that were managed by the non-incumbent bidder and conducted oral presentations. In May the Team issued Cure Letters and received Remedy Letters. Financial proposals were opened May 20th. The Best and Final offers were received May 28th.

In June a recommendation of award, with strengths and weaknesses identified, was presented to the MDVA Secretary for approval. Once approved, letters of final selection were mailed to the offerors.

Management Contract and Bid Protest

The current management contract with HMR expired June 30, 2009. On June 17th the Board of Public Works (BPW) approved three, one month extensions of the existing contract – ending September 30, 2009

On July 20th a debriefing was conducted with the unsuccessful bidder. A protest was filed by the bidder on July 21st. On August 11th the Procurement Officer notified the unsuccessful bidder that the appeal was denied. The bidder has since filed an appeal with the Maryland Board of Contract Appeals.

On September 16th the BPW approved an additional three month extension of the existing contract through December 31, 2009. On November 16, 2009 a Supplement Bid Protest was filed by the non-awarded bidder. On December 2, 2009 the BPW approved another extension of the current contract beginning January 1, 2010 through June 30, 2010. The appeal is still with the Maryland Board of Contract Appeals. A hearing date has not been established.

Computerized Patient Records System (CPRS)

In January a Radio Frequency Study was conducted in advance of the wireless equipment demands. In February a Purchase Order was issued for the installation of the networking cable. Identification of equipment needs was ongoing as well as conference calls to the DCVA, template development and initial training of nursing personnel.

In April the installation of the cabling and radio frequency signaling devices were completed. Servers were received from DCVA and configuring of equipment began. First phase and second phase computer orders were received. A back-up air conditioning unit was installed in the CPRS server room and connected to the emergency power system in the event of normal power loss the server would be protected.

Currently, computer work stations are being replaced with the upgraded units. The State offices have switched over to the new server and the remaining computers are being served by both the former server and the new server until all remaining computers are in place to minimize the probability of lost data. Once all remaining computers are in position, the final switch-over to new servers will be completed.

We plan to have a Kick Off Event in the Spring with the Governor in attendance to showcase Charlotte Hall Veterans Home as the first State Home to have this level of access and coordination with the VA's award winning CPRS program.

Water Supply / Waste water Management

Several meetings were held with Maryland Environmental Services (MES) concerning the operations of the CHVH water supply tower and waste water treatment. From those meetings, MES has added alarm notification devices that now alert their personnel upon failure of normal equipment operations. Prior to this improvement, alerts were sent upon abnormal level control points. This improvement provides greater response time prior to unacceptable operating conditions. CHVH and MES have established regularly scheduled meetings in an effort to continue improved communications and operations.

CHVH Program 2009 Highlights

- Director Sharon Mattia attended the following conventions: Marine Corp League & Aux; MOPH; DAV; VFW & Aux; American Legion & Aux, all in Ocean City, and NASVH Conference in Asheville, NC.
- At the American legion convention, Director Mattia was presented a \$10,500 donation for CHVH.
- In August CHVH was the beneficiary of an estate bequeath in the amount of \$321,903.
- The updated CHVH web site is complete. Year to date, there have been over 40,000 visits to the site.
- An audit by the GAD of the Federal Per Diem Reimbursement Payments was conducted in February. No major findings were reported.
- DHMH survey for annual recertification was conducted in March. Only three minor deficiencies were noted, resulting in the best overall survey results ever for this inspection of CHVH.
- VA annual site survey was conducted in June. Only one 'Not Met' issue was found, that being one vacancy of the Dietician position. Many positive performance remarks were provided from the survey team during the exit interview.
- Two meetings have been held with the local Emergency Response providers to assess CHVH's use of the 911 emergency system. With a private service provider now on site full time, the use of the local emergency responders has been dramatically reduced. The emergency responder representatives expressed their satisfaction with the reduced demand for services of the local resources.
- Disaster Preparedness planning is an ongoing effort. In June, training was provided to five HMR employees and one state employee at the College of Southern Maryland. The course material was provided by the Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, Office of Health Care Quality.
- Energy Reduction – CHVH has accepted the energy reduction initiatives outlined by the NORESO Detailed Energy Audit. A pre-construction meeting was held on September 15th.
- The dental suite renovation project is in the final stages of contractor award. Equipment for the suite has been received. Notice to Proceed to contractor was issued in September. DGS is overseeing this project. When final, the renovation and expansion will increase

the chairs from 2 to 3 and will include wheelchair capability, state-the-art equipment, storage area and a waiting room.

- Emergency Generators – Replacement project of the three emergency generators is moving forward. The A/E has presented DGS three options for installation. The preferred option, at this point, is to have a fully integrated emergency power replacement system with switch-gear that supports parallel operation.
- Facility improvements continued. Completed projects include:
 - Roof replacements, ‘A’ & ‘B’ flat roofs
 - Elevator flooring replacement, five elevators
 - Floor tile replacement, 2A at Core elevators and re-hab hallway
 - Floor tile replacement, employee entrance hallway
 - Floor tile replacement, 3C hallway, dining area and day room
 - Floor tile replacement, 1B hallway
 - Floor tile replacement, Core unloading area
 - 1A, four bathrooms, tub-to-shower renovations
 - 3D, replacement of central air conditioning unit
 - Exit at Smoking Lounge/’D’ wing, added second set of automatic doors
 - Core Dining Room, added set of automatic doors to patio area
 - 1A and ‘B’ wing bathrooms, added heat lamps
 - Core walk-in refrigerator, replaced aluminum flooring
 - Handicap concrete walks replacement at main, ‘D’ wing and CBOC entrance
 - Shrubbery and mulch replacement at main and ‘D’ wing entrances
- Maryland state Senator Ben Cardin visited CHVH July 20th.
- The Census Bureau was provided with a room for several weeks in support of the need to train local personnel for the up-coming census.
- Two new transport buses were received in August. Each bus has the capacity to carry eight walk-on riders and three wheel-chair riders, plus driver.
- The annual Memorial Day Program was well attended by residents, guests and local officials.
- A remembrance program was held on September 11th in memory of those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001. The event was very well attended by the residents, community, volunteers and county officials.
- The annual CHVH Open House was held on November 7th and was well attended.
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Cemetery & Memorial Programs

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Cemetery Program maintains five (5) State veterans' cemeteries, providing a final resting place for those eligible Maryland veterans and their eligible dependents who desire this benefit provided by the State of Maryland. The five State Veterans Cemeteries include Crownsville in Anne Arundel County, Cheltenham in Prince George's County, Eastern Shore in Dorchester County, Garrison Forest in Baltimore County and Rocky Gap in Allegany County. The Cemetery Program also oversees a Civil War Cemetery at Rose Hill Cemetery in Hagerstown.

Since the programs inception in the mid-1970s, more than 73,500 of Maryland's veterans and their dependents have been interred at our five veterans' cemeteries. This requires the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs not only to conduct burial services, but also provide perpetual care on the ever-increasing expansion of grave sites in accordance with National Cemetery Standards (NCA) within the system. Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs is a leader among the nation in State veteran's cemeteries with three out of the five cemeteries among the top ten busiest cemeteries in FY-2009 and where the State conducts the highest number of interments throughout the nation.

The facilities provide interment services during the normal business week (Monday through Friday) and are open to the public 365 days a year. The Cemetery Program maintains and operates the cemeteries, sets the eligibility requirements for burial and manages the day-to-day operations and records. There was an average of 3,182 interments annually over the past three years. The annual interment rate represents 21% of Maryland veteran's deaths.

Interment is the most important function carried out in the cemetery where we ensure the honor and dignity of our veterans and their families is performed for every interment. The operations and maintenance (perpetual care) ensure that our State Veterans Cemeteries are maintained as national shrines, dedicated to preserving our nation's and State's history, nurturing patriotism and honoring the service and sacrifice veterans and their families have made.

Cemetery Program 2009 Highlights

- Completion of capital construction burial expansion projects at Cheltenham State Veterans Cemetery through \$3,743,000.00 of 100% funded USVA approved grants which includes, grave sites, columbarium's, irrigation systems, roadway and curbs, and building construction and renovation.
- Cemetery grant for Garrison Forest Expansion was approved for \$ 4,448,885.00 for cemetery burial expansion, columbarium's, irrigation systems, roadway and curbs and has been 50% completed. The pre-application for FY -2010 grant at Garrison Forest Administration & Maintenance complex has been submitted with the State Cemetery Grants Program for \$5,100,000.00.

- For FY 2010 Pre-Applications were submitted for Eastern Shore Veterans Cemetery Columbarium total Grant: \$ 400,000.00 & Rocky Gap Veterans Cemetery Columbarium total Grant: \$ 250,000.00.
- Successfully completed National Cemeteries Triennial Review at Cheltenham, Crownsville, Garrison Forest and Rocky Gap Cemeteries.
- Installed new Energy Star Efficient lighting in Office & Chapel at Rocky Gap Cemetery.
- Volunteer Committee donated 70 new chairs for Committal Shelter at Cheltenham Cemetery.
- Installed new water filtration systems at all five cemeteries saving on bottled water expenditures.
- Installed new ADA compliant doors to Administration building at Crownsville Cemetery.
- Upgraded Equipment at all five Veterans Cemeteries with new mower decks, seeder, tiller, tractor, utility cart, and other small hand tools.
- Installed new wall at Crownsville Veterans Cemeteries Carillon Tower.
- Repainting of front entrance gate and entire fence line at Eastern Shore Cemetery.
- DGS replaced leaking cemetery chapel roof at Eastern Shore Cemetery.
- Installed new Energy Star Efficient heating systems in office at Eastern Shore & Rocky Gap Cemeteries.
- Cheltenham Cemetery Volunteer Committee donated a four passenger golf cart for helping elderly visitors to gravesite.
- New Energy Star Efficient computer systems at all five Cemeteries.
- Received new podium, Cremation Table, and rendering of Cemetery by artist: George Wright through donations from cemetery recognition committee at Eastern Shore Cemetery.
- Incarcerated Veterans Project are Honorably Discharged Veterans in the Pre-Release Division of Corrections. Crownsville, Garrison Forest, and now Cheltenham Cemeteries each have a crew of 6-8 inmates for maintenance projects.
- Cheltenham and Garrison Forest Cemeteries hired one inmate from the Incarcerated Veterans Project.
- Conducted Memorial Day and Veterans Day events at all five Maryland State Veterans Cemeteries honoring the service and sacrifices of our State's veterans.

- Conducted Wreaths Across America events at all five Maryland State Veterans Cemeteries honoring the service and sacrifices of our State's veterans.

Memorials and Monuments

Currently, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Cemetery and Memorial Program has responsibility for the following memorials:

- World War II Memorial in Annapolis
- Korean War Memorial in Baltimore
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Baltimore
- War Memorial Building in Baltimore - Joint responsibility with the City of Baltimore

These facilities are open 365 days a year in recognition of those who served and those who made the ultimate sacrifice to secure our freedom and democracy.

Memorials 2009 Highlights

- Fourteen (14) patriotic events were held at the memorials throughout the year, including Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Pearl Harbor Remembrance and other special commemorations.
- DGS hired Architectural and Engineering firm to review iron fencing project at War Memorial Building.
- DGS replaced all lighting at Vietnam War Memorial with new efficient LED lights
- Replaced old incandescent lighting at Korean War Memorial with updated CFL Lights
- Completed roof repairs at Memorials Office.

Commissions and Boards

There are five commissions/boards to advise the Secretary in various areas:

- Maryland Veterans Commission
- Charlotte Hall Veterans Home Commission
- Maryland Military Monuments Commission
- War Memorial Commission
- Washington Cemetery Board of Trustees

Maryland Veterans Commission

The Maryland Veterans Commission advises the Secretary on all issues relating to veterans, including legislation. Individuals may be called upon to represent the Department at speaking engagements for commemorative events, present Governor's Proclamations on Veterans Day and Memorial Day ceremonies, and provide recommendations when changes may be requested for the Cemetery & Memorial Programs. The members also review proposed veteran-related legislation and advise the Secretary accordingly.

Twenty-eight Maryland veterans groups comprise the Commission, representing veteran groups and various geographical areas. The Commissioners are appointed to five-year terms by the Governor, who also names the Chair. The Maryland Veterans Commissioners represent the following organizations or categories:

- American Legion
- American Ex POW's
- American Veterans AMVETS
- Black Veterans of All Wars
- Catholic War Veterans
- Disabled American Veterans
- Fleet Reserve Association
- Jewish War Veterans
- Korean War Veterans
- Marine Corps League
- Military Officers Association of America
- Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Paralyzed Veterans of America
- Pearl Harbor Survivors
- Polish War Veterans
- The Retired Enlisted Association
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Vietnam Veterans of America
- Women Veterans

In addition to the Commissioners representing the above named organizations, there is a Commissioner designated to represent each of the eight congressional districts, as a geographic entity.

Maryland Veterans Home Commission

The Maryland Veterans Home Commission advises the Department on issues relating to State veteran homes and interacts with veterans and other organizations to disseminate information concerning Charlotte all Veterans Home, in St. Mary's County, the only State veteran facility in Maryland. The Commission has fourteen members. Eleven are named to five-year terms by the Governor with Senate advice and consent. Three serve ex-officio, representing the Governor, Speaker of the House and President of the Senate.

Maryland Military Monuments Commission

The Governor established the Governor's Commission on Maryland Military Monuments in January, 1989 and it was transferred to the MDVA in October, 2008. The Commission inventories Maryland military monuments. Each monument is identified by name, date of construction, location, and original sponsorship. Current ownership of both the monument and its site is noted with a complete description of the monument, including its construction materials; condition; theme; inscriptions, if any; and who is responsible for maintenance. To restore damaged monuments, the Commission determines the cost and secures funds. The Commission also assigns responsibility for maintenance of each monument and prepares educational and tourism materials for public distribution. Since 1989, the Commission has arranged for the cleaning and restoration of ninety-seven Maryland military memorials. Appointed by the Governor, the Commission consists of up to twenty-one members. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs serves as chair.

War Memorial Commission

The Commission has custody and supervision of the War Memorial Building and the War Memorial Plaza. Both were erected in 1927 in Baltimore to honor those Marylanders who died in World War I. The War Memorial Building lies directly across from City Hall, and with the Plaza, was designed by Baltimore architect, Lawrence Hall Fowler. The Building is open and available for meetings of veterans groups, patriotic societies and for civic gatherings. Use by these groups is permitted provided that no collection or donation is taken nor any admission charged. Maintenance costs are shared equally by the State of Maryland and the City of Baltimore. The Commission's ten members serve five-year terms. Five are appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs with the Governor's approval, and five by the Mayor of Baltimore.

Washington Cemetery Board of Trustees

The Cemetery's Board of Trustees was chartered in 1870. Originally, it was to have had five members: three from Maryland and one each from Virginia and West Virginia. Virginia and West Virginia contributed to the cost for funding and maintaining the Cemetery initially and so were given a place on the Board. In over one hundred and thirty years, however, neither Virginia nor West Virginia has appointed a representative. Of recent significance, was the rebuilding and restoration of the original 1866 Speakers Stand at the Rose Hill Cemetery.

**General Assessment of the Status of Maryland Veterans Demographics
According to VA Census Data**

| | |
|---|---------|
| Maryland Veterans Population..... | 476,202 |
| Maryland Veterans Age 65 and Older..... | 167,283 |
| Maryland Women Veterans..... | 48,615 |
| County with Most Veterans: Prince George's..... | 68,075 |
| County with Fewest Veterans: Kent..... | 2,167 |

**Key Performance Measures for Veterans Represented By the Maryland
Department of Veterans Affairs Fiscal Year 2009**

Inputs

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Potential number of veterans to be served..... | 476,000 (Approx) |
| Number of veteran contacts..... | 65,500 (Approx) |

Outputs

| | |
|---|-------|
| Claims filed and developed on behalf of service-connected disabled veteran..... | 3,627 |
| Active cases for veterans represented by the MDVA..... | 9,700 |
| Appeals of unfavorable VA decisions filed on behalf of veterans..... | 226 |

Outcomes

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| VA awards for Service-connected claims..... | \$8,832,047 |
| VA awards for totally disabled non-service connected claims..... | \$4,730,402 |
| VA awards for widows and orphans of veterans..... | <u>\$3,980,999</u> |
| Total of awards to veterans and survivors represented by MDVA..... | \$15,166,082 |

Estimated Impact of Current Military Operations on the Needs of Future Veterans

The estimated impact of current military operations on the future needs of veterans will continue to be seen in the increased requests for claims counseling and assistance. Our National Guard members and Maryland's regular service veterans who are activated, as well as Maryland veterans who served on active duty in the military, are eligible for state and federal veteran benefits. Recent studies have suggested that returning veterans from the Southwest Asia Theater continue to have a higher demand for counseling and assistance. There are outstanding issues regarding Gulf War illnesses, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). The USVA Capital Healthcare system (of which Maryland is a part) has treated over 7,000 veterans who have served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF). The exact number of requests for additional assistance and counseling is unknown at this time. Although we had three additional service officer positions approved during the 2008 General Assembly, additional veteran service officer staffing may be required to meet an increased demand for services, as well as additional service office locations based on demographics and census – a general fund issue.

There is a separate, albeit significant concern for difficulties faced by women veterans. We, like the USVA, are still learning about the unique issues that effect female veterans compared to their male counterparts. Better understanding of these issues will enable us to develop outreach efforts that target women veterans and help them address these issues.

Another item of impact is the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's (BRAC) decision to consolidate various military and federal offices to Fort George G. Meade, Aberdeen Army Proving Grounds and the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda. Both Fort Meade and Aberdeen have been identified as major growth areas for consolidation of services. One aspect of this realignment will be the convergence of high tech companies and defense contractors in Maryland. These employers are likely to seek veterans to fill positions created by BRAC because of their desirable military backgrounds, security clearances, work habits and education. In light of all this, it is expected that there will be an influx of young veterans to our communities to take advantage of the employment opportunities offered by these companies. Concurrently, this surge of new veterans will increase the demand for dependent services. Currently Maryland's veteran's population is the third youngest across the country at 55 years old. The challenge will be how best to inform the veterans and their families of services and benefits to which they are entitled and to ensure that the State can provide for the resulting expansion of local infrastructure in the community. Also, this talented workforce is mobile. It is in the State's interest to retain citizens with this level of expertise and family structure now and in the years to come. Therefore, it is a concern that as veterans retire from civilian employment they might leave Maryland. Improvements to the tax benefits for our retiring civilian veterans would help to retain the population.

Current military operations, as with previous military operations, will produce a new generation of veterans with special needs. Today World War II veterans are aging; all are beyond 70 years in age. Many of these veterans have been dependent upon the system for more than 60 years as a result of injuries, diseases and disabilities suffered while exposed to battlefield

conditions. For recent veterans of combat and other exposures, access to medical care will be paramount in their recovery. Government agencies at all levels, private and non-profits and the veterans' community should plan and prepare for long term assistance to veterans with medical and special needs.

Projected Conditions Affecting Future Services at MDVA

- Aging and declining veteran population base - WW II and Korean War veterans and their dependents.
- Southwest Asia ongoing combat operations – returning veterans and their dependents.
- The lack of awareness among veterans and their dependents of the services and benefits available to them.
- Limited resources within the Outreach and Advocacy Program to reach the approximate 476,202 Maryland veterans and their families and advise them of the benefits and services available to them.