



June 2025



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Greetings from your WDVA Director: David Puente

Washington State remains dedicated to ensuring that Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) have access to the support they need. Recently, Governor Bob Ferguson reaffirmed this commitment by [signing](#) a [proclamation](#) renewing our participation in the [Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among SMVF](#). This initiative, in partnership with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), unites all 50 states and five territories in a coordinated effort to implement comprehensive suicide prevention strategies.

As Governor Ferguson stated during the proclamation signing: *"We need the help of all Washingtonians, and I urge everybody to raise awareness of the support services that are available for suicide prevention. I urge all people in our state to raise awareness of behavioral health, suicide prevention, lethal means safety, and the support services available in our communities. Together we must encourage those in need to reach out for help, hope, and community."*

To further support this initiative, we are launching several key resources:

- A newly developed [website](#) providing essential suicide prevention information.
- Upcoming [LEARN](#) and [S.A.V.E.](#) suicide prevention trainings.
- [Toolkits](#) for safe firearm storage and firearm [suicide prevention & lethal means safety](#).
- Comprehensive suicide prevention toolkits for [healthcare](#) and [community](#) organizations.
- A Governor's Challenge [overview video](#).

Suicide prevention is a collective effort. By engaging with these resources, sharing them within our networks, and fostering conversations about behavioral health and safety, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who serve and have served.

Together, we can ensure that every service member, veteran, and their family member knows they are not alone.

Thank you for your continued dedication to this vital mission.



Legislative Wrap Up: Budget

The 2025 Legislative Session ended on April 27, 2025. You can find a [summary of the Veteran related bills that were passed](#) on our [Legislative Updates](#) page.

Like all agencies, WDVA did receive reductions to our operating budget because of the state's budget shortfall. Director David Puente shared early with WDVA team members that we are committed to our mission of Serving Those Who Served. Throughout the budget process, we worked hard to minimize the impacts of budget cuts on staff members, programs, and our partners.

I also want to share that while programs may be discontinued for now, that doesn't negate the incredible work that was accomplished or milestones that were achieved. We do plan to look for funding opportunities to reinvigorate many of these programs when the time is right.

The final legislative budget took the following reductions:

- \$3.2 million in administrative efficiencies over the two fiscal year period which includes:
- 6% reduction in the five nonprofit Veterans Service Organization contracts to assist veterans in filing claims to the federal VA.
- 50% reduction in Veterans Conservation Corps internships.
- Holding 17 positions vacant and abolishing several filled positions. (This means that existing staff members duties and priorities may shift to ensure we are meeting our statutorily mandated requirements. We will do our best to ensure there are not delays in service or response times.)
- Reductions in goods and services, contracts, equipment, and similar areas where efficiencies exist.
- Elimination of funding for the Military Transition and Readiness Council staff member. We recognize the significant role the MTRC has played uniting Senior Leaders of public, private, and community-based organizations to support Washington's Military and Veteran communities. While funding for the position managing MTRC work has ended, the executive order establishing the framework remains and we are evaluating options to ensure the significant achievements and relationships the Council has fostered are not lost.
- Reduction of \$861,000 in Veterans Services/Counseling & Wellness budget in both Fiscal Year 25 Fiscal Year 26. (This is in addition to the administrative efficiencies noted in the first bullet.)
- 8% increase in private pay rates for State Veterans Homes Private Pay Residents.

Programs that are being discontinued as a result of either state or federal cuts include:

- In House NAC Academy (partnerships with local colleges will continue)
- Veterans Farm at Orting
- Vet Corps (AmeriCorps program through ServeWA)
- Funding for lethal means lock boxes previously received from Department of Commerce.
- Tobacco Cessation Program (grant funding through Department of Health)

As reductions take place at both the national and state levels, we know our partnerships are more important now than ever before. Your WDVA Team is working hard to ensure Washington's Veterans and families are connected to the benefits they earned and we know this is only possible because of our work together. Our thanks go to our state's amazing Veterans Community as we work together to navigate these changes.

Memorial Day Recap

Fallen service members were honored with solemn Memorial Day ceremonies throughout Washington.

In Olympia, the [Northwest Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America](#) placed wreaths at each [War Memorial](#) on the Capitol Campus, followed by a commemorative ceremony in the Capitol Rotunda, hosted by the Thurston County Veterans Council. The [Vietnam Vets Legacy Vets Motorcycle Club](#) gathered at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial for a special remembrance and hosted a Thunder Run. Across the state, the [Washington State Veterans Cemetery](#) in Medical Lake, Spokane, held its own tribute, providing a meaningful space for reflection and gratitude.



Washington State Veterans Cemetery Photos taken by Niki Sibley

Hear from Niki, a dedicated volunteer, as she shares why honoring Veterans through cemetery events has been her passion for over a decade the moments that inspire her, the connections she's made, and the impact of her work.

Watch the video here: [Interview with Niki Sibley](#)

For more photos visit:

[Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs's albums | Flickr](#)

[2025.05.26 Memorial Day Event at the Vietnam War Memorial in Auburn | Flickr](#)

WDVA News and Current Events

LGBTQ+ Program and Pride Month Outreach Events

At WDVA, we are proud to support and stand with our LGBTQIA+ employees, veterans, and community members. Please take a moment to explore our [LGBTQ+ Veterans Resource Page](#) for programs, services, and support.



Here is a list of Pride LGBTQ+ Program Outreach Events:

[Happy Pride Month 2025 - Serving ALL Those Who Served | WDVA](#)

Take a look at our [2025 Pride Month Video](#) and stay tuned on our social media channels for the full video.

Women Veterans Day Proclamation Signing with Governor Bob Ferguson



Governor Bob Ferguson officially proclaimed June 12, 2025 Women Veterans Day in Washington, recognizing the dedication and sacrifices of women who have served in the U.S. military. The event brought together women Veterans, leaders, and advocates to celebrate this milestone, fostering unity and highlighting ongoing efforts to ensure their voices and contributions are honored.

For more information on 2025 Women Veterans Day visit: [2025 Women Veterans Day Media Kit - Videos, Photos and Proclamation | WDVA](#)

NATIONAL
PTSD
AWARENESS
MONTH



June is PTSD Awareness Month



The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) is proud to recognize Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Month by amplifying the voices of Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF). Through real stories from real Veterans, we aim to shed light on the challenges they face and foster greater awareness within our communities.

To learn more about PTSD, resources and to hear from Veteran stories visit: [Real Veterans, Real Voices: Stories of Resilience in the Face of PTSD – Recognizing June as](#)

[PTSD Awareness Month | WDVA](#)

Check out what's happening at our Veterans Homes

Washington Veterans Home



The neighborhood coordinator for our Memory Care unit, Cathy Ripley, had the idea to plant a shared garden to beautify the unit's outdoor space.

Part of the Well-Being Model for dementia care means learning as much as we can about each one of our residents- their stories, likes and dislikes, and hobbies- and Cathy noticed how many of our residents have a love for gardening!

We were able to purchase the materials through the "Wellness, Arts, and the Military (WAM)" grant, provided by the [Washington State Arts Commission](#), and on Thursday, May 29th, we broke ground! The residents took the reins immediately: preparing the soil, planting seedlings, and watering, with staff chipping in. We will have flowers and veggies growing soon!

Watch the video here: [Washington Veterans Home Pea Patch Video](#)

Have you heard? WVH Has a new Facebook page!



Check it out!

Visit: [Washington Veterans Home in Port Orchard - Retsil](https://www.facebook.com/WashingtonVeteransHome)

Spread the word, follow and stay connected to keep up with what's happening!



Washington Soldiers Home in Orting

A Home Run Day at the Ballpark! Residents from the Washington Soldiers Home (WSH) in Orting, with the fantastic support of our dedicated volunteers and the WSH Recreation team, had an unforgettable time cheering on the Tacoma Rainiers! It was a day filled with camaraderie, fun, and America's favorite pastime.



Walla Walla Veterans Home

"Luci Therapy" was in full effect at WWVH, bringing smiles and comfort to residents and staff alike.

A heartfelt thank you to Bernice Garza for sharing her adorable six-month-old pup, Luci, with us, because there's nothing quite like soft puppy snuggles to brighten the day!



Spokane Veterans Home

Residents from the Spokane Veterans Home had the incredible opportunity to visit Big Red's Barn in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho and what a special day it was!

Big Red's Barn, North Idaho's only indoor petting zoo, offers a hands-on animal experience that's not only fun but also deeply therapeutic. Surrounded by exotic animals, miniatures, farm favorites, reptiles, and more, our veterans lit up with smiles as they interacted with the gentle creatures in a warm, dry, and welcoming environment.

WDVA Job Opportunities

Take a look at our [available opportunities](#) with WDVA!



YesVets National Hire-A-Vet Day Job & Resource Fair



Calling all Veterans, service members, and their families! Your next career opportunity awaits at the [#YesVets](#) National Hire-a-Vet Day Job and Resource Fair on July 24 at Mount Tahoma High School!

Get resume and interview help on-site and connect with employers ready to hire.

Don't wait - register now! <https://app.brazenconnect.com/a/washington/e/8LjLnho>

For more information visit: [YesVets National Hire-A-Vet Day Job & Resource Fair | WDVA](#)

Events & Observances Calendar

[Click Here to View Upcoming Events](#)

JUNE



2025 EVENTS

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
	4	5	6	7	8	9
	11	12	13	14	15	16
						17

[Submit an Event](#)

Program Spotlight

Veterans Conservation Corps



The [Veterans Conservation Corps Program](#) serves those who served by providing Veterans with self-directed connections to the lands, waters, and communities in WA State.

The Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC) was founded in 2005 to honor John Beal, a Vietnam-era Veteran who found healing and purpose through restoring Hamm Creek and the Duwamish River. VCC helps Washington State veterans build their own paths to healing by offering hands-on training in environmental conservation and sustainable agriculture.

Through this work, veterans gain valuable skills while reconnecting with nature and their communities.

Listen to VCC intern Bailey Wambold share how VCC has shaped her journey.

Watch the video: [Veterans Conservation Corps Internship Spotlight - Bailey Wambold - Pierce Conservation District](#)



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