
AGENCY OVERVIEW**Date:** 12/23/2014**321 Department of Veterans Affairs****Time:** 12:42:03

Statutory Authority

North Dakota Century Code Chapters 37-14 and 37-18.

Agency Description

The North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (NDDVA) has the responsibility of ensuring the state's over 61,000 veterans and their dependents not only know about the state and federal benefits to which they are entitled for having served their country, but also assist them in obtaining such benefits. The department is responsible for the collection, filing, safeguarding and maintaining of North Dakota Veterans DD214 and DD215 discharge documents. The department safeguards these records in fireproof locking cabinets and in electronic form. NDDVA provides certified and true copies to the veterans upon request.

The department is responsible for assisting counties with training of 65 County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs) and their assistants who serve 53 counties, and are appointed by their respective County Commissions, as well as assisting in the training of 7 Tribal Service Officers from three tribes. The department provides training through a minimum of two training seminars each year to keep the CVSOs as current as possible on issues, topics and programs available to and affecting veterans as well as providing initial and continued one-on-one training with the CVSOs either in the NDDVA office or the CVSO's own office.

The department accepts and carries through to completion veterans claims for entitlement from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and acts as power of attorney in these claims; counsels veterans on employment and entrepreneurial programs and regulations, educational (high school through graduate level) programs, disability benefits, medical (both physical and mental) care entitlement, nursing home assistance, death benefits, and other related veterans activities. The department is responsible for enforcing the state's veteran's preference law.

A Veterans Aid Loan Program, Transportation Program, and Hardship medical and non-medical Grant Programs are all administered by the department. The department is responsible for distributing information relating to veterans, veterans programs and veterans issues to the state veteran's population, interested parties and the general public through the use of email, news media, website, social media, CVSOs, veterans organizations and US mail. The department, working under the supervision of the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs, also monitors legislation and assists others in acquiring information.

Agency Mission Statement

The mission of the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs is to:

1. Assist Veterans and their families to obtain benefits for which they are entitled.
2. Ensure that Veterans of the State of North Dakota are aware of all benefits available.
3. Advocate for adequate and needed benefits for Veterans being mindful of changing needs of those Veterans.
4. Ensure adequate resources for Veterans and Veterans' programs.
5. Develop programs and services to meet Veterans' needs.

Agency Performance Measures

1. Strategic plan objectives: objectives set and are reviewed quarterly.
2. Performance audit recommendations: Performance audit conducted by state auditor's office in June of 2013 resulted in one formal recommendation. This recommendation has been addressed.
3. Legislative action taken by state legislature. All legislation required action has been and is being addressed.

Major Accomplishments

1. Provided four training conferences for County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs) and Tribal Veteran Service Officers (RVSOs).
2. Continued to archive DD214s into electronic data base for safe keeping and easy access.
3. Continued to improve veterans claims management program which will allow NDDVA and CVSOs to maintain, track, process and submit claims to the federal VA electronically.

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4. Established women's veteran support groups around the state, provided brochures, website information and mailer information.
5. Appointed a NDDVA staff member as the Minority Veterans coordinator. Have established great working relationships with all Native American tribes in ND.
6. Involved in legislative changes that resulted in: New Veterans Education Training program to prepare veterans for college; resident tuition for dependents of veterans attending ND schools; free tuition for dependents of veterans who were 100 percent disabled at time of death; Vietnam Veterans exposed to Agent Orange outreach program grant; grants for Stand Down events; grants for purchase of service dogs for veterans with PTSD; funding for the purchase of transportation vans for Veterans to get to the VA medical centers; additional \$250,0000 added to the Post War Trust Fund principal; reduced hunting and fishing fees for disabled veterans; fee removal for Gold Star, POW and DAV plates; DAV plates eligible for handicapped parking; increased property taxable value exemption amount; and added section for private employers to provide veterans hiring preference.
7. Continued to work on establishment of a Veterans Court in ND. Trained many law enforcement officers, attorneys and judges on PTSD and TBI.
8. Worked with Federal VA's Veteran Justice Outreach person to establish treatment for veterans rather than jail.
9. Applied for three federal grants: transportation grant; Veterans Cemetery improvement grant; and healthcare in rural areas grant.
10. Improved website and added many social media programs such as face book and twitter to educate veterans and dependents on benefits.
11. Collaborated in initiating the new ND Cares project.
12. Continued to improve on the training of new CVSOs.

Future Critical Issues

Future critical issues facing the Department are:

1. providing adequate pay to retain and attract employees.
 1. During the 2013-15 biennium NDDVA has already experience a 30 percent turnover all due to salary levels.
 2. While filling one position NDDVA had it's top 4 candidates turn down position due to the starting and final salary offered.
2. meeting the needs of state's veterans to ensure they and their dependents are aware of and receive the proper assistance they need to receive the benefits to which they are entitled.
3. meeting the needs of a veterans' population ranging in age from teenagers to those in their 80s and 90s.
4. meeting the needs of the ever increasing number of female veterans by providing the proper outreach and training to assist CVSOs and veterans.
5. providing a safe environment for veterans' records to include fireproof locking files as well as imaging capability to maintain, store and protect veterans' documents.
6. meeting the new and yet unknown needs of the veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. From exposure to multiple chemicals from burn pits to mental illness.
7. addressing the ever growing issue of high suicide rates of war veterans.
8. addressing the ever growing issue of PTSD and the effects it has on the veterans as well as their families.

REQUEST SUMMARY321 Department of Veterans Affairs
Biennium: 2015-2017

Bill#: HB1025

Date: 12/23/2014

Time: 12:42:03

Description	Expenditures 2011-2013 Biennium	Present Budget 2013-2015	Budget Request Change	Requested Budget 2015-2017 Biennium	Optional Budget Request
By Major Program					
Veterans Affairs Administration	1,384,927	1,723,636	(385,755)	1,337,881	2,979,035
Total Major Program	1,384,927	1,723,636	(385,755)	1,337,881	2,979,035
By Line Item					
Accrued Leave Payments	0	10,123	(10,123)	0	0
Technology Project Carry	0	7,933	(7,933)	0	0
Transport Vans	0	30,000	(30,000)	0	15,000
Grants - Agent Orange	0	50,000	(50,000)	0	50,000
Veterans' Affairs Administration	1,384,927	1,375,580	(37,699)	1,337,881	1,164,035
General Fund Transfer	0	250,000	(250,000)	0	1,750,000
Total Line Items	1,384,927	1,723,636	(385,755)	1,337,881	2,979,035
By Funding Source					
General Fund	1,384,927	1,723,636	(385,755)	1,337,881	2,703,339
Federal Funds	0	0	0	0	275,696
Special Funds					
Total Funding Source	1,384,927	1,723,636	(385,755)	1,337,881	2,979,035
Total FTE	7.00	8.00	0.00	8.00	2.00

REQUEST DETAIL321 Department of Veterans Affairs
Biennium: 2015-2017

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Description	Expenditures 2011-2013 Biennium	Present Budget 2013-2015	Budget Request Change	Requested Budget 2015-2017 Biennium	Optional Budget Request
Accrued Leave Payments					
Salaries - Permanent	0	10,123	(10,123)	0	0
Total	0	10,123	(10,123)	0	0
Accrued Leave Payments					
General Fund	0	10,123	(10,123)	0	0
Federal Funds	0	0	0	0	0
Special Funds	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	10,123	(10,123)	0	0
Technology Project Carry					
IT Contractual Svcs and Rprs	0	7,933	(7,933)	0	0
Total	0	7,933	(7,933)	0	0
Technology Project Carry					
General Fund	0	7,933	(7,933)	0	0
Federal Funds	0	0	0	0	0
Special Funds	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	7,933	(7,933)	0	0
Transport Vans					
Motor Vehicles	0	30,000	(30,000)	0	15,000
Total	0	30,000	(30,000)	0	15,000
Transport Vans					
General Fund	0	30,000	(30,000)	0	15,000
Federal Funds	0	0	0	0	0
Special Funds	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	30,000	(30,000)	0	15,000
Grants - Agent Orange					
Grants, Benefits & Claims	0	50,000	(50,000)	0	50,000
Total	0	50,000	(50,000)	0	50,000
Grants - Agent Orange					
General Fund	0	50,000	(50,000)	0	50,000
Federal Funds	0	0	0	0	0
Special Funds	0	0	0	0	0

REQUEST DETAIL321 Department of Veterans Affairs
Biennium: 2015-2017

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Description	Expenditures 2011-2013 Biennium	Present Budget 2013-2015	Budget Request Change	Requested Budget 2015-2017 Biennium	Optional Budget Request
Total	0	50,000	(50,000)	0	50,000
Veterans' Affairs Administration					
Salaries - Permanent	522,162	661,906	46,406	708,312	239,664
Salaries - Other	0	0	0	0	96,143
Temporary Salaries	988	0	0	0	54,080
Fringe Benefits	236,598	298,093	33,961	332,054	100,855
Travel	94,069	95,399	(15,473)	79,926	32,973
Supplies - IT Software	13,539	14,264	(5,610)	8,654	6,410
Supply/Material-Professional	2,456	2,100	(700)	1,400	2,050
Food and Clothing	165	200	(100)	100	0
Bldg, Ground, Maintenance	6,900	8,053	0	8,053	0
Miscellaneous Supplies	14,977	173	0	173	1,500
Office Supplies	11,949	8,036	(1,500)	6,536	5,350
Postage	992	6,006	(1,500)	4,506	3,000
Printing	2,486	3,150	(1,000)	2,150	4,450
IT Equip Under \$5,000	16,839	18,852	(11,000)	7,852	14,278
Other Equip Under \$5,000	4,806	250	0	250	0
Office Equip & Furn Supplies	2,290	900	(400)	500	0
Utilities	5,554	7,100	(1,000)	6,100	1,000
Insurance	2,929	2,752	870	3,622	400
Rentals/Leases-Equip & Other	6,808	6,954	0	6,954	0
Rentals/Leases - Bldg/Land	71,051	81,210	1,621	82,831	25,232
Repairs	1,199	1,351	0	1,351	2,000
IT - Data Processing	24,309	27,603	(2,000)	25,603	6,701
IT - Communications	17,305	19,100	(2,852)	16,248	3,840
IT Contractual Svcs and Rprs	37,919	21,832	(18,500)	3,332	61,935
Professional Development	4,248	6,116	0	6,116	4,200
Operating Fees and Services	493	2,291	(1,000)	1,291	20,700
Fees - Professional Services	23,786	21,889	(7,922)	13,967	8,922
Motor Vehicles	57,500	0	0	0	0
Grants, Benefits & Claims	200,610	60,000	(50,000)	10,000	468,352
Total	1,384,927	1,375,580	(37,699)	1,337,881	1,164,035
Veterans' Affairs Administration					
General Fund	1,384,927	1,375,580	(37,699)	1,337,881	888,339
Federal Funds	0	0	0	0	275,696
Special Funds	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1,384,927	1,375,580	(37,699)	1,337,881	1,164,035

REQUEST DETAIL

321 Department of Veterans Affairs
Biennium: 2015-2017

Bill#: HB1025

Date: 12/23/2014

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Description	Expenditures 2011-2013 Biennium	Present Budget 2013-2015	Budget Request Change	Requested Budget 2015-2017 Biennium	Optional Budget Request
General Fund Transfer					
Transfers Out	0	250,000	(250,000)	0	1,750,000
Total	0	250,000	(250,000)	0	1,750,000
General Fund Transfer					
General Fund	0	250,000	(250,000)	0	1,750,000
Federal Funds	0	0	0	0	0
Special Funds	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	250,000	(250,000)	0	1,750,000
Funding Sources					
General Fund	1,384,927	1,723,636	(385,755)	1,337,881	2,703,339
Federal Funds	0	0	0	0	275,696
Special Funds	0	0	0	0	0
Total Funding Sources	1,384,927	1,723,636	(385,755)	1,337,881	2,979,035

CHANGE PACKAGE SUMMARY

321 Department of Veterans Affairs
Biennium: 2015-2017

Bill#: HB1025

Date: 12/23/2014

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Description	Priority	FTE	General Fund	Federal Funds	Special Funds	Total Funds
Base Budget Changes						
One Time Budget Changes						
A-E 2 Removes 2013-2015 one-time funding for agency we		0.00	(15,000)	0	0	(15,000)
A-E 3 Removes 2013-2015 one-time funding for the purch		0.00	(30,000)	0	0	(30,000)
A-E 4 Removes funding for a transfer from the general		0.00	(250,000)	0	0	(250,000)
A-E 5 Removes 2013-2015 one-time funding for Agent Ora		0.00	(50,000)	0	0	(50,000)
A-E 6 Removes 2013-2015 Technology Project Carryover f		0.00	(7,933)	0	0	(7,933)
A-E 7 Removes 2013-2015 one-time funding for Service D		0.00	(50,000)	0	0	(50,000)
Total One Time Budget Changes		0.00	(402,933)	0	0	(402,933)
Ongoing Budget Changes						
A-A 1 To reflect adjustments needed to meet the 2015-2		0.00	(53,066)	0	0	(53,066)
Base Payroll Change		0.00	70,244	0	0	70,244
Total Ongoing Budget Changes		0.00	17,178	0	0	17,178
Total Base Budget Changes		0.00	(385,755)	0	0	(385,755)
Optional Budget Changes						
One Time Optional Changes						
A-D 1 Increase to the Principal of the Post War Trust	1	0.00	1,750,000	0	0	1,750,000
A-D 2 Website Upgrade	2	0.00	60,935	0	0	60,935
A-D 3 Treatment/Study for Veterans with TBI	3	0.00	108,352	0	0	108,352
Total One Time Optional Changes		0.00	1,919,287	0	0	1,919,287
Ongoing Optional Changes						
A-C 1 To restore base budget funding	1	0.00	47,846	0	0	47,846
A-C 2 Salary Equity Funding	2	0.00	96,143	0	0	96,143
A-C 3 Training Position	3	1.00	135,575	0	0	135,575
A-C 4 Veterans Organizations NSO Office	4	0.00	300,000	0	0	300,000
A-C 5 Temp Employees	5	0.00	59,488	0	0	59,488
A-C 6 Marketing / Advertising	6	0.00	20,000	0	0	20,000

CHANGE PACKAGE SUMMARY

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Biennium: 2015-2017

Description	Priority	FTE	General Fund	Federal Funds	Special Funds	Total Funds
A-C 7 Service Dogs for Veterans with PTSD	7	0.00	50,000	0	0	50,000
A-C 8 Agent Orange Outreach	8	0.00	50,000	0	0	50,000
A-C 9 Increased Funding for Stand Downs	9	0.00	10,000	0	0	10,000
A-C 10 Funding for Vans	10	0.00	15,000	0	0	15,000
A-C 12 State Approving Agency under ND DVA	12	1.00	0	275,696	0	275,696
Total Ongoing Optional Changes		2.00	784,052	275,696	0	1,059,748
Total Optional Budget Changes		2.00	2,703,339	275,696	0	2,979,035

BUDGET CHANGES NARRATIVE

321 Department of Veterans Affairs

Bill#: HB1025

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Change Group: A	Change Type: A	Change No: 1	Priority: 1
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To reflect adjustments needed to meet the 2015-2017 biennium

To reflect adjustments needed to meet the general fund request limit for the 2015-2017 biennium

Change Group: A	Change Type: C	Change No: 1	Priority: 1
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To restore base budget funding

To restore base budget funding to maintain operating levels for the 2015-2017 biennium. Costs increases in travel impact the agency's ability to participate and attend Outreach events throughout the State, as well as conduct CVSO training. Supplies - IT Software and IT Equipment under \$5,000 funds will continue our ability to stay current with technology changes and the agency's replacement schedule as recommended by ITD. Supplies - IT Software also includes vendor agreements covering our Claims and Loan Program software programs. These agreements cover support, maintenance, upgrades and off-site backups of these important programs. IT Contractual Services covers ongoing costs for transfers of DD214s from our VetraSpec software system (handles VA claims documents) to the State's FileNet system.

Change Group: A	Change Type: C	Change No: 2	Priority: 2
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Salary Equity Funding

Recruiting and retention of employees: During the current biennium we have experience 30% staff turnover. All staff turn-over was attributed to their salary/compensation amounts. Civilian, County and Federal employers are paying higher compensation packages. We have an employee with over 30 years with our agency that is still not at the MPP. We had four of our top candidates refuse employment due to the compensation package we could offer, this was for just one position we were trying to fill. It is unacceptable that we cannot afford to recruit the qualified staff we need. We need to provide funding to move these employees closer to a compensation package which is more reflective of the work that they are doing and competitive with the civilian, county and Federal employment markets. In looking at the last legislative session and the target goal to have state employees compensated at 95% of the MPP we would need an additional \$96,143.

Change Group: A	Change Type: C	Change No: 3	Priority: 3
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Training Position

In an attempt to meet the demand for training we are proposing one new FTE to act as the training officer & benefits specialist. 70% of the training officer's time would be spent attending training, producing training programs, creating training kits and binders and conducting training with CVSO's. This would include complete initial training for new CVSO's as well as continued training on basic and advanced levels of knowledge for current CVSO's. 30% of the training officer's time would be spent doing hands on work helping veterans obtain benefits such as filing claims, as they will need to be proficient at what they are instructing and changes happen frequently. One of the biggest concerns our CVSO's seem to have revolves around training. We need more staff dedicated to training in order to properly accomplish this objective. Better trained and informed CVSO's will result in much better services to our veterans and their dependents. This will greatly improve the lives of many of our veteran's and their dependents.

An added note: the Federal VA expended over \$334,755,000.00 in 2013 and over \$279,238,000.00 in 2012. That is over half a Billion Dollars in Federal funds coming into North Dakota during the last Biennium. Without VSO's this does not happen. Also this is an increase of over \$55,000,000.00 in just one year. The increase difference between 2012 and 2011 was \$44,000,000.00. Better trained VSO's will be able to improve on this.

BUDGET CHANGES NARRATIVE

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Change Group: A	Change Type: C	Change No: 4	Priority: 4
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Veterans Organizations NSO Office

Currently the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (NDDVA) acts as the Power of Attorney (POA) for Veteran Service Organizations which cannot support a POA in the state of North Dakota. Some of these organizations are the Blinded Veterans Association, Military Order of the Purple Heart, NCO Association of the USA, The Retired Enlisted Association and the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) and most recently the American Veterans (AMVETS). By providing representation for these organizations, Veterans who have chosen one of these organizations as their POA will have representation through the NDDVA. Over half of the states in the country have contracts and/or working relationships to provide state funding to these organizations. For instance our neighboring states; Montana-represent American legion, VVA; South Dakota-SDVA represents all organizations- DAV is the only organization not staffed by state employees in South Dakota; Minnesota- represents the American Legion.

The North Dakota Chapters of the American Legion and the VFW have indicated that they are no longer financially situated to fund their POA positions at the Fargo VA Regional Office. The VFW has indicated that 60% of this year's entire states budget went to the POA's at the Fargo VA Regional Office, their memberships are down and they foresee, with the trend of the past years, the department will not be capable of funding these positions in the very near future.

The Fargo Veterans Affairs Regional Office (VARO) claim inventory historically shows the VFW and American Legion have over 55% of the total claims at the Fargo VARO. The VFW and American Legion POA officers are funded only by their state organizations.

The DAV also provides POA services at the Fargo VARO. They are funded by their National organizations, which have shown some concern over funding as well.

During the current biennium the National AMVETS eliminated their POA in North Dakota. The POA was taken over by the NDDVA which increased our workload.

If the VFW, DAV and American Legion cannot fund these positions-this will fall on the NDDVA to provide services to these veterans.

To ensure that each organization can continue to fund their POA's at the Fargo VARO we are requesting a \$50,000 per year per organization grant from the NDDVA budget to supplement their operating expenses. This would be \$50,000 x 3 organizations or \$150,000 per year or \$300,000 per biennium.

Change Group: A	Change Type: C	Change No: 5	Priority: 5
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Temp Employees

Temporary employee needed to assist NDDVA in collecting data, researching available resources, and contacting stakeholders required to complete projects and programs NDDVA's is working on. Such as Coordination of Mental health providers, Establishing a Veterans Court, establishing help for veterans with barriers to education due to; PTSD, reintegration issues, and TBI; coordinating opportunities for veteran entrepreneurs, employment opportunities, addressing veteran homelessness, transportation to medical services, establishing a Fischer House for the ND Veterans, Website data, healthcare and other benefits available to veterans.

Change Group: A	Change Type: C	Change No: 6	Priority: 6
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Marketing / Advertising

The North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs has never had marketing -advertising funds to let our Veteran know who we are, where we are and what we do. Much less that we exist. One of the biggest comments we hear from veterans when we do our outreach events is they did not know there were state and county veteran service officers. From that many do not know of the benefits they have earned and the services that are available to them.

BUDGET CHANGES NARRATIVE**321 Department of Veterans Affairs****Bill#: HB1025****Date:** 12/23/2014**Time:** 12:42:03

The continuing war on terror we will see more and more young veterans returning home with physical and mental disabilities. One of the main concerns we have is for those who go untreated. Many veterans do not want to admit that a year or more in a combat zone seeing and taking part in unspeakable acts will cause mental health issues. These issues if not treated can become disorders which will affect them and their families the rest of their lives. Treatments are available and from various sources. We need to be able to reach out to the Veterans and their families to educate them on these illnesses and the resources available to help them deal with them.

The quickest and most efficient method to get the word out to our Veterans is through marketing and advertising. As the agency charged with the care of our veterans we need to be the forefront in making contact with our veterans and their families.

Change Group: A	Change Type: C	Change No: 7	Priority: 7
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Service Dogs for Veterans with PTSD

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a real illness which greatly affects the quality of lives for well over 35% of our veterans. PTSD is also a large contributing factor in the alarming rate of suicides within our veteran community. Nationally it is estimated that a veteran will successfully commit suicide every 80 minutes which results in over 6,000 suicides per year. The 2013 Suicide numbers for North Dakota have not been released yet. But in 2012 North Dakota had 18 Veteran Suicides and 25 in 2011. As a comparison we have lost 26 North Dakotans in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2001. We have lost over 230 North Dakotan Veterans to suicide since 2001 (without the 2013 numbers). These service dogs can greatly improve the quality of lives of our veterans who have many hidden injuries from their war experiences. The 63rd legislative assemblies SB 2344 appropriated \$50,000 to the NDDVA for the purchase of service dogs for our veterans. We would like to continue this appropriation in our budget.

Change Group: A	Change Type: C	Change No: 8	Priority: 8
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Agent Orange Outreach

Agent Orange is a highly toxic herbicide used by the U.S. military during the Vietnam War to defoliate hiding places used by the Viet Cong, rice paddies and fields that provided them with food, and to clear the perimeters of military bases to give service members a clear line of fire. Although colorless, it is known as "Agent Orange" because of an orange band painted on the drums used to store and transports it. Over 50 diseases are linked to Agent Orange exposure to include diabetes, Parkinson's, heart diseases, many cancers and birth defects.

Upon returning from Vietnam our veterans were not treated well and the US Government did not recognize these diseases as connected to Agent Orange Exposure. The VA was not equipped to care for these service members. Now many of our Vietnam veterans are suffering from these diseases and are not aware that the Veterans affairs has changed immensely since their return and care is available. This grant is important to maintain in our budget so we can continue to reach out to these veterans who suffer from the effects of Agent Orange and are now facing an average life expectancy of 65 years of age due to this exposure. Korean War vets life expectancy is 75 years and WWII veterans life expectancy is 77.5 years.

North Dakota's 63rd legislative assembly appropriated \$50,000 to NDDVA as grant funding to provide outreach to our Vietnam Veterans. NDDVA would like to continue the appropriation as part of its budget.

Change Group: A	Change Type: C	Change No: 9	Priority: 9
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Increased Funding for Stand Downs

BUDGET CHANGES NARRATIVE**321 Department of Veterans Affairs****Bill#: HB1025****Date:** 12/23/2014**Time:** 12:42:03

This appropriation is to provide funding for Stand Down events in communities across North Dakota. during the 2013-15 biennium Stand Down events were conducted in Bismarck, Minot, Dickinson, Williston, Bottineau, Watford City and Fargo. These events bring many organizations together in one place to provide service to our veteran's in need. The main focus is directed at homeless veterans. The veteran's service organizations in North Dakota conduct fund raising and use other resources for these events also. This funding is needed to ensure these events continue. During the current biennium the funding for stand down events were expended in the first year. No further funding is available. Historically \$20,000 has been sufficient for the biennium. We are requesting \$10,000 in addition to the \$10,000 in our base budget which was included by the legislature for the 2013-2015 biennium.

Change Group: A	Change Type: C	Change No: 10	Priority: 10
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Funding for Vans

NDDVA's budget for 2013-2015 included \$30,000 for the purchase of transportation vans. This funding along with funding from the Columbia Trust is used to purchase vans to transport veterans from across ND to the VAMC in Fargo. In working with the Columbia Trust NDDVA's has been able to purchase a van for \$14,000-\$14,500 during the last two bienniums. During the current biennium NDDVA purchased two vans. When we submit applications to the Columbia Trust we also request that the trust consider us for a free van, the trust provides 1 or 2 free vans nationwide each year. In 2014 North Dakota will receive a free van in addition to the vans we purchased. It is our expectation that we will only need to purchase one more van in the next biennium. We are requesting that the \$30,000 funding for vans be continued at the lesser amount of \$15,000 for the 2015-2017 biennium.

Change Group: A	Change Type: C	Change No: 12	Priority: 12
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State Approving Agency under ND DVA

The Governor assigns State Approving Agency (SAA) responsibility to an oversight agency, by letter of designation. The North Dakota University System (NDUS) was assigned this responsibility in the 1960's. Initially, the main role of SAA was to approve public institutions and their academic programs for veteran's benefits. Therefore, in many states, including ND, responsibility was assigned to Departments of Higher Education. Since October 2011, SAA no longer approves or supervises academic programs at public institutions, as this function has been re-assigned to each state's Education Liaison Representative who reports to the federal Chief Education Liaison Officer. The SAA only approves and supervises academic programs at the tribal and private colleges.

Currently, the primary responsibility and focus of the SAA is to conduct on-site compliance surveys to approved institutions and schools—public, private and tribal.

As a result of these changes, it is recommended that SAA responsibilities, along with staffing (1.0 federal funded FTE) be re-assigned to the ND Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA), which is a state agency, reporting to the Governor.

As State and National Priorities change, as the function of government undergoes perpetual re-examination, and as the needs of our Veterans evolve with changes in American society, it is reasonable we develop and maintain a strong collaborative working relationship with the ND DVA and ND SAA. This re-assignment provides a necessary alignment of abilities so they can stand ready to meet the challenges before them.

Approximately 24 states now have their Department of Veterans Affairs oversee their State Approving Agencies.

Co-located and coordinated efforts between veterans' services agencies and functions would result in:

- Better use of resources to serve veterans
- Improved oversight of institutions to verify continued compliance with state and federal requirements; to prevent fraud, waste and abuse; to offer training; and at the request of the VA to investigate and provide assistance with compliance/program issues

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- Improved assistance to schools, training establishments and individuals regarding approval of program and certification of veterans
- Increased outreach activities to promote the increased usage of veterans educational benefits
- Improved coordination with government, veteran and educational entities to facilitate the approval of programs and increase educational opportunities for veterans.
- Shift of 1.0 federally funded FTE position from NDUS to VA.
 - This shift is supported by the current VA director.
 - This shift is supported by the past two and the current Interim Chancellor.
 - This shift is supported by the ND SAA Director.
 - This shift is supported by the ND DVA Commissioner.

Change Group: A	Change Type: D	Change No: 1	Priority: 1
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Increase to the Principal of the Post War Trust Fund (PWTF)

The PWTF is defined in the NDCC as follows:

37-14-14. Veterans' postwar trust fund. The veterans' postwar trust fund is a permanent trust fund of the state of North Dakota and consists of moneys transferred or credited to the fund under this chapter and other laws. Investment of the fund is the responsibility of the state treasurer who shall invest the fund only in those legal investments authorized by section 21-10-07. All income received from investments is to be utilized only for programs of benefit and service to veterans or their dependents, and all income earned in a biennium is appropriated to the administrative committee on veterans' affairs on a continuing basis in the following biennium and not in the biennium the income is earned for expenditure on these programs as authorized by law.

The PWTF has only begun to grow in the last biennium. Prior to that time the fund stayed at \$4.1Million dollars. The buying power of \$4.1Million dollars when the fund was set up and the buying power today are quite different. With a portion of the funds interest earnings going back into principal to grow the fund along with the lower rate of interest combined with the lower buying power of the interest earned we are in need of a higher principal balance. The funding available for service to benefits from the PWTF is not enough to fully fund all programs and properly care for our veteran's. In the interest of caring for our veterans of today and ensuring we can provide for the unmet needs of our veterans in the future we have determined that an additional \$2,000,000 in principal is needed. This principal amount will never be spent-only invested so the interest earnings can be distributed. During the 63rd legislative assembly HB 1468 requested \$2,000,000. \$250,000 was appropriated and added to the principal of the PWTF. Under the direction and advice of the 63rd legislative assembly leadership we are adding the remaining \$1,750,000 to our budget.

Change Group: A	Change Type: D	Change No: 2	Priority: 2
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Website Upgrade

During the last two legislative sessions we asked for our website upgrade stating the following...

"This would convert our agency website to Drupal CMS enabling department staff to make content changes to the pages on the website. Previously we had to submit all changes through ITD which was not cost efficient. It would give more control in to the agency in terms of content and management of the website. "The website is still hosted by ND ITD and held to the Web Standards in place."

ND ITD representatives spoke to the appropriations committees explaining what the conversion would entail and what the cost would be. It was estimated that at the new rates the cost would be \$15,593. Once the analysis and estimates were completed during the 2011-2013 biennium the bid was \$30,411 for the full Drupal conversion. I asked for a "base level" estimate to get us started and that came to \$18,285. I approved the base level amount because our website is and will be the main tool for resources for North Dakota Veterans and it needs to be completed. ITD estimates that it will cost a little more than the total \$30,411 bid to finish the Drupal conversion

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during the 2013-2015 biennium. During the 2013-15 biennium we needed to have ITD analyze and estimate the cost to finish the website. The project is not completed and an estimated \$60,935 is needed to complete.

Change Group: A	Change Type: D	Change No: 3	Priority: 3
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Treatment/Study for Veterans with TBI

HeartSprings is proposing a half day transitional program to begin to heal the brain and body of four military clients living with a traumatic brain injury. The program would highlight changes and challenges and assess the progress and potential future programming to get our ND veterans back to work and/or improve their quality of life.

The program would start with pre and post-testing measures by a physical, occupational and speech therapist. Then, the clients would become part of a half day program for one year that would consist of proven methods to stimulate the brain through exercise, ease stress, encourage eating the right kind of food for their brains, learn how to cook and grow their own foods, artistic work for expression, community support and encouragement. Many of the methods we will be using can be found on Mayo Clinic's website at: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/departments-centers/general-internal-medicine/minnesota/overview/specialty-groups/complementary-integrative-medicine> or Duke Integrative Medicine website at: <http://www.dukeintegrativemedicine.org/> or Scripps Integrative Medicine website at: http://www.scripps.org/services/integrative-medicine/programs-and-services__classes or our yoga therapist training took specialty training in trauma sensitive yoga at Kripalu and you can see it here: <http://kripalu.org/program/view/TSYT-142>

These will all be carried out by our trained practitioners in occupational therapy, physical therapy, nursing, massage/reflexology, yoga therapy, etc. which have become certified in many complementary medicine practices.

HeartSprings has shown consistent and progressive work with neurological clients over the past six years and demonstrates improvements in quality of life for service members and civilians alike. HeartSprings has worked closely with the head psychiatrist, Dr. Leone at the Veterans Affairs Healthcare System and has brought three types of yoga for stress relief, fitness, and chronic pain to our veterans through HeartSprings yoga therapists (one veteran completely got off his pain medication)! HeartSprings has and continues to partner with the MS society, the Parkinson's Disease Foundation, and the local neurology center in dealing with these chronic regional challenges using methods that heal the brain and body; showing a history of the working with the brain. HeartSprings recently did a study on the use of a sleep pillow with eleven veterans, including some vets from the Vet Center, which changed the quality of sleep and reduced nightmares in ALL of the Vietnam, Gulf war, and OEF/OIF veterans!

Military service members comprise the highest per capita of citizens in the state of North Dakota than any other state in the United States. Additionally, North Dakota has the highest suicide rate per capita of veterans in the United States. Sixty percent (60%) of the veterans returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) have sustained blast injuries and almost sixty-seven percent (66.7%) of these veterans are returning to civilian life with a traumatic brain injury. These veterans are North Dakota community members who primarily serve as members of the North Dakota National Guard. These are citizen soldiers, who return to North Dakota to their families and their communities after they have served our country in war. Their chronic illnesses are over burdening the Veterans Healthcare System and taking an extreme toll on their families.

North Dakota has over 13,000 residents who live with a traumatic brain injury (TBI) long-term disability; yet the state has only two facilities that house individuals with severe head injuries. These facilities provide no treatment for mild to moderate traumatic brain injuries. Nationwide, the percentage of injury-related productivity loss attributed to TBI is 14 times that associated with spinal cord injury and as described above, many of those suffering with TBIs are veterans and their families.

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Change Group: A	Change Type: E	Change No: 2	Priority: 1
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Removes 2013-2015 one-time funding for agency website update.

Full Drupal conversion to agency's website has been completed by ITD. The website is still hosted by ITD and held to the Web Standards in place.

Change Group: A	Change Type: E	Change No: 3	Priority: 2
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Removes 2013-2015 one-time funding for the purchase of vans

Two vans have been purchased to help transport veterans throughout the State.

Change Group: A	Change Type: E	Change No: 4	Priority: 3
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Removes funding for a transfer from the general fund to the Veterans'

Removes transfer from the general fund to the veterans' postwar trust fund to increase the principal balance of the fund. (H.B. 1439).

Change Group: A	Change Type: E	Change No: 5	Priority: 4
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Removes 2013-2015 one-time funding for Agent Orange Grants

Removes grant funding used to identify and provide services to North Dakota veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange.

Change Group: A	Change Type: E	Change No: 6	Priority: 5
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Removes 2013-2015 Technology Project Carryover funding

Full Drupal conversion to agency's website has been completed by ITD. The website is still hosted by ITD and held to the Web Standards in place.

Change Group: A	Change Type: E	Change No: 7	Priority: 6
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Removes 2013-2015 one-time funding for Service Dogs

Removes funding to train service dogs to assist North Dakota veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder (SB 2344).

Change Group: R	Change Type: A	Change No: 1	Priority:
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Increased Operating Costs

Provides \$47,846 to restore funding to the base budget. As costs are increasing in the state, it effect travel, supplies and IT services in the Veterans Affairs budget.

Change Group: R	Change Type: A	Change No: 2	Priority:
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Salary Equity

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Provides \$55,100 salary adjustments for targeted market equity.

Change Group: R	Change Type: A	Change No: 3	Priority:
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Stand Downs

Provides additional \$10,000 for ongoing funding of outreach to veterans.

Change Group: R	Change Type: A	Change No: 4	Priority:
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Vans

Provides \$15,000 to purchase one van. This funding will remain as ongoing in their budget to allow the purchase/replacement of one van per biennium. Vans are used to transport veterans to medical appointments at the VA in Fargo.

Change Group: R	Change Type: A	Change No: 5	Priority:
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State Approving Agency

Provides \$275,696 federal authority and 1.00 FTE. The program is currently located in Higher Education. The position no longer approves and supervises academic programs at public institutions, only at the tribal and private colleges. The individual currently holding this position would transfer from Higher Education to Veterans Affairs.

Change Group: R	Change Type: A	Change No: 100	Priority:
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Executive Compensation Package Adjustment

This budget change provides funding for recommended 2015-17 compensation adjustments.