

CLAYTON COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS MEETING

600 Gunder Road NE, Elkader, Iowa 52043

March 11, 2025, at 7:30 a.m.

The Veterans Commission Meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. on March 11, 2025, at the Clayton County Office Building Meeting Room.

**I.) Roll Call:** Commissioners Clark, Torkelson and Jordan, Administrator, Randy Moose, 4<sup>th</sup> District Vice Commander from Garnavillo, IA.

**II.) Approval of Minutes:** Motion was made by Clark to approve the minutes from the February 10, 2025 meeting, seconded by Torkelson. Motion carried unanimously.

**III.) Public Comments:** Randy Moose, 4<sup>th</sup> District Vice Commander from Garnavillo, IA representing the 4<sup>th</sup> District which includes the following counties: Buchanan, Clayton, and Delaware Counties appeared at the March 11, 2025 Meeting. He noted that the 4<sup>th</sup> District Spring Meeting will be held in Independence on April 19, 2025 beginning at 9:00 a.m. Veterans' benefits could be impacted with staff reductions and longer processing claim times. The Veterans Service Officers (VSO) will continue to process claims and support veterans and their families. The American Legion is here to support their efforts.

**IV.) Budget Review:** Jordan distributed the current Fiscal Budget for Period Ending: February 28, 2025. The Veterans Affairs office spent \$14,780.12 during the month of February 2025. A total of 49.26% remains in the budget for the year. Jordan reviewed additional expenses incurring this month to include items to be distributed at the Clayton County Fair in August 2025 advertising veteran services available at the VA Office. These items include stress balls, sunshades, baseballs, and pens. He also indicated that funds were spent on obtaining sympathy cards to be sent to families upon a veteran's death. Clark made the motion to approve the budget, Torkelson seconded the motion; the motion carried unanimously.

**V.) Old Business:**

a). Jordan reported back with the information regarding the stipends in the other counties. The Buchanan County has a \$25.00 stipend per trip using their own vehicles to transport. The following counties have a shuttle service: Allamakee, Winneshiek, Howard, Fayette, and Chickasaw paying \$60.00 per trip and they do not reimburse mileage. Dubuque has no stipend and no mileage reimbursement. Our reimbursement is \$75.00 per trip. The vehicle is maintained through the Veterans Administration Services Office. Eilers will coordinate with the Veterans Administration to get repair services performed which would include replacement of tires.

b). The number of Commissioners remains at three. There is one other applicant interested in the Commission bringing the count to four Commissioners, but an uneven number of Commissioners is needed when voting. The Commission should be increased to five Commissioners. Jordan is willing to contact Legion Posts to see if there is an interest in filling the Commission positions. Moose said he would be happy to place the information on the American Legion Clayton Co. Iowa Facebook page. He said he would also advertise for van drivers interested in serving Clayton County.

c). Jordan stated that he was continuing collaborative outreach opportunities with Crawford and Grant Counties in Wisconsin.

d). The Commission members will have their semi-annual training from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. on March 18. This will be virtual training. Jordan indicated that he would be attending the National Spring Training in Minnesota in April, 2025.

## **VI.) New Business:**

a). Saturday, March 29, 2025 is National Vietnam Veterans' Day. There will be a gathering of Vietnam veterans at TDs in Elkader beginning at 2:00 p.m.

b). The December Statistical Report was distributed. 24 total calls were received this month re: Veteran related concerns. 11 total office visits from Veterans were completed, 2 home visits were completed, 0 outreach events were conducted, and 1 training event occurred.

c). Tricare Issues. Since the beginning of the year, military families have reported challenges in accessing medical care resulting from the new contract with Tri West Healthcare Alliance. Tri West assumed the contract on January 1, 2024; however, there have been reports that the transition has impacted beneficiaries' ability to access health care services. Among the issues have been difficulty with getting appointments with specialists; prolonged wait times with members services, issues with online portal, and interruption in coverage. TriWest have been working to resolve the issues. The Defense Health Agency has acknowledged the issues and is working with TriWest to address the concerns.

d). Tax Season Guidance for Veterans. VA Benefits: Veterans should note that VA disability benefits, inclusive VA pension, VR&E benefits, educational benefits (i.e. GI Bill) are not considered taxable income. Veterans may qualify for a federal tax refund if their VA disability percentage increased, including retroactive adjustments. IRS Free Filing: Veterans with an adjustment gross income of \$79,000 or less can file electronically using an IRS Free File software provider. Veterans with high income can use Free File fillable forms. In-Person Help: Veterans with an adjustment income of \$64,000 or less, veterans with disabilities, or veterans aged 60 or older can receive free in-person assistance from an IRS certified volunteer.

e). VA Benefits & White House Funding Freeze Order. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, veteran Benefits and support services will not be affected by White House freeze on federal financial programs. VA services are inclusive of education support, suicide prevention programs, and homeless assistance. VA Secretary has confirmed that the financial halt will not disrupt health care or veteran benefits. The Office of Management and Budget called for a pause on federal financial assistance disbursements to ensure that funds were not linked to diversity and inclusion programs.

## **VII. Review and approval of Claims:**

**VIII. Confirmation of the Next Meeting:** Next meeting will be on April 14, 2025, at 7:30 a.m.

**IX. Adjournment:** Clark made the motion to adjourn, Torkelson seconded the motion; Motion unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Gerrie Torkelson

# March Report

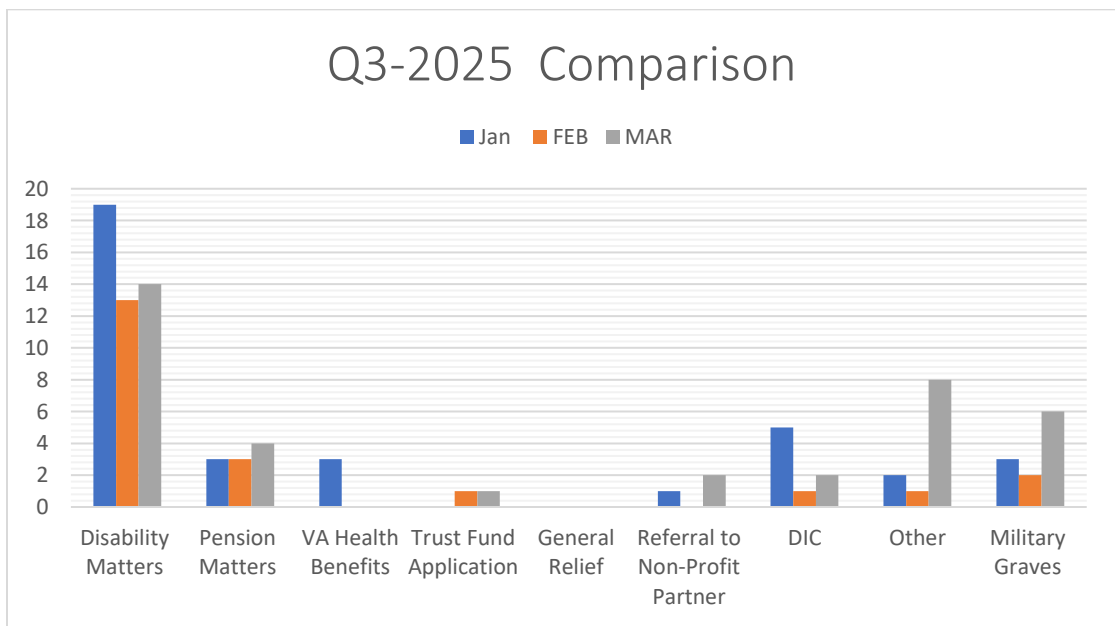
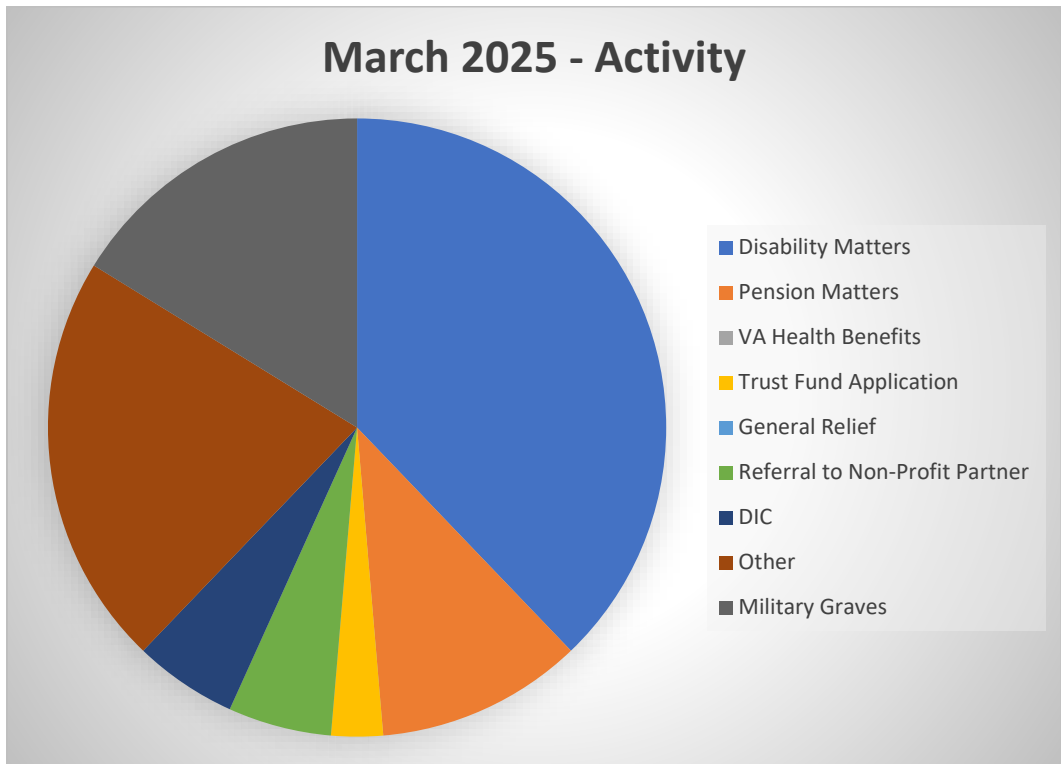
**38** total number of calls received this month re: Veteran related concerns.

**15** total office visits from Veterans.

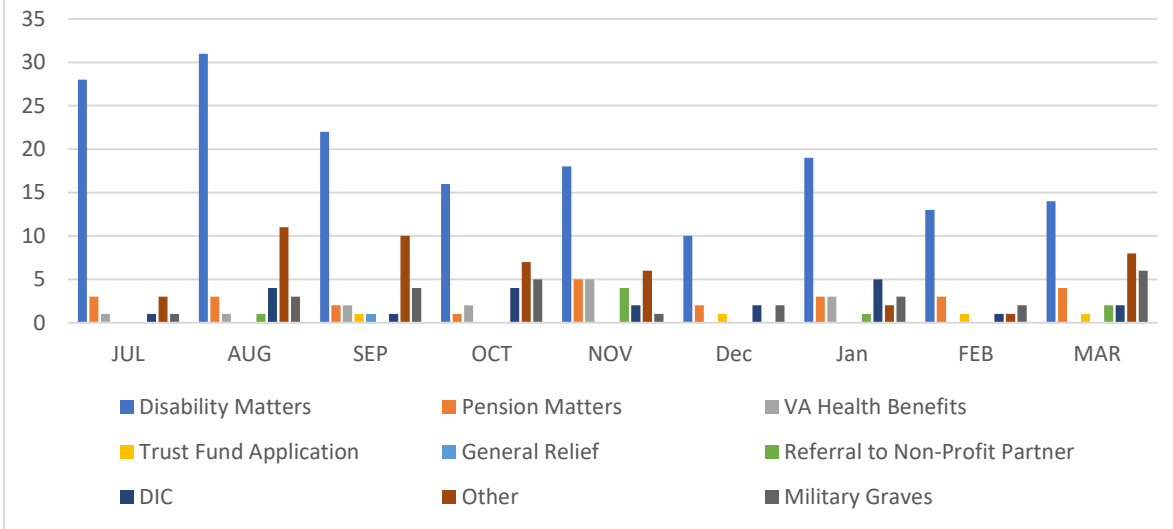
**0** home visits

**0** outreach events

**3** training events

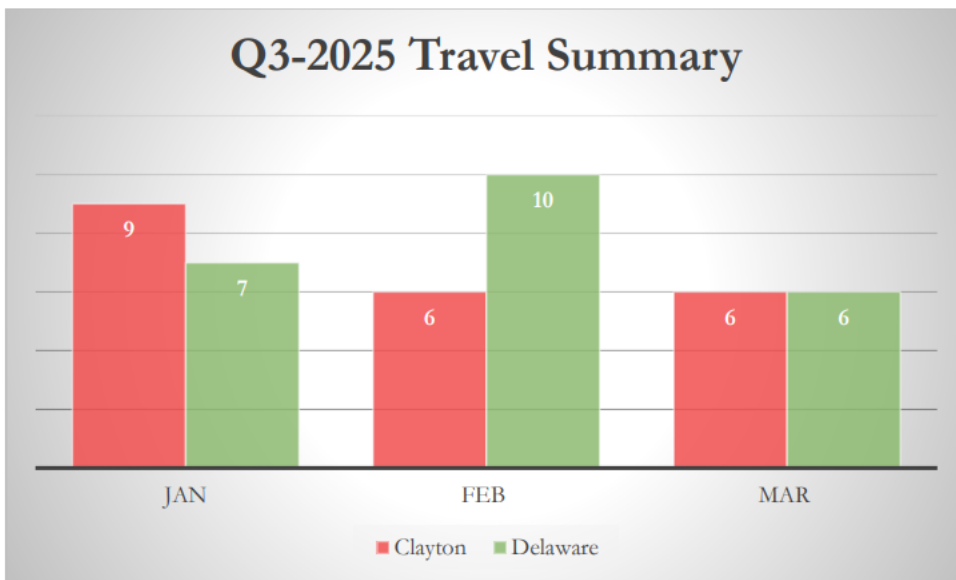


### March 2025-YTD Comparison



**VA Shuttle Travel for Q3** – this summary was provided because we’re seeing an increase in ridership and frequency of use. This occurred during the winter season and perhaps our relative mild winter was a contributing factor.

### Q3-2025 Travel Summary



**VA & State Updates:** NO UPDATES AT THIS TIME