

CLAYTON COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS MEETING
CLAYTON COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING/CONFERENCE ROOM 1
600 Gunder Road NE, Elkader, Iowa 52043
June 9, 2025, at 7:30 a.m.

The Veterans Commission Meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. on June 9, 2025, at the Clayton County Office Building Meeting Conference Room #1.

I.) Roll Call: Commissioners Clark, Eilers, Torkelson, and Jordan, Director, were present.

II.) Approval of Minutes: Motion was made by Eilers to approve the minutes from the May 12, 2025, meeting, seconded by Clark. Motion carried unanimously.

III.) Public Comments: No comments were noted.

IV.) Budget Review: Jordan distributed the current Fiscal Budget for Period Ending: May 31, 2025. The Veterans Affairs office spent \$6,714.47 during the month of May 2025. A total of 18.66% remains in the budget for the year. Jordan indicated that all funds will be allocated for the current year ending June 30, 2025. Clark made the motion to approve the budget, Eilers seconded the motion; the motion carried unanimously.

V.) Old Business:

a). Discussion was held regarding the 28E Agreement enforced when VSO position is vacant. Jordan spoke with peers in Allamakee County, and they are interested in establishing an agreement for joint services in the event of a vacancy.

b). Jordan contacted the Clayton County Human Resources Officer and obtained the Performance Appraisal Form for Employees. This form is being used as a template for the Secondary Roads Department in evaluating staff performance. Jordan distributed this form to the Commissioners for review.

c). Jordan gave a report to the Commissioners regarding the 80 theater tickets that were purchased for veterans and their families. A total of 66 tickets had been distributed to 19 veterans and their families. 14 tickets are remaining. Jordan noted that the average age of the veterans obtaining the tickets were in their late 60s and early 70s. Jordan felt that we could use future grant dollars to purchase additional tickets. Jordan also thought that it was a good thing to do annually. It supports veterans and their families, and at the same time supports local businesses. It was a great way to introduce veterans to our Veterans Service Officer and the services that are provided to veterans in our County.

VI.) New Business:

a). Jordan stated that Rochelle Fuller from Senator Grassley's office was stopping tomorrow to visit with him concerning questions or needs of our Clayton County VA Office.

b). Jordan reported and distributed a letter from the Iowa Department of Veteran Affairs dated May 29, 2025 with the Subject: FY 26 Training Requirements. He stated that he maintains a cross-accreditation with the following organizations: American Legion, National Association of County Veterans Service Officers, and Disabled American Veterans enabling him to work with and support veterans.

c). Discussion was held regarding the replacement of cemetery markers due to missing or damaged markers. Motion was made by Clark and seconded by Eilers to have the VA office cover these costs using the Funeral Services/Grave Marker Care line items in the Veterans Affairs Budget. Motion carried unanimously.

d). Application forms have been received regarding the Progressive Keys to Progress Veteran Vehicle Giveaway Program. Completed applications and all supporting documentation should be submitted by Sponsors between Friday, April 4,

2025, and Friday, August 1, 2025. To be eligible to enter, an applicant must meet all of the criteria at the time their application is submitted. The goal of gifting vehicles to recipients in all 50 states, is giving away an estimated 100 vehicles to veterans and their families as well as some active-duty members, Gold Star spouses/domestic partners, veteran-owned businesses and non-profit organizations. Progressive, together with business affiliates and several military and charity organizations, will present the vehicles to the recipients. Progressive works with military and charity organizations to find recipients in need of a vehicle and gather their stories. Vehicles are donated to recipients through a non-profit organization.

e). The May Statistical Report was distributed. 27 total number of calls received this month re: Veteran related concerns. 19 total office visits from Veterans. 1 home visit for Veterans, and 1 training event.

f). The US Department of Veterans Affairs announced an update to the VA's Community Care Program. The Community Care Program, which was established in 2018, enables eligible veterans to receive medical treatment from healthcare providers outside of the VA system. A veteran may qualify for care if:

- * Needed services are not available at the VA facility.
 - * The veteran faces long wait times for VA appointments (more than 20 days for primary or mental health and 28 days for specialty care).
 - * The drive time to a VA care facility is excessive (over 30 minutes for primary or mental health care or over 60 minutes for specialty care).
 - * The Veteran lives in a state or US territory without a full-service VA hospital.
 - * The VA services do not meet quality standards.
 - * Receiving care in the community is in the best medical interest of the veteran.
 - * The Veteran qualifies under grandfathered provisions from previous Veterans Choice Programs.
- Effective immediately, the VA is removing the extra review step which previously required the Veteran to obtain a second opinion letter from another VA doctor to support a request for community care. With this change, Veterans should experience quicker access to care whether that be a VA facility or in the community.

The Department of Veteran Affairs has announced a major initiative to improve the way it serves the survivors and dependents of deceased veterans and service members. As of May 2025, the VA is introducing the following three key updates to better support survivors:

- * Restoring the Office of Survivor Assistance – This will be realigned under the VA secretary where it can directly advise on survivor related policy and ensure that their voices are heard.
- * Launching “White-Glove” Survivor Outreach Team – This team will be based at the Philadelphia Regional (DIC) claims process and offer hands-on support
- * Leveraging the use of automation to streamline benefit processing. Use of such tools should make processing claims faster and easier for survivors to navigate.

How to Contact the Office of Survivors Assistance?

Survivors who need assistance or have questions about their benefits can contact the office in several ways:

- * Visit the VA's Ask VA Portal to submit questions, upload documents and get updates on claims. Ask. Va.gov found at <https://www.va.gov/contact-us/ask-va/introduction> (Note this may require created a Login.gov or ID.me account).
- * Call the VA main information line at 1-800-698-2411
- * Contact the Survivor Benefit Coordinator at your local VA regional office
- * Visit the VA's survivors benefits section found at <https://www.va.gov/family-and-caregiver-benefits/>

VII. Review and approval of Claims:

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

IX. Adjournment: Eilers made the motion to adjourn, Clark seconded the motion; Motion unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Gerrie Torkelson

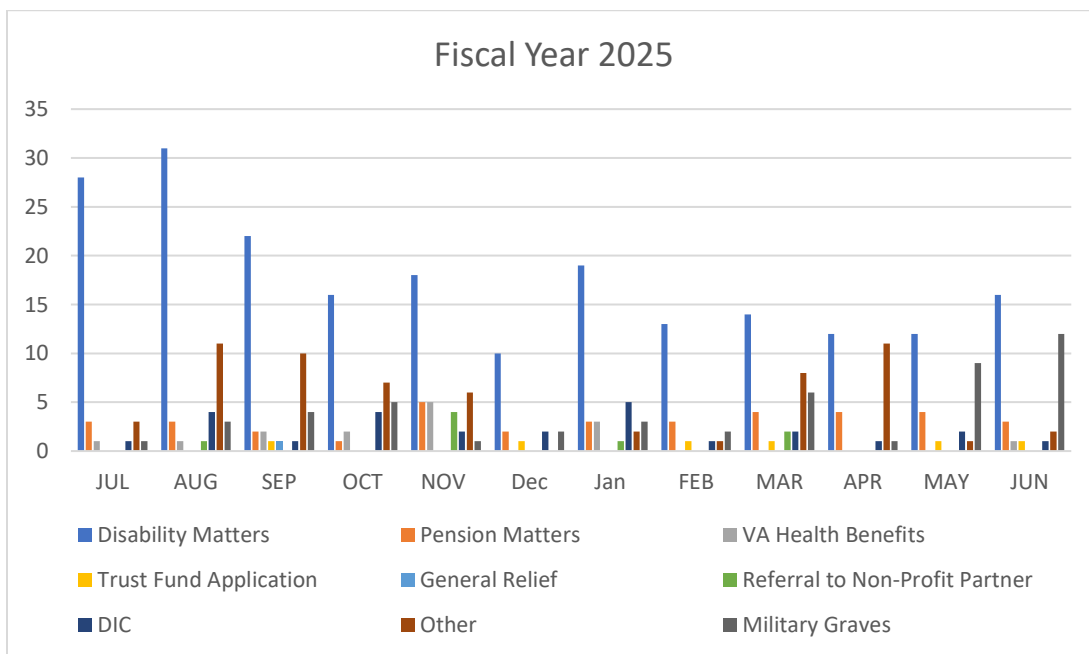
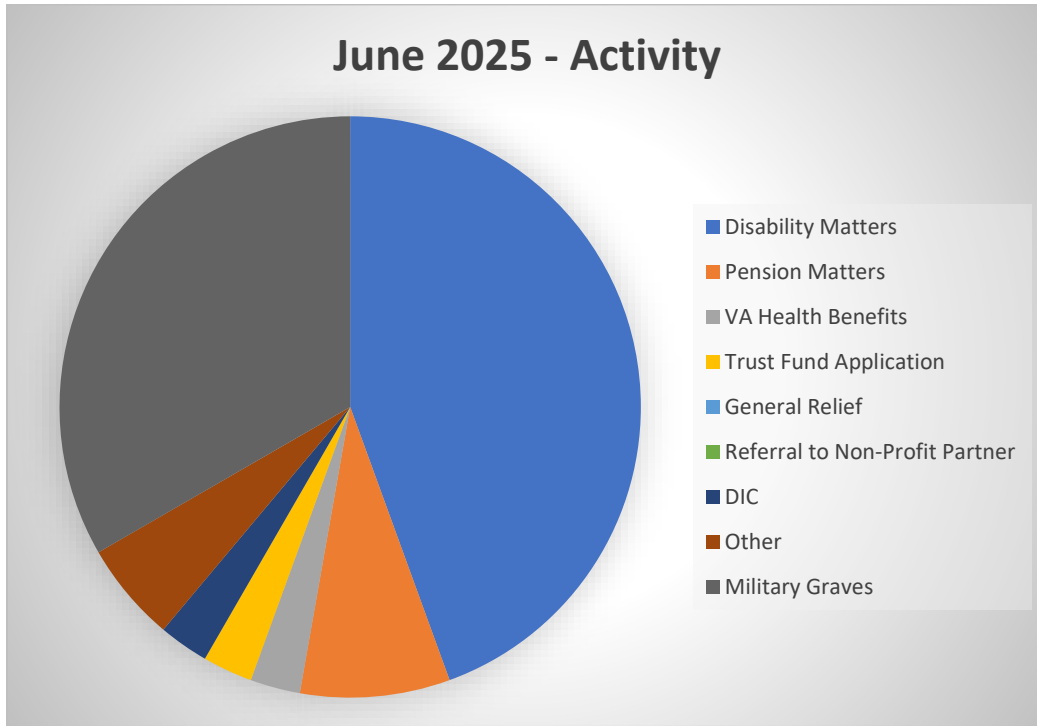
June Report

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

21 total office visits from Veterans.

2 home visits

1 training event



VA & State Updates:

VA Lowers Life Insurance Premiums

Effective July 1, 2025, the VA is reducing monthly premium costs across several life insurance programs.

Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance ("SGLI")

SGLI is available to all active-duty members including National Guard and Reserve members. In fact, all active-duty members are automatically enrolled. Members do not have to do anything, as the changes to premium costs will happen automatically. SGLI is an affordable term life insurance program that enables members to secure coverage up to \$500,000.00. Premium cost will adjust from 6cents to 5 cents per \$1,000 of coverage.

Family Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance ("FSGLI")

This option enables a service member to secure coverage for their spouse and child. Dependent children are covered at no cost, while a service member can secure up to \$100,000 for their spouse. Spousal coverage will decrease, on average, by 13% (discounts range from 11-22% - this is because premiums are calculated based on the age of the spouse). No action is required, as adjustment will be applied automatically.

Veterans' Group Life Insurance ("VGLI")

This option allows Veterans to maintain their life insurance after separating from military service. Reduction in rates will automatically be applied across all age groups, so an exact discount will vary with reductions ranging from 2-17%. This change is applicable to Veterans currently enrolled in VGLI. Veterans enrolled in VGLI will receive updates regarding their new rate by mail, email and through online accounts or billing statements. Most Veteran will not need to take action; however, if a Veteran manually pays their premium then the Veteran should confirm the amount of their premium rate before making payment.