

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

The Veterans Commission Meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. on July 7, 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 of the June 9, 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: June 30, 2025. The Veterans Affairs Office began the current fiscal year on July 1, 2025. \$102,019.00 is the yearly budget for 2025-2026. 100% remains in the budget for the year. 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 80 theater tickets that were purchased for veterans and their families. The remaining passes were distributed to 23 households during the months of May 1 through June 16, 2025. Fourteen new veterans were identified. Five Elkader Veterans were identified, two of which were added to the roster. Three veterans were from the Strawberry Point area, and two veterans were from the Garnavillo area with two added to the roster. Publicizing ticket information was costly. Most of the veterans receiving them saw the ad in the Trader. Black and white ads depending on the size could be \$126.00 in black and white running 1 week. It was suggested that the ads cover a shorter span of time, such as 3 months. It was also discussed that the tickets have a limit of two tickets per household instead of four. Advertising should be placed in the Trader and on the County Website. This would help veterans to become more aware and familiar with using the County website.

b). Discussion was held regarding the participation of the Commissioners at the Clayton County Veterans Association at the fair booth during the Clayton County Fair July 30-August 3. Eilers volunteered to help on Thursday, July 31 from 12:00-5:00 p.m. and Torkelson volunteered for Saturday, August 2 from 12:00-4:00 p.m. County passes will be issued and picked up by the Commission Members.

b). Jordan is still waiting to hear from the County Human Resources person regarding the Performance Appraisal Form for Employees to evaluate Jordan. This form should be completed by the Commission at the end of May, 2026.

VI.) New Business:

a). The monies allocated for EARL Transit during the 2024-2025 fiscal year were used by a veteran needing transportation to special appointments.

b). Application for Keys to Progress Veteran Vehicle Giveaway Program Business Automobile was discussed. The Clayton County Board of Supervisors was willing to have the Veterans Commission apply for a vehicle under this grant for use by the Veterans Commission Office. Clark volunteered to complete the application using his data.

c). Goals for the 2025-2026 fiscal year were established by the Commission. They are as follows:

1. Purchase 80 movie tickets for the Fall of 2025 with a limit of four passes per family. Time period of distribution would be shortened to (2 months) (40 each month).

2. Continue talking with other counties collaborating services to veterans in Northeast Iowa.
3. Investigating possible public Wi-Fi access for Veterans seeking veteran services.
4. Increase the number of volunteer van drivers transporting veterans to medical services.
5. Inquiry made to the Board of Supervisors regarding a better location to store/house the veteran van.
6. Researching the distribution of possible Quarterly Report to veterans in the county via mailing and/or through the County website.

d). The June Statistical Report was distributed. Thirty-four total number of calls were received this month re: Veteran related concerns. Twenty-one total office visits from Veterans. Two home visits for Veterans, and One training event.

e). Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance ("SGLI") is available to all active-duty members including the 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 6 cents 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 \$100,000.00 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 veterans will not need to act; however, if a veteran manually pays their premium then the veteran should confirm the amount of their premium rate before making payment.

VII. Review and approval of Claims:

VIII. Confirmation of the Next Meeting: Next meeting will be on August 11, 2025, at 7:30 a.m.

IX. Adjournment: Clark made the motion to adjourn, Eilers seconded the motion; Motion unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Gerrie Torkelson

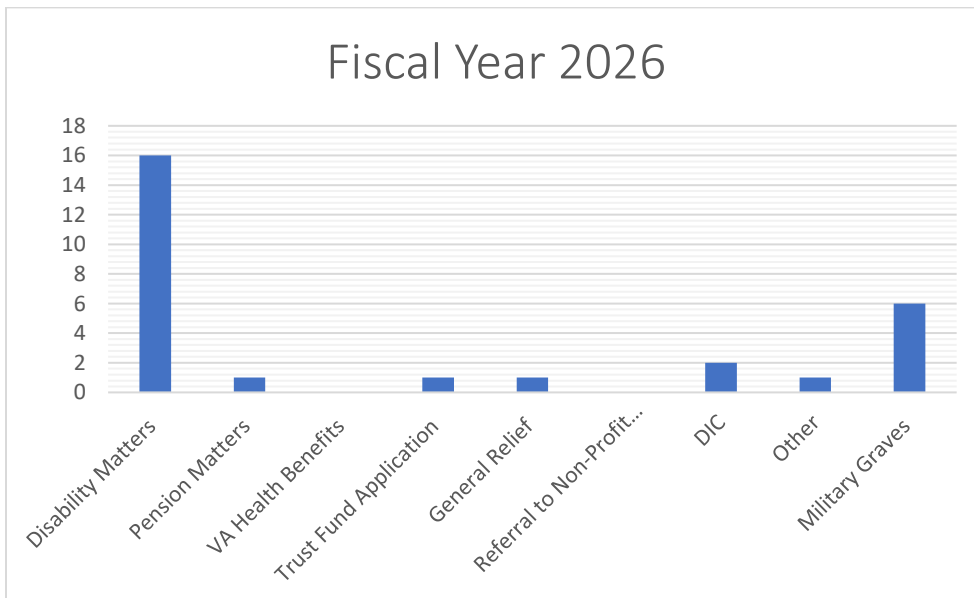
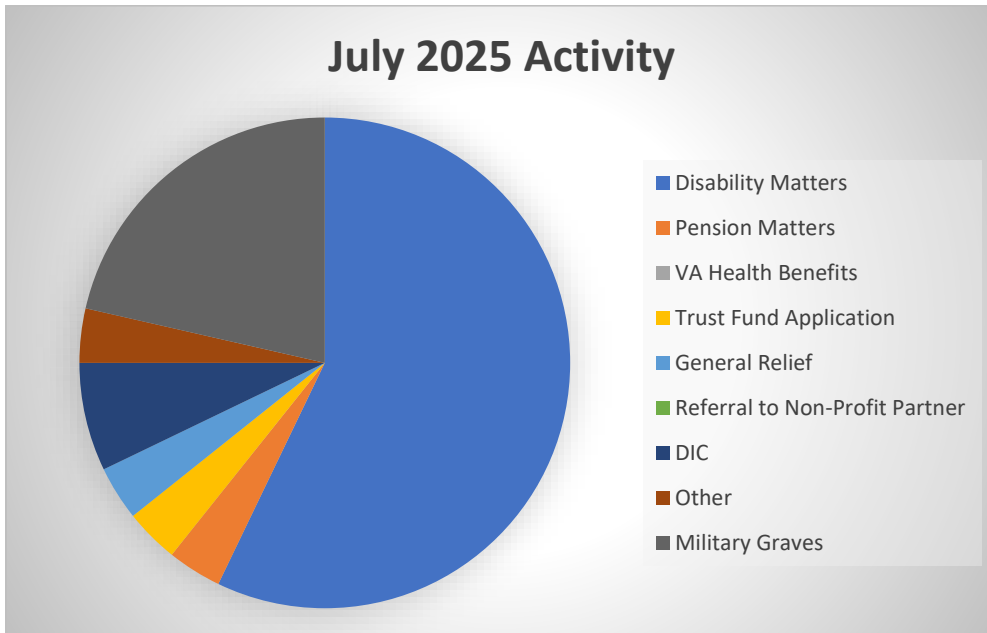
July Report

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

18 total office visits from Veterans.

0 home visits

2 training events



VA & State Updates:

VA Broadens Burial Benefits for Veterans in Home Hospice

Under the Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act, the VA ***will temporarily widen*** burial benefits for veterans who choose to spend their last days at home. Previously veteran families did not receive full burial allowance because the Veteran passed outside of a VA facility. With this change, any Veteran who is released from a VA hospital or nursing home specifically to receive VA arranged hospice service at home would qualify for the full allowance if the veteran passed away between **July 1, 2025, and October 1, 2026**. Under the expanded rule, eligible families can receive:

- A burial and funeral allowance to offset casket, service and transportation costs.
- A plot or interment allowance for those who choose private cemetery.
- Reimbursement for transporting remains when required.

Payment amounts will vary by service connection and are adjusted each year, but this assistance can reduce out-of-pocket expenses that the family incurs.

Harvard to offer this fall a Full-Ride Master's Fellowships

Harvard University is extending a rare invitation to service members. Starting in September, the newly minted American Service Fellowship will welcome at least 50 students to Harvard Kenedy School for a fully funded one-year master's degree in public policy and leadership. This is a pilot program with a total package value of \$100,000 per student that is tax free for each recipient. The package includes:

- Full tuition and fees for the program, which is \$80,000.00
- A living stipend of \$20,000 to assist with housing and expenses.
- Waiver of application fee for each veteran and civilian.

There is no minimum length of military service required. Remaining spots are intended for civilians who have spent seven more years in federal, state or local government – an invitation that extends to those recently displaced by agency downsizing. Fellows will benefit by gaining access to the school's alumni network, policy labs and visiting scholar programs. For Veterans utilizing GI Bill benefits, this opportunity helps close the gap as the GIL Bill rarely can cover the tuition cost for an Ivy League education and expenses. The application portal opens in mid-August. Finalists will be virtually interviewed by December 15th, with fellows arriving on campus in late August 2026 for orientation.