

CLAYTON COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS MEETING
CLAYTON COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING/CONFERENCE ROOM 1
600 Gunder Road NE, Elkader, Iowa 52043
August 11, 2025 at 7:30 a.m.

The Veterans Commission Meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. on August 11, 2025 at the Clayton County Office Building Meeting Conference Room #1.

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

II.) Approval of Minutes: Motion was made by Eilers to approve the minutes of the July 7, 2025 meeting, seconded by Torkelson. Motion carried unanimously.

III.) Public Comments: No comments were noted.

IV.) Budget Review: Jordan distributed the current Fiscal Budget for Period Ending: July 31, 2025. The Veterans Affairs Office began the current fiscal year on July 1, 2025. \$102,019.00 is the yearly budget for 2025-2026. \$7,984.63 was spent during the month of July with 92.17% remaining in the budget for the year. Eilers made the motion to approve the budget, Torkelson seconded the motion; the motion carried unanimously.

V.) Old Business:

The Fall Training Meeting for Commissioners will be held October 13, 2025. It will be a virtual evening meeting. The county VSO Training will be later in October. The CVSO meeting will include election of state association leadership .

VI.) New Business:

a). Jordan commented on the National Training he attended at Louisville, KY. There were representatives from every state and territory. 300-1000 individuals were present. Presentations focused on wide variety of topics impacting the veteran community and/or the claims process. Two California attorneys discussed ways to manage VA's attempts to severe or reduce benefits. There was a presenter to addressed asbestos exposure and its prevalence in the military operations. Another segment focused on the VA's use of artificial intelligence. The Keynote Speaker was Jessica Lynch, Gulf War Veteran. She was a remarkable woman who shared her service experiences. Jordan met with a representative from the Rand Corporation who shared particulars on research and materials that influence VA policy and programming for veteran caregivers. A booklet about service-connected caregivers was made available to the County VSO officers.

b). Clayton County VSO and Commissioners attended the Clayton County Fair for three days to connect with veterans and their families. 150 sunglasses, 210 stress balls, 1 case (16 books) of the Vietnam War, and 59-gun locks were distributed at the Fair. An outreach graph was presented to the Commissioners. Jordan felt that there were more table visits from Veterans on Thursday because the opening day usually attracts a smaller crowd and this may be the optimal time for veterans who experience anxiety with crowds. Jordan felt that on other days, that there were more activities that competed with exhibitors, therefore impacting table visits. on Saturday. Parking concerns were evident. Veteran Visitors from Delaware, Dubuque, Fayette, and Crawford Counties also visited the Clayton County Fair Booth. Should Commission continue with this outreach activity, the Committee may consider having more kid-friendly items to distribute given the County Fair aligns closely with start of the school year.

c). The County is moving forward to creating a new website for the County. It is hoped that the new website will be more user friendly. A meeting with county representatives is scheduled this week to discuss a platform like those used in other Iowa counties.

d). The July Statistical Report was distributed. Thirty-four total number of calls were received this month re: Veteran related concerns. Eighteen total office visits from Veterans. No home visits for Veterans, and two training events.

e). 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 internment 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.

f). 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 Kennedy School for a full 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 GI 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 15, with fellows arriving on campus in late August 2026 for orientation.

VII. Review and approval of Claims:

VIII. Confirmation of the Next Meeting: Next meeting will be on September 8, 2025, at 7:30 a.m.

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

Respectfully submitted by Gerrie Torkelson

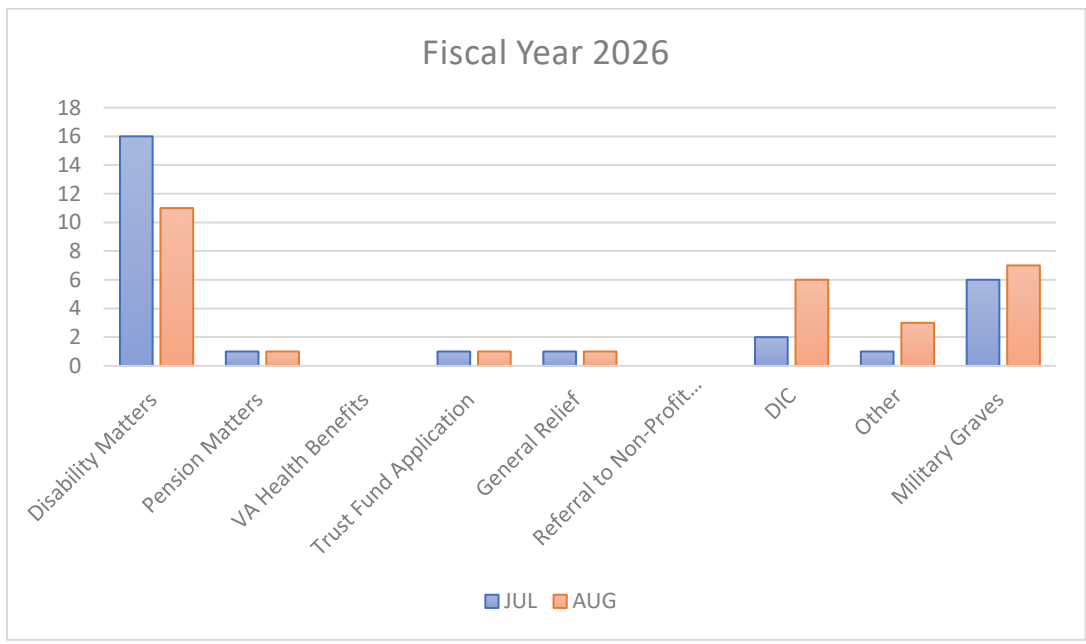
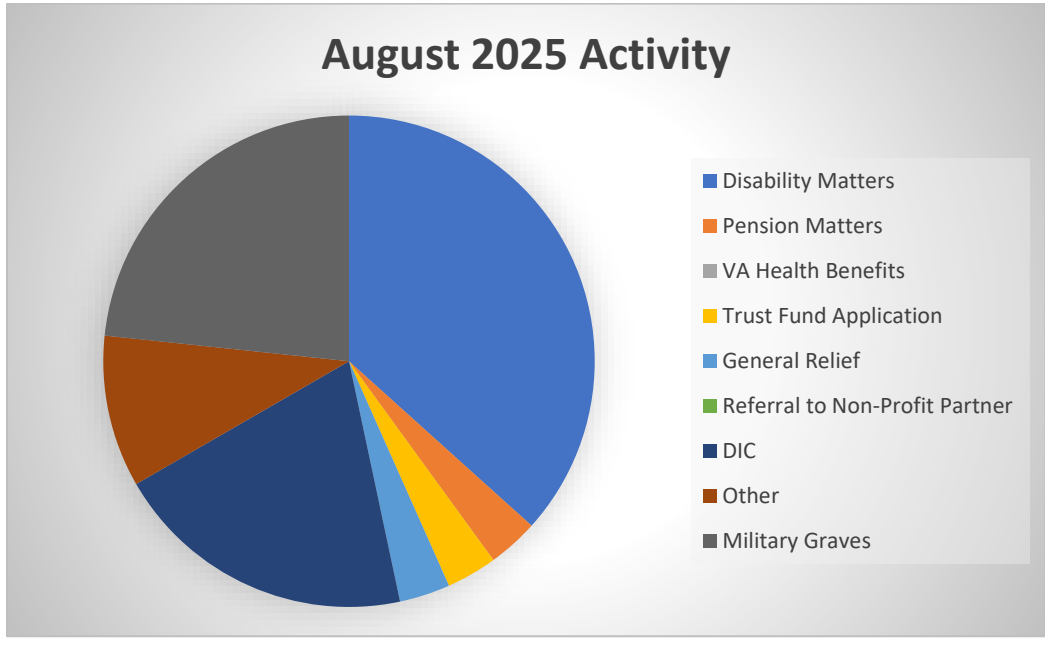
August Report

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

22 total office visits from Veterans.

1 home visits

1 training event



VA & State Updates: - NO UPDATES