

CLAYTON COUNTY VETERANS' AFFAIRS MEETING  
CLAYTON COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING/CONFERENCE ROOM 1  
600 Gunder Road NE, Elkader, Iowa 52043  
March 9, 2026 at 7:30 a.m.

The Veterans Commission Meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. on March 9, 2026 at the Clayton County Office Building Meeting Conference Room #1. Due to a broken leg with restrictions, Torkelson was unable to attend in person, so she is attended by Microsoft Meeting online.

**I.) Roll Call:** Commissioners Eilers, Laughead, Torkelson, and Jordan, Veterans Service Officer, were present.

**II.) Approval of Minutes:** A motion to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2026 meeting was made by Laughead and seconded by Eilers. Motion carried unanimously.

**III.) Public Comments:** No comments were noted.

**IV.) Budget Review:** The Veterans Affairs Office began the current fiscal year on July 1, 2025. \$102,019.00 is the yearly budget for 2025-2026. \$7414.58 was spent during the month of February with 56% remaining in the budget for the year. Torkelson made the motion to approve the budget, Eilers seconded the motion; the motion carried unanimously

**V.) Old Business:**

The Commission reviewed Amendment No. 1 to the Clayton County Commission of Veterans Affairs Emergency Assistance Policy and Guidelines for the burial of a deceased indigent veteran who was a Clayton County resident at the time of their death. The decedent must be a Veteran as defined by the policy and Guidelines. It is hereby agreed that the current subsection of the Policy and Guidelines, entitled "Burial" be deleted in its entirety and replaced. We, the members of the Clayton County Commission of Veterans Affairs, agree to the adopted amendment to the policies and guidelines contained in the document. Motion made by Laughead, seconded by Eilers; motion carried unanimously.

**VI.) New Business:**

a). February 18, 2026 online training was held for Veteran Commissioners. Discussion was held regarding Governor Reynolds Introduction of Bill to Modernize Veterans' Benefit System: January 15, 2026, Governor Kim Reynolds introduced legislation to the Iowa House and Senate to improve existing statewide system for delivering benefits to Veterans. The legislation includes provisions to move toward a single statewide claim system, provide dedicated training for all counties from the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs and ties state funding for each county to a performance-based incentive model. Laughead and Torkelson signed on to this meeting.

b). Van drivers are still needed in Clayton County. Advertising for positions has been completed at the local theatre and at Legion Meetings. A stipend for these drivers is competitive to support the program. Jordan will look at publishing costs affiliated with local newspapers. He will also look at social media including Facebook.

c). Discussion was held regarding the February 27<sup>th</sup> meeting in Guttenberg about the new bill introduced by Governor Reynolds. Jordan along with his counterparts in the counties of Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, and Winneshiek counties were present. Jordan is to be commended for his participation. There were Board of Supervisors, Veteran Service Officers, County Veteran Commissioners, Legion Representatives, State Legislators, and Iowa Department of Veteran Affairs Representatives attending. Discussion was held regarding the reports to be used to determine performance. Upon review, these reports may be perceived as misleading when comparing the dollar amounts allocated to veterans with expenditures in neighboring counties. Many resources are needed to pull necessary information in the national averages with the Midwest falling below the national average. It was agreed that many factors need to be used in planning the way forward with this legislation.

d). A PTSD Awareness and Suicide Prevention Conference will be held at UNI on March 25, 2026. Flyers will be sent to local veteran groups. The Inservice is from 9:00 – 3:00. Anyone wanting to attend should call 319-273-3040. Register by March 18. There will be seven different topics discussed.

e). The Clayton County Meeting will be held on April 23 in St. Olaf.

The January, 2026 Statistical Report was distributed. Twenty-nine total number of calls were received during January re: Veteran related concerns. Eighteen total office visits from Veterans. Zero home visits for Veterans, one outreach event, one training..

The February, 2026 Statistical Report was distributed. Thirty total number of calls were received during February re: Veteran related concerns. Nine total office visits from Veterans. Zero home visits for Veterans, one outreach event, and one training.

a). Beginning in 2026, VA Plans Major Health Care Reorganization. The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced plans to restructure its health care system with changes being implemented in early 2026. The major change is how VA medical facilities are overseen. The plan will include reducing Veterans Integrated and Services Networks (VISN) from eighteen (18 to five (5). VISN are the regional management layer for VA hospitals and clinics. The remaining VISN will report directly to VA Under Secretary for Health. The restructuring will also include the elimination of Veteran Health Administration's chief operating officer's role. The provision of service to VA patients should be impacted at VA medical centers and clinics. Additionally, the Veteran Health Administration has signaled implementing updates to Community Care Program, which allows Veterans to receive care from non-VA providers. The change will reduce the number of community care regions with more health care networks operating within the reduced regions. Overall, the reorganization will take place over the next two years.

b). Commissary Doorstep Delivery – Military commissaries across the US are introducing new doorstep grocery delivery option, marking a shift in how commissary benefits can be accessed. The service is designed to make discounted groceries more accessible to eligible shoppers having trouble with getting to location due to distance, mobility constraints and/or transportation challenges. New location providing this service will be phased into the new delivery model. Users of the programs will place grocery orders online via a computer or mobile device. Commissary staff will pick and prepare the order. The order will be delivered by a third-party delivery service to customer's home. Delivery is available within a 20-mile radius of participating commissaries. The third-party delivery service provider sets that delivery fee, and fee will vary by distance.

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

**VIII. Confirmation of the Next Meeting:** Next meeting will be on April 13, 2026, at 7:30 a.m.

**IX. Adjournment:** Eilers made the motion to adjourn, Laughead seconded the motion; Motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Gerrie Torkelson

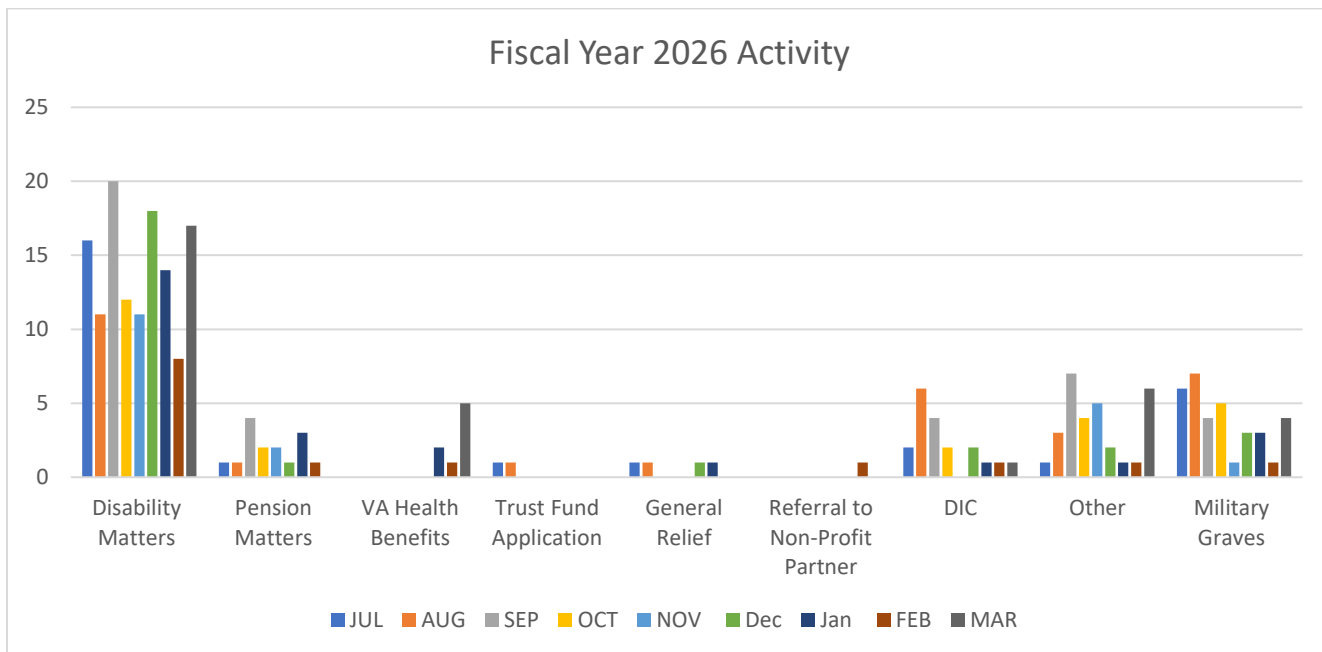
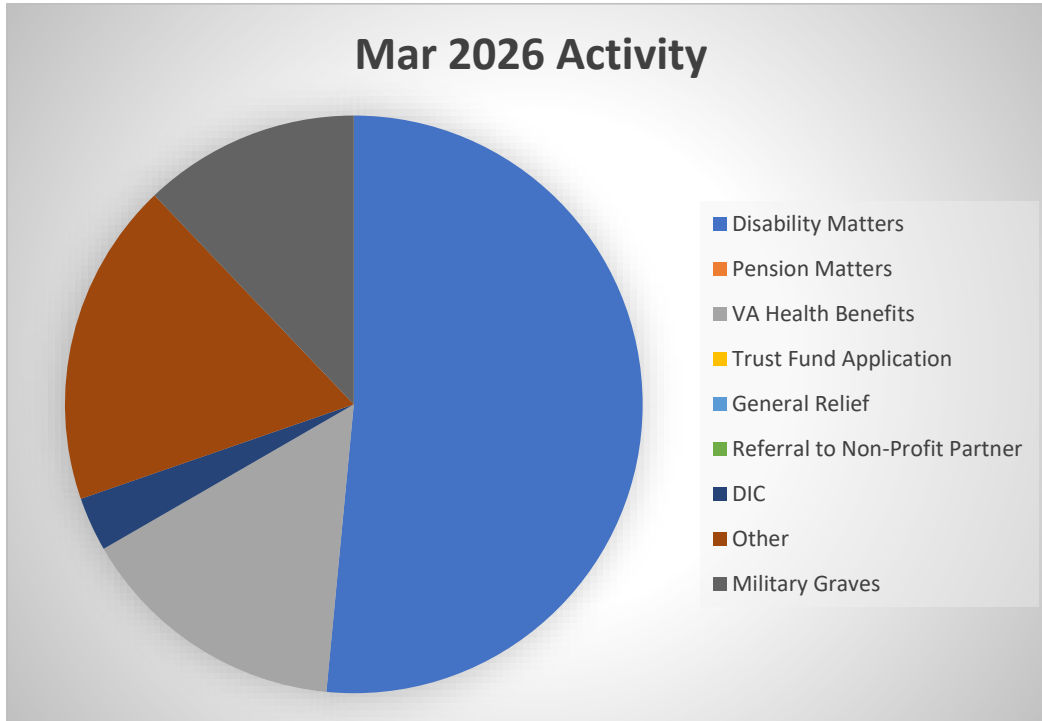
# March Report

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

24 total office visits from Veterans.

0 outreach event

2 training(s)



VA & State Updates: **NO UPDATES**