

CLAYTON COUNTY VETERANS' AFFAIRS MEETING
CLAYTON COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING/CONFERENCE ROOM 1
600 Gunder Road NE, Elkader, Iowa 52043
April 14, 2026 at 7:30 a.m.

The Veterans Commission Meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. on April 14, 2026 at the Clayton County Office Building Meeting Conference Room #1

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

II.) Approval of Minutes: A motion to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2026 meeting was made by Eilers and seconded by Torkelson. 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. \$13,688.23 was spent during the month of March with 43.26% remaining in the budget for the year. Eilers made the motion to approve the budget, Eilers seconded the motion; the motion carried unanimously

V.) Old Business:

a). 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. The change to this amendment will take effect July 1, 2026. Draft amendment will be circulated for Commissioners' and Board of Supervisors' signatures.

b). Update on Legislation introduced by Governor Reynolds. An amendment has been proposed to the bill. If this is accepted and passed as is, each county will continue to receive the \$10,000 allocation grant funding. Some of the dollars received will serve as an incentive for each county to perform well. The changes will also include a state-wide claim system with Iowa Department of Veteran Affairs managing the system of tracking Veteran claims. The changes will indicate how the county offices will be staffed. The bill must pass quickly before the session ends.

c). Van drivers are still needed in Clayton County. Jordan reviewed publishing costs. with the Press Times Register and Trader. Publication costs are \$150.00 per week. Torkelson made the motion to run an ad for Van Drivers for two weeks. Eilers seconded the motion; motion carried unanimously

VI.) New Business:

a). Under the leadership of Industrial School Teacher Ryan Bergan, Central Community High School donated five flag boxes to the Clayton County Veterans Affairs Office. These flag boxes will be distributed to families in honor of their loved ones who have passed away.

b). The VA rescinds Medication-Related Disability Ratings Rule. The Department of Veterans Affairs has formally rescinded its February 17, 2026, interim final rule on the "impact of medication" in disability ratings. The rescission took effect immediately when it was published in the Federal Register on February 27, 2026. That means the prior regulatory language is back in place. VA said it issued the original rule to clarify its position after ongoing litigation, including Ingram v. Collins. But in the rescission notice, the department acknowledged that many veterans, advocates, and other stakeholders were uncertain about how the rule could affect claims, and VA said leaving it in place could weaken trust in the benefits system. The rule drew widespread concern because many people believed it could lead to lower disability ratings when a veteran's symptoms were improved by medication or treatment.

c). VA Expands Faster Scheduling for Community Care Appointments. The Department of Veterans Affairs says a scheduling system designed to speed up community care appointments is now in place at VA facilities nationwide. The system, called External Provider Scheduling, gives VA staff direct access to participating in community providers' scheduling systems so appointments can be booked more quickly and with fewer back and forth calls.

d). Congress is now hearing from veterans earning retirement to offset disability caused retirement benefits.

e). The March 2026 Statistical Report was distributed. 32 total number of calls were received during March re: Veteran related concerns. 24 total office visits from Veterans. 0 home visits for Veterans, 0 outreach events, and 2 training courses.

VII. Review and approval of Claims:

VIII. Confirmation of the Next Meeting: Next meeting will be on May 11, 2026, 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 8:23 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Gerrie Torkelson

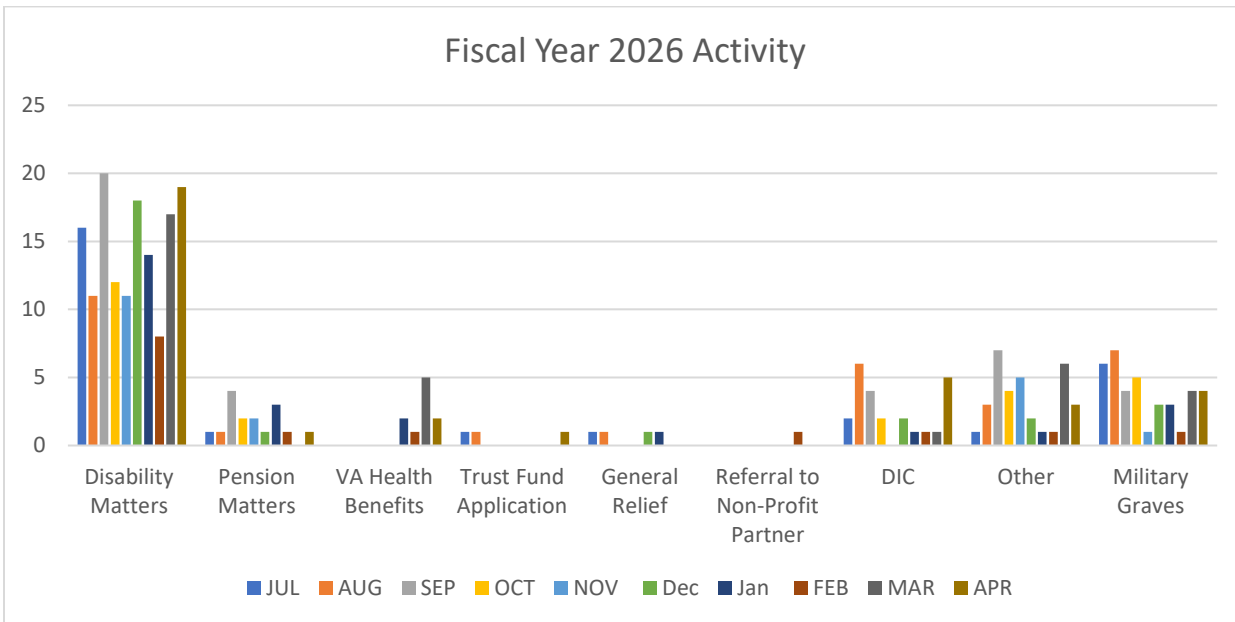
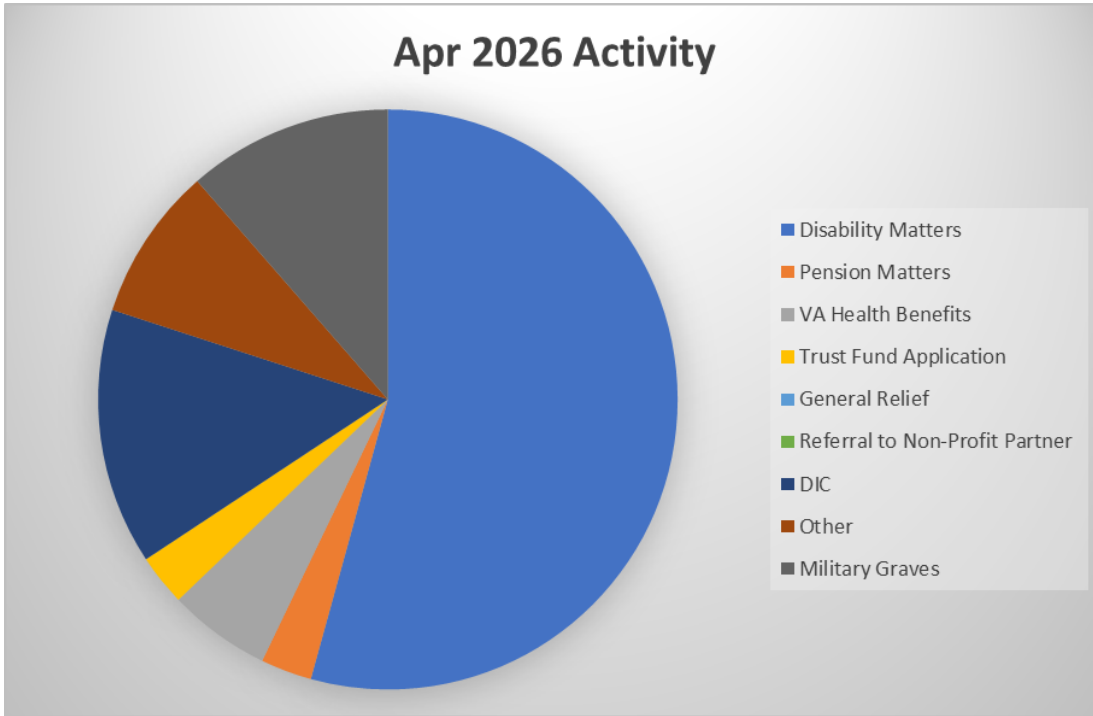
April Report

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

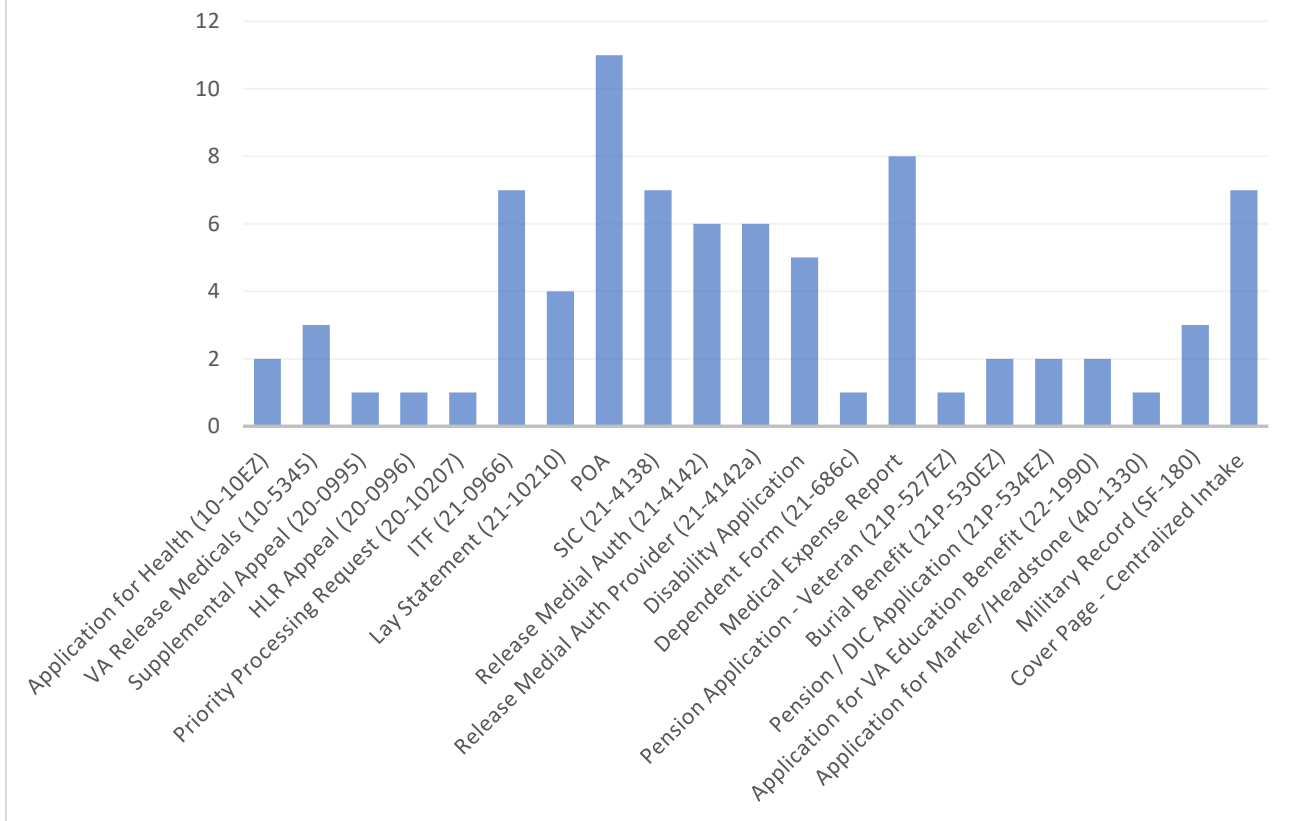
28 total office visits from Veterans.

1 outreach event

0 training(s)



April 26- Form Documents Generated



VA & State Updates:

VA to Develop a Fraud Review Tool – The Department of Veterans Affairs is in the process of developing a new tool that would help to flag possible fraudulent disability claims. The agency has indicated that the tool will be used to review new claims and not used to reopen or reexamine past claims. The tool will detect patterns that may highlight suspicious activity or questionable practices of individuals who are misusing the claim system. The new tool will rely on data analysis to identify patterns such as inconsistency in forms; inaccurate provider information; altered questions or unusual details that raise concerns about legitimacy of filings. A 2024 report from the Office of the Inspector General found that a large share of reviewed claims included at least one potential fraud indicator underscoring the need for better screening and oversight. The department has not yet announced the launch date for the new tool; however, it is expected to roll out later this year.

Home Loan Certificate of Eligibility – The VA’s health and benefit mobile app now allows Veterans to view their active Certificate of Eligibility (“COE”) Home Loan Letter. This app update only applies to Veterans who already have an active COE. Veterans who do not have an active COE or who need to make changes to an existing COE will need to work with their mortgage lender or use VA.gov.

VA Health Connect Offers 24/7 Nurse Triage – Veteran enrolled in VA health care will have the ability to access VA Health Connect to speak with a registered nurse anytime of the day. This service is available nationwide. This service is being provided to help with ongoing health concerns, address symptoms questions, and/or changes in ongoing conditions. Veterans can access triage service by calling their local VA medical facility and selecting the option to speak with a nurse. This service also included assistance with scheduling appointments, pharmacy support and virtual care options.

Automatic Draft Registration – Under changes approached in last year’s defense policy law, automatic registration for the Selective Service is expected to begin by December. Males ages 18-25 will automatically be registered for selective service rather than requiring them to sign up on their own – which is required by law. Women are not required to register. The US has not used the draft since 1973.