



Illinois Department
of Veterans' Affairs

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS



Current Total Veterans

(Vet Pop as of 9/30/14; <http://www.va.gov/vetdata/>)

Illinois Total	721,575	Percent	2013
<i>Wartime Vets</i>	539,880	74.8%	553,612
- Post 9/11	76,399		53,171
- Gulf War	130,105		192,090
- Vietnam Era	241,854		246,761
- Korean Conflict	65,381		76,661
- World War II	37,506		49,753
<i>Peacetime</i>	181,695	25.2%	191,090
Female	54,707	7.58%	67,638
Male	666,868	92.41%	677,072

Overview:

- 10th largest Vet population in United States
- 36,919 military retirees, per DoD stats
- Vietnam, Korea and WWII vets are 47.8% of the Illinois Veteran population
- Youngest Vietnam vet est. to be 59 yrs. old; avg. 64 yrs. old.
- 492 WWII vets dying per day in USA; 5 in IL
- 22,000 National Guard deployed since 9/11
- 76,399 Post "9/11" Vets in the state.
- 35,000 new vets expected back to Illinois in years 2013-17
- Women Vets = fastest growing demographic: 54,707; 7.58% overall, est. to be 15% by 2035.

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Where Illinois Veterans Are

- Illinois Veteran Population: 721,575
- Where are they:
 - Cook and the 5 Collar counties = 49.8% of IL Veteran Population
 - East St. Louis (Monroe, Madison, St. Clair) = 10% of IL Veteran Population

County	Rank	Veteran Pop 2013	Veteran Pop 2014	Metro Area
Cook	1	218,384	199,966	Chicago & Collar Counties – 359,459
Dupage	2	43,763	40,604	
Will	3	40,537	39,376	
Lake	4	37,885	35,395	
Kane	7	25,674	24,787	
McHenry	9	20,316	19,331	
Saint Clair	5	29,744	29,288	St. Louis Metro - 54,318
Madison	6	26,213	25,030	
Winnebago	8	21,827	20,959	Rockford
Sangamon	10	16,933	16,370	Springfield

(Source USDVA <http://www.va.gov/vetdata/> VetPop FY2013 as of 09-30-13, FY2014 as of 09-30-14)



Discharged Servicemembers Task Force

Pursuant to Public Act 95-294, effective August 20, 2007, the State of Illinois created the Illinois Discharged Servicemember Task Force (DSTF). The mission of DSTF is to investigate the re-entry process for servicemembers who return to civilian life after being engaged in an active theatre. In order to accomplish this mission, DSTF convenes a team of experienced, professional veteran advocates, and community leaders to analyze major issue areas and develop strategic policy recommendations. DSTF's strategic policy recommendations are published yearly in the DSTF Annual Report.

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ILLINOIS DISCHARGED SERVICEMEMBER TASK FORCE

(FY 2016)

Director Erica Jeffries

Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (Chair)

Lieutenant Colonel Maurice Rochelle

Deputy J9, Illinois Department of Military Affairs

Mr. Thomas Banning

Military and Veterans Rights Bureau Chief, Office of the Illinois Attorney General

Representative Linda Chapa LaVia, State Representative, 83rd District

A member of the General Assembly appointed by the Speaker of the House;

Representative Jeanne Ives, State Representative, 42nd District

A member of the General Assembly appointed by the House Minority Leader;

Senator Michael Hastings, State Senator, 19th District

A member of the General Assembly appointed by the President of the Senate;

Senator Pamela Althoff, State Senator, 32nd District

A member of the General Assembly appointed by the Senate Minority Leader;

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Sergeant Major Mark W. Bowman, Illinois National Guard

Mr. Kevin Hull, Executive Director, Westside Institute for Science & Education

Mr. Kenneth Clarke, President & Chief Executive Officer, Pritzker Military Library & Museum

Paul Knudtson, Vice-President of Development, Student Veterans of America Illinois
Appointed by the IDVA, representing statewide veterans' organizations or veterans' homeless shelters

Mr. Jim Frazier, Gold Star Father and Survivor Outreach Services Officer, U.S. Army
A member appointed by the Lieutenant Governor

Ms. Mary Ann Romeo, MSSW, VISN 12 Care Coordinator, USDVA

Ms. Suzanne Nunziata, Chicago VBA Regional Office Director, USDVA
Representatives of the USDVA

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Year In Review

In Fiscal Year 2016, DSTF held meetings on:

- Dec 11, 2015 Jesse Brown VA Medical Center
- Feb 1, 2016 Will County Veterans Assistance Commission
- Apr 4, 2016 Dupage County Veterans Assistance Commission
- Jun 9, 2016 Pritzker Military Library and Museum

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Topics

Recognition of Military Learning

Veterans Treatment Court

Definition of a Veteran

Access to Mental Health Care

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Issue

- Education can be a vital component to ease a servicemembers transition from the military to the civilian workforce. Accurate and honest evaluations of the significant range of knowledge and skills veterans have acquired during their service to this country can help accelerate the process for veterans to earn the credentials needed to succeed in the civilian labor market.]
- Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) refers to a set of longstanding, validated methods to assess learning gained in nontraditional settings, like the military, for college credit or licensure.

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Key Statistics

- Illinois Veterans Grant cost \$26.8 million in FY 2016 (Illinois Board Of Higher Education)
- Over 305,000 veterans accessed federal education benefits in Illinois in 2015 (Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, SAA).
- Over 23,000 veterans received Post-9/11 education benefits in Illinois in 2015 (Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, SAA).



Recommendations

Funding the Illinois Veterans Grant

Providing full funding for the Illinois Veteran Grant would remove the financial burden from Illinois public universities and community colleges who have been shouldering the full cost of this state aid program in recent years. Without this financial burden, Illinois' public institutions would be able to devote more resources to innovative practices, such as prior learning assessment (PLA) programs that would ultimately save time and money for student veterans as they pursue career credentials.

Reestablishing the Military Training Counts Initiative

The Military Training Counts program is a collaborative pilot effort to articulate military training to credentials and/or state licensure at select public higher education institutions.



Implementation

Funding the Illinois Veterans Grant

The General Assembly can appropriate funding to ISAC to cover the financial cost accrued by public colleges and universities for providing veterans with the IVG.

Reestablishing the Military Training Counts Initiative

Reenacting Executive Order 13-02 to address additional workforce-aligned areas, as well as, examining the articulation of military training to a 4-year college and university programs. Emphasis should be placed on stackable credential pathways leading veterans to career and further educational opportunities. In addition, Military Training Counts is currently supported by a small grant from the Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit. DSTF recommends state financial support to sustain and expand this initiative.

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Issue

Through P.A. 96-924, the General Assembly recognized,

- "that veterans and active, Reserve and National Guard servicemembers have provided or are currently providing an invaluable service to our country. In so doing, some may suffer the effects of, including but not limited to, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, depression and may also suffer drug and alcohol dependency or addiction and co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse problems. As a result of this, some veterans or active duty servicemembers come into contact with the criminal justice system and are charged with felony or misdemeanor offenses."
- Veterans Treatment Courts provide the criminal justice system the vehicle through which "justice can recognize these veterans, provide accountability for their wrongdoing, provide for the safety of the public, and provide for the treatment of our veterans."



Key Statistics

- In 2011–12, an estimated 181,500 veterans (8% of all inmates in state and federal prison and local jail excluding military-operated facilities) were serving time in correctional facilities.
- More than three-quarters (77%) of incarcerated veterans received military discharges that were honorable or under honorable conditions.
- Incarcerated veterans who saw combat (60% in prison and 67% in jail) were more likely than noncombat veterans (44% in prison and 49% in jail) to have been told they had a mental disorder.
- From 2001 to 2012, veterans discharged during Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn accounted for 13% of veterans in prison and 25% of veterans in jail. (Veterans in Prison and Jail, 2011–2012, Bureau of Justice Statistics)



Implementation

Establishment of a working group

The General Assembly or the Governor can assemble the requisite stakeholders, for the purpose of, creating a document that will provide counties with best practices on how Veteran Treatment Courts can effectively and efficiently serve veterans. We believe this to be a vital step ensuring that none of our servicemembers returning home from combat fall through the cracks and receive the support they need.

In addition, John Marshall Veterans Legal Support Center and Clinic is currently leading an initiative to capture and analyze data relating to the effectiveness and impact existing Veterans Treatment Courts have in Illinois on the individual, their family, their community, and our State. They can be a valuable partner in this process.

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Issue

There are many men and women who pledge themselves to service that never make it to the battlefield. They raise their right hand like many veterans, but are not acknowledged because they were never called to active duty. Establishing the definition of an Illinois Veteran (National Guardsmen or Reservists, primarily who only attended weekend drills and their two week annual training, who doesn't qualify as a Veteran under the Federal definition of a Veteran under Title 10), would do a couple of things:

Currently, any Illinois National Guardsman or Reservists, who drill once a month, who is never activated for federal service under Title 10, and who doesn't have at least 180 days of active federal service, is not considered a veteran. Any National Guardsman who is activated for State level active duty under Title 32 is not considered a veteran. A Full-Time National Guardsman working under Title 32 is not considered a veteran. These personnel are not eligible for nearly every federal benefit and most state benefits. By establishing a definition of an Illinois Veteran, they could receive some state benefits and the recognition they deserve.

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Key Statistics

- Illinois Warrior Assistance Program served 9,213 unique web users in FY15(Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs' Annual Report)
- Illinois National Guard has approximately 13,000 members (Illinois Department of Military Affairs).



Recommendations

Define veteran for State of Illinois recognition purposes.

The individuals who meet the criteria defined below should be recognized as veteran in the State of Illinois.

“Any National Guardsman/Reservist who is Federally/State Activated, **OR** has completed his/her full term of enlistment for enlisted personnel /obligation for officers, **AND** has a discharge characterized as Honorable or Under Honorable Conditions is considered a veteran in the State of Illinois.”

Changing eligibility for certain state benefits to include individuals who meet the definition above.

Grave Registration

State Veterans Employment Preference

IDES Job Assistance

IL Driver's License

Illinois Warrior Assistance Program (IWAP)



Implementation

Define veteran for State of Illinois recognition purposes.

The General Assembly can enact legislation establishing the “Definition of a Veteran” for the purposes of the State of Illinois, outlining specifically what services the new definition would make them eligible for.



Issue

Not every veteran suffers from post-traumatic stress as a result of their service, for those that do, getting access to the mental health care services necessary for healing can be a daunting experience. This issue is compounded for veterans residing in more rural regions of the state. Finding providers who possess the sensitivity for this unique experience is a rarity, if not impossible to find. “Specifically, rural veterans have lower health-related quality-of-life scores and experience a higher prevalence of physical illness compared to urban veterans. While the prevalence of most mental health disorders is lower for rural compared to urban veterans, rural veterans with mental health disorders are sicker as measured by lower health-related quality-of-life compared with urban veterans.” (Strategic Plan Refresh Fiscal Years 2012-2014)



Key Statistics

- Rural Veterans represent 41 percent of the total enrolled Veteran population in VA health care system. Around 30 percent of those enrolled rural Veterans served in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) and Operation New Dawn. (Characteristics of Rural Veterans: 2010)
- In Illinois, it is estimated that 156,031 (19%) veterans live in rural areas.
- In Illinois, 17% of all rural veterans are Post 9/11. (Total Vet Population 18 Years or Older, by State and Geographic Component)



Recommendations

Support Existing and New Tele-health Initiatives.

Leveraging technology to provide access to mental health care for veterans would pay great dividends towards the removal of physical, mental, and emotional barriers that prevent rural veterans from receiving essential services.

Support Existing and New Workforce Recruitment and Retention Efforts

Incentivizing mental health care professional with experience working with the veteran population to provide services in rural communities could reduce access issues.



Implementation

Support existing and new tele-health Initiatives.

The General Assembly and Directors of state agencies can identify legal barriers that currently exist to implement tele-health initiatives in an effort to broaden the services available for veterans in remote rural areas.

Support existing and new workforce recruitment and retention efforts

The General Assembly can enact legislation that creates incentives for mental health care workers in rural areas including tuition reimbursements, tax credits, and travel reimbursements.

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Special Thanks

There have been a number of individuals that were not appointed to the Task Force, but put in countless hours to make this all come together. We want to take the time to acknowledge them here:

- **Amanda Winters**, Assistant Director, Illinois Board of Higher Education
- **Amy Sherman**, Associate VP for Innovation and Policy, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
- **Brain Clauss**, Director, John Marshall Veterans Legal Support Center and Clinic
- **Erik Papineau**, Asst. Superintendent, Veterans Assistance Commission of Will County Illinois
- **Howard Robinson**, State Command Sergeant Major (Retired), Illinois National Guard
- **James Flagg**, Co-Founder, Warrior Summit Coalition
- **Kristi McNichol**, Superintendent, Veterans Assistance Commission of Will County Illinois
- **Steven Fixler**, Superintendent, Dupage County Veterans Assistance Commission
- **Victor LaGroon**, Director of Veterans' Affairs, City of Chicago