



# 2025 MINNESOTA LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

In 2025, the Minnesota Legislature passed an Omnibus Veterans Bill for the fourth consecutive session—cementing our state’s ongoing commitment to Veterans.

Following the 2024 elections, the Minnesota House of Representatives was tied 67-67; the only other tie was in 1979. Under the current organization, committees are operating with co-chairs from both the Democratic Farmer-Labor (DFL) and Republican (GOP) caucuses. Representatives Matt Bliss (GOP - Pennington) and Jay Xiong (DFL - St. Paul) led the House Veterans and Military Affairs Division.

The Senate remained in DFL hands by a 34-33 margin, but Veteran issues were moved to a new committee and chair. Previously, the State and Local Government Committee had jurisdiction of Veterans issues but moved them to the Agriculture committee for the 2025-26 biennium. Senator Aric Putnam (DFL - St. Cloud) chaired the newly named Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband and Rural Development Committee, as well as a new Subcommittee on Veterans.

The work of the two committees led to the passing the Veterans Omnibus Bill, SF 1959, which contains most of the budget and policy items affecting Veterans and their families. The Legislature overwhelmingly passed the bill during the regular session.

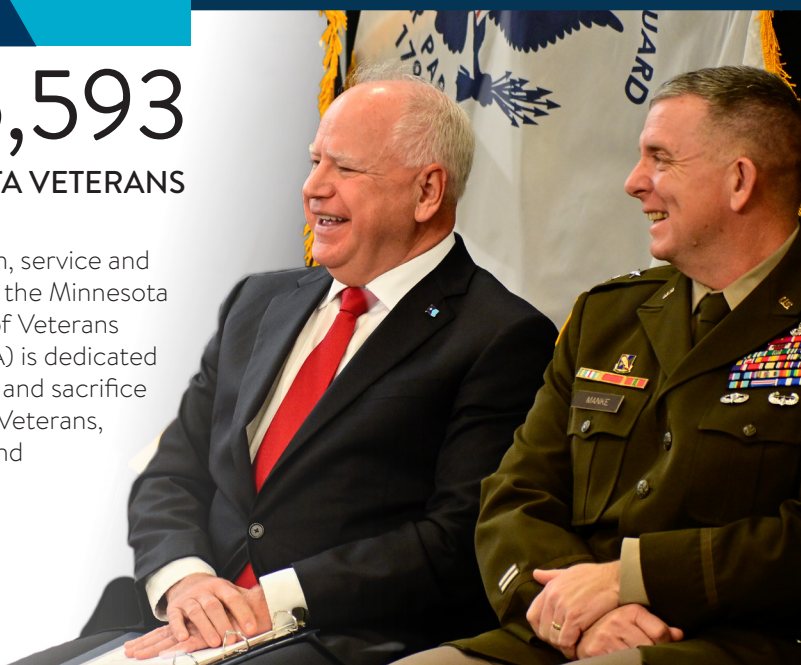


Governor Tim Walz signed it into law as Chapter 30 on May 23, 2025.

# 286,593

## MINNESOTA VETERANS

Every program, service and initiative from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) is dedicated to the service and sacrifice of our state’s Veterans, dependents and survivors.





## HEALTHCARE BUDGET AND OPERATING ADJUSTMENT

Recently, one focus for MDVA was building and opening three new Veterans Homes in Bemidji, Montevideo and Preston. No state in the country had ever achieved this in one year. As such, the need to increase the budget for the MDVA Healthcare Division was vital for the success of these new Homes as well as our five legacy Homes in Fergus Falls, Hastings, Luverne, Minneapolis and Silver Bay.

As of June 2025, the occupancy rate at the three new Veterans Homes was 44% at Bemidji, 55.6% at Montevideo and 50% at Preston.. All the legacy Homes that offer skilled nursing care have an occupancy rate above 85%, with our highest at the Minneapolis Veterans Home at 98.3%. The Domiciliary programs located in Hastings and Minneapolis have rates of 77.1% and 82% percent, respectively.

Without new funding provided through an operating adjustment, MDVA would have been forced to make difficult decisions, including decreasing staff which would reduce the ability to admit more Residents and increase the length of the future Resident waiting list. We are grateful that the Legislature agreed to fund the Healthcare Division Operating Adjustment at the Governor's recommended levels. This will ensure that the new Homes continue ramping up staffing to support increased occupancy while maintaining the Resident levels at the existing legacy Homes. Requisite State funding also ensures that additional revenue from Federal VA Per Diem payments, Resident Maintenance Fees and Medicare Reimbursements will also continue to be collected to support operations.

MDVA's Suicide Prevention office also falls under the MDVA Healthcare Division. The final budget agreement in SF 1959 provided a \$300,000 increase to this important initiative. Deaths by suicide occur roughly every 22 minutes among Veterans throughout the nation. In Minnesota about 100 Veterans die by suicide each year. MDVA has been directed to develop a comprehensive plan to address the tragedy of Veterans dying by suicide. The plan must include strategies focused on: community integration and collaboration, promoting a sense of purpose and belonging, and implementation. The report is due to the Legislature at the start of the 2026 session.



## **PROGRAMS & SERVICES BUDGET AND OPERATING ADJUSTMENT**

Each budget session, the largest portion of MDVA's request to the Legislature is to maintain services through operating adjustments. This increase will offset rising operational costs for staff, IT services and more, while mitigating impacts to current levels of service and information to the public.

The law also boosted funding for MDVA's Programs & Services Division, which supports operations that provide direct services, benefits and assistance to Veterans. Our staff fulfills the needs of Minnesota Veterans and their families through four subdivisions:

- Veterans Programs which administers State benefits.
- Veterans Services which helps process Federal VA Claims.
- Veterans Education and Occupational Resources which serves those seeking higher education or expanding career skills.
- Memorial Affairs which operates four State Veterans Cemeteries in Little Falls, Preston, Duluth and Redwood Falls.



## **VETERAN HOMELESSNESS**

For several years, preventing and ending Veteran homelessness has been a goal of both MDVA and the Legislature, with funds allocated to make Minnesota the next state to achieve the homelessness status described as "functional zero." This milestone means a community has measurably solved Veteran homelessness and, when it does occur, it is rare and brief. Minnesota has 10 regions called "continuum of care" – nine which have already achieved functional zero. Ramsey County is the final continuum seeking that declaration.

SF 1959 funds \$12.8 million over the next two years to support Minnesota becoming the fourth state to put a functional end to Veteran homelessness. This will be achieved through programs including Tenancy and Landlord Support, Temporary Housing and Outreach, Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) and its Permanent Supportive Housing program and more.



## **FOOD INSECURITY**

The Legislature is also interested in funding to help Veterans dealing with food insecurity. In 2023, Metro Meals on Wheels was given grant funding for home-delivered meals to Veterans living in the Twin Cities. That funding received an extension in Chapter 30 and will now be available until June 30, 2027.



This year, \$300,000 was granted to Lutheran Social Services (LSS) to also provide home-delivered meals as part of its CORE program. These meals will be available to Veterans outside of Hennepin and Ramsey Counties. The Minnesota Service CORE program is a partnership between MDVA and LSS. The program is designed to bring essential, community-based services directly to Veterans and their families across Minnesota at no cost. Due to its unique structure, this program also provides resources to previously underserved areas.

CORE provides comprehensive assistance through the existing statewide network of resources within LSS. Services include individual and family counseling, financial counseling, debt management, addiction counseling, disability services and in-home counseling. The goal is to help Veterans and their families develop skills and draw on their strengths to bring about lasting family stability.



## **POLICY ITEMS**

Since 2003, MDVA has had read-only access to the MAXIS database, currently maintained by the Department of Children Youth and Families. This allows the MDVA State Soldiers Assistance Program (SSAP) staff to verify eligibility for state and federal hardship benefits. With enactment of SF 1959, MAXIS is now available for use by MDVA staff supporting the Veterans Stable Housing Initiative. The expansion allows us to more efficiently connect homeless Veterans to resources by ensuring they are screened for available benefits for housing, healthcare and financial assistance. **Original bill: HF 1662 (Rehrauer - Coon Rapids) and SF 1706 (Kupec - Moorhead)**

In Chapter 30, MDVA achieved a streamlined State statute for burial eligibility at State Veterans Cemeteries, increasing alignment with Federal guidelines. The current State statute did not properly address the full range of those eligible and put the agency at risk for future grant opportunities from the Federal VA. Importantly, this change did not affect current or past eligibility for those interred at MDVA's cemeteries. **Original bill: HF 1445 (Bliss - Pennington) and SF 1705 (Kupec - Moorhead)**

SF 1959 ensures surviving spouses retain education benefits even after remarriage and clarifies eligibility for dependents of deceased Veterans. Prior to this change, the spouse's eligibility was terminated upon remarrying. **Original bill: HF 2410 (Bliss - Pennington) and SF 1930 (Howe - Rockville)**

The final section of SF 1959 was a provision to create a bronze plaque memorializing Gold Star and Blue Star Families in the Court of Honor on the Capitol Grounds to recognize the service and sacrifices of these

families. The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board within the Department of Administration will lead the process for design and placement of the plaque. **No original bill.**



## GRANTS

The Minnesota Association of County Veterans Service Officers (MACVSO) needed to receive grant funding under statute to use for various Veterans services. The budget bill provides \$60,000 in new funding for three technical assistance coordinators, specifically for women Veterans, justice-involved Veterans and suicide prevention. **Original bill: HF 1350 (Feist - New Brighton) and SF 1452 (Putnam - St. Cloud)**

The nonprofit **Hometown Heroes Outdoors** received \$100,000 in funding for outdoor activities and mental health services for Veterans and currently serving military. Based in Stillwater, its mission is to reconnect those who served and foster community and healing through peer-led recreational experiences and the telling of real stories. **Original Bill: HF 492 (Hill - Stillwater) and SF 674 (Seeberger - Afton)**

**Camp Bliss** in Walker, operated by Independent Lifestyles, Inc., received a \$150,000 grant to provide therapy, transportation and activities for Minnesota Veterans and their families. The camp offers retreats for Veterans throughout the year. **Original bill: HF 532 (Bliss - Pennington) and SF 488 (Green - Fosston)**

The **Minnesota Military and Veterans Museum** at Camp Ripley received continued grant funding for \$300,000 for staff to provide direct services to Veterans and their families. **No original bill.**

**Metro Meals on Wheels** received authorization to continue using its grant funding from the previous biennium, instead of letting the grant expire. The group provides home-delivered meals to Twin Cities-area Veterans. **No original bill.**

**Every Third Saturday** also received an extension for its grant funds. The Minneapolis nonprofit helps connect Veterans who may need help with the effects of being unhoused, unemployed or in search of camaraderie with other Veterans. **No original bill.**



## VETERANS OF THE SECRET WAR IN LAOS

Chapter 30 included the creation of a new section of State statute for Veterans of the Secret War in Laos who served with secret guerilla units or other irregular forces. For some, eligibility under this new statute might be granted to those naturalized under the Federal Hmong Veterans'

Naturalization Act of 2000. For others, a task force will be formed in fall 2025 and is directed to identify eligibility criteria and verification for these specific Veterans. A report will be submitted to the Legislature in February 2026 that includes criteria, protocol and recommendations for the House and Senate to pass into law. Once that verification process is established, Secret War Veterans will be entitled to a specific set of benefits, including funeral honor guards, grave markers and Veteran designation on drivers' licenses and State ID cards.



## **DISABLED VETERANS REDUCED COST HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSES**

The Environment and Natural Resources budget bill (Special Session SF 3) included a provision that expands hunting and fishing benefits for disabled Veterans who are Minnesota residents.

Starting in March 2027, Minnesota Veterans with a disability rating of 50% or higher can receive a deer or small game hunting license or fishing license for just \$5. One hundred percent-disabled Veterans' hunting and fishing licenses will remain free.

A priority of the Minnesota Commanders' Task Force for nearly a decade, this new benefit will bring Veterans outdoors to help with PTSD and other related conditions. It will also bring the State in line with others that are similarly known for their outdoor culture. The reduced fee will still allow the Department of Natural Resources to collect an excise tax from the federal government as well as contributing payments for its licensing software.



## **LANDSCAPE ARBORETUM +1**

Following last year's free admittance to the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum in Chanhassen for disabled Veterans, the Higher Education budget bill (Special Session SF 1) expanded the benefit to include one guest.



## **CAPITAL INVESTMENT FUNDING**

One of the final bills passed during the June 9 Special Session, HF 18 was a bonding bill that provides funding for infrastructure throughout the State. MDVA received \$7.5 million for Asset Preservation for crucial upgrades at the Minnesota Veterans Homes and State Veterans Cemeteries.

# MDVA PROGRAMS & SERVICES

MDVA is dedicated to helping Veterans from all eras and their families gain access to the benefits and resources they have earned with programs that include:

- Adult Day Care
- Counseling
- Dental Care Assistance
- Education Support
- Emergency Assistance
- Financial Assistance/Grants
- Health and Disability Claims and Appeals for VA and Social Security Benefits
- Homelessness Prevention and Support
- Optical Care Assistance
- State Veterans Cemeteries
- State Veterans Homes/Skilled Nursing and Domiciliary Care
- Suicide Prevention
- Veteran Family Assistance
- Women Veteran Support

For information on all of the programs and benefits available to you, contact:



**Minnesota Department  
of Veterans Affairs**

20 W. 12th St., St. Paul, MN 55155  
651-296-2562  
[MinnesotaVeteran.org](http://MinnesotaVeteran.org)

MDVA offers support seven days a week:



1-888-LinkVet (1-888-546-5838)  
TTY: 1-800-627-3529  
Email or Live Chat: [LinkVet.org](http://LinkVet.org)

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