

Ohio Department of VETERANS SERVICES

Fiscal Year 2017



gratitude.



find it here:



John R. Kasich, Governor
Chip Tansill, Director

July 2017 Director's Message

Ohio is home to more than 830,000 former service members – the sixth-largest population of veterans in the United States – and the Ohio Department of Veterans Services (ODVS) reaches out to this unique and honorable group of Ohioans by actively identifying, connecting with, and advocating for veterans and their families. That never changes.

However, we need to be agile and to continue to find ways to reach out to our veterans and assist them in reaching their full potential. To that end, our Regional Workforce Consultants now provide veteran workforce training and insight to local chambers of commerce, employers and Ohio businesses of all sizes so they can put forth best practices for engaging, hiring and retaining veterans. Since November 2016, those consultants have made contact with more than 6,000 Ohio employers – and we are seeing great return on that investment.

We also continue to work with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and our 88 County Veterans Service Offices. In fact, we have seen our efforts to direct veterans to their VA benefits has correlated with a rise in federal dollars being awarded to former service members. In 2016, the VA awarded more than \$8 billion to Ohioans, which, of course, benefits the state economy.

We have continued to advocate for veterans through the Ohio General Assembly to fast-track military members and their spouses to licenses and certifications. And we're proud of our partnership with several Ohio departments including Job and Family Services, which has a military-specific employment website, OhioMeansVeteranJobs.com. It houses several useful tools for transitioning veterans and also lists 2,400 military-friendly employers in Ohio.

Of course, our website – OhioVets.gov – is a valuable source of information as well. It has links to information about our Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame, the Military Injury Relief Fund, the Ohio Veterans Bonus, and our Ohio Veterans Homes in Sandusky and Georgetown, which provide special care to wartime veterans.

We honor and cherish our Ohio veterans and their families, and it is my privilege to serve as a member of Governor Kasich's cabinet and as Director of ODVS. I'm confident we will continue to find new and innovative ways to reach out to our veteran community and ensure that they are better connected to the wonderful array of resources, benefits and opportunities that they've earned through their service and so richly deserve.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chip Tansill', written over a white background.

Chip Tansill
Director, Ohio Department of Veterans Services

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Introduction

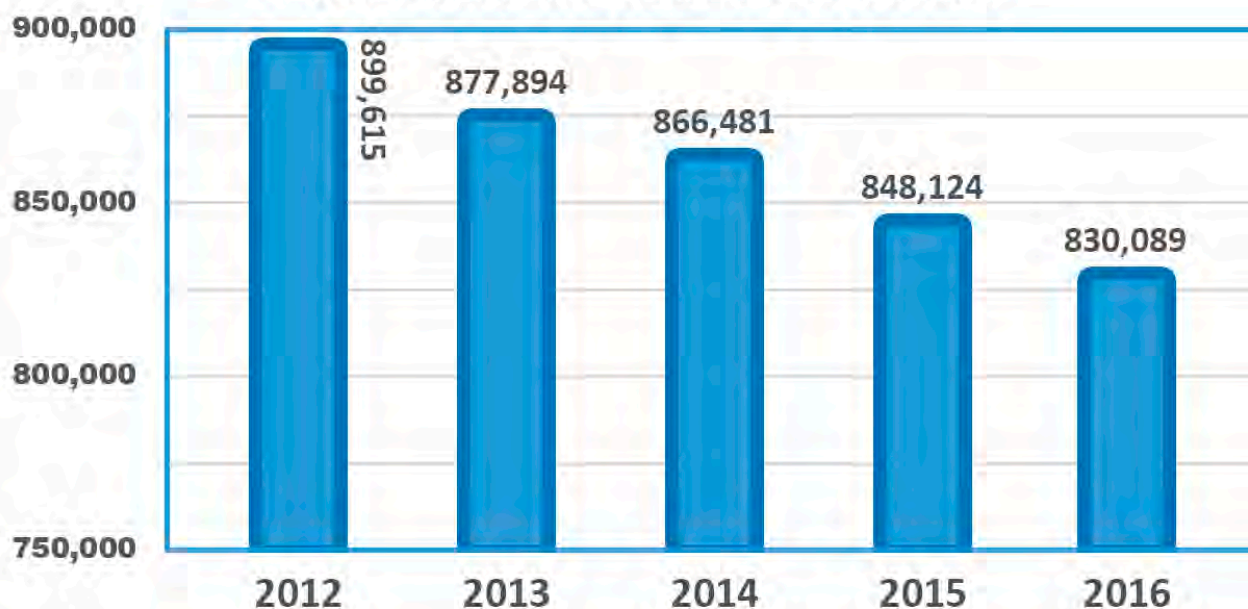
Ohio law gives the Ohio Department of Veterans Services the responsibility to partner with county veteran service commissions and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, in order to “serve those who have served.”

Mission: Provide opportunities and resources for our veteran community through advocacy, collaboration and partnerships.

This mission supports the department’s vision of being “The Trusted Voice for Veterans.”



OHIO VETERAN POPULATION



★ Ohio Currently has the 6th Largest Veterans Population in the Nation.

**Source - VA Annual Geographic Distribution of VA Expenditures (GDY) Report 2012 - 2016*

Serving & Supporting

Fulfilling the mission of providing opportunities and resources for our veteran community brings with it the challenge of identifying and contacting veterans. The department and its partners work to identify and connect veterans and military families with the benefits and opportunities they have earned through their military service. Veterans of all eras often don't realize they may qualify for benefits.

Once veterans are identified, the process to connect them to benefits through their local County Veterans Service Office begins. The County Veterans Service Officer works for a County Veterans Service Commission whose members are nominated by veterans service organizations and appointed by a county common pleas judge.

ODVS is responsible for the training and certification of service officers and commissioners within the 88 counties to help veterans filing VA claims and to ensure veterans are connected to resources at the state, local and federal level. The County Veterans Service Officers help veterans apply for benefits, offer free transportation to medical appointments and provide direct financial assistance when necessary.

Welcoming Transitioning Veterans Home

ODVS continues to explore ways to engage younger veterans and make them aware of all Ohio has to offer them. One method that has shown positive results is sending personalized letters to transitioning veterans, who often are looking to begin a new career and may even be starting to raise a family.



The letters, signed by Director Tansill and Major General Mark E. Bartman, Adjutant General, Ohio National Guard are a form of gratitude for their service but also detail many starting points for honorably discharged service members and their families.

ODVS is working with the U.S. Department of Defense to identify those service members who are returning to Ohio. The federal government estimates 200,000 members of the U.S. Armed Forces will leave the military every year and approximately 10,000 of those will have Ohio homes of record.

Since July 2016, ODVS has sent out letters and postcards to over 7,200 transitioning veterans who were within a month of receiving their discharge certificate. They encourage them to visit their local County Veterans Service Office and sign up to receive updates from ODVS via OhioVets.gov.

It is imperative that returning service members enjoy a post-military life with proper health care and a head start on a new career. They can register for VA benefits through their county service office and can visit OhioMeansVeteranJobs.com, Ohio's online employment resource, to access a military skills translator tool, find a listing of the 2,400 military-friendly Ohio businesses, and discover information regarding licensing, education and training.

Employment

ODVS continues to partner with the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation, JobsOhio, the Department of Job and Family Services, Ohio Higher Education and the Adjutant General to enhance employment opportunities for veterans, service members and their families in Ohio.

In FY2017, the ODVS Office of Employment, Education and Policy implemented a new Veteran Workforce Section consisting of our workforce manager and three regional workforce consultants. Aligned with the six JobsOhio Regional Network Partnerships, our consultants provide direct services to employers seeking assistance in connecting with the veteran workforce system through OhioMeansJobs.com and in developing culturally competent veteran recruiting and retention strategies.



Regional Workforce Consultant Ryan Blackburn discusses veteran employment resources with Ohio workforce leaders.

The ODVS Workforce Section reached its six-month mark of implementation in April 2017. In that time, our regional workforce consultants have contacted more than 6,600 employers leading to 689 employer engagements. Those engagements include 47 employer training events with 625 attendees representing 363 employers around Ohio. The team has developed seven training modules for company human resources, recruiting and management professionals covering everything from military culture and veteran demographics to behavioral health and disability accommodations.

We have received great support from chambers of commerce, employer organizations and the veteran community around the state, which regularly refer employers to our team, and we are greatly appreciative of that collaboration.



Director Tansill and DVS Workforce Manager Jon Field discuss veteran hiring at Bowling Green State University-Firelands.

The workforce team also has reached out to national organizations to examine the possibility of accrediting our training for continuing education credit for human resources professionals.

For more information on our workforce team, please contact Jonathan Field, DVS Workforce Manager, at 614-466-7635, or by email at jonathan.field@dvs.ohio.gov.

Higher Education

ODVS continued its collaboration with the Ohio Department of Higher Education and the University System of Ohio in the implementation of the HB488 (130th General Assembly) veteran education provisions through the Military Strategic Implementation Team. As of FY2017, there are now dedicated veteran points of contact assigned at all 37 of Ohio's public colleges and universities.

This year also saw rapid expansion in the number of Ohio-specific Military Transfer Assurance Guides that make it easier for veterans and service members to apply their military education, training and experience towards meaningful college credit. With the recent addition of 61 Military Transfer Assurance Guides in electrical and industrial engineering, there are now more than 130 Military Transfer Assurance Guides available through the University System.

Pending approval, many more will be established in the coming year.

In FY2017, ODVS and the Ohio Department of Higher Education continued their long collaboration in providing higher education opportunities to the children of killed-in-action and severely disabled war veterans through the Ohio War Orphans Scholarship.

For the 2016-2017 school year, the Ohio War Orphans Scholarship Board awarded more than \$7.1 million in scholarships to 1,086 students attending 67 public, private and non-profit higher education institutions around the state. In Governor Kasich's operating budget, funding for the War Orphans Scholarship Fund has increased 49 percent over the past five years.

Veterans Educational Programs

ODVS is the Ohio agency for the federally funded Veterans Educational Programs office, which oversees the Troops to Teachers program and State Approving Agency for Veterans Training.

Troops To Teachers

Troops to Teachers assists veterans in obtaining teaching certificates and provides both counseling and mentoring in order to



Director Tansill addresses participants at the On-the-Job Training and Apprenticeship Workshop in April.

place veterans in high-needs schools, not only to teach, but to serve as positive role models in their schools and local communities.

Educator Licenses Fees Eliminated

The Ohio Department of Education eliminated fees for educator licenses to recognize the contributions of military families. The fees for any initial Ohio educator license, permit or certificate – or for a renewal – will be waived for candidates who are veterans with honorable discharges or current service members of all branches of the United States Armed Forces, the National Guard or Reserve, and the Ohio Military Reserve or Ohio Naval Militia (under the Ohio Adjutant General). Spouses of active duty service members also may receive a license free of charge.

State Approving Agency

The principal role of the State Approving Agency is to promote and safeguard quality education and training programs for all veterans/dependents and to ensure education and training opportunities meet the changing needs of veterans. There are more than 700 approved Ohio institutions where veterans/dependents are able to use their post-9/11 GI Bill® educational benefits. Each year the VA contractually requires the State Approving Agency to review these programs offered by institutions for validity and to perform 69 compliance surveys (audits) of institutions predetermined by the VA. These surveys acknowledge the reporting accuracy of tuition/fees schools make on behalf of the veteran. In federal FY2016, the VA spent more than \$260 million in Ohio on vocational rehabilitation and education.

Ohio Veterans Bonus

The Ohio Veterans Bonus continues awarding bonuses to Ohio veterans, a tradition that dates back to the Civil War. The payment is \$100 per month to veterans who served during the eligibility period in Afghanistan up to a maximum of \$1,000; and for veterans who served in other locations during the eligible time period, a payment of \$50 per month up to a \$500 maximum. Veterans medically discharged as

a result of combat service can receive \$1,000 regardless of how much time they spent in Afghanistan, plus up to \$500 for service in other locations.

Family members of a service member killed in action or who died from disease as a result of their service in Afghanistan may receive a bonus of \$5,000 plus whatever the service member was eligible to receive, up to \$6,500.



The bonus will remain in effect for veterans who served in Afghanistan, or in other locations since Oct. 7, 2001, until the President declares an end to our involvement in Afghanistan. At that time, eligible applicants will have three years to apply.

The Ohio Veterans Bonus program has paid more than \$74.8 million to more than 91,854 Ohio veterans and military families as of May 30, 2017.

Training & Standards

ODVS coordinates the training and certification for Ohio's County Veterans Service Officers and County Veterans Service Commissioners in all 88 counties. This year, online training was launched for both commissioners and service officers in addition to traditional in-person training. The training allows members to stay cognizant of changes in federal and state benefits which in turn allows them to better support our veteran community.



DVS's Raquel Dowdy-Cornute trains County Veterans Service Commissioners on best practices for HR matters.

During FY2017, more than 430 County Veterans Service Commissioners were trained, along with 265 County Veterans Service Officers. ODVS held a separate training event for 40 newly appointed commissioners and the Ohio State Association for County Veterans Service Officers trained 58 newly appointed County Veterans Service Officers.

ODVS recertified the accreditation of 43 County Veterans Service Officers with

the VA and processed initial accreditation requests for 64 County Veterans Service Officers. More than 175 requests for cross accreditation were processed on behalf of County Veterans Service Officers with various veterans organizations, allowing veterans to be represented by organizations of their choice during the claims process.

Veterans Affairs Regional Office



ODVS liaison office at the Cleveland Veterans Affairs Regional Office provided assistance on more than 6,647 requests from County Veterans Service Officers throughout Ohio during FY2017. The liaison's role is to provide direct assistance with claims that need immediate attention or special management through partnership with the Veterans Affairs Regional Office.

The liaison office also has partnered with the Veterans Affairs Regional Office to provide training to the counties in order to enhance the quality of services provided to our Ohio veterans. This training was conducted on a district level, which allowed the counties to focus on specific issues predominant in their local areas.

Helping Ohio Veterans with Needs

Access to Community-based Mental Health Services

ODVS has partnered with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Ohio National Guard, the VA and other statewide behavioral health and veteran organizations such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness and the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation to form the Ohio Military and Veteran Behavioral Health and Suicide Prevention Collaborative. Together we will strengthen suicide prevention by reducing stigmas that accompany seeking help, by coordinating services and outreach among federal, state and community providers, and through improved access to culturally competent behavioral health services.



Jhan Corzine of Chillicothe holds up a photo of his son, Army Specialist Holden Corzine, who took his own life in 2016.

In FY2017, ODVS built on efforts to expand the availability of military culturally competent behavioral health services through the Star Behavioral Health Providers initiative.

Ohio's initiative was established in partnership with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Ohio Brain Injury Program, the Ohio National Guard, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Department of Defense.

The initiative provides specialized training to Ohio non-VA behavioral health providers on military culture, deployment cycle stressors, combat-related conditions, and effective, evidence-based treatments for behavioral health problems including insomnia, suicidal behavior and PTSD. This training enables providers to better understand, assess and treat veterans. Providers are then eligible to be included as part of an online registry. Registry users can identify nearby providers who can assist them regardless of discharge or veteran eligibility status. Nearly 800 behavioral health providers have received military culture training and almost 200 have been added, or applied to be added, to the online registry.

Preventing Homelessness

In 2009, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced an initiative to end veteran homelessness across the United States by the end of calendar year 2015. Its stated goal was to achieve and sustain "functional zero" – a well-coordinated and efficient community

system that assures homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring.

ODVS has worked with the VA in Ohio to help connect its homeless outreach and service staff with Ohio's network of 88 County Veteran Services Offices that provide financial assistance as well as VA disability and pension claims assistance to veterans and their families. In FY2017, these efforts have included incorporating VA homelessness information and coordinating briefings into ODVS-supported training for more than 600 County Veterans Services Commissioners and County Veterans Service Officers.

During this fiscal year, the VA provided more than 2,300 supportive housing vouchers to assist homeless veterans in Ohio with procuring and maintaining housing. Sixteen Ohio public housing agencies received \$15 million in grants to provide supportive services for at-risk veteran families to prevent homelessness.

Outreach

Getting out into the community, interacting with veterans groups, honoring those who have served honorably, visiting our County Veterans Service Offices and commending Ohio companies and business for adding veterans to their workforce all are a large facet of what we do at ODVS.

Often joined by Ohio legislators, liaisons from the Governor's office and other dignitaries and community leaders, Director Tansill regularly travels to different parts of the state to recognize the outstanding efforts of Ohio's military-friendly employers. In 2016, those ventures included visits to Cintas, Airstream, Crown Equipment, the Akron Fire Department and AMES at the Airpark in Wilmington, which employs hundreds of veterans and also incentivizes them to use their GI Bill® to take advantage of a rewarding 18-month apprenticeship program.



ODVS honored more than 300 veteran employees at Airborne Maintenance and Engineering Services.

On these visits, the director presents an OhioMeansJobs Challenge Coin to upper management and human resource directors as a show of gratitude for recognizing the unique and useful skill set of veterans. He also presents an ODVS Veterans Coin to veterans on hand and offers special recognition to Vietnam-era

veterans by issuing them a 50th Anniversary Commemorative Lapel Pin.

In 2016 alone, the department conducted countless employer visits, served a key role in scores of events and ceremonies that honor veterans, and participated in dozens more veteran-related programs and activities such as roundtable discussions, Honor Flights, job fairs, entrepreneurial workshops, VA programs and many more.



ODVS organized and sponsored a military art exhibit at the Riffe Center in downtown Columbus in October 2016 and also hosted a 40-table Veterans Resource Fair in Sandusky in April 2017 in conjunction with Governor Kasich's State of the State address.

Supporting Justice-Involved Veterans

It is important to ensure that veterans in the justice system are given the resources to succeed afterwards, which makes it a priority for ODVS.

Ohio continues to be a leader in the Veterans Treatment Court movement, with 21 specialty dockets in Ohio courts. Some courts that don't have the resources or veteran population to support a regular Veterans Court are incorporating the principles and procedures into their regular case management when the defendant identifies as a veteran.

ODVS also works closely with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and the Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition to identify and assist veterans leaving the criminal justice system. The objective of this relationship is to ensure that veterans are identified and linked with additional resources to help prevent recidivism.



A local veteran organization takes part in last October's Central Ohio Stand Down at the Columbus Convention Center.

Women Veterans

Ohio is home to more than 67,000 female veterans, which ranks seventh in the nation.

The Ohio Women Veteran Advisory Committee, which dates to 1994, has the ear of the director and ODVS staff members. Its mission is to “locate, educate and advocate for all women veterans who served in the United States military.”

ODVS values its relationship with women’s veterans organizations and, in collaboration with the Ohio Women Veteran Advisory Committee, sponsors a biennial Ohio Women Veterans Conference, which focuses on benefits, health care, networking opportunities and issues that are paramount to women who served in the U.S. Armed Forces. The next conference is set for August 2017 and again will draw hundreds of women veterans from all parts of the state and throughout the Midwest.



In recognition of Women’s History Month, ODVS hosted a women veterans panel at the Ohio History Connection.

The department hosted its annual Women Veterans Panel Discussion in March at the Ohio History Connection to celebrate Women’s History Month. The event gave women of varying eras and military branches a forum to discuss their backgrounds, takeaways from service and some of the challenges and stigmas they overcame.

In March, ODVS highlights female inductees of the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame on its social media channels. The most recently enshrined HOF class includes three women.

Ohio Veterans Homes

The Ohio Veterans Homes are comprised of three facilities – a nursing home located in Georgetown, and a nursing home and a domiciliary located in Sandusky. Each one offers a quality of life which emphasizes privacy, encourages independence, provides comfort and security and meets social needs. The homes embrace a person-centered approach to caring for our residents.

Both homes and the domiciliary are open to honorably discharged veterans of periods of armed conflicts who are or were Ohio residents for at least one year during their lifetime. These veterans also must be infirmed or disabled and incapable of earning a living.

Each home offers standard nursing home care as well as memory care for Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

The homes continue providing quality care at affordable rates. Per-resident per diem funding by the VA, combined with a sliding scale resident assessment based on ability to pay, provides a long-term care value for veterans and their families.



The Ohio Veterans Homes continue to decrease their reliance on the State General Revenue Fund. In FY2004, this funding comprised 61 percent of the homes budget, to 37.9 percent in FY2016. VA per diem funding, meanwhile, increased from 28 percent to 39.5 percent of the Ohio Veterans Home's budget.

Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame

The Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame was established in 1992 to recognize the

achievements of veterans in community service after their military service ended. Charter members of the hall's class of 1993 included the six Ohio military veterans who were elected President of the United States and all of Ohio's Medal of Honor recipients. Honorees of the past 24 years include astronauts, government officials, community leaders, and veterans' advocates. Last year's class of distinguished veterans brings the hall's enshrinement total to 517.

The Hall of Fame Executive Committee is comprised entirely of veterans, and its members serve as advisors for the Hall of Fame. They select up to 20 inductees annually from nominations provided by the citizens of Ohio. Men and women chosen for induction into the Hall of Fame come from all eras, all branches of service and all walks of life.

The Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame is on permanent display on the second floor of the Riffe Center for Government and the Arts at 77 S. High St. in downtown Columbus.



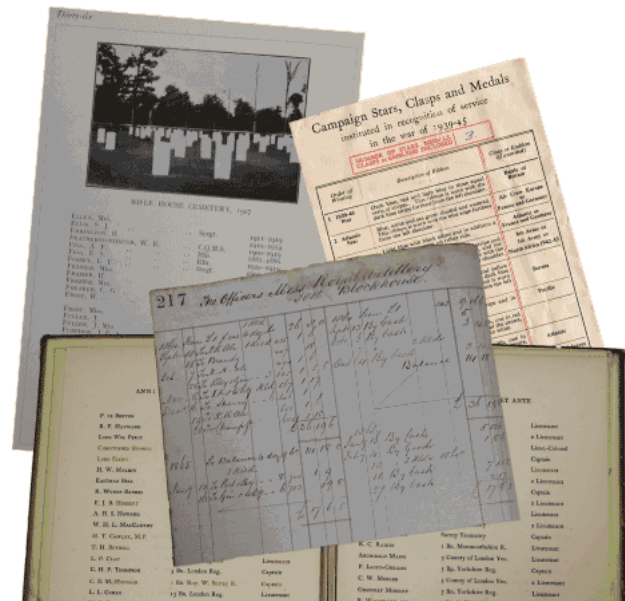
Veterans Records

ODVS is proud to be the first state veterans agency in the nation to be granted full access to the Defense Personnel Records Information System. Currently the system is used by all 88 County Veterans Service Offices, with more than 115 employees enrolled with accounts.

The records system access grants ODVS and Ohio's 88 counties the ability to verify service records of recently discharged Global War on Terrorism-era veterans to determine eligibility for various services, usually within 30 minutes of the request. This allows ODVS and the counties to provide immediate service to those who qualify.



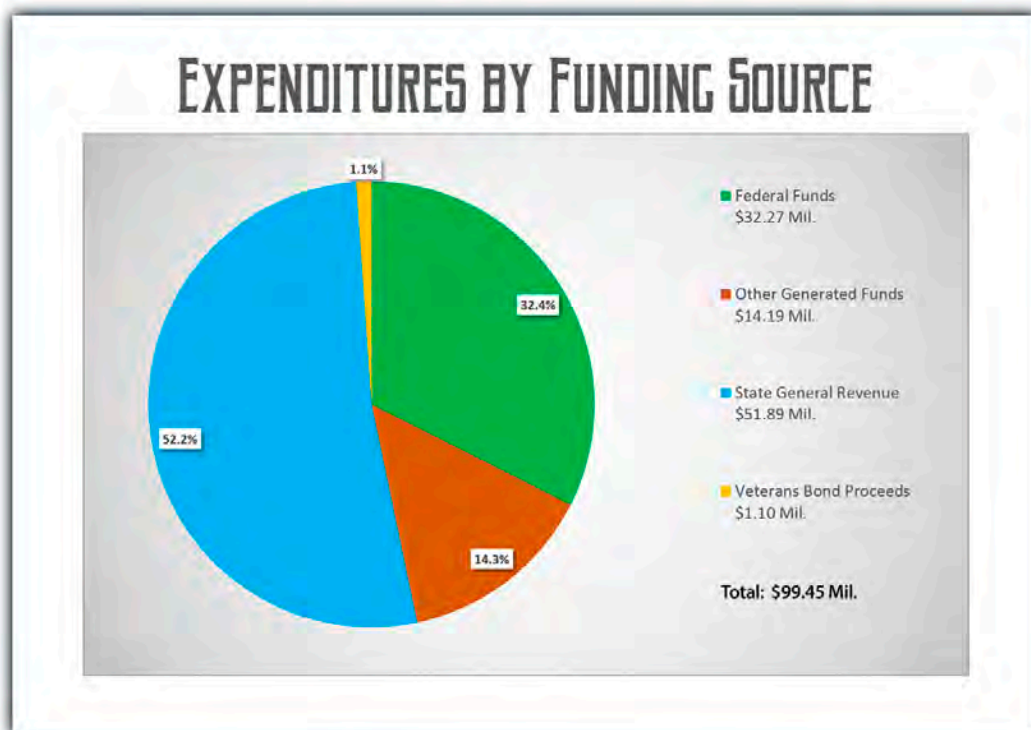
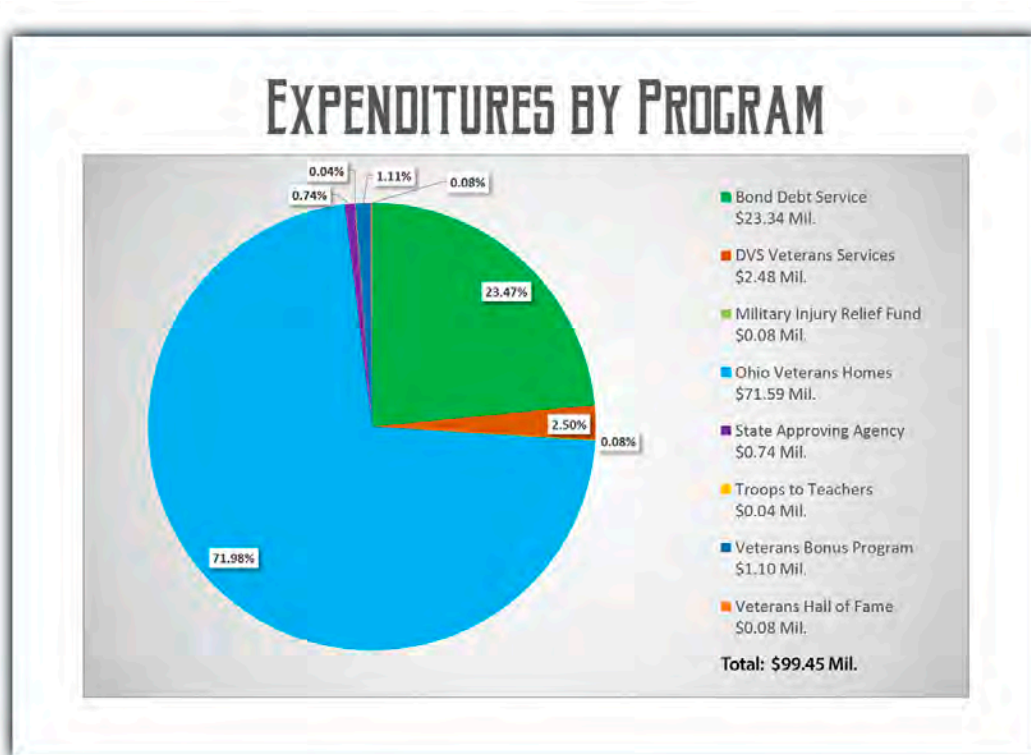
ODVS staffer James Mark uses Defense Personnel Records Information System technology to review a veteran's record.



The ODVS records office maintains nearly complete muster logs of roughly 4.3 million Ohioans who served at war as far back as The War of 1812 through the completion of the First World War. There are more than 1.4 million discharge records in our database which enables easy organization and access to microfilm archives and electronic storage of modern day discharge certificates (DD214s and DD215s) obtained through the Department of Defense.

During FY2017, the records office received approximately 4,182 requests for records, averaging 80 requests per week.

ODVS Expenditures



TOTAL VA EXPENDITURES IN OHIO



Rate of Increase

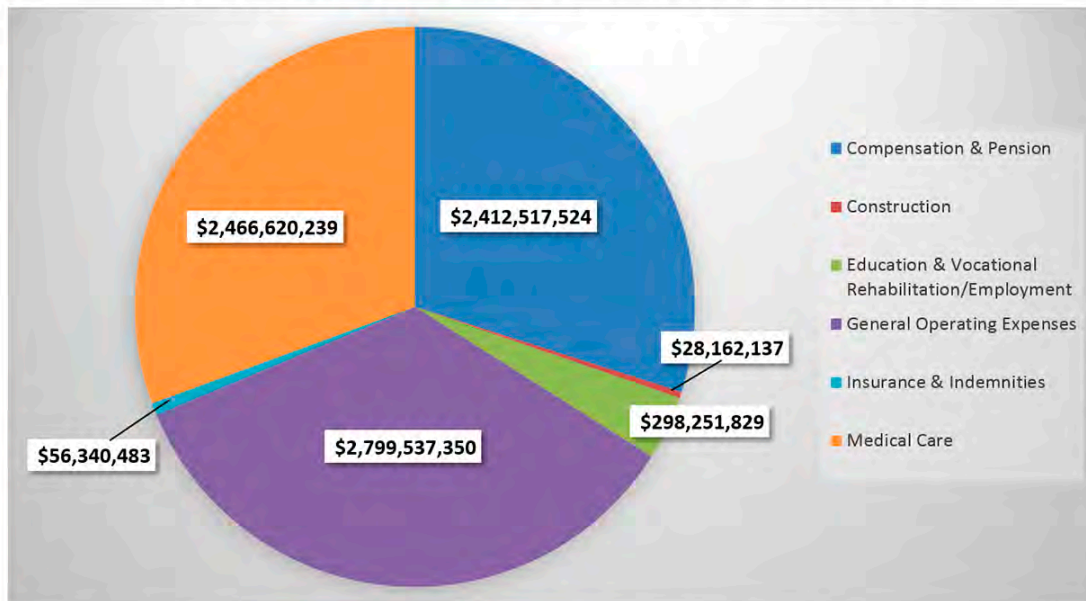
12 - 13	\$838 Million
13 - 14	\$860 Million
14 - 15	\$195 Million
15 - 16	\$362 Million

2012 **2013** **2014** **2015** **2016**

**Source - VA Annual Geographic Distribution of VA Expenditures (GDx) Report 2012 - 2016*

A primary focus of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services is to direct former service members to all the programs and benefits at their avail by encouraging them to visit their County Veterans Service Office. This increased awareness has enabled the VA to raise its expenditures for the benefit of Ohio veterans.

WHAT MAKES UP THE \$8.06 BILLION



**Source - VA Annual Geographic Distribution of VA Expenditures (GDx) Report 2016*

Conclusion

The Ohio Department of Veterans Services continues to “serve those who have served” by actively identifying, connecting with, and advocating for veterans and their families. Stay informed on the many ways Ohio supports its veterans by visiting OhioVets.gov and registering for email updates.