



Director's Message



*A Monthly Report from the Washington
State Department of Veterans Affairs*

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BUDGET CHALLENGES

On November 24, I sent a message to all WDVA Staff Members outlining the budget challenges that face the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs and the steps we're taking to meet those challenges.

As you know, our agency mission includes providing service to veterans in our State Veterans Homes. Because of this, we were not included in some of the early rounds of budget reductions. However, we are affected by the hiring freeze, travel reductions, freeze on non-essential purchases and now a general reduction in our spending authority. It is anticipated that we will need to save approximately \$800,000 between now and June 30, 2009.

As a first measure in addressing our budget situation, I announced three staff reductions in central office in order save \$109,500 between now and June 30. The positions include the elimination of the project manager for the Veteran Owned Business Initiatives, the elimination of a Washington Management Service position in the Human Resources Division, and a reduction to half-time for a special project manager.

The Superintendents are looking closely at the Homes budgets and taking every opportunity to reduce expenses with the least impact to residents or staff. We are doing the same at the customer service centers and in the central office.

More information will be available in the coming weeks on what any additional reductions will look like.

As Veterans, families and members of Washington's Veterans Community, I want to make the same commitment to you that I made to my staff members. I will keep you informed on

any changes we make to meet our current and future financial challenges.

I will have an update at our December VAAC meeting in Bothell. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call or e-mail me.

VAAC MEETING

The Governor's Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee will meet on December 4, 2009 at American Legion Post #127 in Bothell.

The agenda will include a budget discussion as well as the formation of several subcommittees, a report on housing at American Lake and an update on the 81st Brigade.

An MOU will be signed to help ensure all veterans receive the proper military funeral honors, even if they do not have family or friends to identify them as veterans when they pass away. The agreement will allow us to work with funeral homes or cemeteries to help identify unclaimed cremated remains as veterans or their spouses and provide interment in a Veterans Cemetery.

VETERANS CEMETERY

The Cemetery Governance Committee continues to work with the Federal VA State Cemetery Grant Program. The next step in the process is for WDVA to receive final approval on our Master Plan.

Once the plan is approved, the construction team can move forward with the cemetery design. A meeting with the Federal VA is being scheduled in order to determine what additional information or revisions are needed to the Master Plan.