Minnesota Commanders' Task Force 2023 Legislative Priorities

Congressionally chartered veterans organizations in Minnesota working together to pass legislation on behalf of all veterans.

Paralyzed Veterans of America

Pass a clean Veterans Omnibus Bill

The 2021 session produced the first Veterans Omnibus Bill, and this action to separate our legislation was well-received by legislators, veterans and servicemembers alike. We would like this to continue and beyond as a Minnesota precedent, so that our legislation stands on its own merits.

Support the Hastings Veterans Home campus revitalization project

This $170 million capital infrastructure project would replace six of the nine buildings at the campus. Many of the buildings at the Hastings Veterans Home date back to the early 1900s when the campus served as a state mental hospital. It became a veterans home in 1978.

A federal Veterans Affairs grant would pay two-thirds ($111 million), but the state must commit to its one-third share ($59.6 million), which would come from the bonding bill.

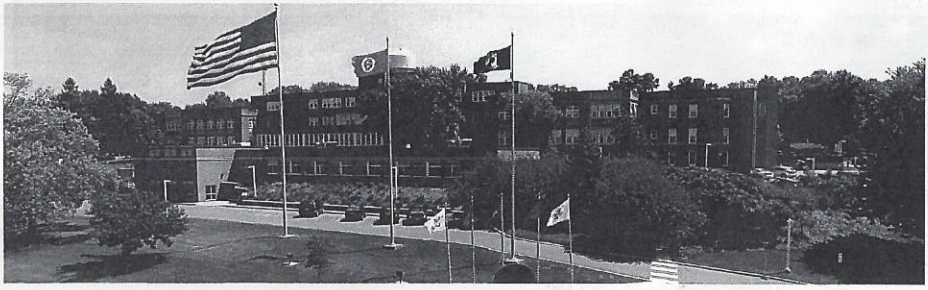
The updated campus would be able to serve 140 veterans in the MDVA's domiciliary program. It is crucial in the state's efforts against veteran homelessness and to care for veterans facing obstacles.

Support state funding to MDVA for prevention of veteran suicides

There will be more details about this, such as specific dollars request, when the 2023 legislative session comes along. The CTF has thrown its support behind dedicated funding for the MDVA to help in its suicide prevention efforts.

Amend the Post-9/11 Service Bonus

The act passed in 2022, unfortunately, left out veterans who received the Inherent Resolve Campaign Medal. We ask that they be added and ask that the commissioner be given



authority to grant exceptions for other post-9/11 veterans who may have been missed.

We also would like to see the bonus extended to veterans who live in Minnesota presently, even if they joined the military in another state. This would be in line with other state veteran benefits, like the Minnesota G.I. Bill. Living here now, they are Minnesotans, just like the rest of us.

Provide a percentage-based change to Homestead Market Value Exclusion

This needs to increase to $400,000 from $300,000 and to provide a percentage-based relief starting at 50 percent. Also, it should provide an inflationary-based increase. We support the removal of the equal or lesser value language for surviving spouses.

Modify the definition of a veteran

This proposal calls for altering the state's definition of a veteran to eliminate the service-connected cutoff date so all service-connected veterans are eligible for benefits and admission to the Minnesota Veterans Homes.

Amend 2 laws to help our CVSOs

Alter Statute 197.63 to include county veteran service officers in the list of entities of which documents can be issued without a charge. Also, change the language of 386.20 to say "Uniformed Services" so that DD214 discharge documents from all branches may be recorded at county courthouses. (Presently, the outdated law says Army, Navy, Marines.)

Reduce the cost of hunting, trapping and fishing licenses for disabled veterans

We are working hand-in-hand with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to reduce the cost of hunting, trapping and fishing licenses for service-connected disabled veterans.

We advocate for the Minnesota Legislature to approve the result of this proposal, as it would likely increase net license revenue for the DNR and give Veterans the health benefits that come from the great outdoors.

Eliminate 2-year rule for DIC recipients

The current exclusion reads that the application for exclusion must be made by the surviving spouse within two years of the death of the veteran. This limited language doesn't allow for cases where the VA may take more than two years to make the proper decision for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). It also excludes the vast majority of surviving spouses made eligible by the recent changes to Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans who may have passed away while being denied all benefits.

Eliminate vehicle registration fees for Gold Star spouses and children, as well as 100 percent disabled

Many states do not charge vehicle registration fees for Gold Star spouses and children (based on the DD1300 Report of Casualty) and they do not charge veterans who have a VA rating of 100 percent permanent and total (P&T) disabled. Minnesota should follow suit.

These people already have made deep

sacrifices on behalf of our federal and state governments, and this would be the least our state could do to thank them.

Fix a property tax exemption regarding Gold Star families

The present law says the surviving spouse must file within two years of the death and must live in the home at the time of the death.

This outdated property tax exemption law clearly discriminates against active-duty spouses and would help only Minnesota National Guard or Reserve spouses. Clearly, active-duty spouses highly likely live on or near out-of-state bases when their spouses die in service to the country. When they return to Minnesota, they find they do not qualify for the Gold Star property-tax exemption. This is not in the spirit of our state's support for veterans and their families. Let's fix it.

Request four new specialty license plates

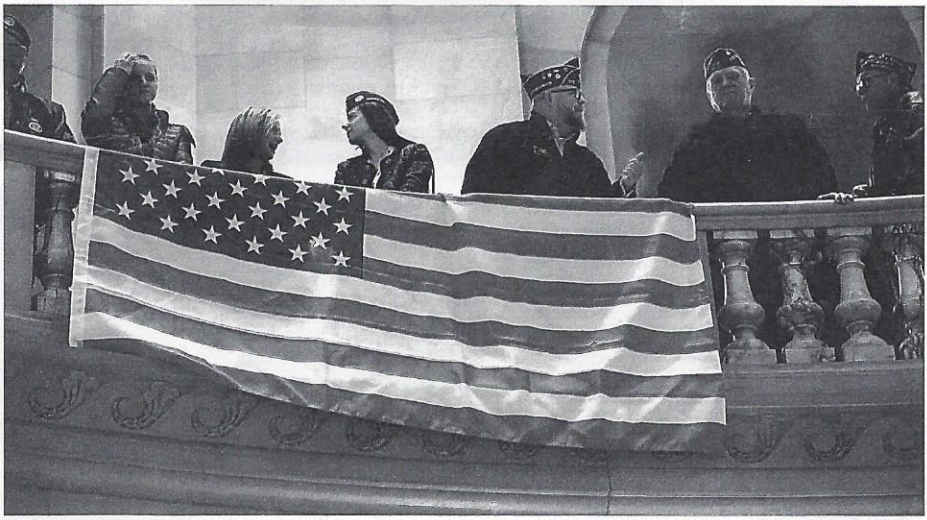
- Jewish War Veterans
- Air Medal Veterans
- Purple Heart Medal
- Retired Military by Branch of Service

Increase the monthly allowance given to sheltered homeless veterans

Despite a large budget surplus, Minnesota encourages homelessness by taking federal benefits income from veterans and others to pay for their shelter. Presently, veterans can enter a shelter and be left with just $111 a month or remain homeless and keep their money.

Fixing this issue would reduce the number of homeless veterans. Last year, this bill was HF3568/SF3417, led by Catholic Charities. It has bipartisan support and should pass this year in the human services bill.

Work with MDVA to update the Personal Needs Allowance

For this one, no law needs to be passed, but we include it here for the sake of awareness and transparency. The CTF does wish for the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs to review its Personal Needs Allowance.

In a worst-case financial scenario, veterans in the homes are allowed to keep $90 a month, and it has not changed for more than 30 years. For the sake of dignity and sound policies, it is time to increase their allowance and to make a Personal Needs Allowance policy that recognizes adjustments in the cost of living.