



## STATE OF MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



20 West 12th Street, 2nd Floor • St. Paul, MN 55155 • Phone: 651-296-2562 • Fax: 651-296-3954  
[www.mdva.state.mn.us](http://www.mdva.state.mn.us) • 1-888-LinkVet

April 17, 2023

Senator John Marty  
Chair, Senate Finance  
3235 Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Erin Murphy  
Chair, Senate State and Local Government and Veterans Affairs  
3229 Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Nicole Mitchell  
Vice Chair, Senate State and Local Government and Veterans Affairs  
3211 Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Marty, Chair Murphy and Vice Chair Mitchell,

Thank you for your consideration of S.F. 2247, the Omnibus Military Affairs and Department of Veteran Affairs appropriations bill. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) is happy to express our gratitude for this bill reflecting our work with Legislators, stakeholders, Veterans Service Organizations, our partners in the non-profit sector, other state agencies and the Governor's Office. We cannot carry out our mission of serving the needs of Minnesota's nearly 300,000 Veterans and their families without this collaboration and support.

Together, we've developed a package of budget initiatives designed to assist Minnesota's Veterans and their families to secure long-term care in our State Veterans Homes, expand access to benefits and services, add more opportunities for higher education and to fund safe and secure housing for those in crisis or at risk of losing their housing.

Every year, the cost to provide benefits, services and care to Minnesota Veterans and their families increases. Even when we have worked hard to identify ways to improve efficiency and maintain productivity within our existing budget, the cost of doing business – whether it be in negotiated salary increases or in supplies and materials – has outpaced our ability to operate within the old base.

Much of the funding in this budget aligns with our goal to supplement agency-wide appropriations to support our current levels of service. From operations at the existing State Veterans Homes to offices within our Programs and Services Division such as the State Veterans

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

This document is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities by calling the Minnesota Relay Service at 1-800-627-3529

Cemeteries at Little Falls, Preston, Duluth. These investments will help make up ground for years of only modest increases which fell short of funding our increased levels of service.

This bill also funds the operational needs of the three new State Veterans Homes set to open later this year. The operating budget request for the new Minnesota Veterans Homes in Bemidji, Montevideo and Preston will ensure that necessary resources are available for the initial operations and start-up costs, certification to operate is obtained, and staffing and resident numbers increase.

Dedicated funding for the Homeless Veterans and SOAR Program will provide advocacy services to Veterans and their dependents in danger of homelessness or experiencing homelessness.

This bill also follows up on a prior appropriation that, in partnership with the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans – MACV – works to create additional permanent supportive housing units and residential support services for homeless Veterans throughout Minnesota. This funding will help create affordable permanent supportive housing units for Veterans facing extremely high barriers to housing that the private market isn't producing.

With respect to the difference between this bill and MDVA's funding request for the Post-9/11 Veteran Service bonus, I will note our appreciation for the inclusion of expanded eligibility and the additional funding, even at moderated levels.

The Walz-Flanagan administration is committed to ensuring that every Veteran in Minnesota who is eligible to receive these bonuses and benefits, and who applies in a timely manner, will be served. If what ends up in the final budget fails to meet that commitment, we will be back before you with a supplemental request to make up the difference.

In closing, there are many choices in this budget that demonstrate your attention to the needs we've identified and reflecting adherence to the joint targets agreed to by leadership, while also funding priorities brought by this chambers' members.

I would like to recognize the collaboration reflected in Senator Nicole Mitchell and Chair Murphy's recommended budget for Veterans in front of you today. Thank you for all the areas that you have offered alignment with our identified priorities, and for your ongoing willingness reach consensus on investing in a historic way in the service of Minnesota's Veterans and their families.

Respectfully,



Brad Lindsay, Interim Commissioner  
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

Cc: Senator Eric Pratt, Senator Bruce Anderson, Senator Kari Dziedzic, Senator Mark Johnson

An Equal Opportunity Employer

This document is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities by calling the Minnesota Relay Service at 1-800-627-3529