



## **Minnesota Association of County Veterans Service Officers**

### **2025 Session Issues**

- **MACVSO Technical Assistance Funding for Special Areas of Expertise Needed.** Last year, John spoke with Chair Newton about state funding to train one of our CVSOs or ACVSOs in the areas of women veterans, suicide prevention, and veteran treatment courts. The amount of funding is likely to be around \$20,000 for each position or a total of \$60,000 annually. The idea is that our three members who receive the training will then travel around the state as needed to support CVSOs and ACVSOs in the work in these areas and provide technical advice.
- **Protect Veterans from Consumer Fraud and Claim Sharks.** Consumer fraud and aggressive practices targeting veterans' VA benefits compensation are on the rise. Several national veterans service organizations, as well as NACVSO, want the return of criminal penalties enforced against non-accredited parties. While the federal government is in gridlock on whether or not to pass the GUARD Act (S. 740 and H.R. 8736), states like New Jersey are beginning to pass their own legislation to protect veterans. MACVSO and organizations that are part of the Minnesota Commander's Task Force believe this issue is too important to wait for the federal government to act. State regulation seems appropriate.

Representative Emma Greenman has taken a keen interest in this issue. We worked with her and the legislature research staff on draft language (CS144-5005671173743550781). MDVA has stated this will be their top issue in 2025, and the Minnesota Commander's Task Force is likely to include this on their legislative platform. The bill essentially removes the \$1,000 penalty per violation under current statute in favor of allowing veterans to pursue recovery of full damages sustained which can be in the tens of thousands of dollars. (Relevant existing federal regulation 38 C.F.R. s.14.636 and state regulation 197.6091 VETERANS BENEFITS SERVICES; DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS)

- **Modernize the Disabled Veterans Homestead Market Value Exclusion.** There may be some noncontroversial changes we could support. Currently, there are two levels of property tax exclusions. The exclusion values have not changed in over 10 years while home values have dramatically risen, reducing the impact of this benefit. The first level is a maximum exemption of \$150,000 for veterans rated by the VA 70 to 100 percent disabled. The second level of exclusion is for 100 percent permanent and total (100 percent P&T) disabled veterans at \$300,000. These amounts should be increased to \$200,000 and \$400,000 respectively and indexed to inflation so that from this point on, they increase annually. We need a technical fix to remove the word "honorable" from the statute. Counties should not re-adjudicate veterans' character of service, since the federal VA has already deemed the service honorable for compensation purposes. In 2024, House lawmakers introduced a bill (HF4259, no senate companion) including all the provisions the CTF hoped to become law. While the relationships with AMC and some of our counties likely prevent us from supporting all the provisions, we could push for these two without controversy. Our draft bill for this year is **JS004-2160864750425313480**.
- **Modernize the Surviving Spouse Homestead Market Value Exclusion.** Amend MS 273.13, Subd 34(d). Homestead of veteran with a disability, or family caregiver. There are several areas of the current market value exclusion statute that are unfavorable to surviving spouses and exclude them from receiving the benefit. First, we support the removal of the equal or lesser value language for surviving spouses. It is often more expensive to



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downsize from a large home that is already paid off to a smaller home, town home, or a condo. Second, the present law, MS 273.13, Subd. 34(d), says the surviving spouse must file within two years of the death and must live in the home at the time of the death. We have gotten rid of most of the time limits, but we should finish the job and remove all time limits for surviving spouses applying for the benefit.

Third, the law discriminates against active-duty spouses and would help only Minnesota National Guard or Reserve spouses. Active-duty spouses are highly likely live on or near out-of-state bases when their spouse dies 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. Lastly, we also would favor changing the law to allow the spouse to remarry and retain the benefit. Veterans who have passed on would want their loved one to find happiness in their absence. We have worked with lawmakers and research staff on draft language ([JS004-2160864750425313480](#)). We hope to see this introduced as a bill in 2025 and passed into law.

- **State Offset to Disabled Veterans and Surviving Spouses Homestead Market Value Exclusion**
  - In the state there are approximately 23,000 homesteads currently receiving the exclusion, we are proposing that the State share this burden and reimburse the Counties up to 25 cents on the dollar.
- **Vehicle Registration for Gold Star Spouses.** Many states do not charge vehicle registration fees for Gold Star spouses (based on the DD-1300 or DD-2064) and sometimes for their children. Minnesota should follow suit. These people have made deep sacrifices on behalf of our federal, state and local governments, and this would be the least our state could do to thank them. Last year a bill (HF4338, no senate companion) was introduced to make this a reality. We need to take care of our Gold Star spouses and get this done.
- **Food Insecurity Resources for Minnesota Veterans.** The veterans omnibus bills last biennium included significant funding to address veteran food insecurity through Metro Meals on Wheels. Metro area CVSOs report that one of the first steps they take after a homeless veteran is stably housed through HUD-VASH or another veteran specific resource is to sign them up for Meals on Wheels to deliver prepared frozen meals to their home. In 2024, two senators voted against the veterans omnibus bill because the funding went only to the metro area and not rural and outstate regions. Determine the level of need in rural and outstate areas and decide if Meals on Wheels, Lutheran Social Services, or another provider could meet these needs.
- **Data sharing between CVSO and assessor's office**
  - To prepare for our meeting I looked at the Statute <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/197.603> and guess what? The language for private data sharing is one way; CVSO to Assessor, not Assessor to CVSO (although many do).



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- **Clarify 197 language to ensure veterans who have been unlawfully charged for government services on veteran benefits matters are not subject to a gross misdemeanor**
  - Currently 197.604 language states any person who pays CVSO staff for services in securing benefits may be subject to a gross misdemeanor. This does not seem in line with the spirit of the law, which is to hold government employees who charge fees unlawfully accountable. This statute could be improved by simply striking the below four words.

Kristy Janigo

MACVSO Legislative Chair