# We Are Oregon Veterans

2015 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR

OREGON DEPARTMENT *of* VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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## On the Cover

Steven Wright is a Korean War era veteran who joined the Air Force at the age of 17. His mother signed the release form for his enlistment and that day he was on a plane to basic.

## Jeffrey VanWormes

UNITED STATES ARMY

*I have 20 years of service in the Army. I was mainly focused within logistics roles and served throughout the world with deployments to Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq. I retired in November of 2012.*

# We all have a story.

Even as unique as our individual service,
we have a shared experience and bond.
A brother and sisterhood that stretches
across the gender and generation gaps.
We trained together and lived together.
We were the ones on the left and the right.
After our service, our life details differ,
but the struggles and triumphs are similar.

## Jerry Glesmann

UNITED STATES ARMY

*I joined the service in 1986 and served two combat tours - one to Iraq in 2003 and another to Afghanistan in 2008. I served in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina/ Rita hit in 2005. In addition, I did 8 overseas training missions. I retired in April 2015 with more than 28 years of active duty and National Guard service. I've been a veteran for a short period of time, but the transition is the hardest part.*

## Jimmy Mayo

UNITED STATES NAVY

*I enlisted in 1954 and went to boot camp in San Diego and onto torpedo school. I served on numerous ships throughout my career and retired in January of 1967 and used my education benefits at Seattle City University.*

## Carol Mayo

UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVES

*I spent my two years at Balboa Naval hospital in San Diego and worked in the hospital wards. I helped triage in the ER when wounded came in from Vietnam via Guam.*

*After meeting my husband in Newport, I spent 15 years raising our children. My husband had my name entered in the Womens - Vietnam Memorial in DC.*

## Sarina Criswell

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

*I joined the Marines in 2001. After basic training I was stationed at Camp Pendleton, California as a Personnel Clerk. My last duty station was with Manpower Information System Support at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina as a Database Analyst until my discharge in 2012.*

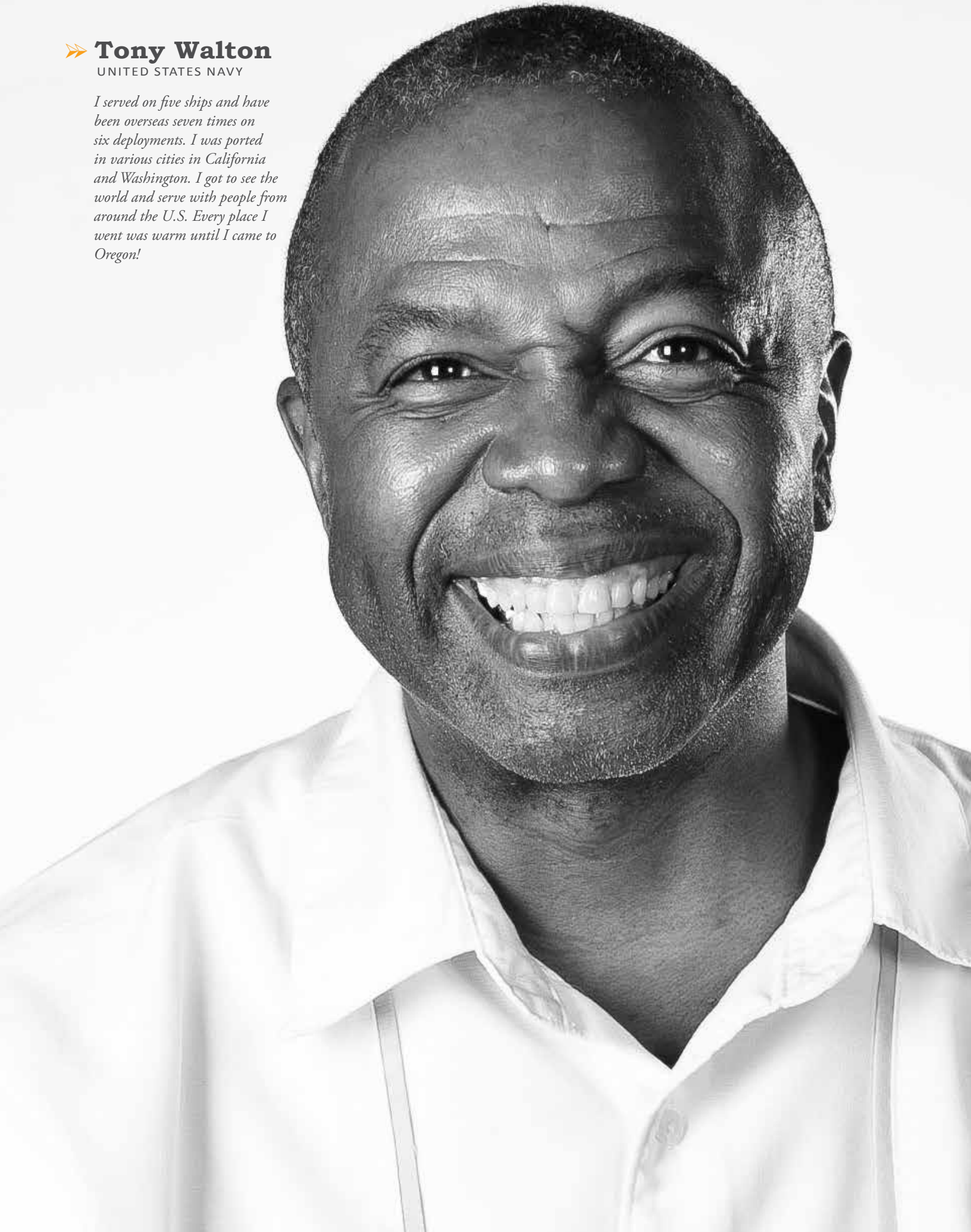
*Since my then I have worked for the State of Oregon with the Department of Transportation DMV headquarters and I am currently enrolled at Argosy University, working towards my B.A. in Computer Science.*

*My husband, who is also a Marine veteran with three combat tours during OEF and OIF is my best friend and battle buddy for life! He is a huge supporting factor in my life and our two children's lives.*

## Tony Walton

UNITED STATES NAVY

*I served on five ships and have been overseas seven times on six deployments. I was ported in various cities in California and Washington. I got to see the world and serve with people from around the U.S. Every place I went was warm until I came to Oregon!*



**We are Oregon veterans.**

## Vietnam 1969

Above: Chair Al Herrera with his then Commanding Officer, Sherwood Goldberg in Vietnam in 1969.

Top left: Chair Al Herrera remembers that most of the photos taken while in country were at the beginning of an operation or while stuck in the mud but ready to move out.

Bottom left:  Chair Al Hererra, who served with Company C, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, better known as the Big Red One, with Director Cameron Smith.

## Alfredo G. Herrera

UNITED STATES ARMY

**The work of ODVA, in many ways, is like an extended military community — ingrained with the values, mutual support, and camaraderie that are a big part of military life.**

My military career began when I was drafted into the United States Army in 1955. I ended up serving a full 20+ year career and proudly served in Vietnam with the 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division. After I retired from the Army in the bicentennial year of 1976, I have been privileged to reconnect with and serve my fellow veterans in such groups as the Bandido Charlie Association, the Military Order of the Purple Heart and The Retired Enlisted Association. Throughout, I have been blessed with the support of my wife Betty and my family.

Little did I know, that my desire to continue serving would allow me the privilege to serve as Chair of the Advisory Committee to the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) this past year.

I am very proud to recognize the dedicated service of my fellow veterans on the Advisory Committee. They are an exceptional group of nine military veterans who provide excellent counsel to the ODVA director and staff on veterans' issues and concerns in the state.

As members of the Advisory Committee, we listen to the needs of the veteran community closely. From conducting quarterly veteran town halls and participating in community conversations across the state, we are more focused than ever on putting our fellow veterans' voice first in pursuit of the ODVA mission.

This year, we have continued to reimagine our role and responsibilities as an Advisory Committee, brought focus and accountability to our work, and reinvigorated our connection to the veterans' community we serve.

Throughout this report you'll have an opportunity to meet a few of our veterans who call Oregon their home. From WWII to the most recent veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, our four generations of veterans are the reason for our work.

I am proud of the foundation we have built and it has been my distinct privilege and honor to serve as Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to serve our veterans and their military families and once again be a part of something much larger than myself.

Sincerely,

**Alfredo G. Hererra**
Chair
Advisory Committee to the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs

# Advisory Committee Members

### 1. Alfredo G. Herrera, Chair
UNITED STATES ARMY
APPOINTED 2011

Highly decorated for his service in Vietnam, Al is the recipient of the Silver Star, Bronze Star (Valor) and Purple Heart. He served with the 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, better known as the Big Red One. Al retired from the Army after a full career in 1976.

### 2. Dennis G. Guthrie, Vice Chair
UNITED STATES ARMY
APPOINTED 2012

Dennis enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1967 and volunteered to serve in Vietnam after completing Airborne and Special Forces Medical Training. He served as Head Company Field Medic with the First Cavalry Division, volunteered for Medevac, and is the recipient of the Silver Star and Bronze Star (Valor) among other awards.

### 3. Michael A. Jones, Secretary
UNITED STATES ARMY
APPOINTED 2012

Michael served in the U.S. Army from 1970 to 1973 and is the recipient of two Bronze Stars for his service in Vietnam.

### 4. Tony N. Garcìa
OREGON ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
APPOINTED 2015

A graduate of Georgetown University and the University of Oregon School of Law, Tony is an Oregon Army National Guard soldier and attorney. He was a Judge Advocate for the 41st Infantry Brigade and served as Chief Trial Counsel in Iraq to the 41st Brigade in 2009 during the Brigade's largest deployment since WWII.

### 5. J. Ryan Howell
OREGON ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
APPOINTED 2008

Ryan served in the Oregon Army National Guard from 1999 to 2005 and deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom with the 2nd Battalion, 162 Infantry. He is the recipient of two Army Commendation Medals and two Purple Hearts.

### 6. Trisa E. Kelly
OREGON AIR NATIONAL GUARD
APPOINTED 2012

Trisa is a Chaplain and Major in the Oregon Air National Guard with the 142nd Fighter Wing. She began her service in 2002 and continues serving in uniform today.

### 7. Gerard F. Lorang
UNITED STATES ARMY
APPOINTED 2008

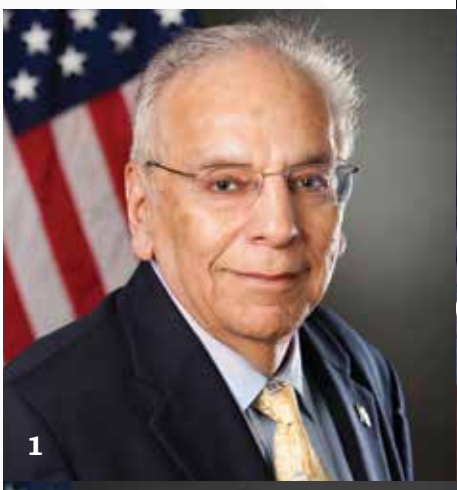
Jerry is a Vietnam Era veteran of the U.S. Army and served from 1972 to 1974 at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. After his military service, Jerry worked at the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration.

### 8. Mary J. Mayer
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
APPOINTED 2011

Mary is a retired Colonel from the U.S. Air Force and served on active duty from 1972 to 2002. She has been the recipient of numerous awards throughout her career, including the Legion of Merit and the Bronze Star.

### 9. Kevin J. Owens
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
APPOINTED 2008

Kevin is a veteran of the U.S. Coast Guard having served along the western U.S. coast from 1984 to 1996.



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Since the Advisory Committee was established in 1945, it has held a distinct and fundamental role advising the Director and staff of ODVA. Advisory committee members are military veterans who are appointed by the Governor and act as advocates for veteran issues and represent veteran concerns across Oregon.

## For the first time in the 70 year history of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs the state is striving to serve veterans spanning four generations across five major wars.

As a state, we have witnessed these generations of service members returning home and then using their hard-earned leadership skills and experience to significantly contribute to our state's communities and economy. These men and women are proud, proven, trained, committed, and patriotic citizens.

What the public may not know is that one out of every twelve Oregonians is a veteran. While the vast majority of our veterans gain great strength from their service, it is not surprising that many can face challenges as they reintegrate home.

For those most impacted by their service, we must understand their tenacious spirit and resiliency. They deserve nothing less than the best in care, resources, and opportunities from our veteran benefit system.

With more than 331,000 veterans in the state, the veteran community is increasingly diverse, and has significant needs for their health, education and economic opportunity.

## William Blake

UNITED STATES NAVY

*I went to officer candidate school after graduating high school in 1968. I served on USS Oriskany, an attack carrier and Vietnam cruiser. Most of my at sea time was spent on the bridge. In late 1970, I went to fleet training in San Diego where I was running ships through refresher training before they deployed.*

*I came down with MS in 1970, but the disease was inactive until 1998. I went to the Veterans Affairs Medical Center and they have taken very good care of me.*

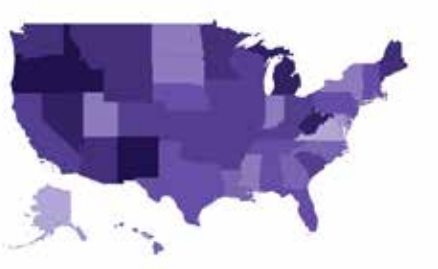
**1 OUT OF 12**
Oregonians is a veteran.

**331,632**
veterans live in Oregon.

**67,046**
disabled veterans in Oregon.

**$106 MILLION**
in disability and pension payments to veterans per month in Oregon.

**3 OUT OF 10**
veterans have accessed at least one federal benefit.



## 5.5% WWII ERA

The number of remaining WWII veterans is on a steep decline. Since 2013, Oregon's WWII veteran population has dropped from 15.5% of the overall veteran population to 5.5% in 2014. It is anticipated that by 2024, less than 1% of Oregon's WWII veteran population will remain.

In the 1940's WWII veterans were among the nation's first to participate in modern warfare. Their service also coincided with major advances in modern medicine, resulting in a then-extraordinary survival rate.

World War II veterans were also the first to serve in the nuclear age. American POWs were used in the clean up of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, thus becoming the first "atomic vets."

## 8.2% KOREAN WAR ERA

Oregon is home to Korean War veterans, accounting for about 8% percent of the veteran population. As these veterans have aged, benefits and services that address a variety of issues unique to their demographic, including the changing health risks and long neglected mental health needs, financial challenges and long-term care needs are being implemented.

## 36.2% VIETNAM ERA

By conservative estimates, at least half a million of the nation's Vietnam veterans still lead lives challenged by serious, war-related readjustment issues.

Forty years after the end of the Vietnam War, the agency has seen a heavy increase in disability claims filed on behalf of Vietnam veterans due to triggered responses to the current wars and the manifestation of acute diseases brought on by exposure to Agent Orange. Diseases and conditions these veterans face include non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, Parkinson's disease, B-cell leukemia, prostate cancer, heart disease, and Type 2 diabetes.

Vietnam veterans make up the largest demographic of Oregon's veterans. In the next ten years, it is projected their numbers will remain steady at 35% as they age and lead the changes and considerations for the needs of our aging veterans.

## Concentration of Veterans Across the Nation by Era

On these maps, the darker the shaded color represents the larger concentrations of era veterans nationally.

## 25.4% PEACETIME SERVICE

A quarter of the Oregon veteran population served honorably during a very unique and relatively conflict-free time in our history. Many of these veterans don't seek benefits, mistakenly believing that if they did not serve in combat, then they must not qualify veteran benefits and programs.

## 24.6% GULF WAR ERAS

Gulf war era veterans consist of Gulf War I veterans (15.9%) and Iraq/Afghanistan veterans (8.7%). Urban warfare has changed not only the face of war, but also what our veterans face after the war. With advances in technology and medicine, more service members are surviving injuries incurred in war that would have killed them in previous eras.

While more veterans are returning home from battle, that also means that more service members are learning to live with catastrophic conditions that previous generations never before had to face. Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), often called the signature wound of these wars, occurs when a sudden trauma or head injury disrupts the function of the brain. Research on OIF/OEF veterans suggests that 10% to 18% of these troops are likely to have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after they return. These wounds are often invisible, the treatment complex, and the effects far-reaching.

## Veteran Population

As of September 2014, there were nearly 22 million veterans living in the United States, according to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates. There are 331,000 veterans in Oregon, making up approximately 1.5% of the nations veterans. However, per capita, the state's veterans make up 9% of Oregon's population.

*I come from a Navy family. My grandfathers and great grandfather are probably rolling over in their graves that I became a Marine.*

*I served two tours with Marine Aircraft Group 16, swinging with the wing, albeit in the grit and dust of western Iraq. After I transferred to 1st Civ Div (ie civilian), I also won the lottery – but in reverse and was recalled for a third and final tour of duty in Iraq with the grunts, 2d Bn 23rd Marines. My three deployments spanned the phases of Operation Iraqi Freedom from the wild west to the hard slog to the retrograde.*

*Throughout my service, I had the support of my wife, Linh, and we now are blessed with a sweet family of our own. My three year-old daughter, Frankie, is strong-willed and fiercely independent like her father. Destined to be a Marine? My beautiful ten-month old little boy, Romy, may grow up to be a graphic designer like my wife. Or maybe a combat artist.*

*Now I serve as a representative and chief advocate for Oregon's 330,000+ veterans. Thankfully, I have an amazing team at ODVA and incredible support from our diverse veteran community across the state. With their support and yours, we will continue to charge the hill for our veterans and their families. Semper fi!*

## Cameron Smith

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

**In 1945, Oregonians committed to stand up and serve returning veterans. Today, as we celebrate Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs 70th year, this mission still holds true. It is a privilege to serve as the director and with our team to carry on this essential support that was envisioned at our founding.**

World War I veterans established the voice needed to better coordinate the sea of goodwill for veterans across all levels of government and community partners like national service organizations, colleges and universities, non-profits, faith-based organizations and private sector employers. They recognized that returning veterans gained great strength from their service, but also faced challenges reintegrating home.

These priorities, over seventy years old, could just as easily have been written today to describe our current veteran landscape. I am not suggesting that we have not made progress. We stand on the shoulders of all those who came before us, and through their leadership are immeasurably stronger in our support of veterans.

At the same time, the essential and timeless nature of the challenges and opportunities in serving returning veterans must guide our approach and efforts today.

Our agency has an incredibly broad mission in serving a diverse veterans' community for their health, education and economic opportunity. The veteran services system also has been challenged in keeping up with demand from four generations of veterans with impacts from five major wars.

The combined breadth of the veterans' population we serve and their diverse needs requires a cohesive strategy and approach to veteran services.

The last few years have been of continued change for the agency. With these changes came new leadership, expanding relationships within the veteran community, and an opportunity to re-evaluate key operations, policies, and outcomes. Thanks to the dedication of our staff and community partners, ODVA continues to build on the promise of our veteran pioneers.

## Strategic Priorities

Nearly 40% of the agency's staff are veterans, spouses or parents of service members. Historically, we have been one of the longest tenured agencies in state government. From 2012 through 2014, the department lost over 20% of its staff and key leadership to retirements. While this loss presented initial challenges, it also was an opportunity to begin identifying improvements.

Our team embarked on a comprehensive review of the agency to examine its mission, evaluate and prioritize its programs, and recruit new staff to address turnover. Oregon's Secretary of State Audit Division also completed an overarching review of veteran services that aligned well with our strategic efforts.

Today, we continue this work and are focused on strengthening the delivery of veteran benefits and outreach. We will continue to partner with other service providers to reimagine how government can deliver services and reach more veterans through methods that are impactful and sustainable. While much work remains to be done, we are already seeing the fruits of our strategic efforts.

## Increased Funding For Veteran Services Across Oregon

Our dedicated county veteran service officers are the boots on the ground serving veterans across Oregon. This year, we were pleased to continue an additional $1 million in funds above their base budget to support their essential work. At the statewide level, we also doubled our capacity to train and certify veteran service officers.

This core service results in vital state and federal benefits for Oregon veterans and has an enormous impact on the state's overall economy. In 2014, our efforts helped draw down $2.5 billion in federal veteran benefit dollars into the state. Almost $1.3 billion of these funds were a direct result of our core work, and awarded as disability and pension payments.

**More than $2.5 BILLION**

in federal VA benefit dollars were drawn into the state in 2014.

While we remain focused on building our overall veteran services system, we have also increased investment to coordinate our agency's outreach and support to underserved veterans.

## Stronger Service For Women Veterans

After many years of advocacy, we now will have a dedicated Women Veterans Coordinator position to improve outreach and policy coordination for women veterans. Women veterans remain the fastest growing demographic in our veteran community.

## Serving Aging Veterans In Oregon

Another significant outcome for our agency was the addition of an Aging Veteran Services director. This position will help lead our Conservatorship and State Veteran Homes program, but also focus much more broadly on how to lead and partner to support our veterans who served in Vietnam, Korea and WWII, and who have unique needs as they age.

## Expanding Support for Student Veterans

We have previously championed in state tuition rates for all veterans and this year we were able to pass legislation to ensure veterans have priority enrollment at public universities and community colleges. Support for student veterans is a top concern and student veteran coordinators on campus have been an essential link.

## Connecting Rural Veterans

In September 2014, ODVA applied for and received a Federal VA transportation grant of $400,000 for highly rural counties in Oregon. These counties include Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Wallowa, and Wheeler. The grant is leveraging innovative approaches to transport veterans in highly rural areas to medical appointments by augmenting resources and coordinating existing local partnerships.

Clockwise: Oregon Air National Guard's 142nd FW deployment ceremony; Eric Ensley, Multonomah County Veteran Services with Director Smith; Veterans' Cremains Interment Ceremony at Willamette National Cemetery; Five former World War II aviators and residents of the Oregon Veterans' Home in The Dalles got some "stick time" at the controls of a Stearman biplane; Coordinating efforts to support Spirit of '45; 1st Bn 186th Infantry demobilization ceremony after serving in Afghanistan; Dedication of Oregon's second Veterans' Home in Lebanon; Gov. Brown joined ODVA staff for the agency's 70th celebration; First-ever Veteran Benefit Expo drew an estimated 400 veterans to Salem; Raising the POW/MIA flag at the state capitol upon the signing of HB 2892.

**$400K** was granted to Oregon from the federal VA for highly rural veteran transportation.

## Supporting LGBT Veterans

Another underserved demographic identified by the Legislature is LGBT veterans. Oregon will now become one of the first states in the country to have a staff position to coordinate outreach and support for LGBT veterans.

## Preventing Suicides And Incarceration

We also secured $350,000 to support a dedicated suicide prevention and crisis resource line for military, veterans and their families. An Incarcerated Veterans Outreach Task Force also was established to study how the state can better serve incarcerated veterans as well as prevent veterans from returning to the system.

## Furthering Honor and Recognition

A number of legislative bills to further honor our veterans were passed in the 2015 Legislative session. Interstate 5 was named to recognize our Korean War Veterans and also declared as the Purple Heart Trail. We now also have a law that all public buildings will fly the POW-MIA flag.

## Invigorating Core Operations and Programs

In addition to new efforts, we are also focusing on our core operations and programs. Our home loan program continues to offer below market interest rate loans and is expanding. The program began offering a new 97% loan to value loan and a down payment assistance program.

In October 2014, we opened the second Oregon Veterans' Home in Lebanon. This newest facility in the state is beautiful and built in the small home model to make it truly more like a home. With Medicaid and Medicare certification, as well as the federal VA per diem revenue, we can offer the best in skilled nursing care for veterans and their spouses at below market rates.

The Oregon Veterans' Home in The Dalles also was recognized in 2014 as the first and only state veterans' home nationally to earn the Gold Award from the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living. Since the program's inception in 1996, only 24 organizations have been awarded the Gold Award.

## Moving Forward

We have made tremendous progress establishing ODVA is a natural center of gravity for veterans who reach out for resources and benefits. In the agency's efforts, we must continue to strengthen service and benefit delivery, communication and outreach, as well as align essential partnerships. A more focused and coordinated system is the only way to reduce gaps in services and improve outcomes for veterans, their families, and survivors.

We could not do our work without our incredible staff and our broad partners. We encourage all to dig into the specific budget, outcomes and legislation as well as the deeper dive on our veteran landscape in the appendix. With your help, we will continue to chart out, advocate for and realize the essential support to ensure veterans thrive in Oregon.

It remains my honor and privilege to serve as the director of ODVA and thank you for all of your support!

Sincerely,

**Cameron Smith**
Director

## OUR VISION

**Veterans and their families thrive in Oregon**

## OUR MISSION

**ODVA serves and honors veterans through our leadership, advocacy and strong partnerships**

## OUR VALUES

**Respect, Integrity, Stewardship and Excellence**

### TARGET VETERAN SERVICES

**Serve more veterans and serve them better**

### MOBILIZE PARTNERSHIPS

**Leverage all resources available to veterans**

### DRIVE VETERAN ENGAGEMENT

**Amplify awareness of resources and build the Oregon veterans brand**

### INVIGORATE CORE OPERATIONS

**Build a better, stronger and more durable department for future generations through our responsible, resourceful and creative management**

# Agency Staff

## A UNITED SEA OF GOODWILL

An organization often reflects the salient beliefs and characteristics of its leadership and, more importantly, its employees. In our case, we are the very community we serve.

As a state agency, our employees are some of the most passionate and dedicated people working toward a very noble mission, day in and day out. From our front line Statewide Veteran Services Division to operational services that support day to day business, our teams work together to deliver on a promise made more than 70 years ago.

In order to deliver on an incredibly broad mission in serving a diverse veterans' community, we focus not on creating new programs, but rather, aligning and partnering around a shared vision and of good stewardship of existing resources.

ODVA unites government, private companies, nonprofits, and other veteran service organizations to address issues facing veterans and their families. We are building support around specific issues that affect veterans. And, we maintain strong relationships with key stakeholders that allow us to continue to be a leading voice on veteran's issues.

**THIS IS ODVA'S CADENCE. TOGETHER WITH OUR VETERANS AND OUR PARTNERS, WE HONOR THE PAST, BUILD ON OUR STRENGTHS, AND CHART A COURSE WORTHY OF THE NEXT 70 YEARS.**

## Jeremy Inloes

UNITED STATES NAVY
ODVA PURCHASING AGENT

*I joined the Navy when I was 18, right after graduation from high school. I went to boot camp in San Diego then spent six months on the USS La Salle command flag ship in Bahrain. At that time, the USS La Salle was the only white naval ship and had the nickname "The Great White Ghost of the Arabian Coast." The remainder of my service was spent at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard doing necessary repair and overhaul to the ship, including painting it gray to match all the rest of the fleet.*

# County Partners

## BOOTS ON THE GROUND

Our dedicated state and county veteran service offices are at the front lines of our veterans' needs. They understand their community and the needs of their veterans.

Partnering with local leadership, businesses, community resource providers, and state and federal partners, our states' veteran service officers are solving the issues that hit closest to home. From rural transportation needs in Morrow County to justice involved veteran resources in Klamath County, Oregon's veteran service officers are a central resource for the veteran community.

This advocacy results in vital state and federal benefits and resources for Oregon veterans and has an enormous impact on the state's overall economy.

In 2014, our efforts helped draw down a staggering $2.5 billion in federal veteran benefit dollars into the state. More than $1.3 billion of these funds were a direct result of our core work and awarded as disability and pension payments to veterans and their families.

**STATEWIDE THERE ARE 72 COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICERS ACROSS 34 COUNTIES TO SERVE THE STATE'S 331,000 VETERANS.**

## Lisa Pickart

JOSEPHINE COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER

*I have been an accredited veteran representative since 2003. One of the great programs that our county has implemented is an extensive outreach program which serves veterans and dependents who are housebound or receive care in local facilities.*

*I am the daughter of Denis Pickart, who honorably served in the Army during the Korean War. His records were destroyed in the 1973 Fire at NPRC. My son Logan is currently serving in the Oregon Air National Guard stationed in Klamath Falls, Oregon. He trains in cyber security and works full time as an assistant for the recruiting team.*

# Federal VA Partners

## A NATION'S COMMITMENT

Oregon veterans have some of the strongest advocates in the form of its federal partners and their commitment to provide an opportunity for the delivery of an ever-changing range of services to veterans and their families.

While the VA is not the sole provider of benefits, services, and resources to veterans, one of their main strategic goals is to hold themselves accountable for each veteran's success, no matter who provides assistance. This has led to a new approach to partnerships in Oregon in recent years. Increased partnerships have empowered effective collaborations and allowed for innovative and relevant benefits for veterans.

Oregon is part of a regional network that is comprised of three medical centers, 15 Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs), five Vet Centers, three national veteran cemeteries, and one regional office that processes claims.

Beyond the brick and mortar services, federal partners continue to help shape policy and resources available to Oregon's veteran community. From veteran home construction grant funding to rural transportation or homeless resource grant funding, the distinct needs of veterans are helped, if not by direct benefits and services, then by the sincere commitment to reach across resources divides to place the needs and outcomes for veterans in the forefront of all initiatives.

## Rosy Macias

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
SALEM VETERAN CENTER

*I served four years on active duty and two years in the reserves. I loved everything about being a Marine, but got out to raise a family. As an aviation supply clerk, I was able to travel a lot and that was fun.*

*I am one of the few lucky veterans that was able to find support right after getting out. I started working for the Salem Vet Center while going to school. Today I provide support and resources to local veterans and organize events for homeless and at risk vets.*

# Service Organization Partners

## EMPOWERING SERVICE

National Service Organizations have been the voice of veterans for generations. Long before any formal state or federal resources existed, groups of veterans would band together to ensure care and resources were available to those who needed them.

Today, these same groups are creating and driving national and state conversations on issues ranging from backlogged VA claim decisions to women's issues and unemployment.

As large veteran member networks, it is the service organizations that are dedicated to continued civic service. Community by community and post by post, they partner with all those who share their commitment to providing care and services for veterans.

Service organizations also provide valuable resources and empower veterans to connect with one another, fostering a strong and lasting community. Through education, advocacy and community building, they make sure that we Remain a country which honors and supports veterans of all generations.

## Robert Haltiner

UNITED STATES ARMY
MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART

*I was drafted in January 1967 and entered Vietnam that June. I served with 1st Infantry Division, 2/28 Inf (Black Lions) and 2/2nd Mech. (APC) Armored Personnel Carriers but was wounded February 2, 1968. I was in the hospital for five weeks for burns. Later I served in Japan, and then in South Korea where I was with the 76th Eng. Group. On October 26, 1968 I got out as a Specialist 5 and was awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star.*

## Charles Upton

UNITED STATES ARMY
MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART

*(Pictured left) I served in France, Germany, Vietnam and Korea. I volunteered for Vietnam three times but was not accepted until 1967 where I joined the 1st Infantry Division. Later I transferred to 329th Navy Boat Co. and was injured in March 1968. I stayed in the military until 1976.*

# Community Partners

## GRASSROOTS INVOLVEMENT

Community partners serve a vital and much needed role in filling gaps in veteran services across the state. Often these partners provide resources to traditionally under-served veterans to improve care in their own communities. These partners are critical to our ability to meet the broad range of needs in our state.

Naturally oriented to social and civic responsibility, it is often our veterans themselves that can be found committing their time and resources to impact community veteran services.

With grassroots involvement in a given resource area, volunteers and advocates step up and share support and awareness for veterans where none existed before.

ODVA depends on the insight and work of these groups to highlight and address emerging needs within our veteran community.

## Johnathan Collins

UNITED STATES ARMY
EASTER SEALS OREGON

*I served more than 11 years active duty in the Army. During my time in the service I deployed to Somalia and Bosnia. Once I was released from active duty I was able to enroll in the Veterans Administrations Vocational Rehabilitation Program. I was able to earn a Masters degree and I now work with Easter Seals Oregon helping veterans and their family members find employment.*

# Agency Budget and Outcomes

**In early 2014, the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs developed a new strategic plan for the agency. The plan was crafted not to transform the agency, but to make a series of course corrections that, over time, will create a more robust agency focused on serving Oregon veterans and their families.**

The five-year strategic plan for 2014-2019 provided a framework for process improvement efforts and helps inform the agency's budget development. With a solid budget and a number of significant policy bills, we are very thankful for the legislative support for our veterans and military families.

The department's biennial budget drives much of our efforts to serve and honor Oregon's veterans. This year, we were pleased to continue an additional $1 million in funds above base budget to support County Veteran Service Offices. At the statewide level, we also doubled our training capacity for veteran service officers.

The Legislature also invested in essential resources to coordinate outreach to undeserved veterans. We now have an Aging Veteran Services Director who is focused on how to better support the 52% of our veterans that served in Vietnam, Korea and WWII, and who have unique needs as they age. We will also be hiring a Women's Veterans Coordinator to improve outreach to women veterans, the fastest growing demographic in our veterans' community.

Several bills had significant policy and program impacts for our veterans. These included preference in public contracting for service disabled veteran owned businesses and priority enrollment for veterans at Oregon's community colleges and universities. We also continue to invest in suicide prevention efforts and linking veterans to crisis resources.

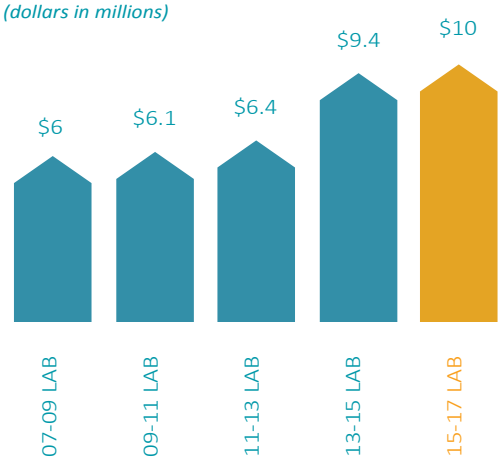
With the continued support of citizens and our elected leaders, we will continue to improve and better serve Oregon's veterans.

**Cameron Smith**
Director

**Bruce Shriver**
Financial Services Director, CFO

## General Funding

*(dollars in millions)*




*LAB: Legislatively Adopted Budget*

## Funding for Veteran Services

Our dedicated state and county veteran service offices are at the front lines of our veterans' needs. One of the key priorities that came out of our strategic framework was to target veteran services. Funding intended as a one-time $1 million outreach grant to the county offices during the 13-15 biennium was added to the base budget for county funding moving forward. Early results from the 13-15 funding indicate that this money increased power of attorneys nearly 14% over counties that did not receive such funding.

At the statewide level, the Legislature also doubled the capacity to train and certify the Veteran Service Officers and increased its investment in other essential resources to coordinate our agency's outreach to women and LGBT veterans by funding a new role within the veteran community.

GENERAL FUNDS

### $4.5m Statewide Veteran Services

Statewide Veteran Services is funded by a combination of General Funds and Other Funds (generated by the Home Loan Program). ODVA receives approximately $10 million of General Fund, of which $4.5 M is used to fund core veteran services. General funding also supports about 42% of the direct costs associated with the Conservatorship Program.

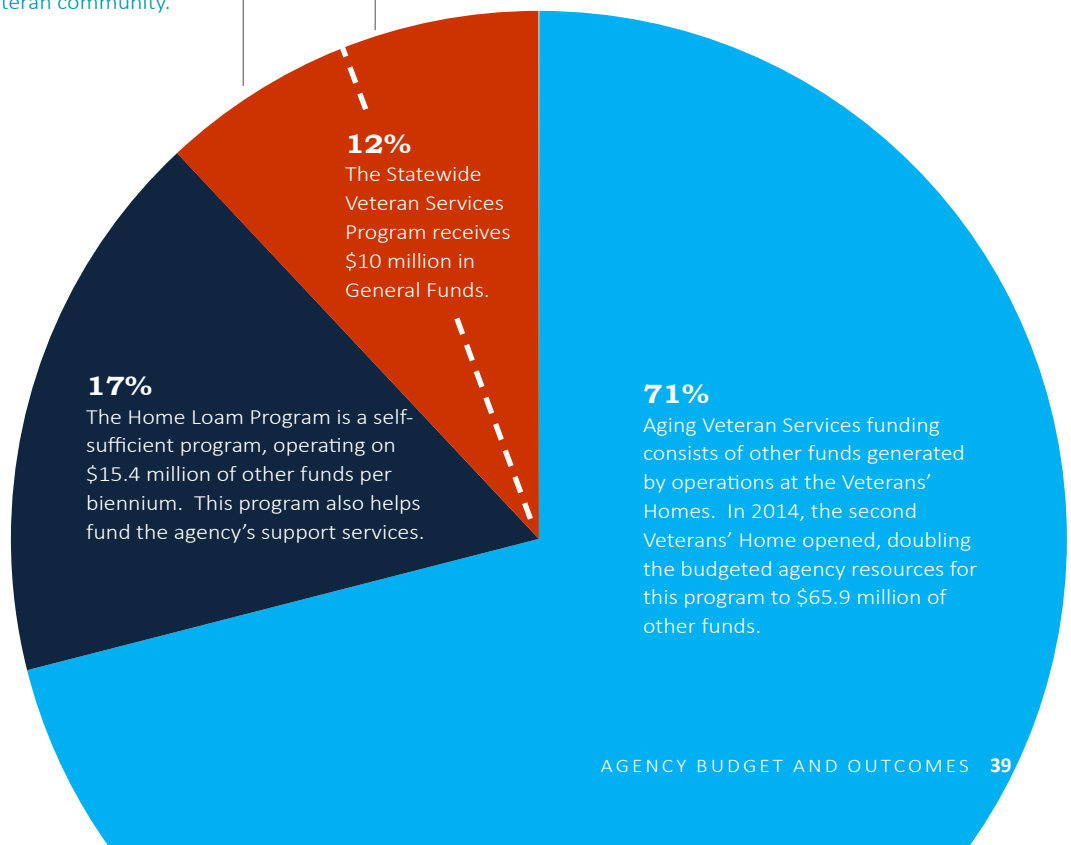
GENERAL FUNDS

### $4.8m Pass-Through to 34 Counties and National Service Orgs

$4.8 million of the agency's general funding is passed through to County and National Veteran Service Offices to directly support veteran services

## Total Agency Funding

2015-17 biennial operational expenditures for ODVA are $92.2 million ($10 million General Funds and $82.2 million Other Funds). General Funding supports direct veteran services.



# Statewide Veteran Services

## Statewide Veteran Services

The Statewide Veteran Services Program is responsible for providing advocacy and benefits to veterans, their dependents, and survivors. The program provides benefits counseling, claims and appellate representation, certification and training for counties and national service organizations, conservatorship services, educational assistance, emergency financial assistance, and other service delivery partnerships across the state.

The division is the front line for all veteran benefits, ensuring that veterans obtain all the benefits to which they are entitled as a result of their military service.

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (Federal VA) benefit system is a legal system. In order to qualify for benefits, veterans must file a claim against the United States proving they are eligible for these benefits through the submission of legal, military and medical evidence.

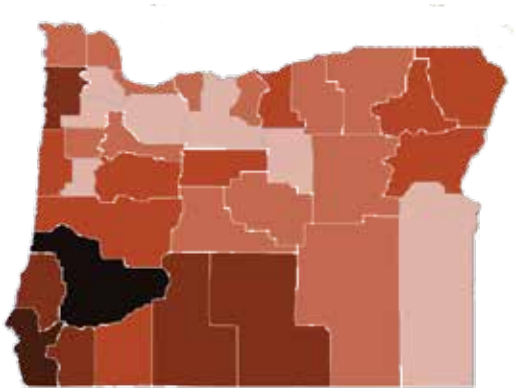
ODVA is responsible for the federal accreditation and state certification of Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) in Federal VA law (Chapter 38 United States Code and Chapter 38 Code of Federal Regulations), allowing these service officers to practice veteran law by taking Power of Attorney and representing veterans seeking benefits. These VSOs also represent veterans, their dependents and survivors before the Federal VA in their claims and appeals.

ODVA's Portland office is the central submission point for all VA claims under ODVA Power of Attorney in Oregon. This office provides quality assurance on claims and acts as a liaisons with the Federal VA. This office primarily represents veterans during various stages of annual appeal hearings.

Statewide there are 74 State and County Veteran Service Officers across 36 counties to serve the state's 331,000 veterans.

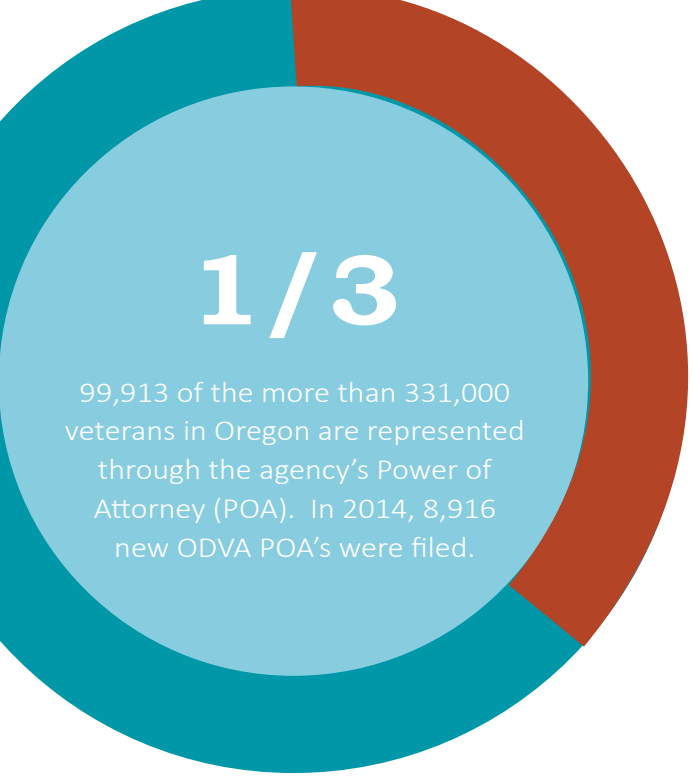
## Economic Impact

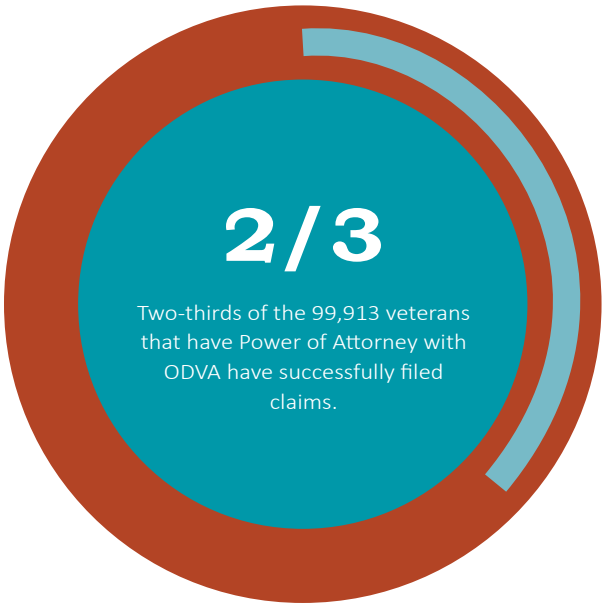
The economic impact of the federal claims that county veteran service officers and veteran service officers file is significant. In 2015, the federal VA distributed $2.5 billion in Oregon for veterans education, health, compensation and pension. Compensation and pension benefits, which are cash benefits paid directly to veterans in Oregon, added $1.3 billion to the Oregon economy in 2014 - an average of $106 million each month.



Compensation & Pension Per Capita (2014)

- $2,000 to 3,000
- $3,000 to 4,000
- $4,000 to 5,000
- $4,000 to 5,000
- $6,000 to 7,000
- $7,000 to 8,000




**67,046** **Service-Connected Disabled Veterans**

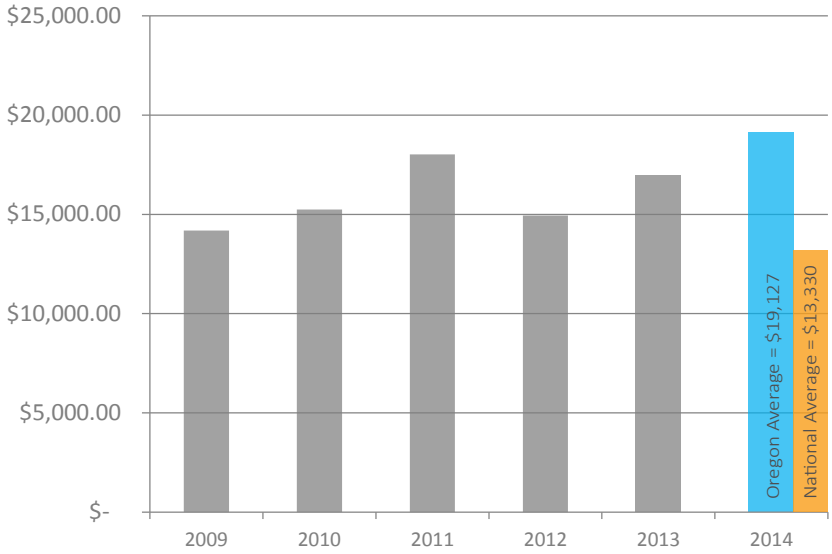
67,046 Oregon veterans receive disability compensation or pension payments. Two-thirds of the 99,913 veterans that have power of attorney with ODVA have successfully filed claims.

**$54.9 million** **in Retroactive Awards**

When a monthly monetary award is granted to a veteran for a claim, the veteran is additionally granted a retroactive award to cover the monthly amount(s) that would have been earned during the time the claim was in process. During 2014, ODVA representatives and our county partners brought in $54.9 million in retroactive benefits for Oregon veterans, and more than $67.7 million new award dollars. More than 11,000 new claims were filed on their behalf in 2014.

**Average Disability and Pension Payments**

Oregon is among the top states in the nation for veterans receiving disability compensation and pension benefits. In 2014, the average dollar amount of disability compensation received by Oregon veterans receiving this type of benefit was more than $19,000, compared to a national average of $13,330.



# Aging Veteran Services

## Aging Veteran Services

The Aging Veteran Services Division is a program within the agency that was established to address the needs and concerns of our rapidly aging veteran demographic and their families. Currently more than 50% of Oregon veterans served during WWII, Korea and Vietnam eras and nationally, more than 12.4 million veterans are age 65 or older.

Long-term care needs for older Americans is a national concern. For the foreseeable future, older veterans and their families will increasingly need access to long-term care, adult foster care, home and community based services, as well as access to prosthetics, mental health care, health care, dental and hearing aids, and prescription medication.

According to the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis, the population of adults 65 years and older will grow at a pace of 4% annually, and will comprise 22% of all Oregonians by 2040.

The Aging Veteran Services Division is the front line for connecting all aging veteran related benefits and resources. Currently, the division incorporates the operational management of the two Oregon Veterans' Homes and Conservatorship program.

The Oregon Veterans' Homes provide veterans and their families with access to high-quality nursing home care at affordable rates as a federal and state benefit. The program also offers Alzheimer's and memory-related care, and inpatient and outpatient rehabilitative care. Admission is open to veterans, and their spouses or parents who have lost a child to war-time service.

When veterans are deemed to be incompetent by a court or the Federal VA to manage their own finances, ODVA may be appointed to provide conservatorship services, which include managing all assets for the veteran as fiduciary. In 2013, ODVA began representing new clients as a Representative Payee, in which the agency acts in a limited capacity to pay the bills of these veterans.

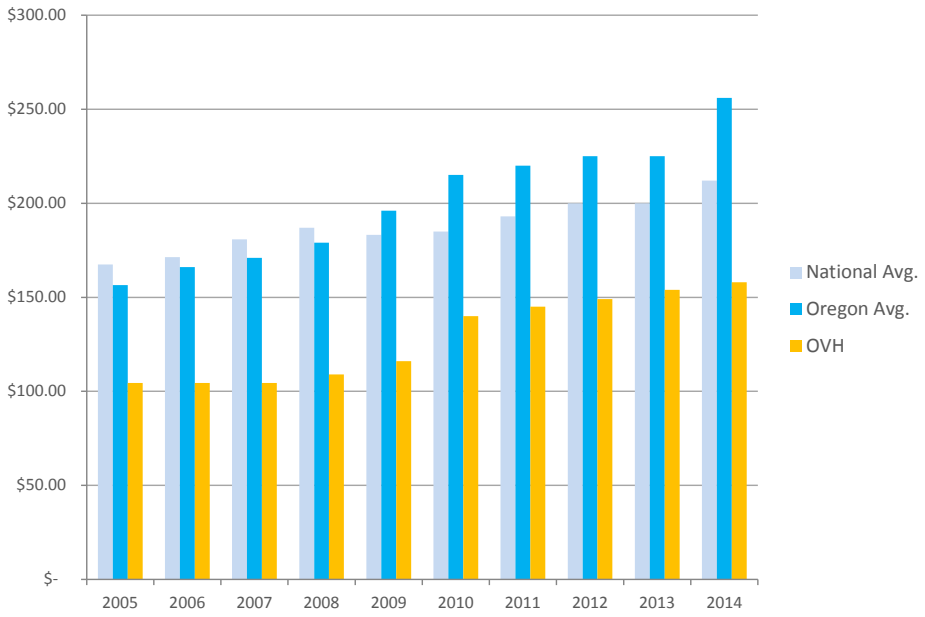
As we move forward, this division will strengthen collaborate with all state, federal and community partners to ensure our veterans, their families, and caregivers receive the best advocacy and services available as they age.

## Lower Cost to Residents

Health care costs nationally and in Oregon continue to rise and the Oregon Veterans' Home is no exception. However, over the past five years, the facility has become more affordable than the average skilled nursing facility. In 2007, the facility charged $66 less for resident private pay daily rates than the average Oregon skilled nursing facility.

## 2014 Average Daily Cost

Oregon Veteran Home = $158/Day
Oregon Average = $256/Day
National Average = $212/Day

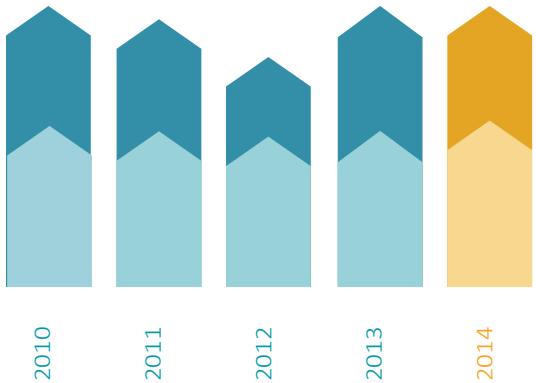



*Average Daily Cost for Skilled Nursing Care*

## Higher Average Resident Occupancy

Over the past five years, occupancy rates at the Home have been significantly higher than the average for Oregon skilled nursing facilities. In 2013, the Home averaged a 92% occupancy, while Oregon had the lowest nursing home occupancy rate in the country averaging 61.4% statewide (Oregon's Aging and People with Disabilities). Additionally, demand for the memory-care unit has often required waiting lists.

While there are several factors, higher occupancy at the facilities is primarily attributable to the commitment to providing the highest quality of care at lower costs to residents, all in an honoring environment where veteran residents are able to share their past experiences.




| | State Average | OVH Average |
|---|---|---|
| 2010 | 63% | 94% |
| 2011 | 63% | 92% |
| 2012 | 61% | 87% |
| 2013 | 61% | 94% |
| 2014 | 64% | 94% |

*Average Occupancy*

# Home Loan Program

## Home Loan Program

Oregon is one of only five states in the nation that has been grandfathered under federal tax law to offer a state veteran home loan program. Historically, this enhanced state housing benefit has generally resulted in significantly lower home loan rates than are normally available in the marketplace through the issuance of tax-free, state general obligation bonds called Qualified Veteran Mortgage Bonds (QVMB). The home loan program offers financing up to the Fannie Mae limit, currently $417,000.

Since 1945, the ORVET program has provided more than $7.7 billion of low-interest loans to more than 334,000 veterans. At one time, the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) was one of the largest lenders in the state with a portfolio of more than 140,000 loans. In addition to originating loans, the ORVET program services all of its loans. This allows for enhanced customer service provided to the veterans and their families, as well as flexibility to restructure loans if the veteran borrower experiences financial hardship.

In June 2015, the Home Loan program rolled out a new loan program that targets the newer discharged veterans. ODVA introduced the ORVET Plus program, offering a 97% Loan-to-Value product. Highly qualified veteran home buyers now can obtain a home loan with as little as 3% down payment, and in some situations, the 3% can be in a form of a gift, essentially allowing for minimal out of pocket costs for an Oregon veteran to obtain home ownership.

## Funding for the Home Loan Program

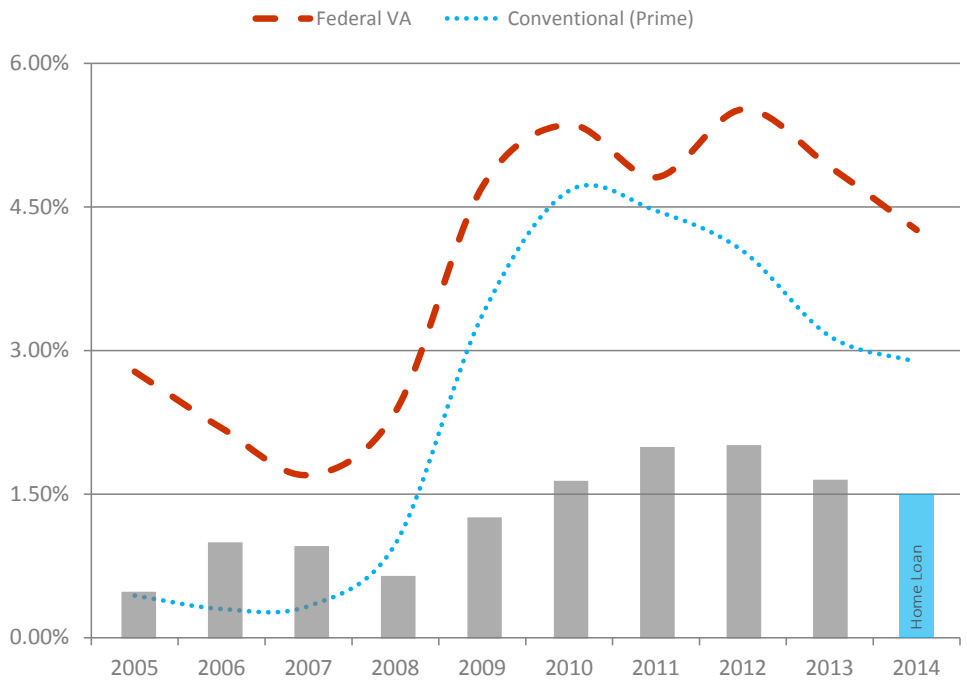
The Home Loan Program is a self-sustaining program, using Other Funds only. These Other Funds monies are constitutionally dedicated for certain veteran programs. Revenues are derived from loan and contract repayments, proceeds from bond sales, fee and rental income and investment earnings. No General Fund monies are used in its operations.

In addition to being constitutionally dedicated, Home Loan Program funds are restricted in their use by federal tax law, bond covenants, standby bond purchase agreements and liquidity provider agreements.

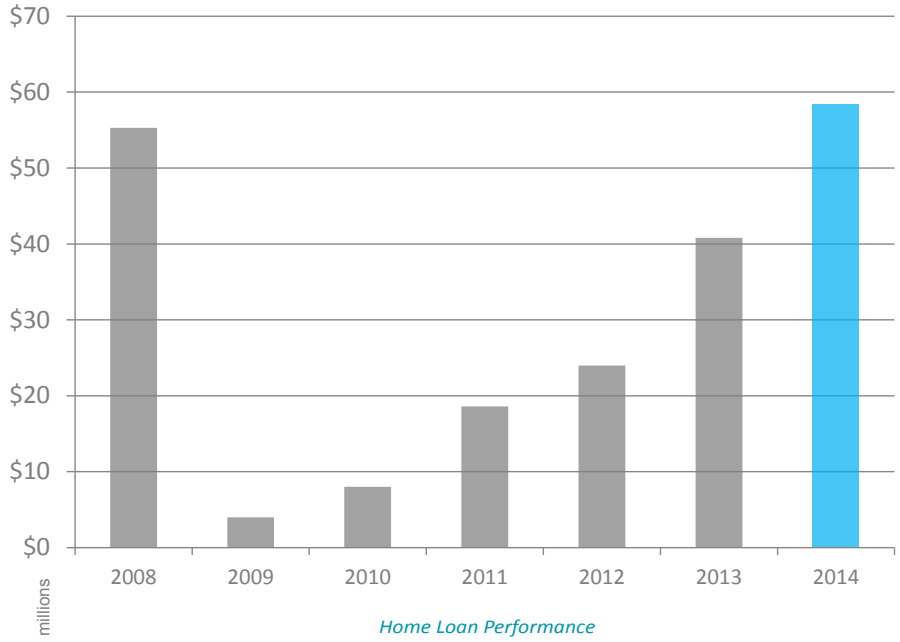
## Home Loan Delinquent Accounts

As of the end of Fiscal Year 2014, the percentage of the total number of loans in the loan servicing portfolio that were delinquent 90 days or more plus those loans in active foreclosure was 1.45%.

The agency's comparative performance to other loan servicer statistics show the Department's delinquency and foreclosure figures consistently below the levels of other servicers on conventional prime, federal VA and FHA loans in Oregon. For example, compared to ODVA's 90 days or more delinquency plus foreclosure rate of 1.45% for FY 2014, the rate in Oregon for conventional prime loans was 2.84%, FHA loans was 5.88%, and Federal VA loans was 4.09%.




*Rates of Delinquency*



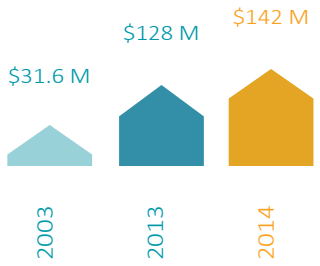

*Home Loan Performance*

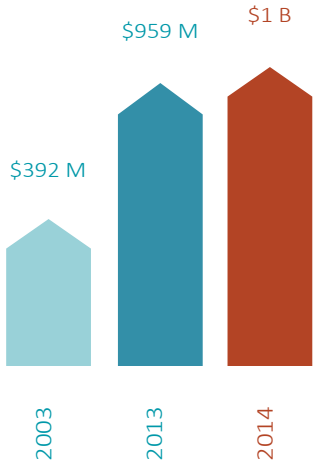
## Home Loan Performance

The fiscal year ending June 30, 2015 reflected the highest total in loan production since 1998. The ODVA ORVET Home Loan program closed $60,270,776 in production. This has increased the total loan servicing portfolio to $237,975,166 from $214,816,033 on 6/30/2014, representing an increase of 11%.

With the department's core support services reliant on the home loan program, loan production is material to the long-term viability of ODVA. The housing crisis had significant impact on the ORVET Home Loan program. With the restriction on offering a refinance program, the current servicing portfolio has significant runoff, resulting in a severe reduction of interest income. However, with loan production materially increasing for 2014-2015, we have seen a tangible slowdown in the portfolio runoff.

# 2014 Federal Benefit Dollar Results in Oregon




## Education

More than $142 million in federal veteran education benefit dollars were spent in Oregon in 2014. These dollars flow directly into the state's community college and university system, and provide monthly income to veterans while attending school.

More than 41% of veterans 25 years and older have some college or an associate degree and nearly 27% have a bachelor's degree or higher. Non-veterans in Oregon have a lower percentage of associates degrees, but higher number of advanced degrees (30%) .

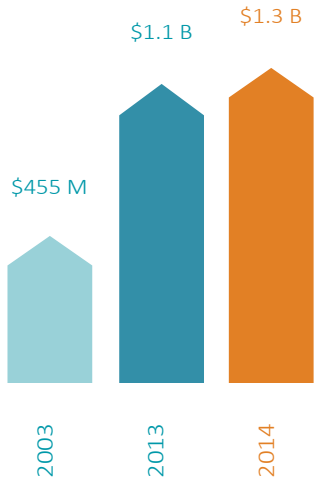
This may suggest that although veterans begin college, they are likely to encounter life circumstances such as multiple deployments, responsibilities for providing for a family, or social and mental health considerations that prevent them from obtaining a four-year degree.

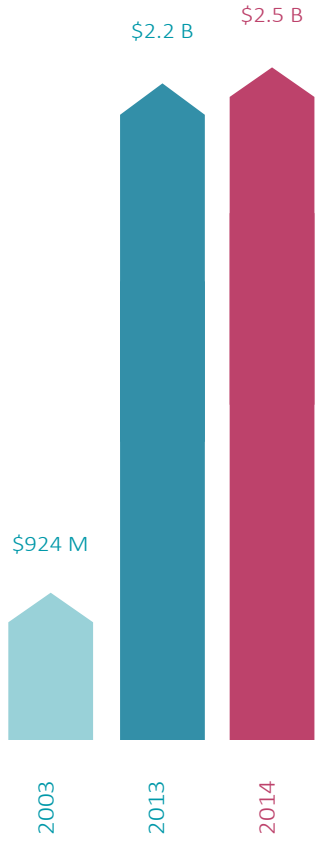
In 2014, more than 12,000 veterans were using federal education benefits in Oregon, of which nearly 8,500 were using the Post 9/11 GI Bill.

## Healthcare

VA operates the largest integrated health care delivery system in America. Currently 99,502 Oregon veterans have access to VA healthcare. More than $1 billion was spent in Oregon providing that care in 2014, an increase of nearly 12% over 2014. VA's health care benefit meets mandatory health insurance coverage requirements.

VA's recent efforts have also expanded access to care through the development of virtual access, reducing the need for travel to medical facilities. Improved access to care through tele-health and other virtual services is of particular benefit to rural veterans in Oregon, as well as those with chronic conditions and/or impaired mobility.




## Compensation

The value of disability and pension payments in Oregon ($106 million per month) is reflected by the 2013 median annual income of $34,123 for veterans in Oregon. This income is 28% more than the non-veteran population.

Veterans experience nearly half the poverty rate of the general Oregon population (8.3% veterans vs. 15.4% non-veterans) while enduring disabilities at more than double the rate (30.5% veterans vs 14.8% non-veterans).

## Total Federal VA Dollars

The core services that ODVA provides result in benefits and resources for Oregon veterans and have an enormous impact on the state's overall economy.

Disability compensation, pension payments, education and health care benefits are earned through honorable military service. These benefits provide income to veterans to pay for living expenses, reduce dependency on state resources, contribute to the health of Oregon's citizens, and increase the state's trained and educated workforce.

Since the beginning of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the total federal dollars flowing back into Oregon has more than doubled from just over $900 million to more than $2.5 billion in 2014.

# 2015 Veteran Legislation

## Legislation Affecting Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs and County Veteran Service Offices

Data Sharing with OHA
HB 2230 requires Oregon Health Authority to provide ODVA with names and addresses of veterans who agree to be contacted by ODVA.

Women Veteran Health Care Study
HB 2539 directs ODVA to contract for a statewide study regarding health care and medical services for women veterans.

Incarcerated Veteran Task Force
HB 2838creates a Task Force on Incarcerated Veterans.

Women Veterans Coordinator
HB 3479 creates the position of Oregon Women Veterans Coordinator in ODVA.

Volunteer Veterans' Guides
SB 89 authorizes ODVA and the counties to appoint volunteer veterans' guides to provide support services and assistance to veterans.

Agency Housekeeping
SB 250 repeals outdated veteran statutes.

Fiduciary and Representative Payee Services
SB 251 clarifies that current law allows ODVA to act as a fiduciary and representative payee for veterans.

Foreclosure Mediation
SB 252 exempts ODVA from the requirement to participate in foreclosure mediation.

Public Records Exemption for Veterans
SB 253 exempts veterans' personal information held by ODVA from public records disclosure requirements.

LGBT Coordinator
SB 946 creates the position of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Coordinator in ODVA.

## Legislation Affecting Veterans' Benefits

Veteran Priority University Enrollment
HB 2645 establishes a priority enrollment system at public universities for students who are veterans or active members of the Armed Forces and for their qualified dependents.

Gold Star Plates
HB 2658 allows a sibling of a veteran who is a Gold Star Family member to obtain a Gold Star license plate.

In-state Tuition for Military
HB 2670 allows individuals who resided in Oregon but relocated due to a position in the military to pay in-state tuition.

Leave of Absence Public Sector Pay
HB 2763 allows public employers to pay an employee, who leaves position to perform military duty, the amount of pay entitled to before the leave of absence.

Service-disabled Veteran Owned Business
HB 3303 provides for certification of service-disabled veteran with Oregon Business Development Department.

Active Duty Service Member Oregon DL
SB 494 allows an active duty service member who is stationed outside of Oregon to renew or replace driver license without a photograph.

## Resolutions to Congress on Veterans' Issues

HJM 9 urges Congress to recognize a presumption of service connection for Blue Water Vietnam War veterans exposed to Agent Orange.

HJM 14 urges Congress to support efforts to improve access to health care for veterans in rural areas.

HJM 18 urges Congress to change veterans' health care from discretionary to permanent.

SJM 11 urges Congress to improve efforts to bring health care to veterans in rural communities.

## Legislation Honoring Veterans

Designating Highways Honoring Veterans
HB 2036 designates highways: Highway 395, as the WWI Veterans Memorial Highway; I-5 as both the Korean War Veterans Memorial Highway and as the Purple Heart Trail (will run from Mexico to Canada); and Highway 101 as the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq Veterans Memorial Highway.

Easier Process for Memorial Signs
HB 2389 streamlines the Oregon Department of Transportation process for Fallen Hero roadside memorial signs.

POW/MIA Flag
HB 2892 requires the POW/MIA flag be displayed with Oregon State flag on public buildings.

Oregon Purpule Heart State
HCR 30 designates Oregon as a Purple Heart State.

## Legislation Recognizing and Honoring Fallen Heroes

HCR 1 honors Marine Lance Corporal Joseph E. Rodewald (1988-2010).

HCR 22 honors Army Specialist Taylor Daniel Marks (1989-2009).

SCR 6 honors Army Specialist Nickolas S. Welch (1987-2013).

SCR 7 honors Army Specialist John Alexander Pelham (1991-2014).

SCR 14 honors Marine Corporal Keaton Grant Coffey (1989-2012).

**Oregon Women Veterans**

Oregon women veterans make up 9% of the states veteran population. The darker shaded color represents larger concentrations of women veterans across the nation.

**Female Service Members**

Today approximately 15% of service members are women compared to 2% who served during WWII.

## WOMEN VETERANS

Over 350,000 women served during WWII and represented 2% of the personnel in uniform. These women served alongside men in all corners of the world, and were even taken as prisoners of war. Yet, many women from that era do not self identify as a veteran.

In fact, the federal government did not recognize them as veterans, and make benefits available to them until 1973.

Today approximately 15% of service members are women and nearly 9% of Oregon veterans are women. As roles traditionally filled by male service members begin to become available to women, it is estimated that they will make up almost one-fifth of the veteran population over the next 30 years.

Women veterans today returning from the wars in the Middle East describe a sense of dismissal and invisibility upon returning to civilian life, much like what has been described by women veterans of past wars.

Returning women veterans often struggle to balance their need for employment with their parenting responsibilities. They are three times more likely to be a single parent than their male counterparts, and many are under age 25 with children under age 5.

Women are eligible for the same VA benefits as male veterans; however, the VA health care system has begun to realize that women need services to better address gender specific issues such as reproductive health, military sexual trauma, menopause management and gender specific cancer screenings.

## Jennifer Borne

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
NEVADA AIR NATIONAL GUARD

*While on active duty I was stationed in Okinawa and New Mexico. Almost immediately after separating from the Air Force I missed it. I missed the feeling of belonging to something bigger than myself - being part of a team. I had the opportunity to meet and work with some amazing individuals in my four years.*

*Within a few years of separating, I attended the police academy and started a 15-year career in law enforcement, but I still missed the military. After a significant break in service I enlisted in the Nevada Air National Guard. Once again, I had the opportunity to meet and work with some truly amazing airmen.*

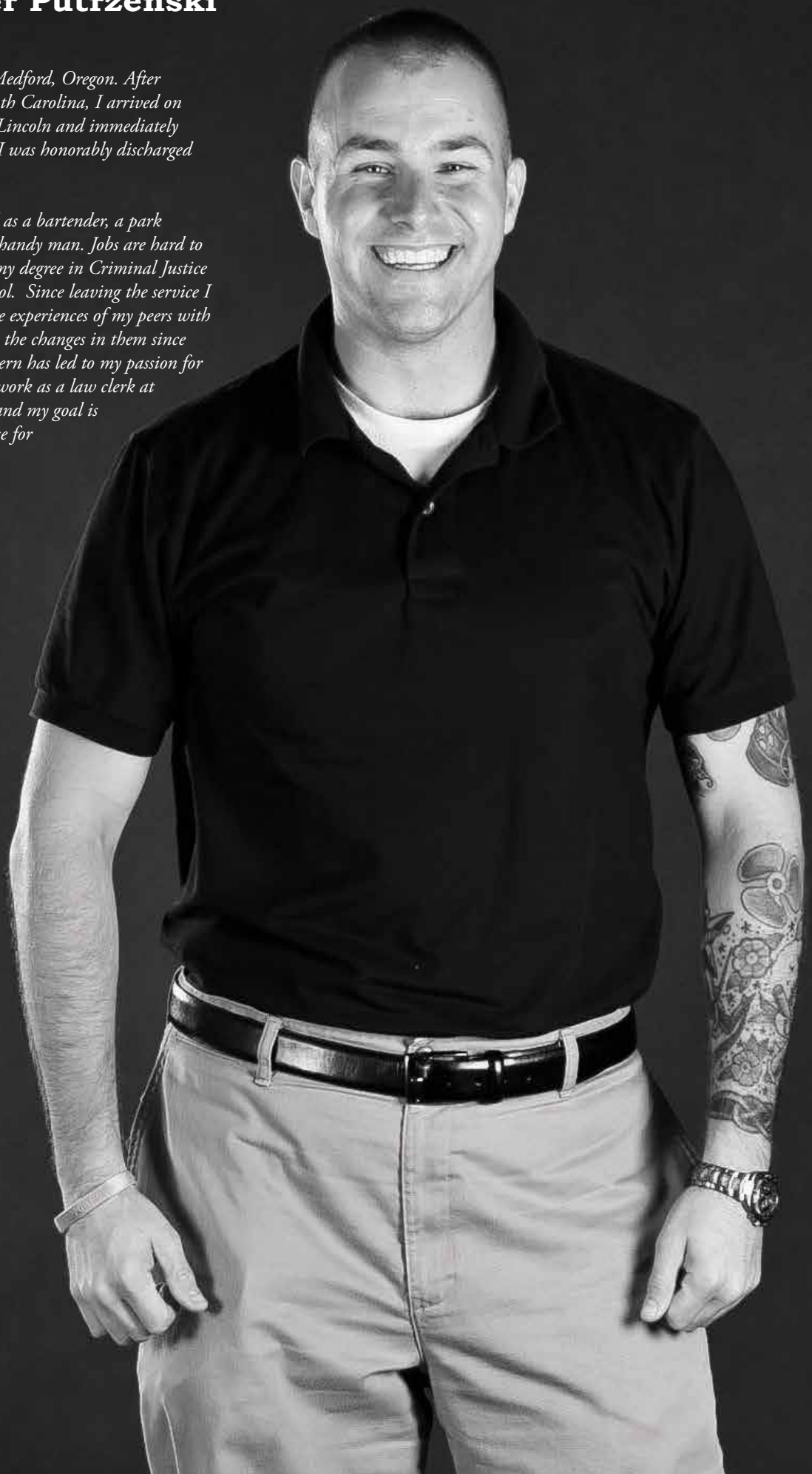
*In 2014, I ended my career in law enforcement and my enlistment in the Air National Guard concluded. I now have the privilege of working with and supporting veterans on a daily basis as a State of Oregon employee.*

## Christopher Putrzenski

UNITED STATES NAVY

*I joined the Navy out of Medford, Oregon. After training in Charlesto, South Carolina, I arrived on board the USS Abraham Lincoln and immediately deployed to the 5th Fleet. I was honorably discharged in 2010.*

*Since then, I have worked as a bartender, a park ranger, grocery clerk, and handy man. Jobs are hard to keep in school. I finished my degree in Criminal Justice and moved on to law school. Since leaving the service I have been frustrated by the experiences of my peers with their VA claims, as well as the changes in them since military service. This concern has led to my passion for law and advocacy. I now work as a law clerk at Northwest Veterans' Law and my goal is to practice criminal defense for veterans with PTSD.*



## STUDENT VETERANS

With wars in Iraq and Afghanistan winding down and enhancements to the GI Bill, colleges and universities have experienced a continued surge in veteran enrollment unseen since World War II.

Some veterans' advocates are warning that colleges are unprepared to deal with the unique needs of former service members. Many veterans face a difficult transition to civilian life, ranging from readjustment issues to recovery from physical and mental injuries. They say that without special attention, many will fail to graduate.

Veterans have expressed feeling isolated, difficulty adjusting to campus culture, and trouble relating to younger students. Some experienced a sense of "let-down" after combat and are bored with college life.

**Post 9/11 GI Bill**

29% of Iraq/Afghanistan veterans in Oregon are using the Post 9/11 GI Bill educational.

**Education Benefits**

In 2014, more than 12,000 veterans were using federal education benefits in Oregon, of which nearly 8,500 were using the Post 9/11 GI Bill.

Another common issue often overlooked is that many of them have work, family and other life obligations. Because they are not traditional students, there is frustration at being held to the traditional policies governing the completion of a degree.

Colleges not prepared to help soldiers transition from combat run the risk of losing an entire generation preparing for the next phase of their life. The GI Bill was intended as a readjustment benefit after WWII, giving veterans an opportunity to do something constructive, a mission that assists them in moving forward in life. It was designed to be a soft landing.

Studies show that there are effective strategies work to keep veterans in school. They include specialized orientation programs, helping veterans connect with one another, training faculty and staff on challenges veterans face and offering more counseling and financial aid.

Many the veterans admit to being conflicted about the role their military service should play in their education. While they don't want to be singled out, they also recognize that they are not the same people they were before they served. Their life perspective has changed and it affects their educational experience.

## RURAL VETERANS

Nationally, 5.3 million veterans live in rural communities. In Oregon, the state has 10 counties that are considered very rural by federal regulation. More than 20% of the states veterans live in these communities. Several barriers exist to accessing care and services in rural communities including provider and specialist shortages, hospital closings due to financial instability, limited broadband coverage (for telehealth services), geographic barriers, and distance.

Between fiscal years 2006-2014, there was a seven percent increase in VA-enrolled rural veterans. Of these, 56% were 65 years old or older, 6% were women and 41% had service-related disabilities. 12% of rural veterans served in OIF/OEF and 39% earned less than $26,000 annually (FY 13).

## TRIBAL VETERANS

The Oregon Native American communities have a long and rich history of honoring and supporting all veterans. According to the VA's 2012 American Indian and Alaska Service Members and Veterans Report, it is estimated that 3,403 Native American veterans reside in Oregon, representing 2.2 percent of Oregon's total veteran population.

Tribal veterans have one of the highest records of military service per capita of any ethnic group. Throughout the nine tribes, ODVA continues to see strong partners eager to assist tribal veterans and their families and is committed to developing strong relationships with Tribal Veteran Representatives.

**Minority Veterans**

8% of Oregon veterans are minorities (African-American, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native).

## LGBT VETERANS

In 2011, gays and lesbians were finally allowed to serve openly in the military. An honorable discharge is generally required to qualify for many state and federal veterans benefits. Previously, an indeterminable number of veterans were dismissed under the 1993 federal law Don't Ask Don't Tell, which allowed gays to serve as long as they kept their sexual orientation a secret.

The number of veterans who have been unofficial discharged because of their sexual preferences is indeterminable and dates back to World War II . These veteran have often gone without veteran benefits because of their "other than honorable" discharge status.

## Jesus Montes

UNITED STATES ARMY

*I trained at Ft. Leonard Wood in Missouri in May of 1955 as a medic. I was stationed all over the world, from Chinon, France to Heidelberg, Germany. In 1961, I met my wife who was serving in the Womens Army Corps. After marriying, I came back stateside to South Carolina as a drill sergeant but in 1963 I ended up in Korea with the 59th Aviation Company. In 1964, I traveled to Japan for the Olympic Trials and qualified as an alternate for the U.S. Olympic team in the 10k, 5k, and 3k meter races. In 1970 I was awarded sportsman of the year for the U.S. Army. Then in 1971, I was in Vietnam with the 1st Cav. When I retired in 1982, I was at Ft. Bragg as the head food advisor for the entire base.*

**Aging Veterans**
Slightly more than half the veterans in Oregon are seniors age 65 or older.

## AGING VETERANS

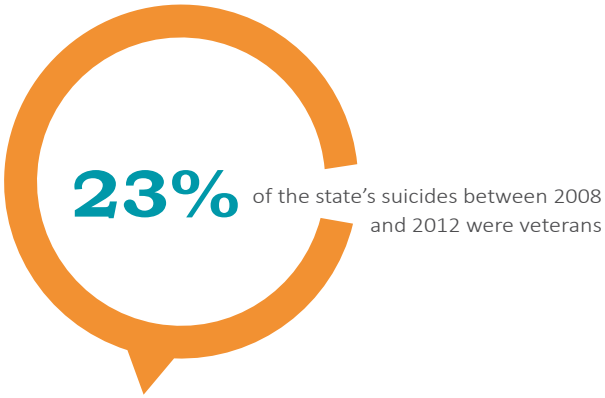
Americans are living longer. Advances in medicine have played a significant role in increasing veteran life expectancy. Treatments for what in the past would have been fatal wounds and disease has introduced new challenges for how we care for our aging veteran population.

Oregon has one of the largest concentrations of veterans aged 65 and over in the US with more than 50% of veterans having served during WWII, Korea and Vietnam eras. Nationally, more than 12.4 million veterans are age 65 or older.

The Census Bureau reported that the number of centenarians in the United States more than tripled from 1980 to 2010. According to a Department of Health & Human Services report, the United States will see a 36 percent increase in the over-65 population during this decade alone.

Long-term care needs of veterans is a long-term issue. For the foreseeable future, older veterans and their families will need access to long-term care, home and community based services, private facilities, and adult foster care.

They will need access to prosthetics, physical and mental health care, expanded medical transportation and pharmaceuticals as this trend continues to increase over the next 40 years.




## VETERANS IN CRISIS

Military veterans made up 8.7 percent of Oregon's population between 2008 and 2012, but they accounted for a disproportionate 23 % of the state's suicides during that period.

The largest segment of suicide victims were men over the age of 55, according to statistics analyzed and reported from the Oregon Violent Death Reporting System by the Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division.

Suicide is the leading cause of death for veterans under the age of 45 according to the report. Suicide victims often struggle with a variety of contributing issues, from mental health problems to alcohol abuse to relationship difficulties, the report noted.

In Oregon, the highest rates of veteran suicide occurred outside the Portland area. Rates exceeded the state averages in Marion, Lane, Coos, Curry, Jackson and Klamath counties.

## JUSTICE INVOLVED VETERANS

Criminal justice involvement and incarceration among veterans, especially those who have served in combat, have long been of national concern. There was much expectation that Vietnam veterans would be at high risk of incarceration because of combat trauma, but recent research suggests that pre-military factors are more important than combat exposure in predicting antisocial behavior and incarceration.

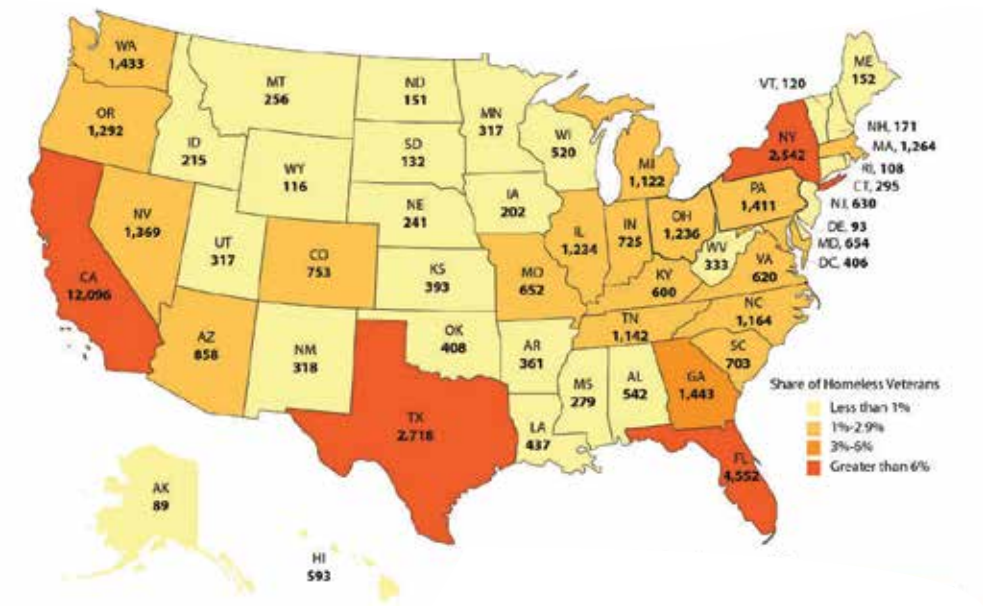
According to a recent report by the U.S. Department of Justice, about 10% of prison inmates are veterans. The incarceration rate of veterans (630 per 100,000) is less than half that of nonveterans (1,390 per 100,000).

The report also indicated that similar to the veteran population as a whole, a majority of incarcerated veterans served during a wartime period. Only 20%–26% reported seeing combat duty.

The media has played an important role in drawing attention about criminal behavior and incarceration of veterans who have served in Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF), Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and New Dawn (OND). However, according to a November 2012 report by Psychiatric Services in Advance, OEF/OIF/OND veterans appeared to be at lower risk of incarceration than veterans of other service eras. However, those who were incarcerated had higher rates of PTSD.

Efforts to link these veterans to mental health services upon their release are warranted. The first veterans treatment court in the country was established in 2008 in New York. The goal was to divert veterans charged with felony or misdemeanor nonviolent criminal offenses to a specialized criminal court that emphasizes treatment and rehabilitation guided by veteran health care professionals, the VA, veteran peer mentors and mental health professionals.

Two-thirds of veterans who come before the treatment courts successfully complete their treatment regimens. When a veteran receives VA services, veterans experience an 88 percent reduction in arrests from the year prior to the year after treatment court admission. Veterans also benefit from a 30 percent increase in stable housing in the year after.




## Homeless Veterans

Nationally, nearly 50,000 veterans are estimated to be homeless on any given night.

According to the National Coalition of Homeless Veterans, 2014 Annual Assessment Report to Congress, the number of homeless veterans in the U.S. makes up 11 percent of all homeless adults. According to the VA and HUD, this represents a 33 percent decrease from 2010.

It is estimated that homelessness among Oregon veterans has decreased 21% since 2011 from 1,635 to 1,292. The state overall saw a 38.2 percent decline in homelessness over the past 4 years, dropping from 19,492 in 2010 to 12,164 in 2014.

However, even with the decline, homeless veterans now represent 10% of all homeless Oregonians, which is more than a 2.5 percent increase over 2011 data.

**40%**
of homeless veterans who are African American or Hispanic

**8.8%**
of the overall homeless veteran population comprised of veterans who served Post 9/11 in Iraq or Afghanistan

**1.4**
million veterans are considered at risk of homelessness due to poverty, lack of support networks, and dismal living conditions

**68%**
of homeless veterans in urban areas

**51%**
of homeless veterans with disabilities

**70%**
of homeless veterans with substance abuse problems

**8%**
of homeless veterans who are women

## John Downing

UNITED STATES NAVY

*I enlisted in the delayed entry program 10 months prior to my 18th birthday and turned 18 in bootcamp. I served in VRC-30 squadron with C-24 greyhound, primarily in San Diego. I was detached to USS Kittyhawk, USS Ranger and briefly USS Nimitz aircraft carriers. The first Gulf war ended just days into my deployment.*

*I used my GI Bill after a few years to get my associates degree and a portion of my bachelor degree. I started my own construction contracting company and later led small business procurement efforts for ODOT.*

*Today I am the Deputy Director of SBDC of Oregon.*

## VETERAN OWNED BUSINESS

Nine percent of all businesses of the United States are veteran-owned. Women veterans own 4 percent of these businesses, and 14.2 percent are minority veterans.

Veteran business owners were markedly older than non-veteran business owners, reflecting the era demographics of the underlying veteran population. In 2007, 75.1 percent of veteran business owners were age 55 and over, with 36.1 percent age 65 or older, compared with 36.6 percent and 12.5 percent of all business owners, respectively.

Among respondent veteran-business owners, 8.3 percent had service-connected disabilities. Service-disabled veterans formed a larger proportion of non-employer owners.

The self-employment rate for veterans has been higher than that of non-veterans since 1979. They are at least 45 percent more likely than those with no active duty military experience to be self-employed.

Households with veterans who owned businesses had higher income and wealth than those with veterans not owning businesses. Military experience is an even stronger predictor of self-employment than graduate level education.

Although veterans are more likely to be self-employed than the general population, analysis of veterans-only data shows that self-employment is negatively correlated with the length of military service. Veterans with four or fewer years of service were most likely to be self-employed. With the exception of veterans who are career military retirees with service of twenty years or more. In this group, additional years of service correlate with a higher probability of self-employment.

## EMPLOYMENT

Military veterans who served since 9/11 are more likely to be unemployed than their peers involved in earlier conflicts. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the jobless rate for the most recent group of veterans was 7.2% in 2014. This figure is down from 9% in 2013 , matching with steady improvement in the overall labor market, but remains elevated compared with other jobless measures. The jobless rate for all veterans was 5.3% in 2014.

Young veterans face the most difficult job prospects. The jobless rate for veterans between 18 and 24 years old was 16.2% in 2014. While high, compared with older veterans, this rate is in line with elevated joblessness in the broader population for younger people and those without college educations.

Veterans are more likely than the broader population to take another government job after they complete their military service. The public sector, including state and local governments, employed 20.7% of all working veterans last year. Nearly one in three veterans with a service-connected disability works for the government.

**20.7%**
of all working veterans are employed by the public sector.

**9%**
of all business in the U.S. are veteran owned.

**5.3%**
was the jobless rate for all veterans nationwide last year.

## Michelle Nelson

UNITED STATES NAVY

*I joined the service in 1992 and was part of the last all girls boot camp in Florida. I married a fellow sailor and was at the Prince Salten Air Base in Saudi Arabia for 6 months. After that deployment, I got out.*

**87% of surveyed military families in Oregon had experienced a combat zone deployment and 30% had experienced more than four total deployments since 2001.**

## MILITARY FAMILIES

From WWII to Iraq/Aghanistan, military families have always been at the forefront of the challenges and triumphs associated with serving in the military. Military families experience not only the worry and concern for someone who is deployed, but also manage the stress of maintaining everyday life during deployment. These families are also the first to experience transition troubles after service.

The experience of deployment can be divided into three distinctive phases, each with its own associated stressors and emotions:

**Predeployment** begins when the service member receives his or her orders. It typically involves extended training and preparation for the upcoming mission. Families may become more distanced and argumentative during this phase of deployment as they vacillate between denial and sadness about the service member's departure.

**Deployment** occurs when the service member begins his or her actual mission in, or in support of, the theater of war. Families typically experience a wide variety of emotions during the actual deployment including relief, sadness, numbing, or anxiety. These emotions can shift into feelings of independence and control as the deployment wears on.

**Reintegration** occurs when the service member returns to the United States and is reunited with his or her loved ones. This period may start as a honeymoon, but end in the reality of renegotiating roles and getting to know each other once again.

Service members ranked deployment length and family separation among their top noncombat-related stressors. Other studies have documented the impact of deployment on family members, noting the shifts needed for adjustment. For some children and youth, parental deployment has been associated with depression, anxiety, lower grades in school, and increased familial conflict. Deployment has also been linked to depression, anxiety, isolation, and sadness for some nondeployed spouses. Not surprisingly, the adjustment of the at-home parent (the nondeployed spouse) has repeatedly been shown to have the greatest impact on the overall adjustment of their children.

### Oregon Military Families Survey

While Oregon is one of the few states without an active duty military base, it is estimated that there are nearly 78,000 military and veteran family members statewide. With no central concentration of military or veteran residents, it can be difficult to identify vital issues and gaps in services available.

In 2013, the governor appointed an Oregon Military Families Task Force which submitted to the Legislature the results of an online survey built to collect data, and identify needs and gaps in the state's resources for military families.

They reported that in Oregon, Active Duty service member families comprised 54% of participants, followed by National Guard (32%) and Reservist (12%).

Of all respondents, 72% requested services for critical life issues such as health care (61%), mental health (41%), financial assistance (38%) and employment.

# We are a nation still at war.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are the longest standing American conflicts in our nation's history. Among active duty and reserve units, the Oregon National Guard units began deploying in 2003 and continue to this day.

Not since WWII have we seen such a mass activation of state forces to federal duty. Of the nearly 31,000 Oregonians who have deployed, almost 38% of Oregon's service members consisted of Oregon National Guard and Reserve components.

Oregon's most notable inheritance of war may be its after effects, many of which are hidden from public view. History has taught us that long after the wars have ended, the work on behalf of veterans is just getting started.

## Eddie Shannon Black

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
OREGON NATIONAL GUARD

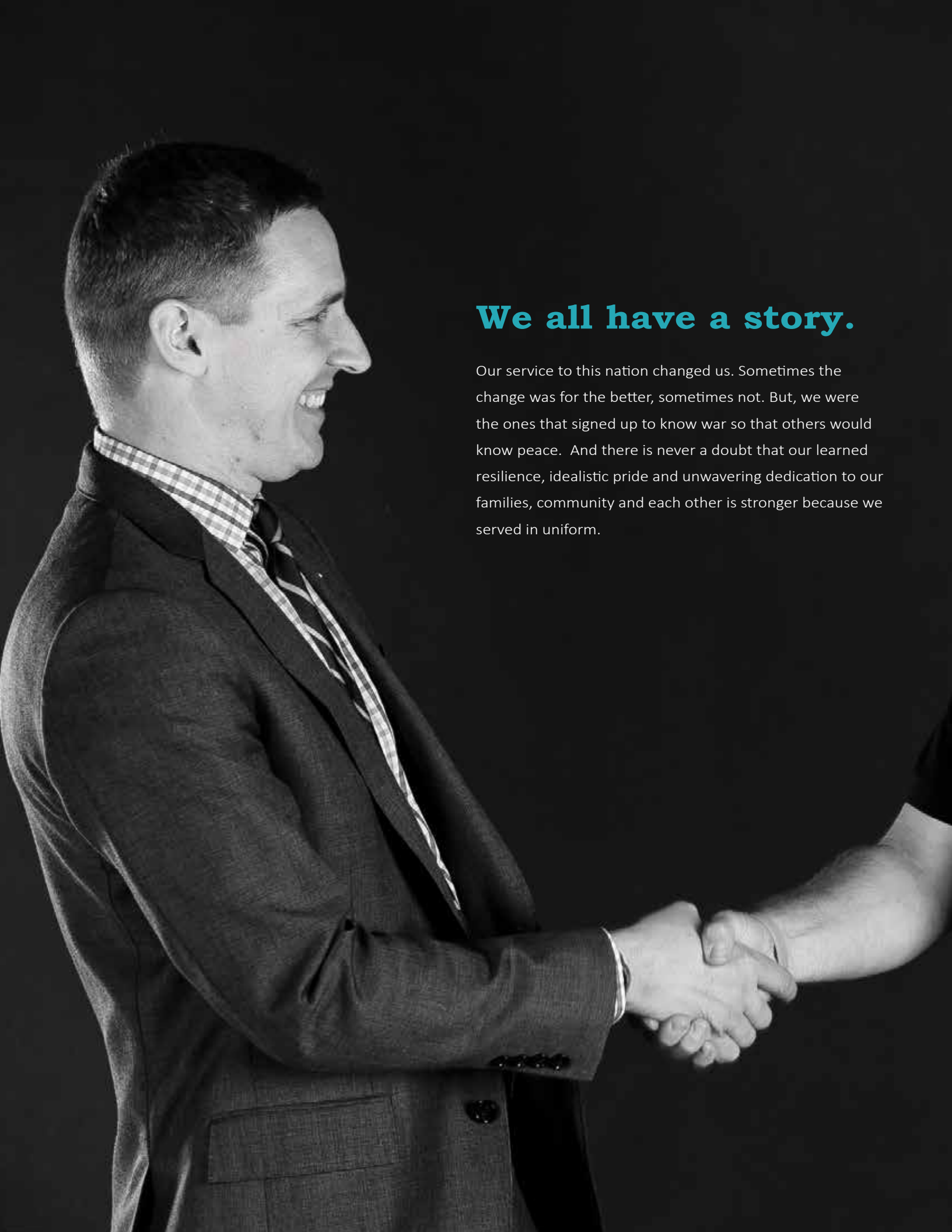
*I joined the Marine Corps out of high school. I was attracted to what it meant to be a Marine; Semper Fi… Esprit De Corps.*

*In 1990 I deployed with VMFA 232 "Red Devils" in Desert Storm. We launched our F/A-18 Hornets from Bahrain. I found my job as Avionics Technician challenging and rewarding. It prepped me for college quite well.*

*After five years active duty, I left to pursue college. But after 9/11 I wanted to get back into the fight.*

*I joined the Oregon National Guard as infantry and in 2004, I deployed to Bagdad for OIF 2 and drove humvees on patrol in support of SASO ops.*

*Since my return I have worked to assist other veterans with the normal transition from wartime deployment to a flourishing life back home.*



## We all have a story.

Our service to this nation changed us. Sometimes the change was for the better, sometimes not. But, we were the ones that signed up to know war so that others would know peace.  And there is never a doubt that our learned resilience, idealistic pride and unwavering dedication to our families, community and each other is stronger because we served in uniform.

We are Oregon veterans.

## GET IN TOUCH

To learn more about your veteran benefits, keep current on veteran news and events, or find a Veteran Service Office near you, by contacting ODVA via your channel of choice.

oregon.gov/odva

800 828 8801

oregondva.com

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