



Legislation Details (With Text)

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To: Board of County Commissioners

Through: Katherine Smith, Community Resources Director

Prepared By:

Joshua Medina, Veteran Service Supervisor, Community Resources

Presenter: Joshua Medina, Veteran Service Supervisor, Community Resources

Subject:

11:30 AM *2022 Veteran Services Office Report

Purpose and Request:

The purpose of this study session is to provide Veteran Services office updates to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and to provide updates on pending Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxins (PACT) Act of 2022 and The Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach (CVSO) Act of 2021 legislation that may have a significant impact on the operations of the Veterans Services Office in the future.

**Background and Discussion:
Initiatives:**

Updates to Current

In our June 2021 update we discussed ensuring accessibility of service for veterans where and when they are most in need of assistance. This direct approach of reaching veterans in crisis is in line with the overall direction of community initiatives:

- Worked with ADWorks! to establish Veteran of the Day for immediate service to veterans.
- Buckley Space Force transition briefs are changing the way we do business, bringing in veterans earlier and increasing the average value of decisions to our veterans by \$5867 annually.
- We are becoming more involved with community improvement initiatives in partner communities such as Aurora Veteran Diversion Court and homeless Veteran case conferencing.

Short Term Objectives:

- The Aurora office continues to build on the partnerships in seeing veterans at a rate in line with population data. Currently we are in the process of extending the IGA to become a three-year agreement with a two-year renewal option.
- We are committed to developing a holistic approach to veteran services.
- We are committed to continue harnessing partnerships that are mutually beneficial and assist the veterans within the county.
- We continue to lead veteran service organizations from the front. We are consistently being asked to consult, speak and mentor other organizations and feel that doing so is in the best interest of our clients and furthers veteran interests.

Long Term Considerations:

Veteran issues are currently a topic of intense discussion in legislature. The majority of both the house and senate recognize the need for legislation to increase access to services and for funding to support county and state offices that advocate on the part of the veteran.

- The Honoring our PACT Act is the most recent issue of note. This bill aimed to give healthcare access and compensation to an anticipated 3.5 million veterans exposed to toxins in combat. This pending legislation had passed the house and was near conclusion in the senate with bipartisan support but has stalled due to a cloture vote to rectify a technical error. This is an issue of significance because research findings are that veterans exposed to burn pits and other service-related exposures are more likely to incur disease. The consensus is that a version of this bill is likely to be enacted in the near future and will definitively have an impact on Arapahoe County Veteran Services Office.
- The CVSO Act is another item of legislation that needs consideration. Its original form was presented to the house in 2001 and would directly provide funding to help Veteran Service Organizations fund veteran claim representation. This legislation was also written into the Honoring our Pact Act recently but was removed to make the bill meet the fiscal expectation of both parties. Many of the national veteran serving organizations are vowing commitment in the 2023 legislative session to finding resolve and funding an agreed upon version of the CVSO Act. There may be opportunities for the BOCC to advocate for this legislation, which could provide additional funding to meet our anticipated increase in caseload.

Fiscal Impact: General funds provide the funding for the Veteran Services office. The PACT act and CVSO act

may result in a need for increased staff and increased expenses to the office.

Alternatives: The BOCC may recommend alternative initiatives.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

- ☒ Be fiscally sustainable
- ☒ Provide essential and mandated service
- ☒ Be community focused

Staff Recommendation: This has been reviewed with Community Resources staff.

Concurrence: N/A