

CLAYTON COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS MEETING

600 Gunder Road NE, Elkader, Iowa 52043

August 14, 2023, at 7:30 a.m.

Veterans Commission Meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. on July 10, 2023, by Commissioner Clark at the Clayton County Office Building Meeting Room.

I.) Roll Call: Commissioners Clark, Eilers, Torkelson and Jordan, Director present.

II.) Approval of Minutes: Motion was made by Eilers to approve the minutes from July 10, 2023. Motion was seconded by Clark; Motion carried.

III.) Public Comments: a). Discussion was held regarding obtaining a step stool for the transit van making it easier for veterans to enter and exit. Research will be conducted in finding a step stool with a raised handle to assist veterans boarding and onboarding the van.

b). Commissioner Clark indicated that he had a seat-belt extender that he would donate to the van.

c). Torkelson said that she had attended the VA Caregiver Support Program's Mobile Resource Fair at the Decorah VA. Torkelson said that she was impressed with the Decorah VA Center. Our Commission may consider adding Decorah VA to the list of other centers in Dubuque and Iowa City in the future.

d). Question was raised on the distribution of markers and flag holders by the Sherriff's office. Currently, family members have been picking them up at the Clayton County VA Office and bringing them to the cemeteries.

IV.) Budget Review. Jordan distributed the current Fiscal Budget for 2023-2024. Veterans Affairs office has spent \$4551.45 during the current month with 94.89% remaining. Van Rental Reimbursement had been received from Delaware County totaling \$793.58. Eilers made the motion to approve the budget, Clark seconded the motion; motion carried.

V.) Old Business: VA and General Relief Clerk (Intern) Job Description was discussed and will be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for their review/approval.

VI.) New Business a). Discussion was held regarding memo received from Roger Bollman, Adjutant/Finance Officer, AMVETS Post #27 requesting the purchase of 1812 grave markers for veterans serving in the War of 1812. Most of these veterans received land grants in Iowa from the U.S. government in honor of their military service. The following comrade Buck, Cyrus A. was identified as one of these recipients. A search for additional War of 1812 veterans will be conducted. The motion was made by Clark to purchase four 1812 brass markers and flag holders costing \$140.00, Eilers seconded the motion; motion carried.

b). The July Statistical Report was distributed. 51 total number of calls received this month re: Veteran related concerns. 16 total office visits from Veterans, and 1 veteran home visit.

c). 2024 Objectives for the Commission were discussed. 1). Continue with current expenditures and stipends for Commissioners and Van Drivers. 2). Continue advertisement at the local theater in Elkader. 3). Outreach is a priority to get new veterans involved. 4). Jordan will continue to attend American Legion Post Meetings. 5). He will also try to engage municipal leaders and emergency services to assist veterans if needed. 6). 2 new positions for veterans are open at the Guttenberg and Elkader hospitals to re-engage veterans in their communities. 7). Establish a flyer which would give veterans information of services that are available to assist them. 8). Continue outreach services/presentations in other times of the year. 8). Looking at different types of workshops that would help in understanding different types of disability compensation.

d). IA Association of County Commissioners & VSO Fall Meeting October 9-12, 2023.

e). County Commissioner term ending. Eilers agreed to continue to serve on the Commission. Commission looking into adding two more Commissioner positions.

VII. Review and approval of Claims.

VIII. Confirmation of Next Meeting. Next meeting will be on September 11 at 7:30 a.m.

IX. Adjourn. Eilers made the motion to adjourn, Clark seconded the motion; motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:55 a.m.

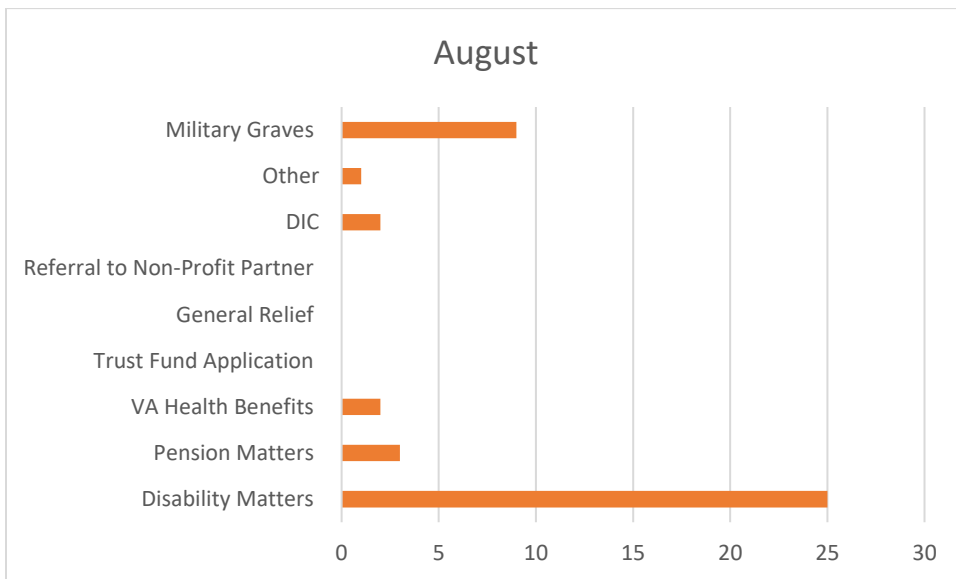
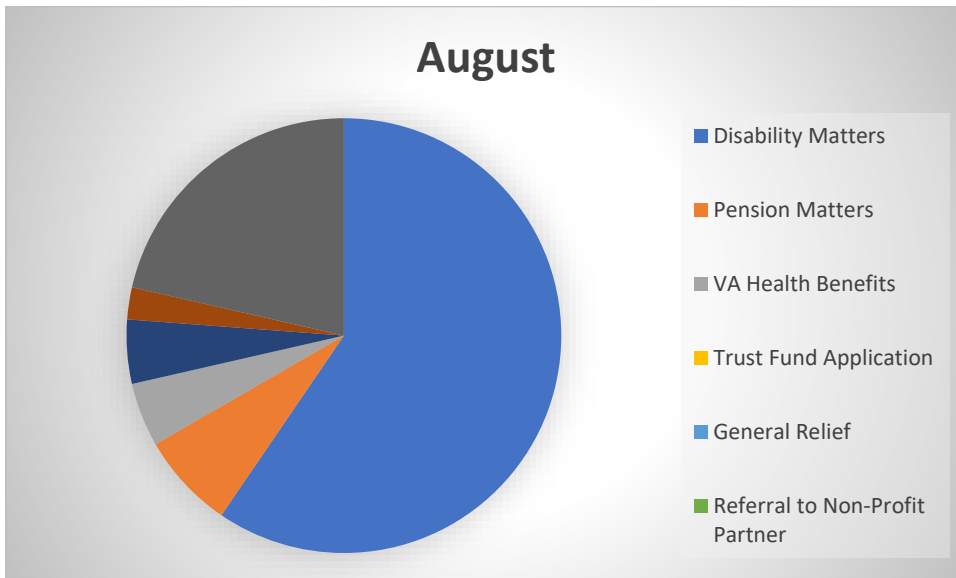
Respectfully submitted by Geralyn Torkelson

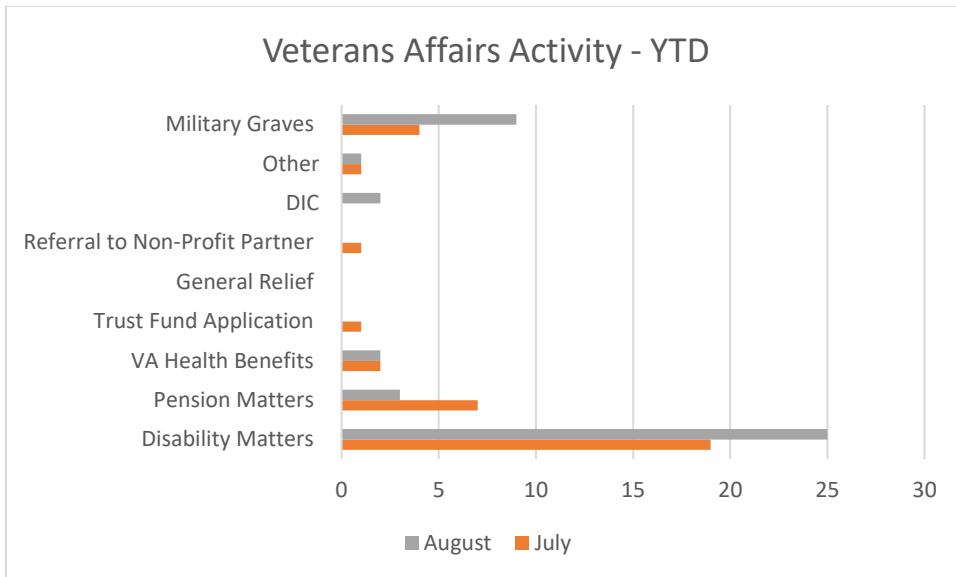
August Report

51 total number of calls received this month re: Veteran related concerns.

22 total office visits from Veterans.

1 Outreach event





VA & State Updates:

One Year Later – What has been achieved since passage of the PACT Act

The PACT Act is the largest expansion of veteran benefits in assistance in decades. While there isn't a deadline to apply, the deadline for which an applicant could seek retroactive payments with an approval of a claim expired in August. As of August 2023, there have been 786,000 disability claims. Approximately 435,000 have been processed with a little more than 348,00 approved (\$1.85 billion in earned benefits have been delivered to Veterans). Additionally, more than 4 million Veterans received free toxic exposure screenings and the VA estimates that 113,000 veterans with toxic exposures have enrolled in VA health care since enactment of the law. There were some challenges that the VA faced, specifically being under staffs to accommodate influx of claims, which resulted in a backlog of more than 250,00 claims. This has increased processing times of roughly 4 months for the VA to process a claim. Due to staffing and number of claims filed since the deadline, the VA anticipates that backlog claims will continue to grow and could surpass 700,000. The Va is working to expand facilities and is offering incentives to recruit and retain staff. Additionally, the VA has noted that they been a drastic increase in fraud and predatory tactics relating to the PACT Act that targets veterans. VA is prioritizing messaging that veterans and their survivors do not need to pay someone to help with filing a claim. Stats from VA Des Moines RO, specific to PACT Act claims filed in Iowa¹:

Completed Claims: 4916

Granted Claims: 3921 (approximately 79% of completed claims)

Claims Distinction Breakdown (most common service-connected conditions)

Hypertension: 1758

Rhinitis: 614

Genitourinary Cancer: 222

Asthma: 195

Sinusitis: 194

Pending Claims: 4861

¹ Annual summary of Iowa PACT Act Claims as of August 10, 2022.