



FISCAL YEAR 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Cover photo from the “Celebrating 80 Years of Victory” World War II Veteran Recognition Ceremony held in the Nebraska State Capitol Rotunda on Victory in Europe Day 2025.

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veterans.nebraska.gov



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Director's Message

At the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs, we've continued to grow our services to meet the needs of Nebraska's veterans and their families while honoring all who served. Fiscal Year 2025 saw great strides forward as we expanded how and where we serve veterans and their families and focused on the human impact we can make with veterans every day.

One of our most exciting new projects was the launch of the Nebraska Resource Center (NRC): a public-facing office housed right in the Offutt Air Force Base Exchange mall that assists service members, veterans, and their families. Our resource center is the first of its kind in the nation and will hopefully become a model for other base and post exchanges so they can bring essential resources to their military families and veterans right on the base where they live and work. You can read more about the NRC and find photos on page 10 of this report.



Just as exciting is the Nebraska Veterans Cemetery at Grand Island (NVCGI), which was dedicated just after the end of FY 2025 but has been at the forefront of our project list for the past several years and saw substantial work completed through 2024 and 2025. I cannot commend our team enough for the work that was done to get this project where it is today. Making Nebraska's second state veterans cemetery a reality took partnerships between federal, state, and local government entities as well as the community of Grand Island and central Nebraska. NVCGI will bridge the gap between our cemetery in Alliance and the two national veterans cemeteries in the state and provide a dignified resting place for all veterans and eligible family members. It is a shining example of the Nebraska way and proof of what we can accomplish together.

Another incredible example of what can be achieved together has been showcased over and over at ceremonies we've held around the state to recognize Nebraska's World War II veterans. In honor of the 80th anniversary of the end of the war, we partnered with Governor Jim Pillen to produce a "Celebrating 80 Years of Victory" recognition medal that's available to Nebraska's living World War II veterans. As of publishing this report, nearly 160 veterans have received a medal. Presentation ceremonies have been held across the state, from Kimball to Kearney to the Nebraska State Capitol, where we hosted our largest ceremony on Victory in Europe Day. The initiative is not only about recognizing these amazing veterans but also sharing their stories and keeping that history alive because these Nebraskans truly came together to save the world. Read about the program and see photos from some of our events on page 22.

As director of this agency for the past 24 years, it's hard to recall a year NDVA brought so many new and exciting ideas to life. And there is much more than what's listed above. For example, we brought accredited veterans service officers into the homes who have done great work ensuring our members are receiving every benefit they've earned. You'll find stories like this and more in the following report, and I hope you are as excited and as proud as I am of the work NDVA is doing to serve our state's veterans.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Hilgert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John Hilgert, Director

FY 2025 At a Glance



Exchange Regional Vice President Scott M. Bonner, NDVA Director John Hilgert, Governor Jim Pillen, and 55th Wing Commander Col. Mark Howard cut the ribbon to officially open a first-of-its-kind resource center at the Offutt Air Force Base Exchange on October 31, 2024. Read more on page 10.



For the past several years, NDVA has worked with the Capitol Commission to have the Nebraska State Capitol lit purple on August 7 in honor of Purple Heart Day.



NDVA provided funding and support for the United Way of the Midlands' Military Family Helpline, an extension of the 211 Hotline that connects callers to a dedicated navigator to assist with issues and questions for service members, veterans, and their families.



NDVA and Governor Pillen continued the state's tradition of honoring Vietnam War veterans with special lapel pins. Though the 50th Anniversary Commemoration ended in 2025, we plan to continue this ceremony into the future.

Emergency funds distributed to veterans and dependents through the Nebraska Veterans Aid Fund
\$1,854,448

437,721
number of ratings received for veterans with NDVA-represented powers of attorney



Over \$650,000 in dental care was provided to veterans and their spouses at no cost to them during the 2nd annual Veterans Mission of Mercy Dental Clinic.



NDVA continued its partnership with the Nebraska Veterans Council to host Veterans Legislative Day, which has been going for over 20 years.



Our first WWII veteran recognition event was held at the Central Nebraska Veterans' Home on December 10, 2024. Read about the initiative on page 22.



At the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs Annual Training Conference, NDVA Deputy Director Levi Bennett presented on the Veterans Mission of Mercy Dental Clinic, which received the VA's Abraham Lincoln Pillars of Excellence Award.



The 3rd annual Nebraska Women Veterans Symposium brought together women veterans from 39 different cities and towns across the state to learn about benefits, network with fellow veterans, and share their stories.

\$1,530,476,881

amount paid to Nebraska veterans and their families in VA claims and benefits

Agency Overview

HISTORY

Nebraska's history of serving veterans dates back to 1887 when the Nebraska State Legislature passed LB 247 to create the "Soldiers and Sailors Home" in Grand Island. The home was dedicated June 26, 1888, and began serving veterans within a few days.

Then, in 1921, the Nebraska Veterans Aid Fund was created to assist veterans returning from World War I with items like food, clothing, fuel, shelter, and other necessities for up to three months. It was expanded near the end of World War II in anticipation of the many returning service members who may need assistance.

It was not until July 1947 that NDVA was created. Initially, the agency was established primarily to administer the Nebraska Veterans Aid Fund. The number of benefits and services offered to Nebraska veterans and their families increased over the years, but NDVA remained a fairly small agency, partnering with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) who managed the four veterans' homes.

In 2017, LB 340 moved the veterans' homes program into NDVA, making it the sixth largest state agency. Today, NDVA is the state's fifth largest agency with 705 FTEs, most of whom provide direct care to veterans and their family members. NDVA remains dedicated to its mission of caring for Nebraska's veterans.

NDVA LOCATIONS ACROSS THE STATE



1. Western Nebraska Veterans' Home
2. Nebraska Veterans Cemetery at Alliance
3. Central Nebraska Veterans' Home
4. Nebraska Veterans Cemetery at Grand Island

5. Norfolk Veterans' Home
6. NDVA Central Office & State Service Office
7. Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home
8. Nebraska Resource Center (at Offutt Air Force Base)

MISSION

NDVA’s mission is to honor Nebraska veterans and their families by providing excellent service, assistance, and care through:

- ★ **Veterans Services** to help veterans identify and access federal and state benefits including disability compensation, pension, and health care available through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), as well as the Nebraska Veterans Aid fund, tuition waivers, and other state services;
- ★ **Nebraska State Veterans’ Homes** to ensure eligible veterans and family receive the highest quality assisted living and skilled nursing care at one of four nursing homes across Nebraska; and
- ★ **Nebraska State Veterans Cemeteries** to ensure eligible veterans and family receive an honorable final resting place maintained to the highest national standards.

VISION

As the state’s chief advocate for veterans, the Nebraska Department of Veterans’ Affairs will serve as a trusted and reliable resource for Nebraska veterans and their families. NDVA will enhance operational efficiency by promoting consistent program delivery and fostering a culture of excellence, dignity, and respect.

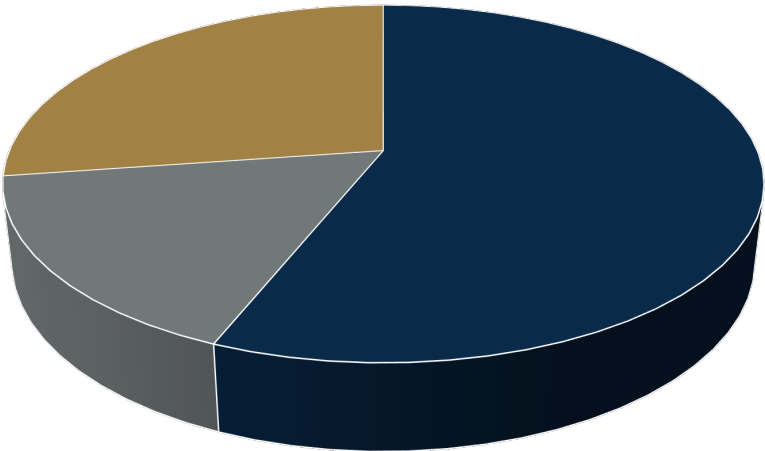


The Governor’s Roundtable, started in 2005, convenes current and past veterans service organization leaders to meet with NDVA and Nebraska’s governor to discuss issues facing the veteran community, successes seen over the past year, and new ideas to better serve veterans.

BUDGET

NDVA’s operating budget is a mix of state general funds, state cash funds, and federal funds from the VA. These funds support agency programs such as the four state veterans’ homes, our State Service Office and their outreach activities, the Nebraska Veterans Cemetery System, and support staff such as human resources, finance, legal, and others.

Note: these totals do not include construction grants or grants created by the Nebraska Legislature that are administered by NDVA and have been or will be awarded to other entities.



General Funds	\$54,893,760
Cash Funds	\$16,236,475
Federal Funds	\$26,680,304
Total	\$88,683,238

CENTRAL OFFICE LINCOLN

NDVA's Central Office is located on the fourth floor of the Nebraska State Office Building in downtown Lincoln. It is home to the agency's leadership and administrative teams, including legal, accounting, human resources, communications, IT, and clinical support.

An accredited veteran service officer is available to assist walk-ins with benefits, services, claims, questions, and more.

Our front desk team can help locate DD214s and other records and handles a number of programs including the Nebraska Veterans' Registry, Vets Get Pets, Waiver of Tuition, and Reservist Tuition Credit.



301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, NE 68509
(402) 471-2458 | ndva@nebraska.gov

NEBRASKA VETERANS' REGISTRY

Signing up to the Nebraska Veterans' Registry allows Nebraskans to get the "Veteran" designation on their driver's license. Not only does this make it easier to get veterans discounts at restaurants and retailers, but it allows veterans to order Military Honor Plates or campaign medal plates from the Nebraska DMV and helps verify eligibility for state benefits such as Vets Get Pets.



Veterans, including National Guard and Reserve veterans, can apply at veterans.nebraska.gov/registry.

FY 2025 Discharge Documents

Discharge Documents Received and Filed.....1,496

Total Discharge Documents on File.....750,440

Requests for Discharge Documents.....999

FY 2025 Veterans' Registry

Applications Received and Filed.....3,000

Total Veterans in the Registry.....176,129

FY 2025 Grave Registration Cards

Grave Registrations Received.....704

Total Grave Registrations on File.....98,564

STATE SERVICE OFFICE

LINCOLN

Our State Service Office assists veterans and their families through the benefit process at no cost. Services include reviewing service records to determine benefit eligibility for veterans, spouses, and dependents; assisting with the accurate completion of forms; transmitting completed claims to the proper state or federal officials; assisting and managing both initial appeals and appeals to the Board of Veterans Affairs; and advising applicants with claims before the VA.

In FY 2025, nearly 3,500 unique veterans worked with veteran service officers at our State Service Office.



3800 Village Drive, Lincoln, NE 68516
(402) 420-4021 | ndva.sso@nebraska.gov

In addition to holding office hours, the SSO outreach team travels across the state to meet and serve veterans where they are. **In FY 2025, the outreach team hosted or attended 109 events around Nebraska**, including a claims clinic in Atkinson that resulted in nearly \$40,000 in retroactive payments to Nebraska veterans.

FY 2025 VETERAN CLAIMS, RATINGS, AND COMPENSATION

In FY 2025, over 1.7 million claims were submitted by NDVA-accredited powers of attorney, resulting in 437,721 ratings and 1,318,955 non-ratings. Ratings include claims submitted to the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) that require a rater decision (e.g. disability compensation, pension, etc.) while non-ratings are claims submitted to VBA resulting in status changes (apportionment, drill pay, dependency, etc.).

Claims paid in FY 2025 resulted in over \$1.5 billion in benefits dispersed to Nebraska veterans and their family members. Nebraska ranks #1 in the nation for the percentage of veterans receiving service-connected benefits, per capita!

Claims Filed*	1,756,676
Ratings Received	437,721
Non-Ratings Received	1,318,955
Benefits Paid	\$1,530,476,881

**for those represented by NDVA-accredited POAs.*

Data provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

NEW!

Nebraska Resource Center



Serving Military Members, Veterans, and their Families

The Nebraska Resource Center is the first of its kind in the nation, bringing a military, veteran, and dependent support center to a public-facing storefront within a military base or post exchange. NDVA developed the idea to support service members and families stationed at Offutt AFB and encourage them to stay in Nebraska when they discharge from the service.

“As we work to grow Nebraska and the Good Life, the service members stationed at Offutt and their families are exactly who we want to attract and retain in the state,” said Governor Jim Pillen. “These are men and women who have dedicated themselves to the service of our country, have developed exceptional skills and discipline, and bring so much to our community. It’s wonderful that we can support them through this resource center.”

The Nebraska Resource Center team includes an accredited veteran service officer (VSO) from NDVA who can connect Nebraska’s newest veterans with the state and federal benefits and services they have earned. This includes reviewing service records, determining eligibility, assisting in the completion and submittal of forms, advising on appeals, and more. The NRC team also has resources on employment opportunities, details on occupational licensure and tax reforms in the state, options for transitional or permanent housing, ideas for recreational and leisure activities throughout Nebraska, opportunities for spouses and dependents, and much more. In addition, the VSO presents during the base’s Transition Assistance Program classes to support those nearing the end of their service in transitioning to civilian life and receiving the benefits and services they’ve earned.



Governor Pillen makes remarks during the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Nebraska Resource Center, held on October 31, 2024, at the Offutt AFB Exchange.

“Whatever point in your military career you’re at, whether you just set foot on Offutt AFB for the first time, you’re discharging next week, or you’ve been out of the service for a few years, the Nebraska Resource Center has something to offer you and your family,” said NDVA Director John Hilgert. “Think of it as an interactive rolodex that can tell you where to go or who to ask whether you want to get military license plates, polish up your resume, find a hunting spot in the panhandle, and anything in between.”



Ribbon cutting attendees tour the NRC and view the many handouts on display to showcase the opportunities Nebraska has to offer veterans, service members, spouses, and families.

The Nebraska Resource Center was created through a partnership between NDVA and the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) and is supported by the Greater Omaha Chamber, VFW Department of Nebraska, and University of Nebraska.

Learn more at veterans.nebraska.gov/nrc.



Inside the NRC

The Nebraska Resource Center was designed to be a welcoming, no-pressure stop for active-duty military, veterans, and their families. It features a lounge area with Nebraska memorabilia, reading materials, toys, and games. Two computer kiosks and a printer are available for visitors to search the web, look for jobs, find housing, or apply for benefits with an accredited veteran service officer nearby to help. An entire wall is dedicated to showcasing handouts that highlight everything Nebraska has to offer, with resources from Game & Parks, Nebraska Department of Labor, visitors bureaus, community groups, non-profits, employers, and many more. Digital signage displays the latest on benefits, services, resources, and upcoming events. Additional office space is located in the back room for those who wish for more privacy while they speak with staff. While it was only open for part of FY 2025, the NRC team had **over 1,700 unique interactions!** These included 480 claims submitted, 106 Game & Parks applications, 48 employment referrals, and much more.



STATE VETERANS' HOMES

NDVA operates four state veterans' homes that provide a variety of nursing and assisted living services tailored to meet our members' needs. These services range from assisted living to skilled nursing to memory care.

Physical, occupational, speech, and restorative nursing therapy services are available at each of our facilities to help improve members' quality of life, allow them to participate in meaningful activities, and maintain optimal physical, mental, and psychosocial functioning.

Members can attend weekly religious services of their choice in the homes' All Faiths Chapels. Chaplains also make regular visits to those who are ill or unable to leave their rooms. A variety of programs allow members to participate in activities that match their interests, from woodworking and crafts to social gatherings. Thanks to service organizations, volunteers, and the caring public servants at our facilities, members can enjoy a varied schedule of events. Activity coordinators at the facilities plan ceremonies for days like Veterans Day, Memorial Day, and other special occasions. Check out some FY 2025 activity highlights on page 14.

Details on each home, as well as virtual tours of the facilities, can be found at veterans.nebraska.gov/homes.

FY 2025 Home Application Data	
Applications Received.....	403
Applications Carried Forward from Previous Year.....	14
Total Applications.....	417
Approved (does not include apps initially approved and canceled later)	380
Denied (includes one who was ineligible).....	8
Canceled by Applicant.....	15
Applications to Carry Forward to Next Year.....	7
Applicants on Waiting List as of June 30, 2025.....	368
Total Admissions during FY 2025.....	137

CENTRAL NEBRASKA VETERANS' HOME

4510 East 56th Street
Kearney, NE 68847
308-865-6000

Size: 330,000 sq ft

Beds: 225

Open date: January 16, 2019

FY 2025 Expenses: \$25,216,172





EASTERN NEBRASKA VETERANS' HOME



12505 Harrison Tull Drive
Bellevue, NE 68123
402-595-2180

Size: 145,000 sq ft

Beds: 144

Open date: July 14, 2007

FY 2025 Expenses: \$17,556,006

NORFOLK VETERANS' HOME

600 East Benjamin Avenue
Norfolk, NE 68701
402-370-3330

Size: 138,000 sq ft

Beds: 159

Open date: November 27, 2001

FY 2025 Expenses: \$19,921,285



WESTERN NEBRASKA VETERANS' HOME



1102 West 42nd Street
Scottsbluff, NE 69361
308-632-0300

Size: 93,000 sq ft

Beds: 109

Open date: March 19, 1975

FY 2025 Expenses: \$12,098,557

MEMBER ACTIVITIES IN OUR VETERANS' HOMES AND THE COMMUNITY

The teams at our veterans' homes ensure members enjoy plenty of activities at each facility and outings in the community. We're also blessed with great volunteers and community support to help make every day special. The photos below are a tiny snapshot of activities from FY 2025. Clockwise, starting top left: NVH members ride in the Norfolk July 4th parade, WNVH members salute during the facility's 2024 Veterans Day ceremony, ENVH members visit the Strategic Air Command & Aerospace Museum, a miniature pony from Dreamer's Place says "hi" to members at NVH, and the Veterans Awareness Riders cruise around CNVH before presenting some of the members with recognition awards.



State Service Officers Now in our Veterans' Homes

In FY 2025, we were able to add state service officers to the teams at our veterans' homes. They work directly with the veterans and family members who live there to review records and ensure our members are receiving every benefit for which they are eligible. State service officers started at CNVH and ENVH in October 2024 and at NVH in January 2025, and we hope to have one at WNVH in the near future.

This has allowed our teams to review members' VA benefits more frequently than in the past and investigate new ways to serve them and increase their benefits. So far, the results have been astounding. In the portion of FY 2025 that state service officers were working in the veterans' homes, **they submitted 486 forms, 95 claims, and 93 intent to files to the VA on behalf of our members.**

NEBRASKA VETERANS CEMETERY SYSTEM



Nebraska is now home to two state veterans cemeteries after NVCGI was dedicated July 12, 2025. The Nebraska Veterans Cemetery at Alliance (NVCA) has been serving veterans and their families since January 2011.

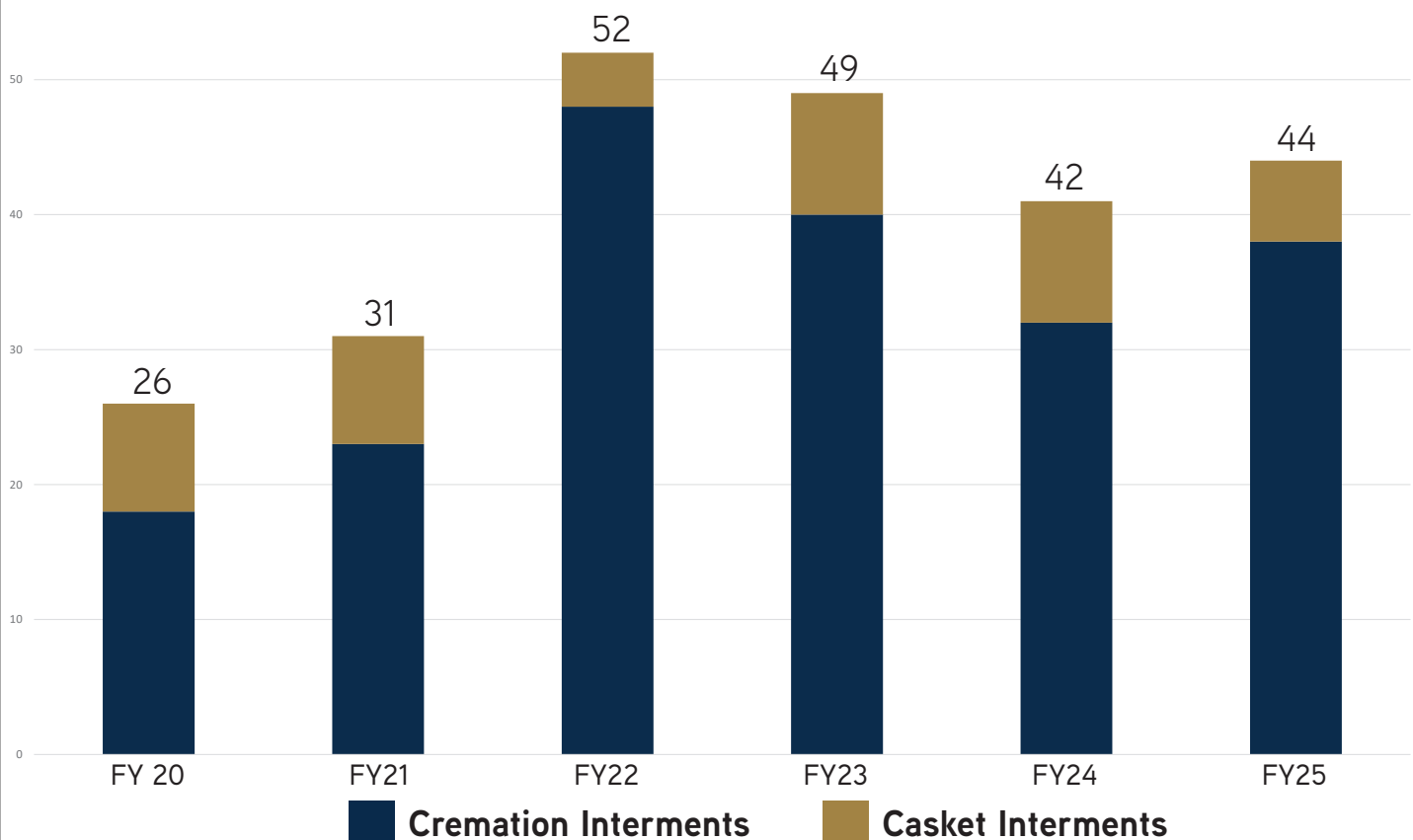
Both cemeteries offer casket or cremation burials with burial plots and a scattering garden for cremated remains. NVCGI also offers columbarium niches. Other services include military funeral honors, memorial services, pre-needs counseling, and civic and volunteer opportunities for the community to get involved. All services are provided at no cost to veterans or their families, with funding coming from the sale of military honor plates. Learn more at veterans.nebraska.gov/cemeteries.



Aerial view of the NVCA grounds and committal shelter (above) and administration building (right).



NVCA Interments



Nebraska Veterans Cemetery at Grand Island Dedicated

Hundreds of central Nebraska community members joined local, state, and federal leaders to dedicate the new Nebraska Veterans Cemetery at Grand Island on July 12, 2025.

The event was emceed by NDVA Director John Hilgert. Speakers included Governor Jim Pillen, U.S. Senators Deb Fischer and Pete Ricketts, District 35 Senator Dan Quick, National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Veterans Cemetery Grants Program (VCGP) Director James Earp, and Hall County CVSO Don Shuda.

The program featured the presentation of Colors by the United Veterans' Color Guard, National Anthem performed by the 43rd Army Band, Pledge of Allegiance led by Cemetery Administrator Randy Lonowski, invocation given by Dan Naranjo, a Chinook flyover by the Nebraska National Guard, and a firing salute, "Taps", and retiring of colors by the United Veterans' Color Guard.

Cemetery construction began in early 2024 after a groundbreaking ceremony was held on November 10, 2023, though the project was initiated much earlier. In 2021, NDVA applied for a grant through the NCA's VCGP to create a state veterans cemetery that incorporated the original 2.7-acre Veterans Memorial Ceremony—also known as the Soldiers and Sailors Cemetery—that was established in 1888 as part of the Grand Island Veterans' Home.

Through community fundraising efforts led by Hall County's Hero Flights Association and a loan from the Hall County Board, the Grand Island community raised \$750,000—the VCGP's required 10% match of the proposed \$7.5 million cost of the project. NVCGI was ranked #1 on VCGP's priority list for establishing new cemeteries and later awarded grant funding in 2023.

This project has been years in the making, with countless hours of work put in by dedicated public servants and community members. We plan to begin interments in fall of 2025 and are honored to provide a dignified final resting place for our heroes and their families.



Programs

NEBRASKA VETERANS AID FUND

Nebraska Veterans Aid (NVA) can help veterans and their spouses or dependents with temporary financial relief in the event of a variety of emergencies. NVA funds can be used for food, fuel, shelter, transportation, daycare, funeral expenses, medical needs, surgical items, and more.

As shown in the graph on the next page, NVA disbursement amounts have been increasing year over year as NDVA works to ensure our state's veterans and their families have the financial support they need. **In FY 2025, \$1,854,448 was distributed to veterans and their families, with the average distribution totaling over \$3,100.**

Per state statute, applicants have been required to submit their applications through a County Veterans Service Officer or Post Service Officer of any recognized veterans service organization for NDVA to review. Starting September 3, 2025, NVA applications can also be made directly through NDVA state service officers.

Learn more about the NVA fund and how to apply at veterans.nebraska.gov/nva.

Facing a financial emergency?
Nebraska Veterans Aid could help.



Use NVA for

- Food
- Rent/Mortgage
- Utilities
- Eye Glasses
- Hearing Aids
- Dental Bills
- Medical Bills
- Transportation
- Daycare
- Funeral Expenses

For more information, contact your County Veteran Service Officer or visit veterans.nebraska.gov/nva

 **VETERANS.NEBRASKA.GOV**
402-471-2458 NDVA@NEBRASKA.GOV @NEVETSAFFAIRS

NEBRASKA
Good Life. Great Sacrifice.
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

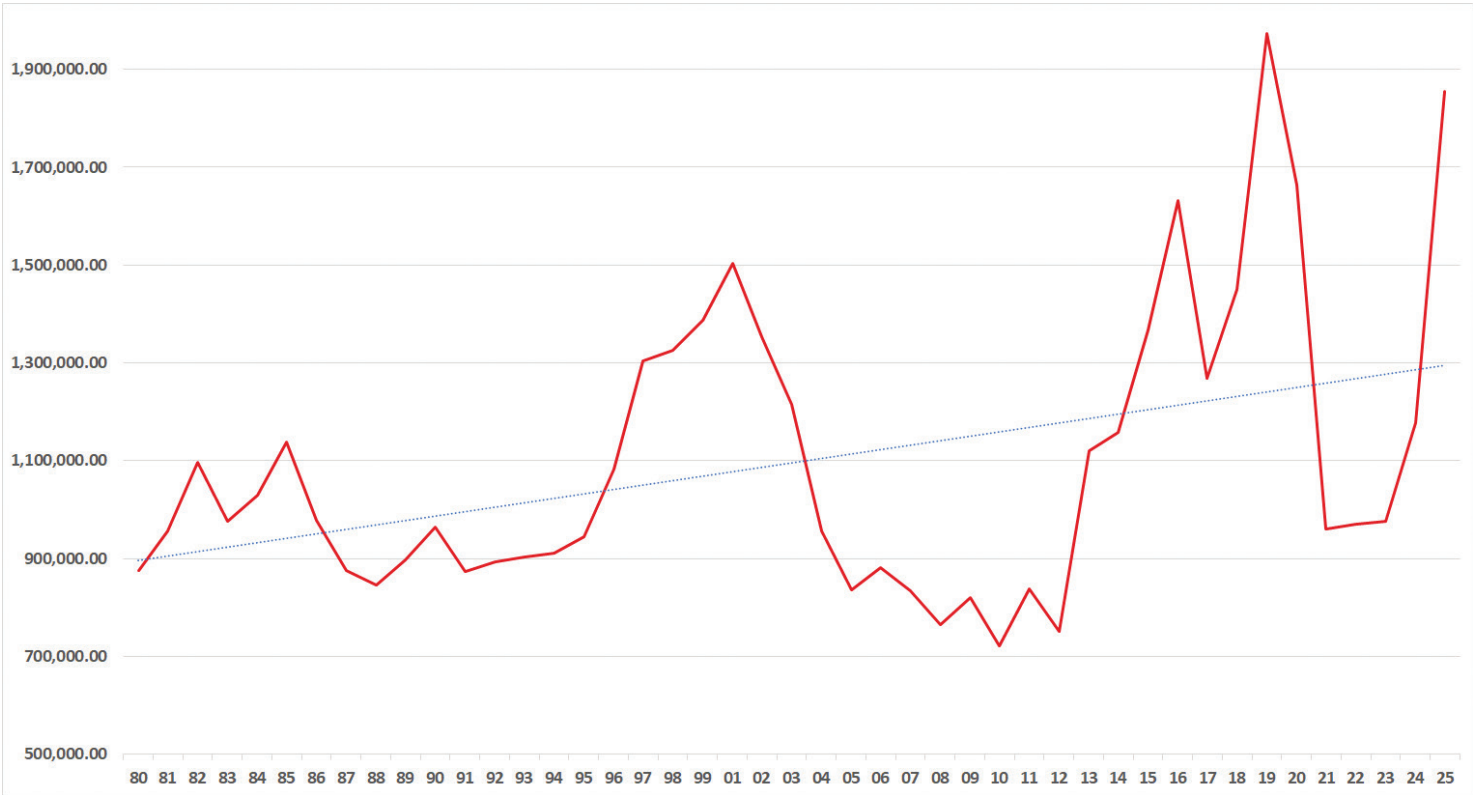


FY 2025 NVA Application Data

Applications Received.....	634
Applications Carried Forward from FY 2024.....	25
Total Applications.....	659
Approved.....	595
Denied.....	41
Canceled by Applicant.....	22
Reconsiderations Reversed (Approved).....	1
Reconsiderations Upheld (Denied).....	2
Pre-authorized Applications to Carry Forward to FY 2026.....	23

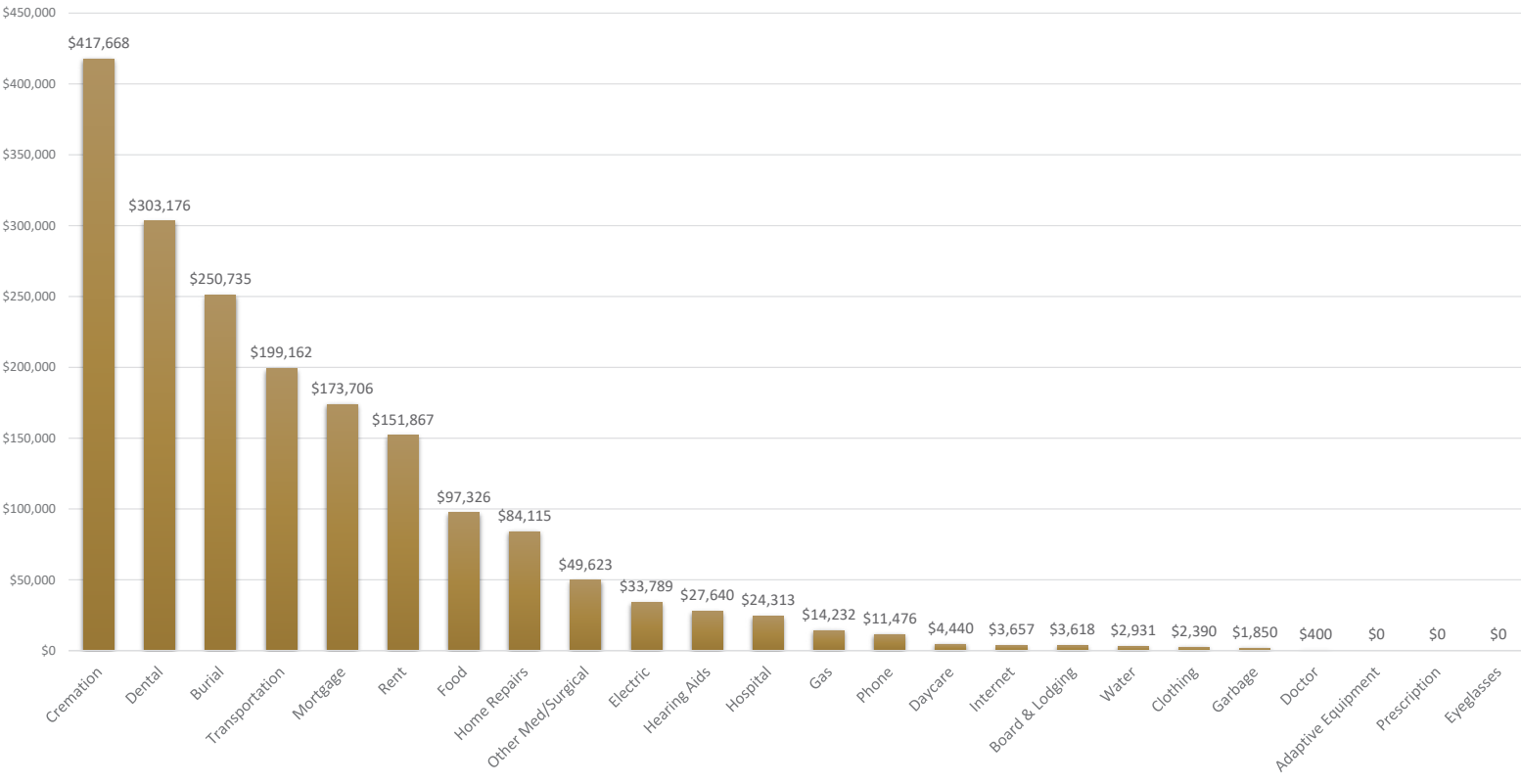
NVA Disbursements by Year

Below is NVA spending over the past several decades. Since its creation, **over \$62 million in emergency financial assistance** has been provided to Nebraska veterans and/or their family members in times of need.



FY 2025 NVA Disbursements by Category

NVA funds can be used for a variety of expenses from medical bills to burial expenses to rent and utilities. Below, you can see what types of expenses NVA funds were used to cover throughout FY 2025.



This chart shows the amount of NVA funds received by veterans in each Nebraska county during FY 2025.



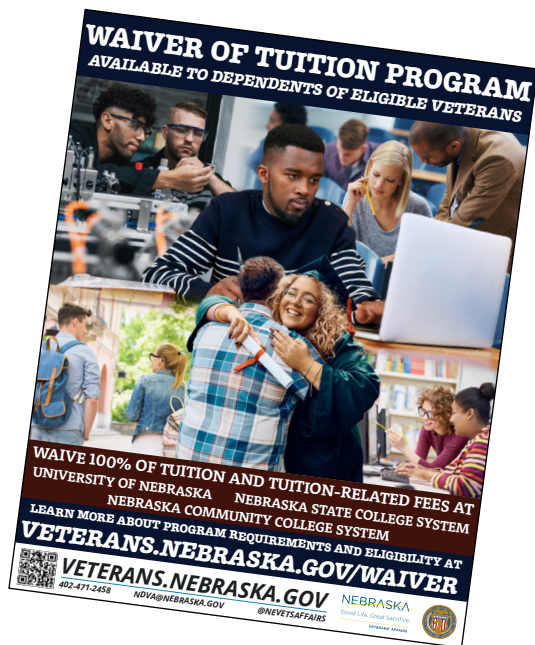
This chart has been adjusted to show NVA funds distributed to each county divided by the estimated veteran population of the county to more accurately reflect the distribution of NVA funds per capita.



WAIVER OF TUITION

The Waiver of Tuition is a state program available to dependents of eligible veterans to help them further their education at Nebraska colleges. It may be used to waive 100% of a student's tuition charges and tuition-related fees to University of Nebraska campuses, Nebraska state colleges, and Nebraska community colleges.

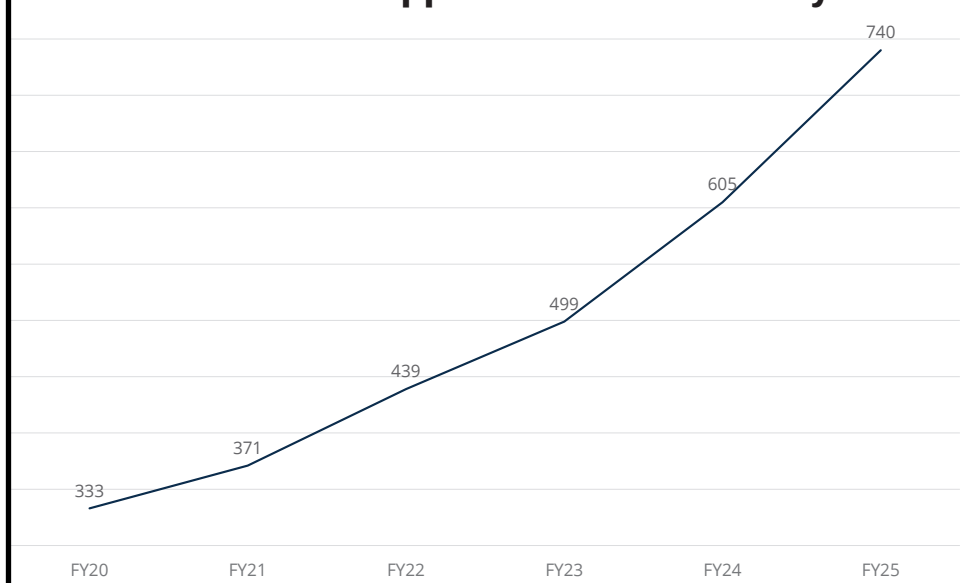
Information on the program is available at veterans.nebraska.gov/waiver.



FY 2025 Waiver Application Data

Applications Received.....	740
Carried Forward from Last Year.....	35
Total Applications.....	775
Approved.....	656
Denied.....	10
Canceled by Applicant.....	18
Carried Forward to Next Year.....	91

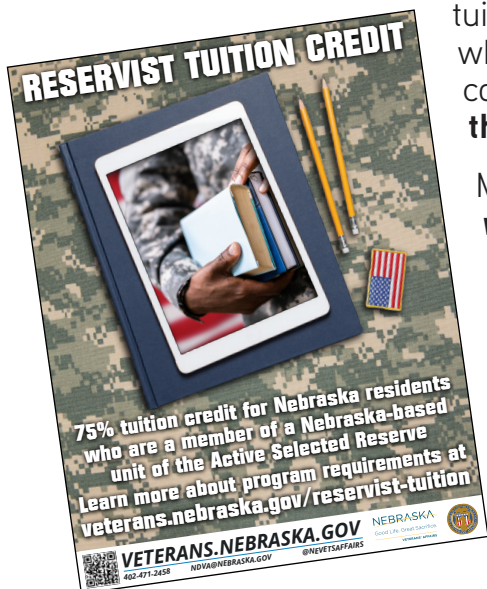
Waiver of Tuition Applications Received by Year



RESERVIST TUITION CREDIT

NDVA also offers a tuition credit to assist Nebraska's reservists in advancing their education at colleges in the state. Nebraska residents who are members of a Nebraska-based unit of the Active Selected Reserve may be eligible for a 75% tuition credit (or 50% if pursuing a graduate or professional degree). This tuition credit may be granted to up to 200 applicants each calendar year who are attending University of Nebraska campuses, Nebraska state colleges, or Nebraska community colleges. **One exciting data point is that FY 2025 saw nearly twice as many applications as FY 2024!**

More information on the Reservist Tuition Credit program is available at veterans.nebraska.gov/reservist-tuition.



FY 2025 Tuition Credit Application Data

Applications Received.....	46
Approved.....	44
Denied.....	2
Re-certifications Approved.....	6

VETS GET PETS

Nebraska veterans can have up to \$350 in rescue pet adoption fees covered through Vets Get Pets when they adopt from a shelter or rescue licensed by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. In FY 2025, we helped 93 veterans bring a new companion animal home!

Funding for the program comes from the sale of the Vets Get Pets license plates, which are available to all Nebraska drivers. Get your plates today or learn more about the program at veterans.nebraska.gov/vetsgetpets.



Judith was one of many special pets adopted using Vets Get Pets in FY 2025.

FY 2025 Vets Get Pets Applications	
Applications Received.....	122
Approved.....	93
Denied.....	3
Canceled by Applicant.....	14
Pending/Carried Forward.....	9



WELCOME HOME PROGRAM

Our Welcome Home program includes two components: a Welcome Home packet sent to each Nebraska service member when they discharge from service and a Welcome Home Dinner hosted by the governor for these new veterans and their families.

Our Welcome Home packet contains a wealth of information on federal benefits and services, state benefits like Nebraska Veterans Aid and Vets Get Pets, resources on employment opportunities and career advancement, and much more. These go out monthly as we receive discharge information for Nebraska service members. **In FY 2025, we sent out 1,104 Welcome Home packets to discharging service members.**



For the Governor’s Welcome Home Dinner, we invite every service member who has discharged over the past 12 months, as well as their families, for an evening of games, recognition, and plenty of food. We invite exhibitors from a host of veterans service organizations, state agencies, job recruiters, and other groups to share information and resources with our state’s newest veterans. Finally, at the end of the evening, the governor presents each veteran with a special Welcome Home challenge coin to thank them for their service and welcome them back to Nebraska.



Governor Pillen meets with veterans and their families at this year’s Welcome Home Dinner.

WORLD WAR II VETERAN RECOGNITION PROGRAM

On May 8, 2024, Governor Jim Pillen and NDVA announced the “Celebrating 80 Years of Victory” program to honor Nebraska’s living World War II veterans with specially minted medals. The program officially kicked off in 2025 to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II.

“The goal of this program is two-fold,” said NDVA Director John Hilgert during the announcement event. “One, we want to thank Nebraska’s World War II veterans while we still can and recognize them for their tremendous sacrifice at a turning point in world history. Two, we want to refocus our attention to these veterans and their stories to remind people of what they were fighting for and just how much they sacrificed to fight for it.”



On the front of the medal, which NDVA designed, is the slogan of the initiative: “Celebrating 80 Years of Victory.” It includes Nebraska’s famous Sower in front of the state and surrounded by a laurel wreath, a symbol of triumph. The backside of the medal features the words “On Behalf of a Grateful State, Thank You for Your Service” emblazoned above the personification of victory standing in front of the 48-star flag of 1946. The ribbon design pays homage to the U.S. Military’s World War II Victory Medal, which is itself a doubling of the pattern of the World War I Victory Medal.

The medal is available to living veterans who served in the U.S. Armed Forces between December 1, 1941, and December 31, 1946; are legal residents of Nebraska or can demonstrate Nebraska residency at the time they entered the service; and discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. The VA estimates there are around 150-200 World War II veterans still living in Nebraska.

“Being able to honor these heroes from the Greatest Generation has been an incredible privilege,” said Governor Pillen ahead of the May 8, 2025, ceremony. “The response we’ve received from the veterans, their family members, friends and neighbors, has been tremendous. The stories they tell are hard to fathom. Some of these veterans are lucky to be with us today. We are blessed that we can show our heartfelt appreciation for their service to our state and our nation.”

To date, nearly 160 World War II veterans have been presented with medals in over 75 presentation ceremonies across the state. You can see photos from just a few of these incredible events on the opposite page.

Information on the initiative can be found at veterans.nebraska.gov/ww2.





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