



# THE AMERICAN LEGION

## DEPARTMENT OF IOWA

### 2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



#### 1. **Funding for Veterans Service Organizations Representing Veterans with the Veterans Benefits Administration**

The American Legion supports providing an annual appropriation to support the operation of the Service Offices of the nationally accredited Veterans Service Organizations (VSO). VSO Service Offices provide claims assistance to veterans seeking benefits from the Veterans Benefits Administration.

It has become more difficult for the VSOs to provide the needed level of assistance to veterans with claims for compensation from the VA due to reduced revenue of the organizations and the increasing number of claims for VA benefits. The appropriation in the form of matching grants would be used to increase the number of professional service officers supporting Iowa's veterans and our county veterans service officers.

VA compensation is intended to improve the quality of life for a veteran suffering from service-connected injuries and illnesses. Disabled veterans would gladly trade their service-connected compensation for return of the capabilities lost due to military service. That return to health is not possible. These benefits are a small measure to compensate for the damage that was done.

Increased VA compensation benefits also have an economic impact for Iowa. While VA compensation itself is not taxable, it does result in additional funds in the Iowa economy, which later generates sales tax income and eventually income tax to the state.

#### 2. **Veterans' Treatment Courts**

The American Legion urges the State of Iowa to establish and expand Veterans' Treatment Courts.

Veterans' Treatment Courts are hybrid Drug Courts and Mental Health Courts and have evolved out of the growing need for a treatment court model designed specifically for justice-involved veterans to maximize efficiency and economize resources.

Many veterans that enter the veterans' treatment courts are not aware of their federal, state, or county benefits, such as Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits for compensation, pension and health care.

Grouping veterans into a specific court docket significantly expedites access to veteran-specific resources, including benefits and treatment earned through military service, and provides options for treatment as opposed to incarceration.

#### 3. **Military Homeownership Assistance Program**

The Military Homeownership Assistance Program is one of the most attractive benefits within Home Base Iowa's arsenal aimed at the recruitment of out of state veterans.

The Military Homeownership Assistance Program continues to be marketed to veterans even after the funds have been exhausted for the fiscal year and veterans are placed on a waiting list.

The American Legion supports increased funding for the Military Homeownership Assistance Program to make the program available throughout the entire fiscal year.