

Joint Committee on Kansas Security

By Gregg Burden

Director, Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office

November 7, 2014

Thank you for the opportunity to brief the Joint Committee on Kansas Security. I am Gregg Burden, Director of the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office (KCVAO). Attending with me today is our Deputy Director and Veteran Services Director, Wayne Bollig, our Chief Property and Fiscal Officer, Pam Rodriguez, our Human Resources Director, Kim Tatum, our Cemetery Director, Kafer Peele, and our Veterans Home Superintendent from Winfield, Steve Dunkin.

The mission of the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office (KCVAO) is to serve Kansas veterans, survivors, and their dependents with dignity and compassion. The Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office (KCVAO) is privileged to support the quarter million veterans who live in the State of Kansas along with the estimated 350,000 dependents and survivors. The KCVAO is a principal advocate in ensuring that they receive information, advice, direction, and assistance through the coordination of programs and services on state and federal benefits: medical care, benefits, social support, and lasting memorials in recognition of their service to Kansas and the nation.

The goal of the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office is to ensure Kansas veterans and their families receive all the services and benefits they have earned in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible. These services and benefits include; long-term nursing and assisted living care to eligible veterans and dependents, interment options and maintenance of four state veterans' cemeteries, and coordination with federal agencies to provide financial assistance to Kansas veterans for health care and disability income.

The past year has been extremely challenging for our agency but all of us feel that our organization has made significant improvements in many areas and has implemented new programs which will help standardize our process and procedures while benefiting our agency and the veterans of Kansas. We are extremely excited about the changes and progress our organization has made and look forward to continuing this positive momentum.

The biggest change for our agency this past year occurred with the passage of House Substitute Bill 2681 which abolished the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs (KCVA) and created the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office (KCVAO) and the Veterans Claims Assistance Program. The agency is no longer governed by a 5 member commission and is now under the supervision of the Director who is appointed by the Governor and subject to confirmation by the Kansas Senate. The bill also abolished the Veterans Claims Assistance Advisory Board and replaced this Advisory Board with the Veterans Claims Assistance Program (VCAP). The Veterans Claims Assistance Program Advisory Board will advise the Director of the KCVAO on all veterans' services, including the VCAP program.

House Substitute Bill 2681 was effective July 1, 2014 and we are pleased that the agency transition has been implemented successfully. The new VCAP Advisory Board has been designated and had their first meeting on September 9, 2014 with the next meeting designated for early December. Wayne Bollig has been selected as the Deputy Director for the KCVAO and our first annual agency report will be presented to the Governor before the beginning of the 2015 Legislative Session.

The Kansas Veterans Home in Winfield and the Kansas Soldiers Home at Ft. Dodge has experienced significant upgrades and changes over the past year. Both facilities have installed new servers and wireless systems which significantly enhances patient security and capability at each facility. Each home has implemented the new

software program, PointClickCare which includes direct care and financial modules that utilizes tablet technology and collects healthcare data at the bedside of a resident. The future goal is to achieve a paperless medical record environment in the near future.

Highlights for the Kansas Veterans Home include:

- Triplett Hall Grand Opening
- Successful Job Fair for Staffing 40 Bed Expansion
- Finished Construction Projects include new roofs on Funston Hall and Donlon Hall, Timmerman Receiving Dock, Bleckley Hall Dining Room Renovation, and a Sprinkler system of Donlon Hall Exits
- Construction Projects In-process include upgrade of outdated fire alarm panels, a wireless nurse call light system, sprinkler system between Triplett and Timmerman Halls, and hard surface sidewalks at all exits

Highlights for the Kansas Soldiers Home include:

- Full Business Office and Human Resource Staff
- Governor's support to increase SIBF Funding for Facility Upgrades
- Finished Construction projects include Lincoln Hall Water Line Replacement, Lincoln Hall and Grant Hall Boiler replacement, Pershing Window replacement, and Stone Work on the Custer House
- Construction Projects In-process include Halsey Hall Flooring and HVAC Projects, Lincoln Hall Flooring, Lincoln Hall Remodel and Bathroom Renovation, Halsey Hall Electric Upgrade and Nurse Call System

The Veteran Services Program also experienced positive changes over the past year which included the Governor recommending additional Veteran Service Officers to the program and merging and adding district offices to better serve our veterans.

Highlights for the Veteran Services Program include:

- 4 Additional Veteran Service Representatives
- Opening new district office in Atchison and Manhattan
- Veterans Designation on Kansas Driver's License

The Kansas Veteran Cemetery Program continues to provide veterans and their eligible dependents with internment opportunities for burial in one of our four Veteran cemeteries. The Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office believes that veterans deserve to be interred with dignity, respect and honor for their service.

Highlights for the Veteran Cemetery Program include:

- Wreaths Across America Celebration
- Memorial Day Celebrations

This is just a brief overview of the past year and the services and programs the KCVAO provides. On behalf of the KCVAO, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to brief the committee and for your continued support. I look forward to working with the Joint Committee on Kansas Security and other parties as we move forward working together helping veterans and their dependents. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Gregg Burden
Director
Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office

KANSAS COMMISSION ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS OFFICE

OVERVIEW

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

Agency: On July 1, 1986, the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs was created by K.S.A. 73-1208a.

On July 1, 2014, K.S.A. 73-1208d abolished the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs and transferred all powers, duties and functions to Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office.

On July 1, 2014, K.S.A. 73-1208e established within the executive branch of government the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office, which shall be administered under the direction and supervision of the Director of the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office. The director of the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office, who shall be a veteran, shall be appointed by the Governor and subject to confirmation by the Senate as provided in K.S.A. 75-4315b.

Veteran Services: The Service Agency was established in 1937 as a Division of Social Welfare to assist veterans and survivors in obtaining federal benefits. The Approval Agency was established in 1945 to implement the G.I. Bill. On January 20, 1946, Governor Schoepel transferred the responsibility of accrediting institutions and business establishments to the Office of Veterans' Affairs, as the "State Approving Agency (SAA)".

On April 20, 2006, Governor Sebelius signed SB 396 (K.S.A. 73-1234, K.S.A. 73-1235, & K.S.A. 73-1236) creating the Veterans Claims Assistance Program (VCAP).

In SFY 2006, K.S.A. 74-8724 established the appropriation for the Veterans Enhanced Service Delivery Program. This program began receiving funds from scratch ticket sales in SFY 2011.

State Veterans' Cemetery Program: Kansas Senate Bill 19 passed during the FY 1999 legislative session and was signed by Governor Graves on April 14, 1999. On April 22, 1999, the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs was authorized by K.S.A. 73-1232 to establish and maintain a state system of veterans' cemeteries.

Kansas Veterans' Home: In 1997, KSA 76-1951 et seq., established the Kansas Veterans' Home (KVH) on the grounds of the former Winfield State Hospital and Training Center located in Winfield, Kansas.

Kansas Soldiers' Home: On February 7, 1889, the Kansas Soldiers' Home (KSH) at Fort Dodge was established. Article 19, Chapters 76-1901 to 76-1941 Kansas Statutes Annotated, set forth the criteria for establishment and operation of the KSH.

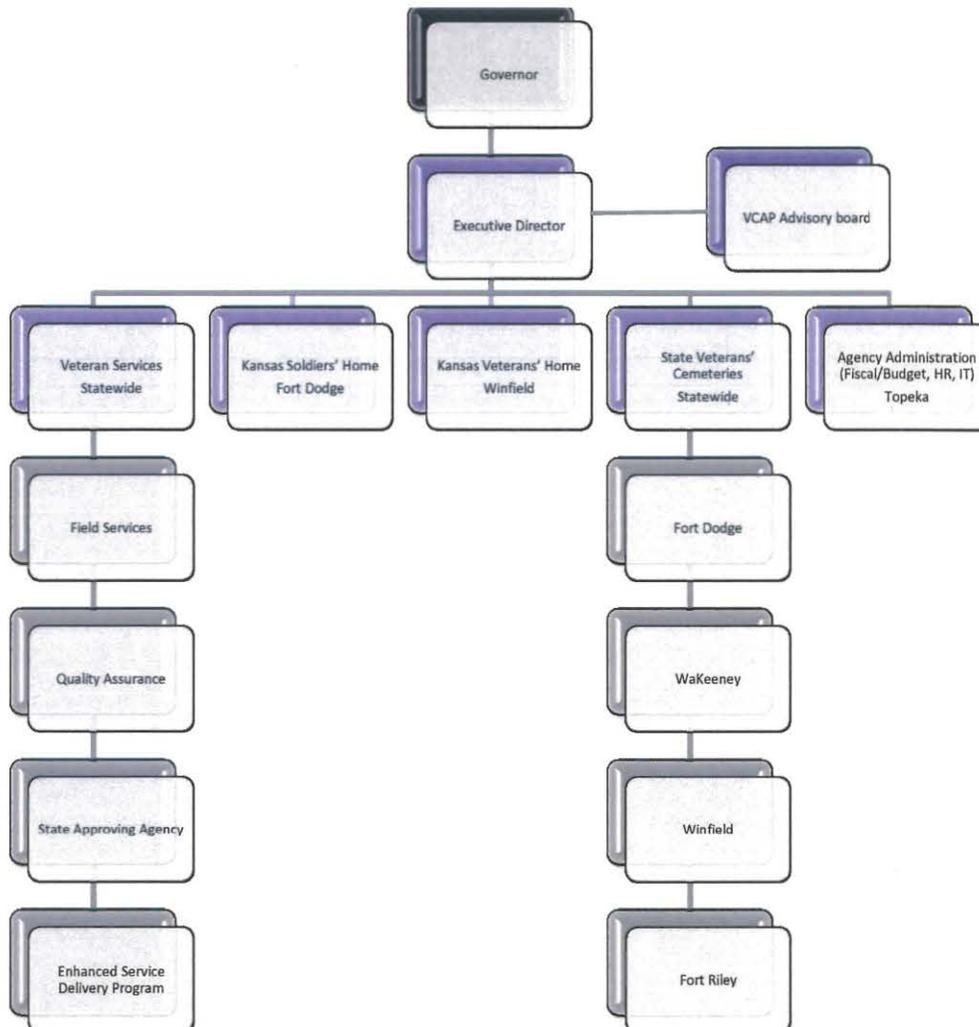
AGENCY MISSION

Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office (KCVAO) provides Kansas veterans, their relatives, and other eligible dependents with information, advice, direction, and assistance through the coordination of programs and services in the fields of education, health, vocational guidance and placement, and economic security. The mission is accomplished within program areas of Agency Administration, Veteran Services, the State Veterans' Cemetery Program, the Kansas Soldiers' Home, the Kansas Veterans' Home, and the State Approving Agency.

ORGANIZATION

The Director of the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the senate.

The Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office is depicted below.



Veteran Services

Veteran Services is the outreach arm of the KCAVO on all aspects of veterans' benefits for the State of Kansas. The KCAVO Veteran Services Program can help veterans file VA claims for education benefits, non-service connected pension benefits, service-connected disability compensation benefits, spouse and dependent benefits, state VA benefits, and VA health care benefits.

❖ **State Approving Agency**

The Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office is the State Approving Agency (SAA) for the State of Kansas. The SAA mission is to determine whether an educational institution or training establishment is qualified to provide education or training in accordance with the provisions of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations.

❖ **13 field offices (throughout the state)**

To help obtain these benefits, the KCAVO provides Veteran Service Representatives (VSRs) free-of-charge to assist veterans and their families with applying for benefits. The State VSRs are

available in strategic locations across Kansas or through grants provided to national service organizations, such as the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars.



- 13 field offices are identified with a black star.
- Topeka, Leavenworth and Wichita VA Medical Centers are highlighted in red with a yellow star. There are Veteran Service Officers (VSO) located at each medical center. The KCVAO Quality Assurance Office is located at the Wichita VA Medical Center.
- The KCVAO field offices and VSOs provide services and benefits to 225,000 Kansas veterans and their dependents (47,000 are currently in the KCVAO database).

❖ **Quality Assurance Office (Wichita)**

The Quality Assurance Program (QA) performs a key role in reviewing claims from field office staff and participating service organizations, thus ensuring veterans' claims meet standards for development and completeness.

❖ **VCAP (grants provided by the state through the KCVA)**

The Veterans Claims Assistance Program awards annual service grants to eligible veteran service organizations (VSOs). The VSO Service Officers are funded through this program and provide support in the three VA hospitals. Grants are awarded annually through grant agreements entered into with the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office. Each year the agency is required to solicit participation from all veteran service organizations that have a presence in the VA Regional Office in Wichita.

Currently, two chartered veteran service organizations, the American Legion and the VFW, have elected to participate for SFY 2011, SFY 2012, SFY 2013, SFY 2014 and SFY 2015.

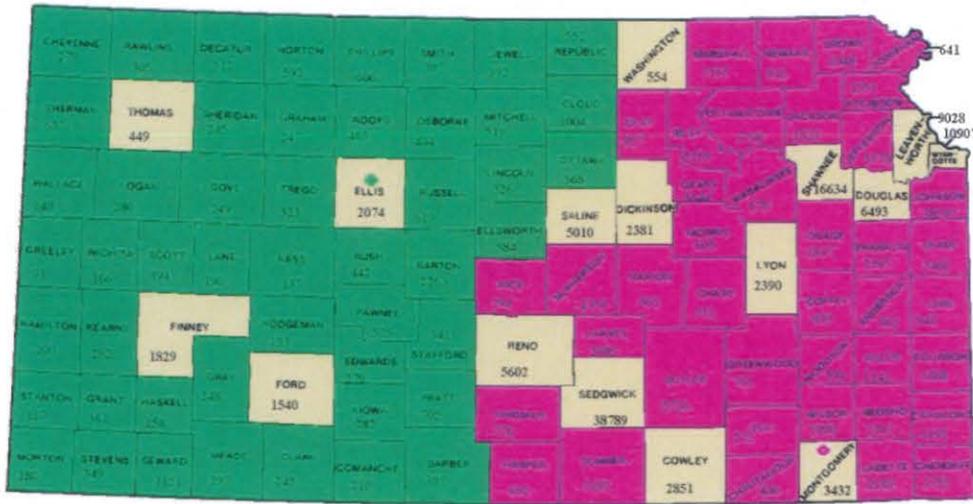
❖ **Veterans Enhanced Services Delivery Program**

The KCVAO administers the Veterans Enhanced Services Delivery Program that makes applying for VA benefits more accessible to state veterans and eligible family members. This program has two fully equipped and handicapped accessible vans (offices on wheels) that can set up shop at designed locations around the state to attend community or special events such as fairs, parades, festivals, and participating retail vendors.

MOBILE SERVICES PROGRAM TERRITORIES

West Region

East Region



Kansas Veterans' Cemetery Program

The Cemetery Program provides veterans and their eligible dependents with interment opportunities for burial in a Kansas Veterans' Cemetery. The program manages and operates the four veterans' cemeteries, and provides staff support and assistance to veterans statewide regarding their interment options and the procedures for pre-certification. The Cemeteries are located at Fort Dodge, WaKeeney, Winfield, and Fort Riley.

The construction of these cemeteries was funded 100% by federal grants from the Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration, State Cemetery Grants Programs.



Kansas Veterans' Cemetery at Fort Dodge (opened in 2002)

The Agency believes that veterans deserve to be interred with dignity, respect, and honor for their service. In that regard, the state cemetery is not only a burial site, but also a fitting memorial for service to country, and full compliance with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs standards ensures that these cemeteries are indeed memorials.

The VA National Cemetery Administration conducted a Triennial review of all four State Veterans Cemeteries during the week of July 9 -13, 2012. All four cemeteries passed the Triennial review and received the "Excellence of Appearance Award".



Kansas Veterans' Cemetery at Winfield (opened in 2004)

Eligibility:

Eligibility is based on a veteran meeting military service as listed.

Military service requirement for burial in a Kansas State Veterans' Cemetery must be in accordance with the eligibility standards as set by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – National Cemetery Administration and, as a minimum, must meet one of the following:

- Veteran was discharged from "active duty" under other than dishonorable conditions, or
- Veteran died while on "active duty", or
- National Guard or Reservists members with 20 years of qualifying service, who are entitled to retired pay or would be entitled, if at least 60 years of age.

Kansas state residency requirement: None

Eligibility for Veteran Dependents:

Spouse, surviving spouse, and dependent children are eligible for interment, even if the veteran is not buried in a Kansas State Veterans' Cemetery. The veteran must have met military service requirements. This includes lost or buried at sea, missing or missing in action, or a veteran whose remains have been donated to science or cremated and the ashes scattered.



Kansas Veterans' Cemetery at Fort Riley (opened in 2009)



Kansas Veterans' Cemetery at WaKeeney (opened in 2004)



Kansas Veterans' Cemetery at Fort Riley

BENEFITS

- Burial space
- Grave liner
- Opening and closing of the grave
- Placement of cremation remains in either columbarium niche or in-ground burial
- Scattering garden
- Perpetual care
- Headstone and inscription



Wreaths Across America (Kansas Veterans Cemetery at Winfield)

State Veterans' Nursing Homes

The KCVAO has two state veterans' nursing homes, one in Fort Dodge, Kansas, and the other in Winfield, Kansas. Veterans seeking admission must have active federal service. Active service means full-time service as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard. The discharge from the period of active federal service on which the application is based must have been under conditions other than dishonorable. On a space-available basis, spouses and surviving spouses may qualify for admission.

Kansas Veterans' Home (Winfield, Kansas)

The Kansas Veterans' Home is located in Winfield, Kansas. Part of Winfield State Hospital and Training Center was converted over to the KVH in 1997 and opened in 1999 with the assistance of a \$17,000,000 VA construction grant renovating four residential buildings.

On October 16th, 2014, the Kansas Veteran' Home had the ribbon cutting ceremony for the grand opening of Triplett Hall. This expansion of resident services will allow the Home to care for a total of 142 residents in nursing care and 48 in assisted living care.



Ribbon cutting ceremony for Triplett Hall



Inside Triplett Hall

Kansas Veterans' Home (Winfield, Kansas)-continued

❖ Services Offered:

- Nutritious meals individualized to meet each resident's needs
- Transportation to and from local health care providers, including the Robert J. Dole Department of Veterans Affairs Medical and Regional Office Centers in Wichita
- 24-hour security systems and grounds patrol
- A trained and professional staff that receives ongoing education
- Private and semi-private rooms
- Activity rooms with internet connected computers
- Affordable costs
- Social opportunities with other veterans
- Qualifying medications provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs at no additional charge to veteran residents
- Medicaid and Medicare Certified
- 48 bed domiciliary unit
- 122 bed long-term care unit
- 20 bed special care unit for Alzheimer's and related dementia



Bleckley Hall (long-term Care and Special Care)



Donlon Hall (Assisted Living)

Kansas Soldiers' Home (Fort Dodge, Kansas)

The Kansas Soldiers' Home at Fort Dodge, Kansas is located approximately 5 miles east of Dodge City, Kansas, on Highway 400 (formerly 154). Fort Dodge dates back to 1865 when it was ordered to be built as a supply post for people and wagon trains traveling the Santa Fe Trail. Fort Dodge was strategically located to the wet and dry routes of the Santa Fe Trail. The old Calvary post converted to the KSH in 1889.

❖ Services Offered:

- Nutritious meals individualized to meet each resident's needs
- Transportation to and from local health care providers, including the Robert J. Dole Department of Veterans Affairs Medical and Regional Office Centers in Wichita
- A trained and professional staff that receives ongoing education
- Private and semi-private rooms
- Activity rooms with internet connected computers
- Affordable costs
- Social opportunities/activities with other veterans
- Physical therapy and Occupational therapy
- Dietary services
- Social services
- Psychological services
- Library/museum
- Recreation Center
- Resident/staff fitness room
- Three domiciliary residence halls
- Medicaid and Medicare Certified
- 165 bed domiciliary unit (includes Cottages)
- 86 bed long-term care unit



Halsey Hall (Long-term Care)



The Sutlers Store (Visitor Center)



Lincoln Hall (Domiciliary)