

# Minutes for Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission

## April 10, 2024

### Hybrid In-Person & Virtually

Call to Order – 8:30 AM MT

Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission was held on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, at the Central Support Office (located at 351 N. Collins Road Boise, ID 83702) and virtually via Microsoft Teams.

#### Attendees

Commission Members in attendance: **Chairman Josh Callihan** (Virtual), **Art Gimpel**, **Jinny Cash**, **Eugene Brown**

IDVS Staff Members in attendance included: IDVS Chief Administrator **Mark Tschamp**, ISVH-Boise Administrator **Rick Holloway**, ISVH-Lewiston Home Administrator **Mark High**, ISVH-Pocatello Administrator **Josiah Dahlstrom** (Virtual), ISVH-Post Falls Home Administrator **Amber Goodchild** (Virtual), OVA Bureau Chief **Bill Heyob**, Idaho State Veterans Cemeteries Bureau Chief **Jacob Faulkner**, Business Support Bureau Chief **Paul Spannkebel**, Community Resource Specialist **Mitzi Cheldelin**, and Management Assistant **Kevin Wallior**.

Number of Citizens in attendance: 0

#### Announcements

No Announcements.

#### Approval of Minutes

**Chairman Callihan** asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on January 11, 2024. **Commissioner Brown** motioned for approval. **Commissioner Cash** seconded. The motion was approved with unanimous assent.

#### Division Bureau Reports

##### Boise Veterans Home Report presented by **Rick Holloway**

The Census is holding steady at almost 80. The Res/Dom program has been closed since November.

	Census								
	Nursing Care			Medicare A		Residential/Domiciliary Care			
	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Occupancy Rate	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Occupancy Rate	
January	2,416	78	97%	0	0.0	0	0	0%	
February	2,281	79	98%	23	0.7	0	0	0%	
March	2,408	78	97%	0	0.0	0	0	0%	
Total/Avg	7,105	78	64%	23	0.3	0	0	0%	

Customer Satisfaction remains high with an average of 4.86-488, equivalent to 98<sup>th</sup> to 99<sup>th</sup> percentile.

The plans for the Boise Replacement Home Project are 100% complete.

Boise Home is managing staffing, seeing some positive movement towards filling positions and reducing agency staffing utilization.

VA Survey was conducted last week. Surveyors were complimentary. Residents are all very happy with the food service, the surveyor mentioned they had never seen that before during a survey. Likely a citation will be issued for the lack of a smoking apron (PPE that is fire proof, fire retardant, and meant to protect the resident from ash and embers) for a resident who was smoking.

**Pocatello Veterans Home Report** presented by **Josiah Dahlstrom (virtually)**

Census is stable. Projecting net positive revenue. Still a little low compared to pre-CoVID.

	Census				
	Nursing Care			Medicare A	
	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Occupancy Rate	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census
Jan	1,595	51	78%	0	0.0
Feb	1,395	48	73%	9	0.3
Mar	1,522	49	74%	41	1.3
<b>Total/Avg</b>	<b>4,512</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0.5</b>

Volunteer hours increased significantly from the previous quarter. This is mostly from clinical students from ISU.

Customer satisfaction is high, in the 98<sup>th</sup> percentile.

DPW project upcoming: Boiler replacement in the summer and a chiller replacement in the fall/winter.

The Pocatello Veterans Home Remodel Project is on hold due to the same BABAA issues impacting the Boise Replacement Home Project.

Carrie Leavitt, the Volunteer Service and Activities Coordinator, is retiring this month after 12+ years of dedicated service. She will be missed.

Showcased a slideshow video of the various activities and events Veterans participated in during the previous quarter.

**Lewiston Veterans Home Report** presented by **Mark High**

The Lewiston Census is creeping upwards. Pushing for a Census of 58 by July.

	Census				
	Nursing Care			Medicare A	
	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Occupancy Rate	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census
Jan	1,482	48	72%	10	0.3
Feb	1,388	48	73%	7	0.2
Mar	1,553	50	76%	31	1.0
<b>Total/Avg</b>	<b>4,423</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>0.5</b>

Customer satisfaction remains high at the Lewiston Home.

DPW – Tells program is up and running. This is a new Maintenance Tracking system. Pressure reducing valves were installed for plumbing. Parking lot resurfacing project will commence soon. The Conex will be moving to prep for this project and to address loss of parking during the project. The Lewiston Veterans Home Remodel Project is on hold due to the same BABAA issues impacting the Pocatello and Boise Projects.

Lewiston in conjunction with the Idaho Commission of the Arts brought a leatherworker to conduct a multi week leather working Creative Aging Workshop.

Showcased a slideshow video of the various activities and events Veterans participated in during the previous quarter.

**Post Falls Veterans Home Report** presented by **Amber Goodchild**

The Post Falls Census is rising. 50 residents as of tomorrow will bring the Census up to 80% occupancy. 14 new residents added in February allowed the opening of a 4<sup>th</sup> Neighborhood.

	Census				
	Nursing Care			Medicare A	
	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census	Occupancy Rate	Days of Care	Avg Daily Census
Jan	977	32	49%	31	1.0
Feb	1,118	39	60%	29	1.0
Mar	1,391	45	70%	31	1.0
<b>Total/Avg</b>	<b>3,486</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>1.0</b>

A new activities director was hired in January.

Post Falls has a 5-star Customer Satisfaction rating.

DPW – HVAC and DOAS issues persist. Working with DPW and Contractors to get the Home to substantial completion.

New Food Operations Manager was hired. Fresh fish, carving station, and wild game are a few of the highlights of the new menu available to residents.

Post Falls has fun events scheduled through out the quarter. For example, to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day a "Pub Crawl" was conducted with 5 pubs set up around the facility for residents to visit complete with non-alcoholic beverages.

Continue to work with HR to recruit and increase staffing, particularly for the night shift.

**OVA Report** presented by **Bill Heyob**

OVA statistics comparing 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter FY-2024 YTD totals to FY-2023:

	2024 YTD	2023 YTD	Increase/Decrease
Interviews YTD	7,541	6,192	+ 1,349
POAs Filed YTD	5,743	4,418	+ 1,325
Claims Filed YTD	9,996	8,912	+ 1,084
Appeals YTD	685	268	+ 417
BVA Hearings YTD	37	40	- 3
Veterans Seen by OVA in Vet Courts	362	366	- 4
State Emergency Grants Approved	2	7	- 5

Notable changes from 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2024 and 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2023: 3<sup>rd</sup> Qrt 2024 had 2,808 Office Interviews (+623), 3,080 Claims filed (-181) and 2,168 POAs filed (+510).

### **Noteworthy Issues Currently Happening with the VA**

- Boise VA Regional Office still has 20 VSR Vacancies posted on USAJobs.
- Boise VARO Service Center is still a Prototype Site for claims automation and working directly with the programmers
- VA recently updated the Schedule of Ratings pertaining to digestive conditions which include new evaluations for celiac disease, irritable bowel syndrome and hemorrhoids.
- Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Education Service is modernizing and integrating its payment system, so all VBA benefits will be paid to beneficiaries through one system. This update requires Post – 9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries who are receiving education benefits to have a single payment account on file. Allowing only one payment account will help reduce improper payments and fraud, protecting beneficiaries from predatory actors.
- Update on discrepancies in data matching between VA and Social Security Administration: Based on the VA Secretary's December 2023 guidance, VA has decided to not collect pension debts associated with the June 2022 SSA income verification match and will contact the 12,000-plus affected individuals directly to inform them of the resolution process. Additionally, they are refunding beneficiaries for any payments already made because of this income verification match.
- As of March 5th, VA is expanding VA Medical based on Toxic Environmental Exposures under the PACT Act. Veterans who were ineligible previously may be eligible now due to conditions caused by toxic environmental exposures.
- Camp Lejeune Justice Act (PACT Act)- anyone who wants to file a lawsuit against the Department of the Navy/Department of Justice needs to do so before August 10, 2024. Veterans can still file presumptive service-connected claims with the VA regardless of the date.

### **Significant Events within the OVA**

- Personnel Changes- The new Administrative Assistant for the Pocatello Office is Savannah Lopez (Escobar). Savannah worked for a brief period at Idaho Dept of Health and Welfare last year. We are bringing on a new VSO April 15th- Eric Bobinsky is an Air Force Retiree and has been working at the VA Regional Office for the past 17 years.
- The Caldwell Department of Labor Office has informed IDVS that they need all of their work spaces back so we need to find a new work space for Abel Silva and Wes McAuslan. Paul is taking the lead on this.
- The Pocatello DOL Office is getting ready for a major renovation of the building so we are waiting to see how this will impact our Team located at that building.
- Currently working with the Boise VA Regional Office to have our outlying Administrative Assistants approved for access to the VA's computer systems.
- Frank Fabbi, Nick Percey, Matt Ranstrom, Wes McAuslan, Paul Burgin and myself will be attending VFW Service Officer Training in Annapolis, MD April 20th-24th. Iris Higgins, Scott Thorsness and JT Ramondetta will be attending virtually.
- Rodrigo Madrigal and Emberly Bertasso attended the VFW Virtual Basic Training Course which was held February 5-9, 2024.
- The 2024 Annual County and Post Service Officer Training will be held at the Riverside Hotel in Boise from August 7-9.

**BREAK 9:30 AM – 9:45 AM**

**Veterans Cemetery Report** presented by **Jake Faulkner**

DPW or Major Maintenance:

DPW 20-606 Boise Cemetery Expansion

1. Memorial Wall-Stage 3 of concrete footings poured, and precast concrete panels are being placed.
2. Inground Urn Expansion-Realigned plots to match irrigation main line through field.
3. Space Force Seal- Matching stone and plaque have been ordered. Marine Corp stone broke and is being replaced in kind.

DPW 24-601 Boise Bathroom Renovation (6 Total)

1. Public Bathrooms within the cemetery are nearing completion.
2. Admin Bldg. public bathroom commenced 04/05/24.

DPW 21-605 Blackfoot Maintenance Bldg., Public Bathroom/Conference Room, Memorial Wall

1. Shop is 99% completion.
2. Public bathroom/conference room plans are awaiting IDOPL/DBS approval.
  - a. Upon approval we will put the project out to bid.
3. Memorial Wall redesign does not meet expectations in craftsmanship. Exploring alternative means.

DPW 24-600 Blackfoot Erosion Control

1. MOA signed with local farmer to farm additional 20 acres of unutilized IDVS land.
  - a. This has been a huge success in both general appearance and operationally.
2. Developing landscaping plan for importation of mature trees, additional road access, flood mitigation.
3. Flood mitigation step 1, perimeter road graded to provide 1-2' berm and runoff channel.
  - a. As of this time, mitigation controls have been successful.

Veteran Interments

Jan	Cemetery Boise: 25	Cemetery Blackfoot: 3	
Feb	Cemetery Boise: 26	Cemetery Blackfoot: 2	
Mar	Cemetery Boise: 35	Cemetery Blackfoot: 2	
<b>YTD</b>	<b>Cemetery Boise: 367</b>	<b>Cemetery Blackfoot: 43</b>	<b>Total Cemetery Bureau: 410</b>

Dependent Interments

Jan	Cemetery Boise: 18	Cemetery Blackfoot: 0	
Feb	Cemetery Boise: 16	Cemetery Blackfoot: 1	
Mar	Cemetery Boise: 18	Cemetery Blackfoot: 1	
<b>YTD</b>	<b>Cemetery Boise: 175</b>	<b>Cemetery Blackfoot: 8</b>	<b>Total Cemetery Bureau: 183</b>

Volunteer Hours

Jan	163
Feb	163
Mar	164
<b>YTD</b>	<b>1,624</b>
<b>2023 Total</b>	<b>2,526</b>

Other Important Events/Information

January – Wreaths Across America pickup held Jan 27th.

February – Memorial Day Event planning began.

Marach – Participated in the Vietnam Veteran Recognition Day in Meridian.

**Business Support** (ITS/HR/Fiscal/Education) – presented by Paul Spannkebel

**ITS** – Update

Talie Bendixsen has been invaluable as a liaison between IDVS and ITS, helping ensure that ITS is meeting all of our agency information technology support needs.

**HR** – Update

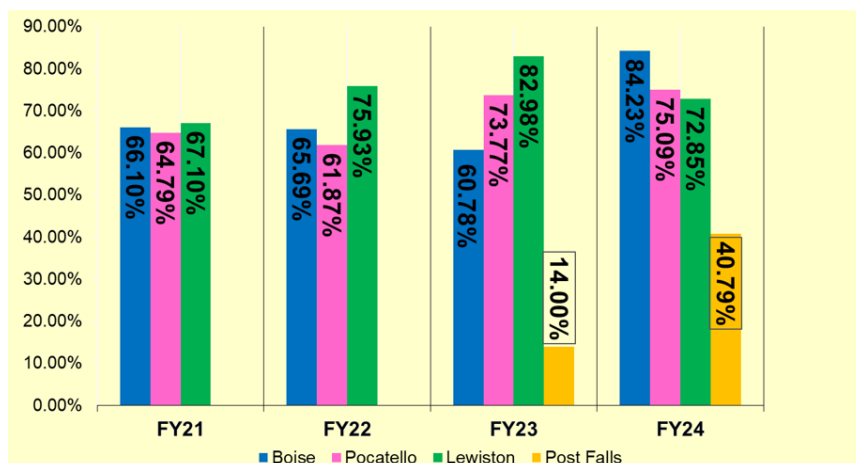
DHR guidance that no more than 20% of staff allowed to be remote/teleworking. This excludes job codes identified as "field workers."

This change across all Idaho agencies has led to Department of Labor employees returning to their offices, which means IDVS will no longer be able to utilize office space in the Caldwell Department of Labor for Service Officers. Currently looking for other office space in Nampa/Caldwell areas to accommodate this shift.

FY2025 CEC will go into effect on June 16<sup>th</sup>, which coincides with the first pay period in July. IDVS was approved for 3%. The 3% was allocated as 1% across the board and 2% discretionary based on employee evaluation ratings and compa/ratio. Pay scale has been increased for healthcare workers. The higher pay scale means lower compa/ratio and more healthcare workers eligible for the CEC.

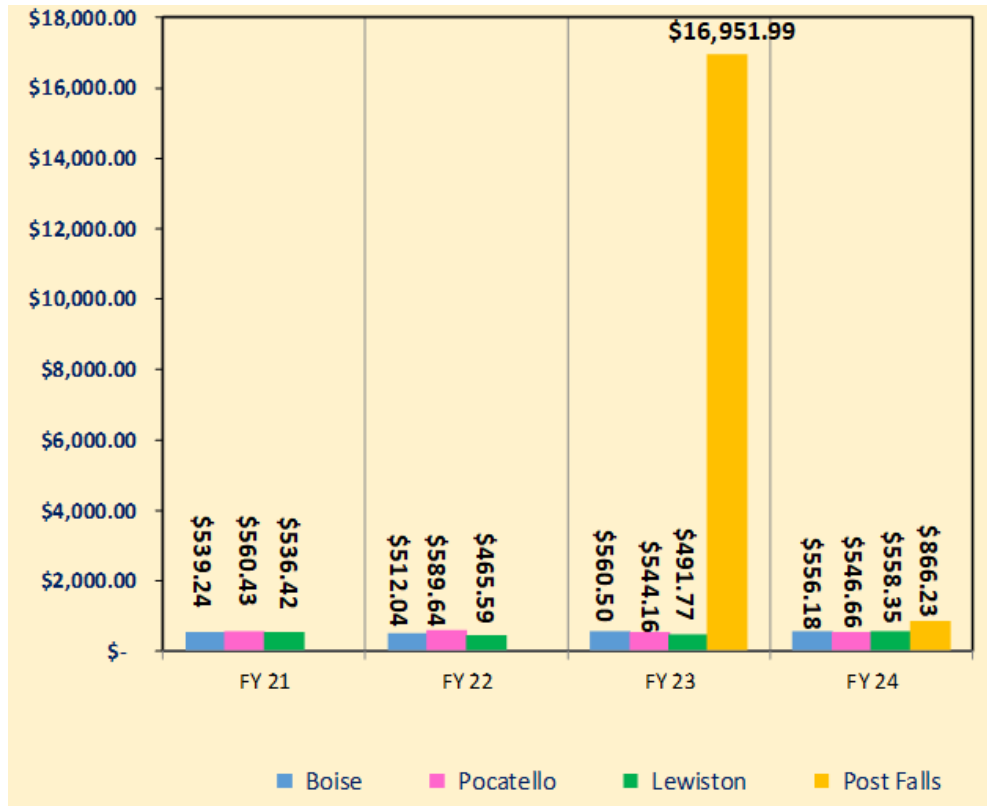
**Fiscal** – Report

Average Census YTD Comparison between each of the Veterans Homes



FY 24 Nursing YTD Average Cost Per Resident Day as of February 29, 2024, was \$594.70 for nursing and \$446.27 for Dom/Residential. (Note: The Dom/Residential program was closed in November 2023).

Nursing yearly costs comparison per resident day for each of the Veterans Homes.

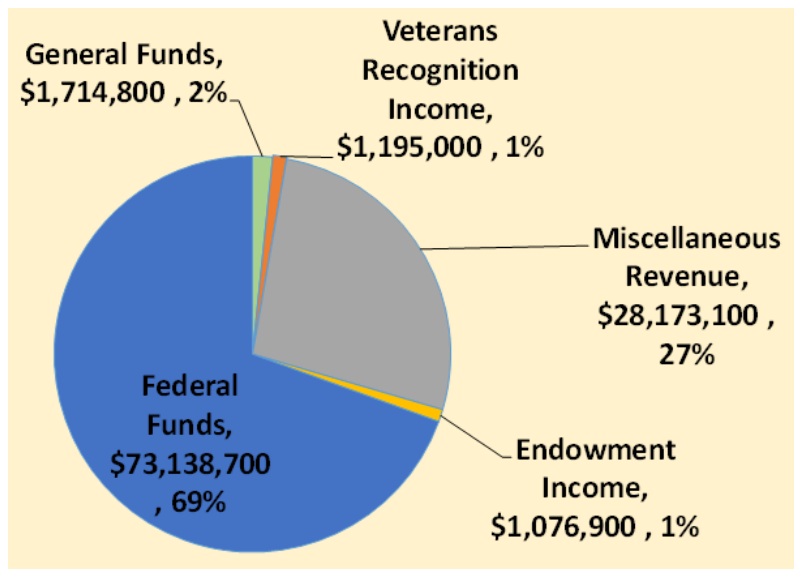


FY2023 Single Audit – There were no findings during the audit!

FY2024 Budget

Fiscal year end coming fast. Continue to watch revenue and cash flow. Using cash reserves due to lower census (decreased revenue) and increased expenditures. Luma continues to be a challenge.

FY2025 Budget Appropriation – \$105,298,500



FY2025 Budget Appropriation Highlights

- <\$330,800> Personnel Benefit Costs
- <\$61,800> Statewide Cost Allocation (DAG, Risk Management, STO, SCO, ITS)
- \$305,900 Change in Employee Compensation
- \$611,500 Additional 2% Change in Employee Compensation
- \$198,300 Replacement Items
- \$8,621,900 Boise Home Replacement
- \$34,462,500 Lewiston Home Replacement
- \$48,000 Pocatello Home Lease
- Reappropriation Authority for Boise Cemetery and Boise Veterans Home of any unexpected and unencumbered balances from the Federal Grant Fund.

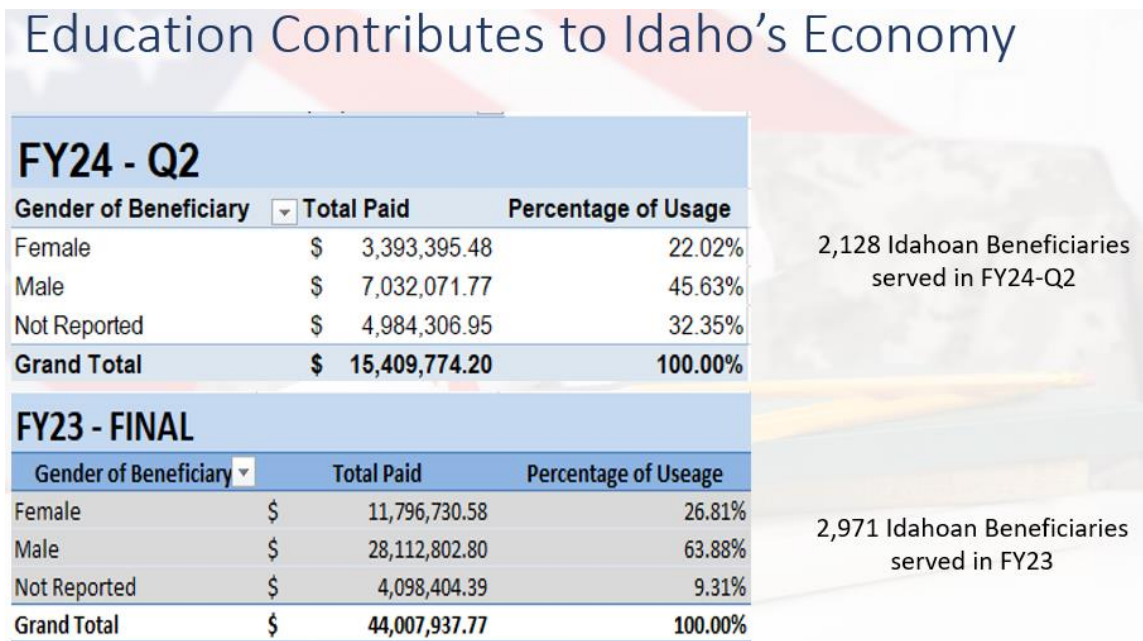
FY2026 Budget Request

Started budget training in March. Address future requirements, objectives, and Veterans Recognition annual allocation plan. Submit agency budget request by August 31, 2024.

**Education Report**

Keeping Tabs on the Cooperative Contract Agreement with the VA:

1. FY24 Allocation:
  - a. Received Q1’s reimbursement on 03/13/2024 in the amount of \$82,311.62
  - b. A \$6,564.00 COLA adjustment accepted by the Idaho SAA and submitted to VA in December 2023 raising FY24’s allocation to \$211,692.00
  - c. \$205,128.00 approved by VA in September 2023
2. FY23 Supplemental:
  - a. Submitted to VA on 12/4/2023, the Idaho SAA requested a \$76,149.62 supplemental for FY23.
  - b. This request is pending VA approval.





The Education Team oversees 387 facilities throughout the state of Idaho. Of the 387 facilities, each program approved by the Idaho’s SAA requires continuous oversight by the Education Team in way of:

- New program approvals.
- Annual program reapprovals.
- Program modifications.
- Program withdrawals.

Program activities in FY2024, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter

Facility Type	Total Number of Idaho Facilities	Programs Approved
IHL	20	99
NCD plus Flight	41	103
Apprenticeships (APP)	179	2
On-The-Job (OJT)**	133	0
License/Certification & Prep-Courses	5	0
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>378</b>	

**Current Education Activities:**

Team focused on increasing approval productivity in 2024, with the goal to be 100% current on all 24-month approvals by September 31, 2024.

The SAA Database is entering its testing phase in May 2024.

**VA's 2024 Focus**

- Assigned 1 Risk-based Survey for a Non-College Degree Program. This is 100% complete and has been submitted to the VA.
- Assigned 14 Supervisory Visits. 50% complete and submitted to the VA. 7 supervisory visits remain.

**Recognition for the Education Team:**

- Shannon attended the NASAA Mid-Winter Conference in February in Washington, D.C., where she received a Certificate of Appreciation for her committee work on the SAA Jurisdiction Subcommittee.
- Shannon attended the Congressman Simpson’s Resource Fair on February 21st in Twin Falls.

**Community Outreach** – presented by Mitzi Cheldelin

**Events:**

- Vietnam Veterans Day: At Kleiner park, March 29th. A day to welcome home and celebrate our Vietnam Veterans. With the support of community partners, there were free hot dogs, fly overs, information booths, static displays and era music for the veterans and their families to enjoy.

Engagement total 2024 calendar year:

- Veterans – 406
- Civilians – 22
- Mixed Events – 3,788
- Events – 50
- Counties Visited – 13/44

Highlighted Events hosted by Community Partners this quarter:

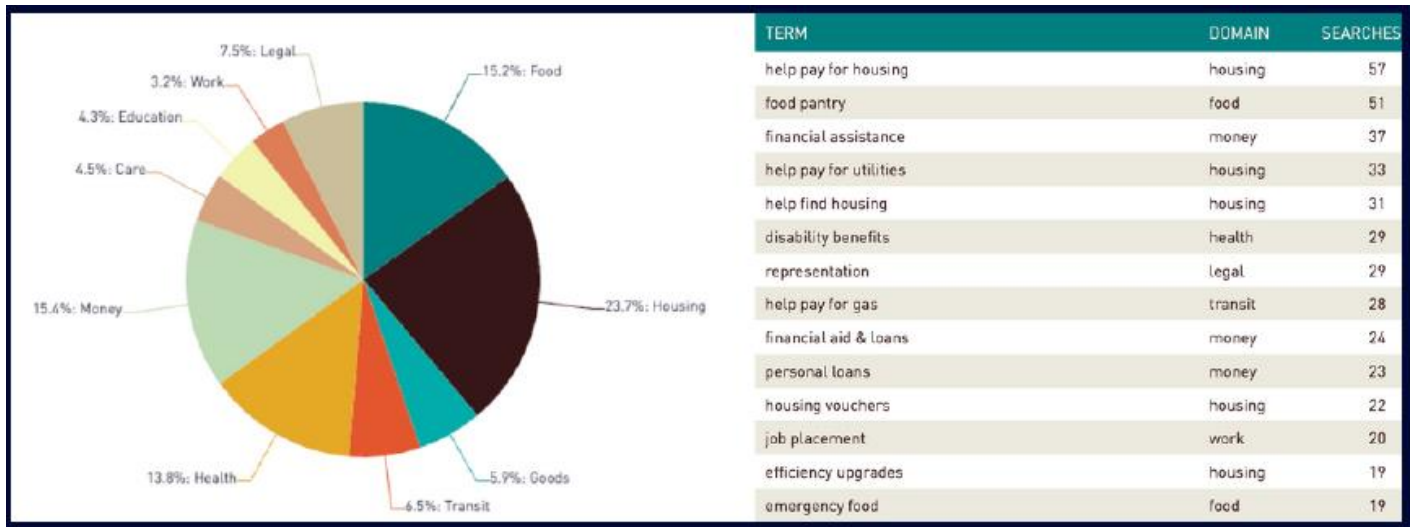
- American Legion Mid-Winter Conference
- Idaho Women Veterans Medallion Mural Unveiling
- Congressman Simpson's Veterans Resource Fair
- National Guard Yellow Ribbon Program and Award Banquet
- USS Idaho Christening Ceremonies and Live Streams
- Idaho Medal of Honor Recipient Ceremony
- Idaho Public Television Nuclear Sub Screening

Contributions through Outreach:

- Raised \$9,450.40 in direct Veterans Support thanks to Community Partners.
- This quarter was full of small requests which mostly consisted of rent and utility assistance with a few requests for house repairs to help keep a roof over their head.

Ongoing Projects

- Joining Forces Idaho – has expanded around the state. Eastern Idaho has already had 2 monthly meetings with great support and turn out from local law enforcement, community partners, and the Salt Lake City VA.
- Governor's Challenge – The Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service Members, Veterans and their Families was taken over by IDVS from Gowen when they decided they did not have the reach or bandwidth to complete the challenge. We are moving into the implementation phase to screen for veterans through nonveteran specific community partners, connect them to benefits and resources and finally provide safety options for crisis situations. The "Ask The Question" campaign is set to be introduced to health care providers throughout the state this year to help identify and connect our veteran population.
- Idaho Veterans Guide – Report from January 1 – March 31, 2024
  - 112 Programs Added (4,277 Total)
  - 57 Programs Claimed (1,138 Total)
  - Programs by Area:
    - Local – 2,385 total
    - State – 969 total
    - National – 923 total
  - Top 5 Local Engaged Programs – Idaho Food Bank Locator; IDVS Office of Veterans Advocacy; Idaho Power Project Share Utility Assistance; Idaho Law Foundation Volunteer Lawyers Program; El Ada Community Action Partnership
  - Site Activity: 2,252 Searches, 1,661 Interactions
  - Site Search Trends:



TERM	DOMAIN	SEARCHES
help pay for housing	housing	57
food pantry	food	51
financial assistance	money	37
help pay for utilities	housing	33
help find housing	housing	31
disability benefits	health	29
representation	legal	29
help pay for gas	transit	28
financial aid & loans	money	24
personal loans	money	23
housing vouchers	housing	22
job placement	work	20
efficiency upgrades	housing	19
emergency food	food	19

**Central Support Office Updates** (Continued next page)

**Legislative Roundup** presented by **Kevin Wallior**

<b>Bill Number</b>	<b>Short Description</b>	<b>Passed/Failed</b>	<b>Date Signed into Law</b>
<a href="#">SB1270</a>	Maintenance Appropriation including Division of Veterans Services.	Passed the Senate 27-7-1 on 2/9/24. Passed the House 57-11-2 on 2/14/24.	2/26/2024
<a href="#">HB417</a>	Adds to existing law to require state agencies to accept cash as a method of payment along with any other accepted methods of payment in certain instances and to prohibit state agencies from charging an additional fee for cash payment. This legislation assures that cash is an acceptable payment in Idaho government and that citizens would not be charged additional fees if they choose to use it.	Passed 46-23-1 in the House on 2/12/24. Passed 30-4-1 on 3/5/24 in the Senate.	3/14/2024
<a href="#">HB456</a>	This legislation would clarify reporting requirements of state officers or state agencies and give the state controller the authority to develop a policy to ensure transparency and accountability. Amends existing law to remove a provision regarding digital copies of agreements entered into by state officers and agencies and to authorize the State Controller to develop a policy regarding agreements.	Passed 66-0-4 in the House on 2/26/24. Passed 35-0-0 in the Senate on 3/12/24.	3/18/2024
<a href="#">HB547</a>	Amends existing law to remove a fee for recipients of purple heart license plates. Current state law exempts the fee for a specialty Purple Heart license plate to only those recipients of a Purple Heart who are also disabled. This bill extends that benefit to all Purple Heart recipients whether or not they are disabled.	Passed the House 67-0-3 on 2/26/24. Passed the Senate 34-0-1 on 3/13/24.	3/18/2024
<a href="#">HB580</a>	Adds to existing law to establish military leave for public school and public charter school employees. This bill establishes provisions regarding military leave for public school district and public charter school employees. It would provide a baseline for public school district and charter school by providing a minimum of ten paid contract days for those employees that are members of the reserve component of the United States Military.	Passed the House 68-0-2 on 2/26/24. Passed the Senate 35-0-0 on 3/12/24.	3/18/2024
<a href="#">SB1311</a>	Adds to existing law to provide eligibility requirements and to provide for services.	Passed the Senate 32-0-3 on 2/23/24. Passed the House 64-0-6 on 3/15/24.	3/21/2024
<a href="#">SB1402</a>	PPROPRIATIONS – DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES – Relates to the appropriation to the Division of Veterans Services for fiscal year 2025.	Passed the Senate 26-9-0 on 3/11/24. Passed the House 61-7-2 on 3/14/24.	3/21/2024

<a href="#">HB486</a>	<p>Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding the succession to property of deceased residents of veterans homes. Amends Section 66-906, Idaho Code, to comply with the Unclaimed Property Act regarding intangible property, exempts unclaimed tangible property from the Unclaimed Property Act, and provides a mechanism for residents to donate their property to the Veterans Home upon their death if they so choose.</p>	<p>Passed the House 68-0-2 on 2/29/24. Passed the Senate 35-0-0 on 3/20/24</p>	<p>3/25/2024</p>
<a href="#">SP101</a>	<p>DOUGLAS ROBERT GWIN – A proclamation commending Douglas Robert Gwin for his service to the United States as a high-speed radio operator during World War II.</p>	<p>Adopted by Voice Vote in the Senate on 3/25/24. Adopted by Voice Vote in the House on 3/26/24.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<a href="#">SB1226</a>	<p>SPACE FORCE – Amends existing law to revise definitions.</p>	<p>Passed Senate 34-0-1 on 1/23/24. Passed House 70-0-0 on 3/27/24.</p>	<p>4/2/2024</p>
<a href="#">HB603</a>	<p>Adds to existing law to prohibit state agencies from donating to or sponsoring a nongovernmental event or organization and to provide exceptions. This legislation prohibits state departments from donating to and or sponsoring non-governmental organizations unless specifically required by law or unless previously approved by the Governor or the chief executive office. This legislation also requires DFM to report all donations and sponsorships to the legislature.</p>	<p>Passed the House 50-19-1 on 3/11/24. Amended and Passed by the Senate 27-6-2 on 4/2/24. Engrossed bill passed by House 58-11-1 on 4/3/24.</p>	<p>Delivered to Governor on 4/3/24. Not yet signed.</p>
<a href="#">HB696</a>	<p>This legislation shifts most general out-of-state hunter tags for deer, elk, and pronghorn from a first-come, first-served over-the-counter system to a drawing-based system, starting on November 15, 2026. The details of how this will be accomplished will be developed by a six-person implementation committee appointed by the Speaker of the House, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Idaho Fish &amp; Game Commission, and the Fish &amp; Game Director. This committee will develop recommendations for any necessary changes to statute and rule and will deliver these recommendations to the Legislature at the beginning of the 2025 legislative session.</p>	<p>Passed the House 55-14-1 on 3/21/24. Senate did not act on it.</p>	
<a href="#">SB1321</a>	<p>DISABLED VETERAN LICENSE PLATES – Amends existing law to provide that a disabled veteran may obtain disabled veteran license plates for up to two vehicles.</p>	<p>Passed the Senate 35-0-0 on 2/27/24. The House did not act on it.</p>	
<a href="#">SB1428</a>	<p>INCOME TAXES – Amends existing law to clarify that military retirement benefits are exempt regardless of the age or disability status of the retired military member or such member’s widow or widower.</p>	<p>Passed the Senate 22-10-3 on 3/25/24. The House did not act on it.</p>	

## **Chief Administrator's Remarks** presented by **Mark Tschamp**

The IDAPA 21.01.04 rule change regarding the Burial Equity was approved, but LSO failed to print the bill even though it made it through both the House and Senate committees it was assigned to. It will get run again as a Temp/Proposed Rule for the 2025 Legislative Session.

State Veterans Homes Rate Change – Effective July 1, 2024. Slowly trying to equalize Private Pay for spouses and Veterans. Only impacts ~38 Veterans/Spouses across the four Veterans Homes.

Reimbursement Strategy for Medicaid from DHW. Attempting to get reimburse for Medicaid costs from DHW. This is a federally funded program. DHW should be disbursing to medical facilities to provide care, including the State Veterans Homes. Additionally, the VA Reimbursement also does not fully cover the cost of care. NASVH is working with GEC/VA to rectify this under reimbursement. If these aren't resolved satisfactorily there are big implications for the budget, that would necessitate requesting an increase of General Funds to cover the shortfalls.

Boise Replacement Home Project – still have not received a BABAA waiver from the VA under the State Home Construction Grant Program. American Manufacturing and Supply Chain are about 20 years away from being able to provide all the requisite materials to meet the provisions of BABAA. This was known when this bill was drafted and is why a waiver process was included in the statutory language. BABAA has three different Waiver processes: Public Interest Waiver; Increased Cost Waiver; and Non-Availability of Materials Waiver. Despite meeting the qualifications for both the Public Interest Waiver and the Increased Cost Waiver, the Boise Home Project was denied for both. IDVS also applied for a Non-Availability Waiver. Our staff compiled a list of the materials currently impossible to obtain under BABAA. IDVS spent \$200,000 to research what materials are and aren't available that meet BABAA requirements to submit the non-availability waiver. This research will be shared with other States for their waiver applications. This waiver was also denied despite confirmation from the VA's own logistics and procurement staff. IDVS is working with the Idaho Congressional Delegation to apply pressure to the VA. The WAIVER Act is intended to force the VA's hand and require approval of waivers for projects that submitted grant applications prior to the passage of BABAA. In the meantime, the Grant opportunity has been withdrawn by the VA. Idaho will maintain our place in the priority list. Idaho has spent ~\$9,000,000 in preparation for the project. Will continue with an expectation that a solution will be found. The difficulties of the stringent BABAA requirements for government construction projects has started gaining the attention of the press (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/buy-american-build-nothing-infrastructure-bill-requirements-complicate-construction-941e0694>).

## **Veterans Recognition Fund Grant Allocation**

The Veterans Recognition Fund has not replenished from the expenditures related to the Veterans Home Construction Grants.

At 11:19 AM, Commissioner Gimpel motioned to maintain existing policy and not implanting an allocation plan for FY 2026. Commissioner Brown seconded. Unanimous assent.

## **New Business**

There is a lack of mental health support/care, transportation, and other necessary services for Veterans in rural communities. Consider evaluating ways to improve/resolve these critical needs.

The next IVAC meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, October 16, 2024, in Lewiston.

**Chairman Callihan** is open to a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Brown** motioned to adjourn at 11:34 AM MT. **Commissioner Cash** seconded. The motion was approved with unanimous assent. Meeting was adjourned at 11:35 AM MT

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