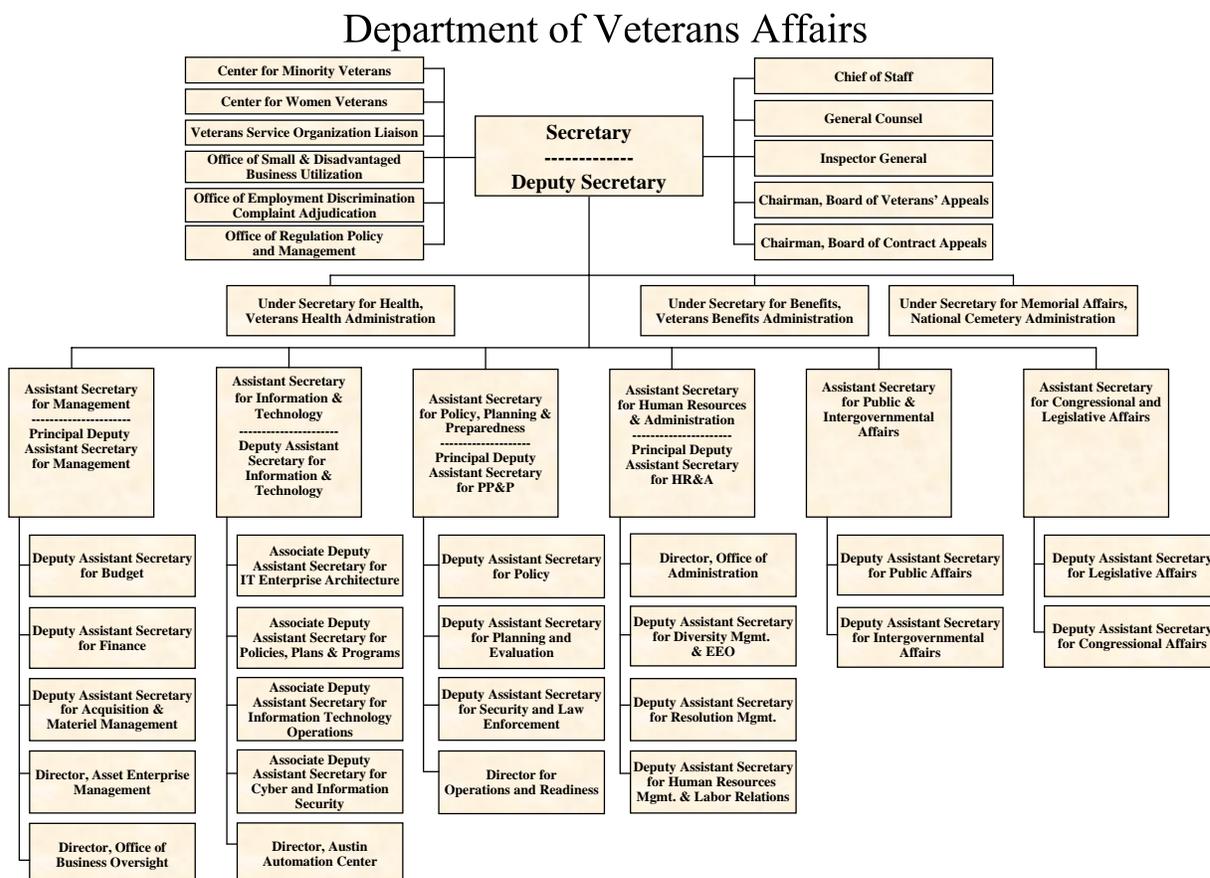


# Who We Are

*"To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan ...."*



VA is striving to fulfill the words spoken by President Lincoln 140 years ago by working to provide world-class benefits and services to veterans in a cost-effective manner. The statutory mission for VA defines our organizational commitment to America's veterans: "to administer the laws providing benefits and other services to veterans and the dependents and the beneficiaries of veterans." (38 U.S.C. 301(b)) This mandate sets forth the Department's role as the principal advocate for veterans and charges VA to ensure that veterans receive the medical care, benefits,

social support, and lasting memorials they deserve in recognition of their service to this Nation.

President Lincoln's words guide nearly 220,000 VA employees who have the privilege of serving veterans today. More than 193,000 employees support VA's health care system, one of the largest in the world. Approximately 13,000 employees are involved with providing benefits to veterans and their families, and over 1,400 employees provide burial and memorial benefits for veterans and their eligible spouses and children.

The delivery of veterans services is accomplished through VA's 157 hospitals, more than 850 community and facility-based clinics, 42 domiciliaries, 206 vet centers, 57 regional offices, and 120 national cemeteries and 33 other cemeterial installations. VA actively recognizes and preserves America's past and is the caretaker of a significant number of the Nation's historic properties. These properties that belong to the American people include 75 hospital campuses that are historic districts encompassing over 1,600 designated historic buildings as well as 66 VA national cemeteries, including 59 Civil War-era national cemeteries that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. VA has facilities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories.

Dating back to the earliest days of our country, support for veterans and their families has been a national priority. Veterans programs have evolved to the comprehensive set of health care, benefits, and memorial services VA provides today. Veterans programs have four broad purposes, which form the basis for VA's four strategic goals.

- To restore the capability of veterans with disabilities.
- To ensure a smooth transition as veterans return to civilian life in their communities.
- To honor and serve all veterans for the sacrifices they made on behalf of the Nation.
- To contribute to the public health, emergency management, socioeconomic well-being, and history of the Nation.

VA also plays a substantial role in ensuring national emergency medical preparedness and providing medical support to DoD. VA's enabling goal helps ensure continuous focus on providing world-class service to veterans and their families through responsible resource stewardship and effective governance. The enabling goal also provides measures to assess performance in the strategic management of human capital, information technology, capital asset management, and governance.

Just as VA's history has evolved, we expect the needs of veterans to change; how VA responds will continue to transform as well. Whatever veterans' needs are, VA will be ready. Today, there are approximately 25 million living men and women who served in the uniformed services. VA currently provides health care, benefits, and memorial services to millions of veterans as well as eligible survivors and dependents.

Each of the three VA administrations has a field structure to enable it to provide efficient, accessible service to veterans throughout the country. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), integrated networks of health care facilities that provide coordinated services to veterans to facilitate continuity through all phases of health care. The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has 57 regional offices (VAROs) that receive and process claims for VA benefits. The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) has five Memorial Service Networks (MSNs), which provide direction, operational oversight, and engineering assistance to the 120 cemeteries by specific geographic area.

The Department accomplishes its mission through partnerships among VHA, VBA, NCA, the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA), and Departmental staff organizations by integrating related activities and functions of our major programs. VA provides services and benefits through the following nine major business lines:

## Medical Care

VA meets the health care needs of America's veterans by providing primary care, specialized care, and related medical and social support services. Also included are health care education and training programs designed to help ensure an adequate supply of clinical care providers for veterans and the Nation.

## Medical Research

The medical research program contributes to the Nation's overall knowledge about disease and disability.

## Compensation

The compensation program provides monthly payments and ancillary benefits to veterans, in accordance with rates specified by law, in recognition of the average potential loss of earning capacity caused by a disability, disease, or death incurred, or aggravated during, active military service. This program also provides monthly payments, as specified by law, to surviving spouses, dependent children, and dependent parents in recognition of the economic loss caused by the veteran's death during active military service or, subsequent to discharge from military service, as a result of a service-connected disability.

## Pension

The pension program provides monthly payments, as specified by law, to needy wartime veterans at age 65 or over or who are permanently and totally disabled. This program also provides monthly payments, as specified by law, to needy surviving spouses and dependent children of deceased wartime veterans who die as a result of a disability unrelated to military service.

## Education

The education program assists eligible veterans, servicemembers, reservists, survivors, and dependents in achieving their educational or vocational goals.

## Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment

The vocational rehabilitation and employment program assists veterans with service-connected disabilities to achieve functional independence in daily activities, become employable, and obtain and maintain suitable employment.

## Housing

The housing program helps eligible veterans, active duty personnel, surviving spouses, and selected reservists purchase and retain homes.

## Insurance

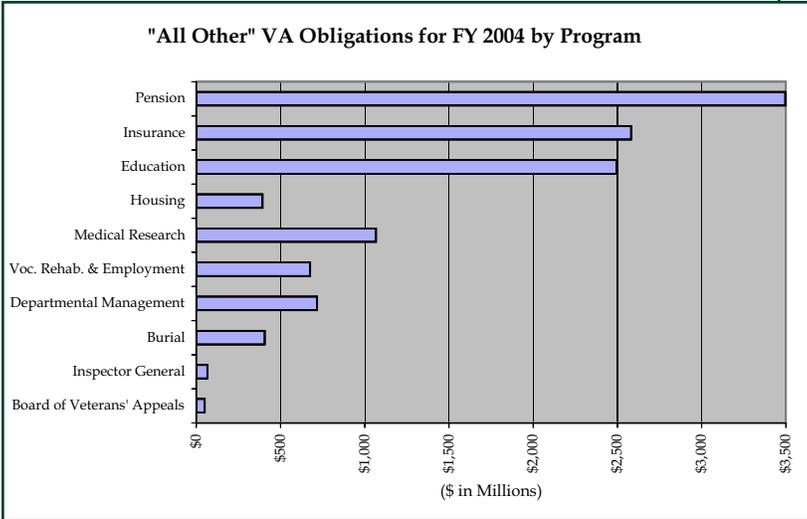
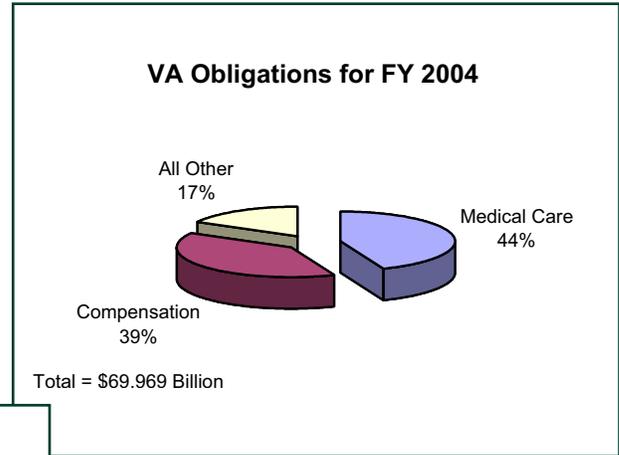
The insurance program provides veterans, servicemembers, and family members with life insurance benefits, some of which are not available from other providers — such as the commercial insurance industry — due to lost or impaired insurability resulting from military service. Insurance coverage is made in reasonable amounts and at competitive premium rates comparable to those offered by commercial companies. The program ensures a competitive, secure rate of return on investments held on behalf of the insured.

## Burial

Primarily through NCA, VA honors veterans with a final resting place and lasting memorials that commemorate their service to the Nation.

Program	FY 2004 Participants
<b>Medical Care</b>	
Unique Patients	5,104,000
<b>Compensation</b>	
Veterans	2,555,700
Survivors/Children	340,700
<b>Pension</b>	
Veterans	342,900
Survivors	222,500
<b>Education</b>	
Veterans/Servicepersons	332,800
Reservists	88,700
Survivors/Dependents	68,900
<b>Vocational Rehabilitation</b>	
Veterans	96,000
<b>Housing</b>	
Loans Guaranteed	335,800
<b>Insurance</b>	
Veterans	1,932,500
Servicepersons/Reservists	2,448,500
Spouses/Dependents	3,090,000
<b>Burial</b>	
Interments	93,000
Graves Maintained	2,641,000
Headstone/Markers (Processed)	350,700
Presidential Memorial Certificates	435,600

In FY 2004, VA obligated \$70 billion and had nearly 220,000 employees. Over 96 percent of total funding went directly to veterans in the form of monthly payments of benefits or for direct services such as medical care. The following charts show how VA spent the funds with which it was entrusted as well as the distribution of full-time employees by program.



### Full-Time Equivalent Employees, FY 2004

