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**GOVERNMENT
TO GOVERNMENT REPORT**

17

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17



The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) is pleased to submit this report to Governor Kate Brown and the Legislative Commission on Indian Services in accordance with ORS 182.162-182.168 (SB 770).

C. Smith

CAMERON SMITH, DIRECTOR

2017 GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT EFFORTS AND GOALS

ODVA has an established and valuable collaboration with the nine federally recognized Native American Tribes across Oregon in the delivery of state and federal services for our veterans. In 2017, ODVA continued this work to strengthen and build closer relations between tribal governments and key federal, state, county and other partner organizations to better serve Native American veterans across Oregon.

ODVA's continued efforts across the veteran services system have focused on three important outcome areas for Oregon's Native American veterans:

- Target advocacy and access to veteran services
- Increase access to health care and social services
- Promote and participate in good government to government relationships to help shape the priorities of veteran services available to tribal veterans

ADVOCACY AND ACCESS TO VETERAN SERVICES

Through our Statewide Veteran Services, ODVA is a center of gravity for veterans seeking to access their veteran benefits. Our focus is on benefits counseling, claims and appellate representation, and certification and training of veteran service officers. We continue to build a strong advocacy system for all veterans, and recognize that there continue to be specific groups of underserved veteran populations including tribal veterans.

Senate Bill 80

During the 2017 Regular Legislative Session, the Legislature passed SB 80 in recognition and honor of the service and sacrifice of Oregon veterans who are Native Americans, directing ODVA to provide aid and assistance to federally recognized Indian tribes in Oregon with regard to programs and services for Native American veterans overseen by the tribes. The legislation also codified efforts of the federal VA's Office of General Counsel, supporting accreditation of tribal veteran's representatives in Oregon.

Tribal Veteran Representatives

Continuing to build on the groundbreaking collaboration between the federal VA, ODVA and tribal and community partners that began in 2014, ODVA hosted a fourth Tribal Veteran Representative (TVR) training event in July 2017, in partnership with the Confederated Tribes of Grand

TVR's are trained tribal veterans who act as a liaison between veterans and the federal VA. They specialize in access to benefits, healthcare and social services and work with veterans on their own land.

ODVA provided training on benefits available to veterans, their families and survivors, and the development and submission of claims for those earned benefits. In addition, training on long term care needs and issues for tribal veterans was given to address the emergent need of our aging veteran population. Several other government entities participated, offering information and updates on a variety of subjects, such as substance abuse and mental health services, Social Security benefits, education benefits, native procurement processes, Vet Centers, and VA Regional Office updates.

The conference had participants from four states and five Oregon tribes. Inter-governmental networking and idea sharing is continuing, even months after the event concluded. Other states have contacted ODVA to advise on the success of the inter-governmental effort and to better serve Tribal Veterans.

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

As the only state department in the nation, ODVA was invited to an executive work group with the Federal VA Office of Tribal Governmental Relations to plan the largest nation-wide outreach efforts for Indian Nations. ODVA was instrumental in focusing target areas for this outreach based on known gaps in services and lack of representation on tribal lands.

Outreach

In 2018 through 2019, Oregon efforts will focus on identifying and assisting veterans across Indian Country with presumptive disabilities and veterans who may have non-compensable disabilities (VA pension claims) and barriers to federal VA benefits to tribal veterans and their families.

Reaching these veterans could have an immediate and positive impact on the lives of hundreds of previously unreachable Oregon Tribal veterans and their spouses.

Access to Healthcare

ODVA has also been supportive of efforts to improve tribal veteran's access to federal VA healthcare benefits. Through the VA's Office of Tribal Governmental Relations, Indian Health Service (IHS) and Tribal Health Partners (THP), reimbursement agreements to further cover tribal veterans'

health needs have been implemented in Oregon. In 2017 the federal VA has signed MOU's with the Warm Springs, Umatilla and the Siletz Tribes. Negotiations are in work for Grand Ronde and Cow Creek Tribes. The VA healthcare system is also seeking permission to place tele-health portals at IHS tribal facilities to reach more veterans. This initiative will greatly impact tribal veterans who live in some the most rural parts of our state. Efforts also have been directed at ensuring transportation to VA healthcare or use of community care on tribal lands.

Housing

ODVA also partnered with the Native American Rehabilitation Association (NARA) to identify Tribal Veterans who are living in the Portland urban area. This

partnership includes Multnomah County Veterans services, federal VA and non-profits housing and social work agencies to ensure Tribal Veterans have access to VA benefits, County Emergency Housing Assistance from the state Emergency Housing Assistance fund.

ODVA has also been supportive of efforts to improve housing opportunities for tribal veterans. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – Veterans Affairs Supported Housing (HUD-VASH) established a voucher program that provides vouchers and case management services to veterans struggling with homelessness on tribal lands. HUD-VASH isn't a new program, but this specific focus on tribal veterans is new.

GOOD GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

While ODVA is proud of our efforts to serve and honor tribal veterans, we also recognize no single agency or organization can wholly address the diverse needs across native lands. Throughout the nine tribes, ODVA continues to build strong partnerships to assist tribal veterans and their families in improving the quality of their lives – economically, socially and health-wise – by ensuring access to the veteran resources and benefits for all Oregonians.

Partnering to Train and Assist

ODVA is also continuing work with the federal VA's Office of General Counsel, the Confederate Tribes of Umatilla, and others within Oregon to support proposed rule changes allowing tribal governments to have their own Power of Attorney in representing claims for veterans before the federal VA. ODVA is acting as a subject matter expert in offering input to the proposals, as well as training and support to our tribal partners.

ODVA has been invited to have a formal tribal consultation with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs to discuss a formal Memorandum of Understanding of providing training and technical assistance

in formally establishing a veterans service office within their tribal government.

Tribal Veteran on Advisory Committee

In 2016, Reynold Leno was appointed to ODVA's Advisory Committee by Governor Kate Brown. Reynold, a Vietnam veteran, was elected to the Tribal Council of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon in 1996 and currently serves as a member of their Veterans Committee. He is Chairman of the Board of Directors for Spirit Mountain Gaming, Inc., and a Board member for the Spirit Mountain Community Fund. He has long been a strong advocate for both tribal affairs and veterans alike.

Veteran and War Memorials

Another bill that was passed during the 2017 Regular Session was House Bill 2405 which added tribal governments to local and regional governments that are eligible to apply for state park grants to construct or restore veterans and war memorials. This effort was unanimously passed by both the House and Senate.

GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT LOOKING FORWARD 2018

ODVA will continue its commitment to unite governments, private companies, nonprofits and other veteran service organizations to address issues facing all veterans and their families. Together we will continue to build a shared vision, coordinate existing resources and deliver on our mission, especially in areas concerning Oregon tribal veterans.

