November 19, 2021

TO: Honorable Governor Kate Brown
   Patrick Flanagan, Director of Legislative Commission on Indian Services

FROM: Kelly Fitzpatrick, Director of Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs


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).

The Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs (ODVA) continues to greatly value its Government-to-Government relationship with Oregon’s federally-recognized Tribal Governments. Over the last several years, ODVA has worked collaboratively with the tribes, as well as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, to help ensure that tribal veterans have access to state and federal benefits they have earned as a result of their military service. Native Americans continue to serve in the armed forces with honor and distinction.

**ODVA’s Government-to-Government Policy**
Attached to this letter is ODVA’s Government to Government policy adopted pursuant to ORS 182.164. ODVA is currently undergoing an effort to establish a new five-year strategic plan that will identify the agency’s goals and objectives. As part of that effort, ODVA intends to update its Government to Government policy to ensure these two important strategic documents are consistent with each other and to establish processes that will better enable ODVA to identify opportunities for collaboration with tribes and their members on programs to benefit tribal communities, continue to promote the excellent communication ODVA has with the tribes, and to continue our positive government-to-government relations.

**ODVA’s Government-to-Government Leadership Team**
ODVA honors the role of developing and implementing programs that affect tribal veterans. The principle officials at ODVA who are responsible for developing and implementing such plans are:

- Kelly Fitzpatrick, Director
- Jennifer Donovan, Interim Deputy Director
- Sheronne Blasi, Statewide Veterans Services Director
- Ana Potter, Aging Veteran Service Director
- Stacey Jochimsen, Legislative Director

**ODVA’s Government-to-Government Process and Efforts**
ODVA is committed to maintaining and growing our valued partnerships with Oregon’s Native American Tribes in the delivery of state and federal benefits and services for our tribal veterans. In
2021, ODVA continued to build and strengthen relations between tribal governments and key federal, state, county and other partner organizations to better serve Native American veterans across Oregon.

2021 Government-to-Government Achievements

Funding and Support of Tribal Veteran Service Offices Focused on Tribal Veteran’s Needs

In 2021, ODVA passed through funding to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Indian Reservation, and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, in support of their Tribal Veteran Services Offices. These funds are to help support and enhance Tribal Veteran Services, including the Tribal Veteran Services Officer (TVSO), who work directly with tribal veterans and their families.

During 2021, Tribal Veteran Service Officers, along with Tribal Veteran Service Representatives, diligently worked to ensure that despite the pandemic, tribal veterans had access to applying for and receiving their earned benefits. Outreach and services were adapted to meet the needs of tribal veterans. A few examples include:

- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation – advertised veteran services several times in the local tribal newspaper, participated in a Vietnam Veterans Day outreach video that was shared with tribal members, and actively participated in ODVA’s 2021 Women Veterans Conference and the Campus Veterans Summit.
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation – participated in regular food distribution events for the community, and assisted with the coordination of non-emergent medical transportation for veterans to their VA appointments.
- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Indian Reservation - prioritized outreach in the tribe’s community centers, for mental health, substance abuse, social services and housing programs.

Statewide Training Focused on Tribal Veteran’s Needs

In 2021, ODVA’s Statewide Veteran Services training team partnered with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDAV) Office of Tribal Government Relations to co-host the annual Tribal Veteran Representative conference. Due to the restrictions around COVID-19, this year’s successful event was held remotely but was well attended. In addition to attendees from Oregon, the event provided valuable training and information to those that serve veterans in Washington and California.

To better support Tribal Veteran Service Offices and County Veteran Service Offices with only one Veteran Service Officer (VSO), ODVA began hosting bi-weekly meetings to provide these VSOs a cohort to meet with and share knowledge. These meetings provide opportunities for single-office Tribal VSOs to discuss specific cases, and receive assistance from long-time VSOs.

Improving Access to Healthcare and Social Services

ODVA regularly participated in the SB 770 Health and Human Services Cluster meetings, providing updates on the newly established Tribal Veteran Services Officer program and funding, as well as learning more about some of the challenges facing the tribes and the efforts to overcome those challenges. As part of ODVA’s updates, we have introduced special advocacy coordinators including those that work specifically to address issues impacting houseless veterans, women veterans, aging veterans, and LGBTQ+ veterans.
In 2021, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde continued to implement a previous ODVA Veteran Services grant to expand funding for two annual Veteran Summits as well as Native American wellness activities. The grant also partially funded a portable x-ray machine for the Summits.

The Native American Rehabilitation Association of the Northwest (NARA), continued to provide salary and benefits for a position dedicated to identifying veterans and connecting them to services. NARA also utilized grant funds for client outreach and financial assistance for housing deposits, identification document fees, etc.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation continued to implement an ODVA Veteran Services grant to further assist veterans by providing transportation to and from appointments, assistance in applying for benefits, and providing outreach. Additionally, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde continued to utilize a grant to help provide information and referrals for veteran services through tribal programs. Funding will also be used to support the annual Veteran Summit and pow wow.

Also, in 2021, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation received a Rural Veterans Healthcare Transportation grant to provide rides free of charge for tribal veterans to health and behavioral healthcare appointments and other related services. This grant opportunity is currently open for applications from all of Oregon’s federally recognized tribes.

**Conclusion**

ODVA is proud to honor the service of Oregon’s tribal veterans. We will continue to strive to build strong partnerships with the tribes in order to assist tribal veterans and their families in improving the quality of their lives – economically, socially, mentally and physically – by ensuring access to the veteran resources and benefits they have earned.

We look forward to continued collaboration across governments, agencies and other essential partners who serve all veterans in the delivery of state and federal veteran services and benefits.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

Kelly Fitzpatrick
Director

CC: Dustin Buehler, Tribal Affairs Policy Advisor