

DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER'S REPORT

Although the Covid19 Pandemic has created many difficulties, it has given the opportunity for growth on an individual level and a team. Since early summer we have been back to full staff in our office. Even though the world has slowed down, veterans' claims have not.

As of September, our office represents 64% of veterans in the State of Iowa with pending or active claims with the VA. Here are some quick stats of what we have accomplished from January 1, 2020 to September:

- A total of 16,369 awards have been issued to veterans represented by the American Legion;
- \$18, 987,982.00 is the monthly total benefit paid out by the VA to veterans represented by the American Legion;
- This brings the total benefit paid out for year to date to \$218, 534, 492.00
- To put into perspective the sheer volume of claims our office represents, the next highest amount paid out on behalf of a Veterans Service Organization is \$118,982,601.00.

Prior to the pandemic, our office completed 19 hearings at the BVA Travel Board Hearings. Beginning in August, the Board of Veterans Appeals began conducting hearings again. Since the pandemic is still not permitting a lot of public access, the BVA began doing hearings virtually. This allows the hearing to take place while the veteran appears from their home, we from our office and the judge from Washington, D.C. In the past month our office has participated in seven (7) of these virtual hearings with another 53 scheduled for Nov and Dec . We have also completed 30 Informal Conferences on behalf of the veteran.

On top of our normal daily tasks, our two newest employees have completed The American Legion 2020 Department Service Officers School "Winning Appeals at Your Regional Office". This is the first time the school has been offered virtually.

We would like to thank the Commander, the Headquarters office and the DEC for their support.

Respectfully submitted,

Shane Pankonen
Department Service Officer