

Governor Signs 2011-2012 Veterans' Affairs Budget

TALLAHASSEE – Gov. Rick Scott signed the 2011-12 state budget during ceremonies in The Villages May 26. The \$69.1 billion budget includes more than \$88.6 million for the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA).

“Florida, with its more than 1.6 million veterans, has earned a reputation as one of the most veteran-friendly states in the nation,” said Steve Murray, FDVA Communications Director. “This was primarily a continuation budget aimed at providing a high level of service for our veterans, their families and survivors.”

FDVA's approved continuation budget is \$81,373,504, which includes funding for 1,122 positions or full-time equivalents (FTE). The department's budget was reduced by \$61,154, due to a reduction in staff of one position from the Benefits and Assistance Division in Bay Pines, Fla.

The total operating and fixed capital outlay budget appropriation for the 2011-12 fiscal year totaled \$88,616,823, of which 92 percent comes from trust funds.

Budget Highlights:

The department, which operates six state veterans' nursing homes and one veterans' domiciliary home, received approval for a non-recurring trust fund appropriation of \$502,819 to replace furniture and equipment reaching or exceeding its useful life.

In addition, a non-recurring budget appropriation of \$4,830,000 was approved to complete major renovations at the Emory L. Bennett State Veterans' Nursing Home in Daytona Beach and the Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home in Land O' Lakes. The renovation projects will be funded in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The VA provides 65 percent of the renovation costs (\$3,139,500), with state trust funds providing the required match of 35 percent (\$1,690,500).

Also included in the budget is a non-recurring trust fund appropriation of \$1,800,500 for capital improvement projects at each veterans' home, such as replacement of chillers, water heaters, boiler pumps, or the repaving of driveways and parking areas.

Watching over and advocating for Florida's veteran population are the men and women of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. FDVA is a state agency responsible for assisting, without charge, Florida's veterans, their families and survivors in improving their health and economic well-being through quality benefit information, advocacy, education and long-term health care.

For more information on FDVA, visit www.FloridaVets.org. For more information on the 2011-12 budget, visit www.FLGov.com/budget.

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