

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (ADVA)
Commissioner's Goals
Quarterly Meeting of the State Board of Veterans Affairs
July 10, 2020

Commissioner's General Intent Going Forward

- I have 2 1/2 years left in my term as Commissioner.
 - My first year was largely externally focused, i.e., building external relationships/partnerships.
 - The past five months have been unfortunately and overwhelmingly dominated by COVID-19.
 - Going forward I will increasingly shift to an internal focus.
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Goal #1: Tackle pressing State Veterans Homes needs

- **Overcoming the challenges of the COVID-19 emergency**
- **Successful execution of major construction projects**
 - Completion of major renovation work at Tut Fann and William F. Green Homes
 - Fifth State Veterans Home in Enterprise
 - MOU completed
 - A&E contract => later construction contract itself
 - Name for new home
 - Roof replacement project at Robert L. Howard State Veterans Home

Goal #2: Continue to improve efficiency of office operations

- **Update office business systems/technology**
 - Microsoft Office 365/SharePoint/Teams
 - Video-teleconferencing capability via WebEx
 - RFID inventory system implementation
- **Continual improvement of personnel management**
 - Pay raises and reclassifications to align salaries with market demands (e.g., at cemetery)
 - Align merit and non-merit appraisal systems
 - Revamped employee award program and camaraderie events for morale; townhall meetings, management retreats and “all hands” conference
- **Updated Organizational Chart and Order of Succession**

- **Increased/Improved office space at HQ and Veterans Service Offices**
 - Additional offices
 - Additional storage space
 - Visitor office space
 - Enlarged and improved conference room
- **“Strategic Budgeting”**
 - Budget workshops to financially plan years in advance
- **Action Trackers (e.g., elected official inquiries)**
- **Emphasis on Customer Service**
 - Standardized, professional interactions with customers; the “Chick-fil-A” standard
- **Modernize employee training**
 - Online training via WebEx or similar systems; conferences and seminars
 - New Training Manager at HQ => Training Policy and Plan
 - Emphasis on new topics and general topics (e.g., ethics, customer service, active shooter, etc.)
 - “Professional Development” versus “Training”

Warning: *Some will find adjustment to coming internal changes challenging (e.g., organizational structure, office processes, Information Age-era improvements). **Change is sometimes difficult, particularly in an organization that for years has frankly been satisfied with the “status quo” in some areas.***

Goal #3: Continue to improve communication, outreach, and engagement

- **New Outreach & Engagement Office**
 - Even better partnerships with AlaVetNet, other state agencies, federal agencies, non-profits, civic/fraternal & faith-based organizations.
 - Redefined role of General Counsel (added Intergovernmental Relations)
- **New, merged ADVA/AlaVetNet website**
 - “A work in constant progress” => master event calendar; forms; streaming videos
- **ADVA branding efforts**
 - Promotional materials
 - Public Service Announcements
- **Improve outreach to active duty military**
 - “The Military-Veteran Continuum”
 - Military Stability Commission/Foundation
- **Community Veterans Engagement Boards (CVEBs)**
- **Use of technology (WebEx, Virtual Townhall meetings via Facebook Live, etc.)**
- **I intend to remain a fully accessible Commissioner**
 - That includes an open-door policy for employees and stakeholders/potential stakeholders involved in veterans affairs. This is NOT intended to interfere with the chain of supervision.
 - **TRANSPARENCY:** It also includes proactive provision of information to SBVA and other stakeholders (e.g., monthly ops. report).
 - I expect ADVA employees to mirror that behavior.

Goal #4: Continue to boost number of Veterans Service Offices

- Aspirational goal of returning to all 67 counties (currently 55 offices, up from 50 a year ago; 5 more planned in remainder of 2020)
- Targeted increases in VSOs/AVSOs in selected offices with demonstrable need

Goal #5: Continue to tackle unique Alabama “hot button” issues, for example:

- Veteran suicide rate in Alabama –
 - State “Task Force on Veterans’ Suicide”
 - USDVA/SAMHSA “Governor’s Challenge”
 - PREVENTS program

Goal #6: Continue improvements at state veterans cemetery to meet increased demand

- In progress:
 - Wash bay renovation/upgrade
 - COVID-19 policies
- Strategic planning of future improvements and construction phases
- Continue to improve turnover rate of maintenance personnel

Goal #7: Continue superb performance in the following areas with only minor changes as necessary:

- Dependent Scholarship Program (go digital?)
- Accounting
- Property Management (RFID property tags)
- Information Technology. May need SBVA approval/assistance in this area as we modernize (e.g., video-teleconference hardware, digitizing archived DD-214s, digital scholarship applications, etc.)