

JANUARY

Newsletter

Welcome!

As the new year begins, we are thrilled to continue support for Alabama's veterans and their families with the upcoming opening of the Alabama Veterans Resource Center. This new facility highlights the importance of strong partnerships and meaningful collaboration among agencies and community organizations — all under one roof. ADVA is proud to support the Alabama Veterans Resource Center and the services it will provide, helping expand access, reduce barriers, and strengthen support for veterans across our state.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeff Newton".

Commissioner, Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs



➤ In this edition.

In Your Community
Operation Gratitude
Operation Iron Ruck
Employee Spotlight
New State Veterans Cemetery
and more



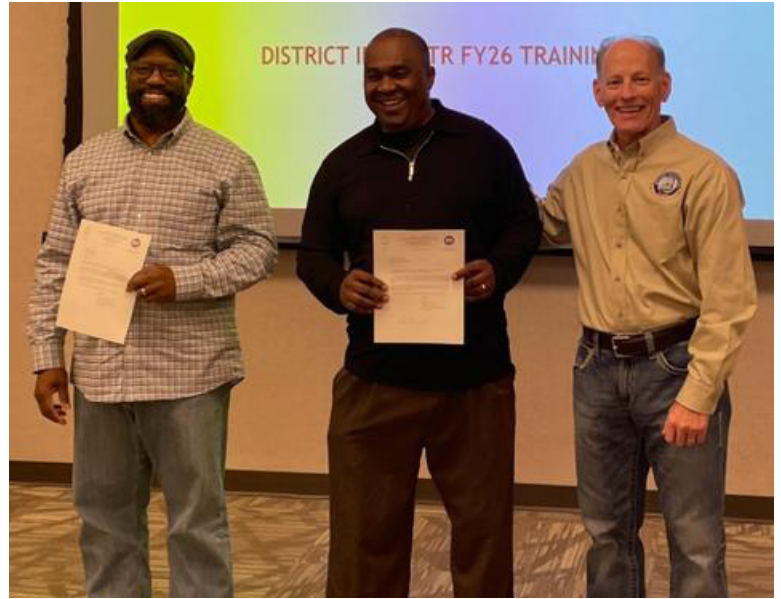
IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

We are committed to connecting with Alabama veterans and ensuring they receive the benefits they have rightfully earned.



District 2 - Prattville High

Commissioner Newton proudly presented a Certificate of Appreciation to the Prattville High School Marching Band and Director Chris King for their outstanding performance of the national anthem at ADVA's 80th Anniversary Luncheon in October 2025.



District 4 - 10 Years of Service

Congratulations to Lee County VSO Sean Gathers and Shelby County VSO Tim Waters on receiving their 10-year service pins! We are grateful for their continued commitment and for the impact they make every day for Alabama's veterans and their families.



District 3 - Legion Riders Charity Drive

District 3 had a voluntary donation box for the Legion Riders Christmas Charity Drive. To add to the fun, they decorated the box with Commissioner Newton's high school photo and appropriately topped it off with a curly red wig.



District 1 - VSO Faron Matthews

We are proud to have him as a permanent member of the team after completing his probationary period!

OPERATION GRATITUDE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS - VA.ALABAMA.GOV



Operation Gratitude is a statewide initiative through the ADVA that **amplifies appreciation for Alabama's veterans by recognizing their service and sacrifices** through outreach, support, and meaningful acts of gratitude.



We want to thank Glenwood School and the kindergarten classes of Kelli McMurray, Angie Wilson, and Jennifer Corbett for spreading the love this Valentine's Day with handmade cards for our veterans! Cards will given out at our Veterans Service Offices in Russell and Lee counties, as well as HQ in Montgomery and the Alabama Veterans Resource Center!

INSTRUCTIONS: MAKE A MINI THANK YOU CARD!

1. Print this page.
2. Use scissors to carefully cut along the dashed line.
3. Color the front of the card however you like.
4. Fold the card in half on the straight line.
5. Write a message inside the card for a Veteran.
6. Deliver the card to a Veteran you know!



**Thank You For
Your Service!**





Operation Iron Ruck

This past November, on the day before Thanksgiving, ADVA Claims Analyst Lyle Rountree and Claims Division Support Administrator Paula Lawson rucked the first three miles of Operation Iron Ruck which began at the Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

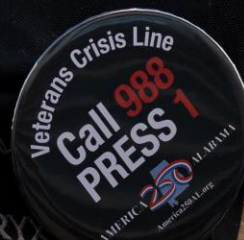
Operation Iron Ruck (OIR) is an annual event hosted by the Auburn Student Veterans Association (ASVA) and the University of Alabama Student Veterans of America (SVA) to raise awareness and funds for Veteran suicide prevention.

In 2018, Operation Iron Ruck was founded when student veterans from Auburn University and the University of Alabama decided they wanted to help their fellow veterans. Each Iron Bowl since, student veterans, veteran alumni and ROTC from both Auburn and Alabama embark on a 151-mile ruck starting at the away team's stadium and ending at the home team's stadium. The ruckers also carry the game ball to the home team's stadium ahead of each Iron Bowl.

"As the state of Alabama has one of the nation's highest Veteran suicide rates, OIR seeks to increase the public's knowledge on this issue while uniting Veterans with the community, funding charities, championing Veteran suicide education and supporting local Veteran organizations."
- Operation Iron Ruck



You can learn more at:
operationironruck.com



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



VSO Samuel Yount & VSO Stephanie Burchfield

Congratulations to Jefferson County VSO Samuel Yount and Etowah County VSO Stephanie Burchfield on receiving their 5-year service pins.



VSO Larry Stier

Baldwin County VSO Larry Stier was awarded his 5-year service pin at the District training held in Greenville.

ADVA Employment Opportunities!

The ADVA is **HIRING** for several positions:

- Womens Veterans Coordinator
- Veterans Outreach Coordinator
- Caretakers

Ready to make a difference? Whether you're a veteran or a passionate supporter, there's purpose in serving those who served.



APPLY TODAY AT [VA.ALABAMA.GOV/EMPLOYMENT](https://va.alabama.gov/employment)





ADVA Commissioner Finalizes Land Contract for New State Veterans Cemetery in North Alabama

The Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs (ADVA) is advancing a new state veterans cemetery in North Alabama after Commissioner Jeff Newton signed a contract Thursday securing property in Madison County.

“The new state veterans cemetery will be a lasting and meaningful impact on Alabama’s 400,000 veterans, and Governor Kay Ivey’s continued support has been instrumental in making this important investment a reality,” Commissioner Newton said. “This facility is another example of how Alabama takes care of its veterans, retirees, traditional Guardsmen, Reservists, and spouses.”

The finalized contract comes several weeks after ADVA received authorization for federal grant funding from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to support the development. The grant of \$13.5 million

is dependent upon receipt of compliance documentation.

The new cemetery, which will be located east of Huntsville on Maysville Road NE, will serve a majority of the 42,709 unserved veterans in Alabama who do not live within 75 miles of a state or federal veterans cemetery. The facility, which will serve the region’s veterans for many decades to come, will include ground crypts, traditional graves, columbarium niches, and a scatter garden, along with a committal shelter and administrative building.

To read the full update about the North Alabama Veterans Cemetery, please scan the QR Code.





Looking to find more events?

Visit our Event Calendar at va.alabama.gov/events
We update the calendar regularly and also share upcoming events on our social media accounts.

Upcoming ADVA Holiday Closures

February 16, April 27, May 25,
June 1, June 19, July 3



Vets For Hope

View crisis intervention resources, find a crisis center or service provider near you, and read more about support and warning signs today at VetsForHope.com



brewing connections.
COFFEE WITH THE COMMISSIONER



Coffee with the Commissioner Podcast Season 1

EP1: Welcome!

EP2: 80 Years Strong ft. Deputy Commissioner Lucas

EP3: The Importance of Community ft. Drew Lufkin, OIR Coordinator

Have you listened to the new ADVA Podcast, Coffee with the Commissioner, yet?

If you haven't, join us on YouTube (youtube.com/@alvetaffairs) to listen to the first season of the podcast!



If you or a group would like to participate in Operation

Gratitude, please contact the ADVA at: va.alabama.gov/contact

