

JUNE

Newsletter



Welcome!

Thank you for taking the time to read this month's edition of our ADVA newsletter. We appreciate your continued interest in the work we're doing to support Alabama's veterans and their families. Each month brings new opportunities to strengthen our services, share important updates, and highlight the efforts taking place across the state. Thank you for staying connected with us and for your commitment to Alabama's veteran community.

Commissioner, Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs

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COMMISSIONER'S CORNER

MEMORIAL DAY 2026

Memorial Day was a meaningful time of remembrance across Alabama as communities gathered to honor the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our nation. ADVA Commissioner Jeff Newton participated in several observances throughout the state, including serving as a guest speaker and performing Taps at events in Auburn and Montevallo.

At Auburn University's Memorial Day Observance, hosted by the Veterans Resource Center, Commissioner Newton helped honor fallen service members through a ceremony dedicated to remembrance and reflection. He also served as keynote speaker and performed Taps at the Alabama National Cemetery's "Joining As One For Our Veterans" event in Montevallo. These observances serve as powerful reminders of the sacrifices made by America's fallen heroes and the importance of preserving their legacy for future generations.



COMMISSIONER'S MEMORIAL DAY MESSAGE



"It might rain, gas is expensive, let's just sit on the beach and do nothing, but there is so much work to be done at home and in the office." Things we hear on Memorial Day.

Memorial Day is not the first day of summer, or the first three-day weekend of summer.

Decoration Day began during the American Civil War, when citizens placed flowers on the graves of those killed in battle. After World War I, the day was observed in honor of all who had died in all U.S. wars, and the name was changed to Memorial Day. In 1971, it became a federal holiday, observed on the last Monday in May.

For these 250 years in our Country's history, we have honored those who made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom and justice for all. This historic year, I am honored to play Taps at the Alabama National Cemetery, Montevallo, AL. Like Decoration Day, Taps originated during the American Civil War in July 1862.

The sound of "lights out" is familiar to many in our military. It is a peaceful, revered moment at the end of the day, and for many, a time of reflection.

At Memorial Day ceremonies throughout the U.S. and the World, the single sound of the bugle or trumpet is the official "Song of Remembrance." Our veterans will remember the moment with respect, honor, tribute, and solemn reflection. For veterans and their families, the weather, the cost of goods, the to-do list, and the desire to vacation won't matter.

This day is important because the seat at the table is empty, but the memory is very much alive.

This National Day of Remembrance is marked at 3:00 p.m. local time; take a moment to reflect on the sacrifices of fallen soldiers from all wars.

Jeffrey L. Newton
Brig Gen USAF/ANG (Retired)
Commissioner,
Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs

THE CEMETERY REPORT

A COMMUNITY HONORING ITS VETERANS

The Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Spanish Fort hosted its annual Memorial Day ceremony on May 25, bringing together veterans, families, and community members to honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our nation.

The ceremony featured a wreath-laying, folding of the American flag, a rifle volley, the playing of Taps, and an Honor Guard salute. Spanish Fort Mayor Brad Bass delivered the keynote address, while local Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts helped pay tribute to Alabama's fallen heroes by placing American flags at gravesites throughout the cemetery.



PLANNING CONTINUES FOR NORTH ALABAMA CEMETERY



Exciting progress is being made on the Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery - North Alabama project as leaders and project partners continue meeting to discuss the next steps for the cemetery's development.

Commissioner Jeff Newton recently joined Madison County Commissioner Craig Hill, the Archemy Architecture and Design team, State Board of Veterans Affairs member Larry Vannoy, and ADVA Cemetery Director Joe Buschell to review progress and plans for the project. With interest continuing to grow, ADVA looks forward to sharing more updates in the near future.

ADVA PREPARES FOR CEMETERY TOWN HALL



Commissioner Newton and members of the Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery - North Alabama Town Hall planning committee recently visited Madison County High School for a final walk-through before the June 18 town hall. We invite the community to join us at 6 p.m. in the auxiliary gym to learn more about the project and ask leaders and project coordinators about what the establishment of this facility means for the veterans community in North Alabama. The town hall will also be streamed on the ADVA Facebook page.

CELEBRATING WOMEN VETERANS

WOMEN VETERANS COFFEE AT THE AVRC



On May 29, women veterans in the River Region gathered at the Alabama Veterans Resource Center for an event focused on connection, support, and community with a side of coffee and delicious donuts.

The event provided an opportunity for attendees to share experiences, learn about available resources, and build relationships with fellow women veterans in a welcoming and supportive environment. The next women veterans coffee is planned for 7:00 a.m. on August 4 at the Alabama Veterans Resource Center on Dexter Avenue in Montgomery.

“AMERICAN WOMEN HAVE BUILT FOR THEMSELVES A PROUD RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT OF UNSELFISH DEVOTION TO THE PUBLIC WELFARE . . . ADVANCING EVERY GOOD CAUSE.”

– President Harry S. Truman

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT ANDREA SEAROR

On May 1, **Andrea Searor** became the first Women Veterans Coordinator for the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs. This position was created to strengthen outreach and support for women veterans across Alabama. As coordinator, Searor will work to connect Alabama's 43,000 women veterans with benefits, resources and services while helping raise awareness of programs designed to support their success and well-being.

Searor recently retired from the Air Force on March 1 and brings more than 26 years of military leadership and public service experience to the position. During those 26 years, Searor served in senior leadership roles in strategic planning, international affairs, and program management.



1775 - 1783



Women served in the **Revolutionary War**, mostly as nurses, cooks, and saboteurs. Some disguised themselves as men to fight directly.

1861 - 1865



Thousands of women served as nurses and spies in the **Civil War**.

1917 - 1918



World War I marked the first time women openly enlisted, primarily as nurses and telephone operators.

JUNE 12, 1948



The **Women's Armed Services Integration Act** was passed by President Harry S. Truman. It allowed women to serve as permanent, regular members of the Armed Forces.

PRESENT DAY



Women constitute approximately 16% of the U.S. military and over 10% of the veteran population, equaling to about 2.1 million.

VETERANS RESOURCES



ALNG JFHQ VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE RIBBON CUTTING

Commissioner Jeff Newton, Maj. Gen. David Pritchett, and leadership from the ADVA and Alabama National Guard recently celebrated the opening of a new Veterans Service Office at the Alabama National Guard Joint Force Headquarters.

The office represents a partnership between the ADVA and the State Military Department to improve access to benefits, claims assistance, and other vital services for veterans, service members, and their families.



The new location strengthens ADVA's statewide network of Veterans Service Offices and reinforces its commitment to ensuring Alabama veterans have convenient access to the resources and support they have earned through their service. The office will help connect Guardsmen directly with a trained professional to assist in navigating federal and state benefits programs.



Photos credits of AL.com

S.A.F.E.R. TOGETHER

Suicide prevention and firearm safety remain important priorities for veterans, service members, first responders, and communities across Alabama. Through partnerships like S.A.F.E.R. Together, organizations and local businesses are working together to provide safe, temporary firearm storage options and connect individuals with support during challenging times.

Recent media coverage has helped raise awareness about the impact of suicide in Alabama and the importance of having resources available before a crisis occurs. These collaborative efforts continue to encourage open conversations, promote safe firearm practices, and ensure those in need know where to turn for support.

You can learn more about S.A.F.E.R. Together at <https://www.safertgetheral.org/>

ANNOUNCEMENTS & MORE



THE CHILTON COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE HAS RELOCATED TO
**53 ROBERT THRELKELD PARKWAY (ROOM B 700)
CLANTON, ALABAMA 35045**

AMERICA 250 CELEBRATION

Alabama recently kicked off its America 250 celebration, marking the beginning of a statewide effort to honor the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026. Held at the Alabama State Capitol, the event brought together leaders, veterans, and community members to celebrate America's history, recognize the sacrifices of those who have defended our freedoms, and look ahead to the semiquincentennial celebration next month.



A SPECIAL VISIT

Commissioner Jeff Newton recently met with Rodney Smith, founder of Raising Men & Raising Women Lawn Care Service, as Rodney was invited by Governor Kay Ivey to mow the South Lawn at the Alabama State Capitol. Known as the "Lawn Mower Man," Smith has traveled to all 50 states providing free lawn care services to veterans, senior citizens, single parents, and others in need, inspiring a spirit of service and kindness in communities across the country.

**JEFFERSON WILKINSON, WWII
VETERAN AND BILL NICHOLS SVH
RESIDENT CELEBRATED HIS 100TH
BIRTHDAY ON JUNE 9!**

100



UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE 24

BOAZ ALABAMA VETERAN RESOURCE FAIR AND CLAIMS CLINIC

JIMMY HARRIS VFW POST 6837
1441 HIGHWAY 431 BOAZ, AL 35957
10 AM - 1 PM

JUNE 26

VA CAREGIVER RESOURCE FAIR

MULTIPLEX AT CRAMTON BOWL
220 HALL STREET, MONTGOMERY, AL
10 AM - 2 PM

JUNE 30

VETFEST 250 VETERANS RESOURCE FAIR AND CLAIMS CLINIC

VESTAVIA CIVIC CENTER
1090 MONTGOMERY HWY
VESTAVIA HILLS, AL
10:00 A.M. TO 1:00 P.M.

JULY 16

BESSEMER VETERANS RESOURCE FAIR AND CLAIMS CLINIC

BESSEMER RECREATION CENTER
100 14TH STREET
BESSEMER, AL
10 AM - 2 PM

LEARN ABOUT MORE
UPCOMING EVENTS AND
OTHER VETERANS
RESOURCES BY SCANNING
THE QR CODE

