

SEPTEMBER

Newsletter



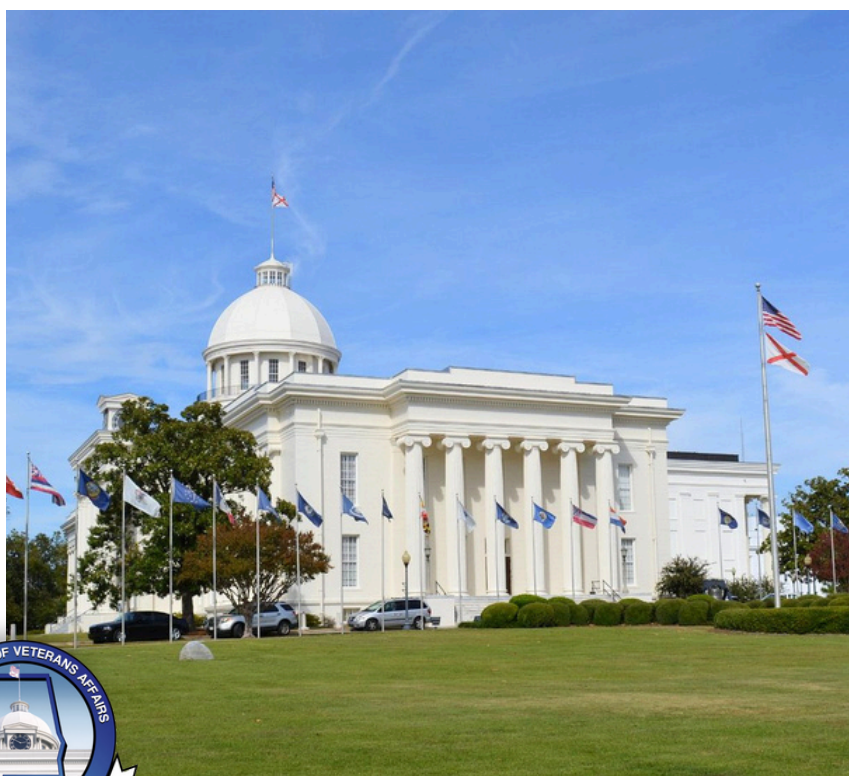
Welcome!

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 the Alabama's veteran community.

Commissioner, Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs

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COMMISSIONER'S CORNER

As we marked the 25th anniversary of September 11, 2001, we paused to remember the events that changed our nation and the generation of veterans who answered the call to serve in the years that followed. At ADVA, our mission is to serve Alabama's 400,000 veterans and their families, and that mission carries special meaning as we remember the Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans we are honored to serve. Their courage, sacrifice, and commitment to our nation will always be part of our story.

That mission extends far beyond the work of ADVA alone. It takes partnerships with veterans organizations, nonprofits, and communities across Alabama to ensure veterans know the benefits and resources they have earned. As we remember the sacrifices of the post-9/11 generation, we are reminded of the importance of continuing to stand alongside them and their families.

The 25th anniversary of 9/11 was both a time to remember and a time to recommit ourselves to those who served because of that day. We are grateful for every OEF/OIF veteran who answered our nation's call, and we remain committed to serving them with the same dedication they showed our country. Communities are stronger when veterans are stronger, and together, we can continue making Alabama the most veteran-friendly state in the nation.



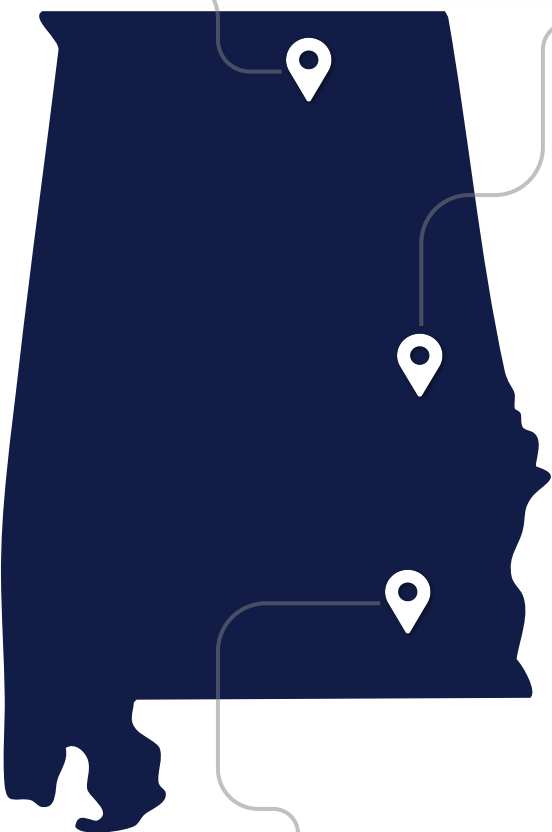
HAPPENING AROUND ALABAMA

BLACK TIE CHARITY BALL

Huntsville, Alabama



Talk about a night to remember! Numerous residents at Floyd E. 'Tut' Fann State Veterans Home and Director Charlotte Robinson enjoyed a wonderful evening out last month at the annual Black Tie Charity Ball, held in the beautiful Von Braun Center Saturn Ballroom in Huntsville. It was a special night filled with fellowship, laughter, and a whole lot of style! Here's to great memories, good company, and dressing up for a great cause!



OPERATION IRON RUCK DAY ZERO 5K

Alexander City, Alabama



The ADVA Office of Outreach joined the Operation Iron Ruck Foundation in late August for its Day Zero 5K Ruck. The event created the opportunity to connect with student veterans from Auburn and Alabama, network with fellow veteran-serving organizations, and share information about the programs and resources we have available to Alabama's veterans community.

The full 151-mile Operation Iron Ruck takes place from Auburn to Tuscaloosa the week of the Iron Bowl in November. The 2026 Iron Bowl is scheduled for November 28, 2026, at Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa.

TBI CENTER RIBBON CUTTING

Enterprise, Alabama

ADVA joined its partners at the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services in Enterprise in late August to celebrate the ribbon cutting of Alabama's third Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Center!

The new center will provide no-cost resources and support to veterans, National Guard members and others living with the long-term effects of traumatic brain injury. ADRS operates five centers, which are also located in Mobile, Opelika, Birmingham, and Huntsville.



OPERATION WE REMEMBER

ADVA formally announced the 2026 Operation We Remember campaign on September 9 in Montgomery. The statewide initiative honors veterans lost to suicide and carries added significance as we mark the 25th anniversary of 9/11 and remember the generation that served in OEF/OIF. This year, 150 American flags honor the 150 Alabama veterans who died by suicide in 2024, with the display remaining throughout the Biscuits' final homestand and Military Appreciation Night.





NASDVA CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE RECAP

The National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs conference, Aug. 9 - 12 in Savannah, Georgia, was filled with warm weather and hot topics!

We were pleased to have several ADVA VSOs and Directors attend. This year marks NASDVA's 80th anniversary. For decades, this organization has been a force in providing and advocating for needed veterans' benefits at the state and national level and has remained true to its mission of serving veterans and families.

Leaders from across our nation share a common mission: ensuring that veterans, service members, and their families receive the care, benefits, opportunities, and recognition they have earned through their service and sacrifice. NASDVA provides federal, state, tribal, for-profit, and non-profit organizations with an opportunity to meet, share ideas, and collaborate to better serve veterans and their families.



NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED

ADVA Women Veterans Coordinator Andrea Searor was recently elected the Junior Vice President of the National Association of State Women Veterans Directors by her counterparts from across the country.

Since joining ADVA as Alabama's first Women Veterans Coordinator in May, Searor has worked to strengthen outreach, build meaningful connections and ensure women veterans across our state are informed, supported and empowered to access the benefits and resources they have earned.

This national leadership role gives Alabama an even stronger voice in conversations surrounding women veterans while creating new opportunities for Searor to work with other women veterans leaders to share ideas, strengthening partnerships, and bring the best practices back home.

VETERANS NEWS

SIGNED AND SEALED

Commissioner Newton signed a Memorandum of Understanding with 1SG Johnathan Wilson, President of the Enlisted National Guard Association of Alabama, in August to formalize a partnership to reflect our shared commitment to working collaboratively and better serve National Guard members and their families by helping connect them with the benefits, support, and recognition they have earned.

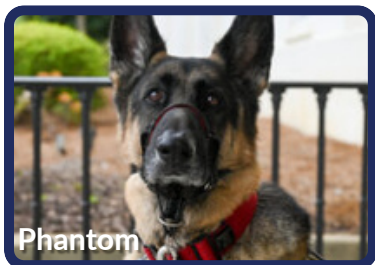


A LASTING LEGACY

We remember and honor Roy Drinkard, a Cullman resident, World War II veteran, and the nation's oldest living U.S. Marine, who passed away in late August at age 106. His lifetime of service to our nation and his community leaves a lasting legacy and serves as a reminder of the courage, sacrifice and dedication of America's World War II generation.

REMAINS OF MISSING AIRMAN RETURNED HOME AFTER 7 DECADES

Capt. Alger M. Cheney's journey home has continued for more than seven decades. One of 52 people aboard a U.S. Air Force C-124A Globemaster that crashed in Alaska during the Korean War in 1952, Capt. Cheney was originally interred at the Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Spanish Fort in 2017 alongside his wife, Elaine. Now, after decades of recovery efforts, newly recovered remains have been returned to Alabama — bringing Capt. Cheney home once again and ensuring that a man who gave his life in service to his country will never be forgotten.



Phantom



Kirby



Kulture

I AM WORKING HERE!!!

SERVICE - NOT EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities. The ADA defines Service Animals as dogs of any breed and any size, trained to perform a task directly related to a person's disability. This simple guideline carries great responsibility. Learn about service animals at ADA Requirements: Service Animals | ADA.gov

Tip: Service dogs are working; please don't pet or distract them.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & MORE

COLLEGE COLOR DAY

Governor Kay Ivey declared September 4 as College Colors Day! We loved showing our school spirit and representing our alma maters and favorite teams!



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NEW PARKING LOT AT BILL NICHOLS

We're always looking for ways to improve the facilities that serve Alabama's veterans. Recently, the parking lot at the Bill Nichols State Veterans Home in Alex City is receiving upgrades and fresh new surfacing — just one example of our ongoing commitment to maintaining safe, welcoming and high-quality facilities for Alabama's veterans.



UPCOMING EVENTS



Join us for a special POW/MIA Recognition Ceremony on Saturday, September 19, at 10:30 a.m. on the South Lawn of the Alabama State Capitol. The ceremony will honor and remember the brave Americans who were prisoners of war or remain missing in action, as well as the families who have carried their sacrifice through the years. U.S. Army Major (Ret.) Mark A. Smith will serve as the keynote speaker. A highly decorated Vietnam War veteran, Smith was captured by the Viet Cong and held as a prisoner of war for 10 months in a jungle camp in Cambodia. Following his release in 1973, he returned home and continued a life of service while sharing his experiences to honor fellow veterans and preserve the stories of those who served. All are invited to attend as we honor their service, remember their sacrifice and reaffirm that they will never be forgotten.

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