NOVEMBER

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.

Jeff Newton
Commissioner, Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs

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COMMISSIONER'S *CORNER*



Commissioner Jeff Newton's tour across the state has continued as he's connected with veterans, military leaders and community partners while advancing ADVA's mission. Recent stops included Fort McClellan Training Center, where he joined the Alabama National Guard's Lethality Group and veteran residents from the Col. Robert L. Howard State Veterans Home, as well as Troy University's Military Appreciation Game, where he joined Chancellor Jack Hawkins Jr., the family of Medal of Honor recipient Bennie G. Adkins and Medal of Honor recipient Mike Rose in the Chancellor's suite.



As Veterans Day approached, Commissioner Newton shared a message of gratitude with Alabama's 400,000 veterans on social media, highlighting ADVA's continued work to expand services, strengthen resources and ensure veterans and their families can access the benefits, care and support they have earned. From strengthening partnerships to honoring those who served, each opportunity reflects ADVA's commitment to Alabama's veteran community.





VETERANS DAY *IN ALABAMA*



GOVERNOR PROCLAIMS VETERANS WEEK

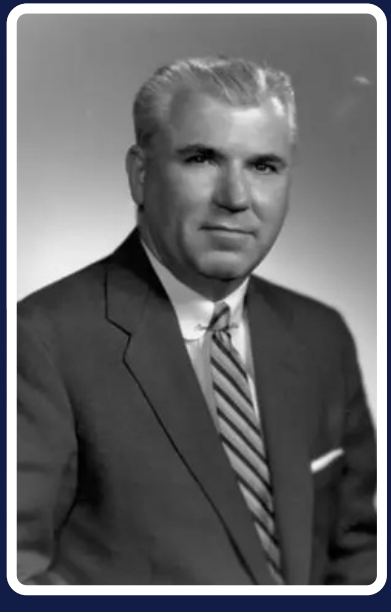
Governor Kay Ivey proclaimed November 5–11 as Veterans Week in Alabama, honoring the more than 400,000 veterans who call our state home. While serving veterans is at the heart of ADVA's mission every day, this week provides a special opportunity to recognize their service, sacrifice and continued impact on communities across Alabama.

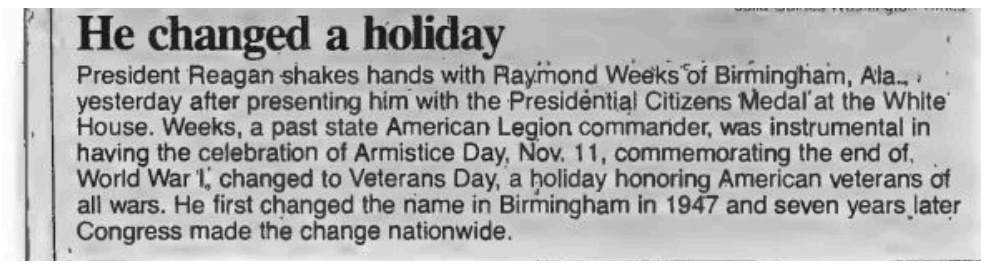
RAYMOND WEEKS

"FATHER OF VETERANS DAY"

Birmingham native and World War II veteran Raymond Weeks helped shape the Veterans Day we know today. Believing November 11 should honor veterans of all wars, Weeks organized the first Veterans Day celebration in Birmingham in 1947 and continued advocating for national recognition.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed legislation changing Armistice Day to Veterans Day, expanding the observance to honor all American veterans. Today, Weeks is remembered as the "Father of Veterans Day," and Birmingham continues his legacy as the birthplace of Veterans Day.





He changed a holiday

President Reagan shakes hands with Raymond Weeks of Birmingham, Ala., yesterday after presenting him with the Presidential Citizens Medal at the White House. Weeks, a past state American Legion commander, was instrumental in having the celebration of Armistice Day, Nov. 11, commemorating the end of World War I, changed to Veterans Day, a holiday honoring American veterans of all wars. He first changed the name in Birmingham in 1947 and seven years later Congress made the change nationwide.



CONGRATULATIONS!

State Board of Veterans Affairs member Brandi Whitman was named the 2026 Veteran of the Year during the Veterans Appreciation Community Luncheon in Enterprise.

The annual event brings together veterans, service members and community leaders to recognize those who have served and continue to make an impact in their communities.



SOUTHERN UNION HONORS VETERANS

The Alabama G.I. Dependent Scholarship Office attended Southern Union State Community College's annual Veterans Appreciation Day Program, which recognizes the courage, commitment and sacrifices of veterans within the college and surrounding community.

VETERANS DAY
IN ALABAMA

















HAPPENING *AROUND ALABAMA*

AMERICAN LEGION LEADERSHIP VISITS COL. ROBERT L. HOWARD STATE VETERANS HOME

Pell City, Alabama



Commissioner Jeff Newton and Director Hiliary Hardwick – and "Big Fig" Newton – welcomed American Legion National Commander Jay Bowen and state American Legion leadership to the Col. Robert L. Howard State Veterans Home in Pell City.

The visit provided an opportunity to highlight the exceptional care provided to Alabama's veterans while strengthening ADVA's continued partnership with the American Legion.



STARS & STRIDES FALL FESTIVAL AT BONDFIRE

Clanton, Alabama



ADVA's Outreach team joined veterans and their families at the 3rd Annual Stars and Strides at BondFire Ranch in Clanton.

The event was a wonderful opportunity to connect with the veteran community, share information about ADVA programs and resources, and have meaningful conversations with veterans and their loved ones.

FLAGS OF HONOR

Spanish Fort, Alabama

Ahead of Veterans Day, seniors from St. Paul's Episcopal School joined the Alabama Power Service Organization and Energizers Volunteers to place American flags at gravesites of the Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Spanish Fort.

Each flag serves as a reminder of the service and sacrifice of our veterans and the importance of ensuring their legacy is carried forward by future generations. The volunteers' time and effort helped create a meaningful tribute to veterans and a powerful display of gratitude from the community.



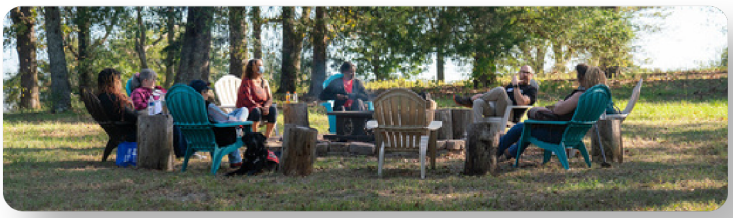


CELEBRATING *WOMEN VETERANS*

WOMEN VETERANS LISTENING SESSION

On October 28, women veterans gathered at BondFire Ranch in Clanton for a day focused on connection, conversation and community.

Held in collaboration with the Montgomery and Birmingham Vet Centers, the listening session provided a welcoming space for women veterans to share their experiences, be heard and enjoy time together. ADVA looks forward to expanding this initiative and creating more opportunities for women veterans across Alabama to connect and build community.













SEAROR REPRESENTS ALABAMA AT MCON 2026

ADVA Women Veterans Coordinator Andrea Searor (middle) was recently invited to be a panelist for "Supporting Her Service in Uniform and Beyond" at the MCON 2026 Health Summit in Las Vegas

Representing ADVA and the National Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators, Searor joined leaders from across the country to discuss improving care, resources and support for women veterans.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HONORED AS FORD GAMEDAY HERO

ADVA Deputy Commissioner Sandra Lucas was recognized as a Ford Gameday Hero during a recent Auburn University football game. The recognition highlighted her continued dedication to serving Alabama's veterans and supporting the veteran community across the state.

Deputy Commissioner Lucas graduated with an Executive Masters in Business Admistration from Auburn University and is a member of the Auburn Student Veterans Association.

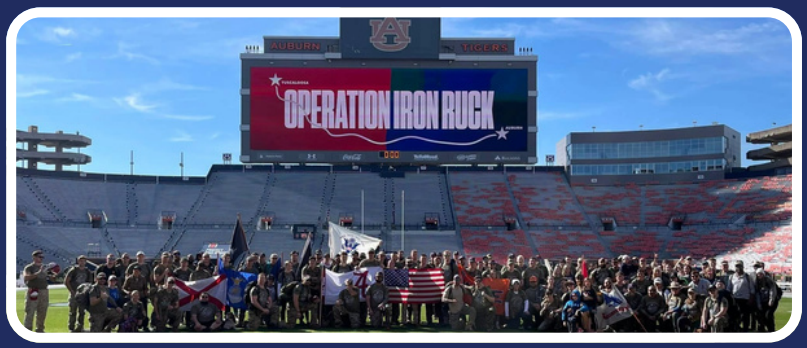


ANNOUNCEMENTS *& MORE*



A WARM WELCOME HOME!

A special thank you to Alabama Power and more than 100 APSO volunteers for providing welcome-back bags to veterans returning to the Bennie G. Adkins State Veterans Home after 16 months away.



OPERATION IRON RUCK

Operation Iron Ruck is almost here! Student veterans from Auburn and Alabama will complete a four-day, 154-mile ruck from Auburn to Tuscaloosa.

Scan the QR code to learn more about Operation Iron Ruck and how you can donate.



VETERANS WELL-BEING GRANT PROGRAM

Applications are open for ADVA's 2027 Veterans Well-Being Grant Program, with $2.5 million available to support organizations serving Alabama's veterans.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the grant program, eligibility and how to apply.



HAPPY RETIREMENT!

After serving veterans with ADVA for the last five years and positively impacting the lives of countless veterans and loved ones, Veterans Resource and Families Navigator Sissy Louise Moore is retiring at the end of month. Thank you for your service and congratulations!



HONORING SERGEANT FIRST CLASS HENRY A. TODD

Sergeant First Class Henry A. Todd, a U.S. Army veteran and resident at the Bill Nichols State Veterans Home in Alex City, was presented with a replacement Bronze Star Medal from U.S. Congressman Gary Palmer after his original medal was lost. The honor recognized Sergeant Todd's distinguished service, including his service during the Vietnam War.