

MONTANA VETERANS AFFAIRS 2020

Biennial Report

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Administrator, Montana Veterans Affairs Division

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Introduction

Montana Veteran Affairs Mission:

Promote the general welfare of Montana Veterans and their Families

THRU:

Establishing a statewide network of service for military veterans and their families.

Provide services and assistance for all Montana veterans and surviving spouses and dependents, in coordination with associated federal and state agencies, veteran's service organization, private organizations and individuals.

Management, operations, and maintenance of Montana's state veteran's cemetery program.

Assist and advise the public, governmental agencies, and elected officials regarding veteran's services, programs, initiatives, and policy.

Major Program Initiatives

Administration:

Board of Veterans Affairs – In FY19 & FY20, the Montana Board of Veteran Affairs conducted five meetings. Two of the meetings were conducted in Fort Harrison, and the other three via teleconference.

Technology – In FY19, the cemetery program converted to online scheduling. The Montana State Veteran Cemetery Program directed their first virtual Memorial Day ceremony in May 2020 due to COVID-19. The virtual Memorial Day ceremony was a success and was viewed 15,000+ times via Facebook and aired on new stations throughout Montana.

Administrative Office – Headquarters completed paperless initiative for all cemetery files, scheduling, accounts receivable, and accounts payable in FY20. The administrative office developed a tracking system for accounts receivable, county payments, and federal plot reimbursements. This system creates invoices and tracks payments to ensure we received on average \$20,250 per month for the cemetery program. This system was piloted for FY20 and will be standard procedure starting FY21. The administrative office has redesigned all forms and brochures. The new formatting allows for forms to be filled out virtually, and the brochures to be viewed virtually.

State Veterans Cemetery Program:

Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery (Miles City): VA construction grant approved. Expansion construction began in April 2020 with anticipated completion date of 1 October 2020.

Montana State Veterans Cemetery (Fort Harrison): Preapplication for VA construction grant approved, now qualified for VA Priority List 1. Passed National Cemetery Administration inspection/assessment – superior rating.

Western State Veterans Cemetery (Missoula): Preapplication for VA construction grant approved, now qualified for VA Priority List 1.



Major Program Initiatives

Veteran Services Operations:

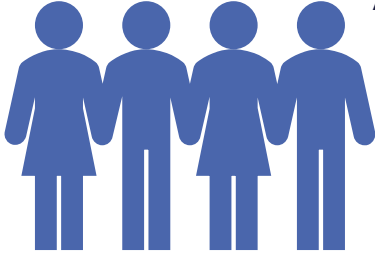
Electronic – 100% paperless initiative complete for all nine Veteran Service Offices by July 2018. All VA claims submissions are completed electronically. VA mail delivers to Administration Office and is uploaded into electronic database for Veteran Service Officers to retrieve. Before FY2020, mail was forwarded from Administrative Office via snail mail.

Great Falls – Great Falls VSO office relocated to new office space in Spring 2020 and expanded to four Veteran Service Officers. The fourth Veteran Service Officer position was filled in the end of June 2020.

Billings – Billings VSO office moved to new location in the Montana State University Billings – College of Education campus.

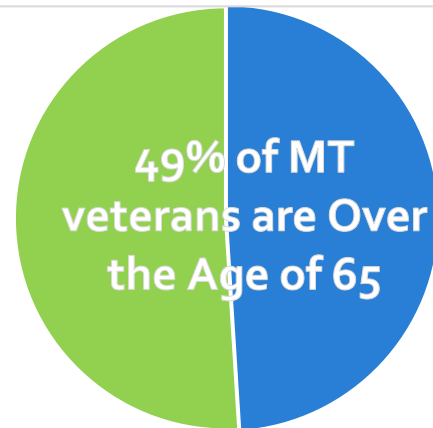


Montana Veteran Demographic Data



As of 30 September 2018, there are 92,000 veterans in the state of Montana. Of the 92,244 veterans, approximately 83,200 veterans are male, and 9,000 are female. More than 90% of the veterans in the state of Montana are males (National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics).

Approximately 44,750 veterans in the state of Montana are 65 years of age or older. That translates to roughly 49% of Montana veterans are over the age of 65. Roughly 34,000 veterans are between the ages of 40 and 64 years old. That means, only 13,557 Montana veterans are under the age of 40, roughly 14.7% (National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics).



Due to Montana being a vast and rural state, Montana Veterans Affairs works to expand its outreach program. Currently, service officers travel to more than 47 communities across Montana, making themselves more available to veterans.

The outreach program is continually expanding, and in Fiscal Year 2019, MVAD added Lame Deer, Poplar, and Scobey.

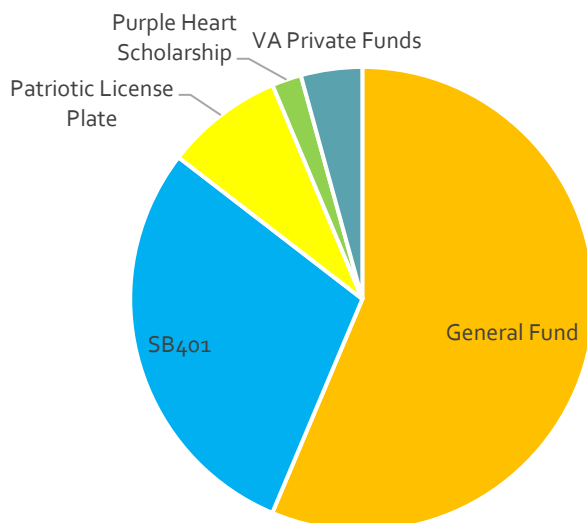
Financial Report

Montana Veterans Affairs is responsible for the funding of two organizational levels. First is the Veterans Services being the funding of MVAD's Veteran Service Officers and operations. The Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) offices are in Belgrade, Billings, Butte, Great Falls, Havre, Helena, Kalispell, Miles City and Missoula. Montana Veterans Services are primarily funded by General Fund, a fraction of a percent of Montana License Plate Revenue, and Patriotic License Plate revenues.

General Fund	\$1,372,889
SB401	\$709,128
Patriotic License Plate	\$200,424
Purple Heart Scholarship	\$50,000
VA Private Funds	\$104,123

The other funds the Montana Veterans Affairs Division are responsible for are the Purple Heart Scholarship fund, HB172-the County Veteran Services fund (which is included in General Funds), the Honor and Remember Medallion fund and a VA Private fund-consisting of donations.

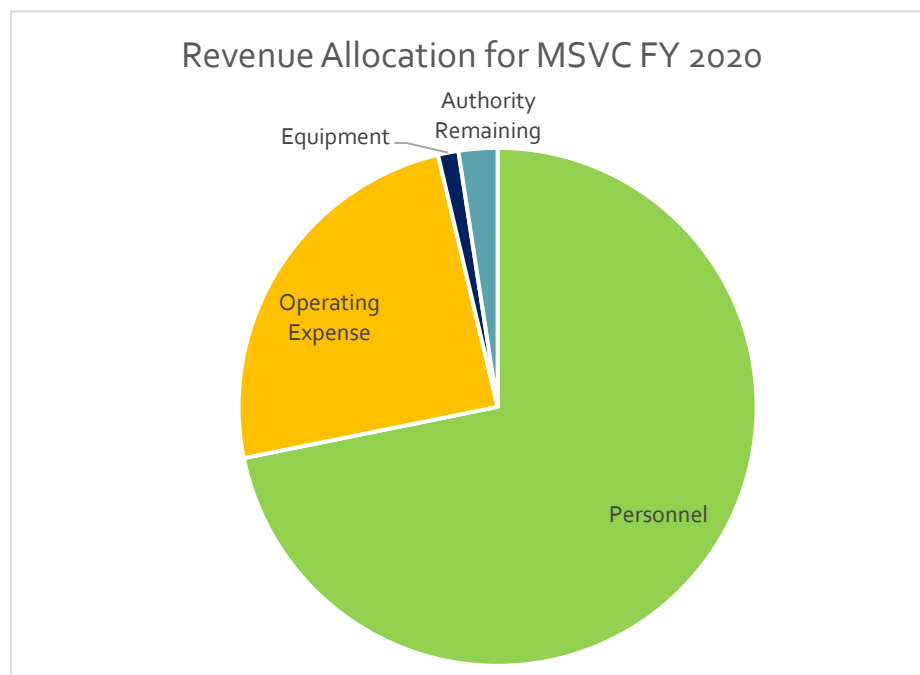
MVAD Veterans Services Appropriation by Fund
FY2020



Financial Report

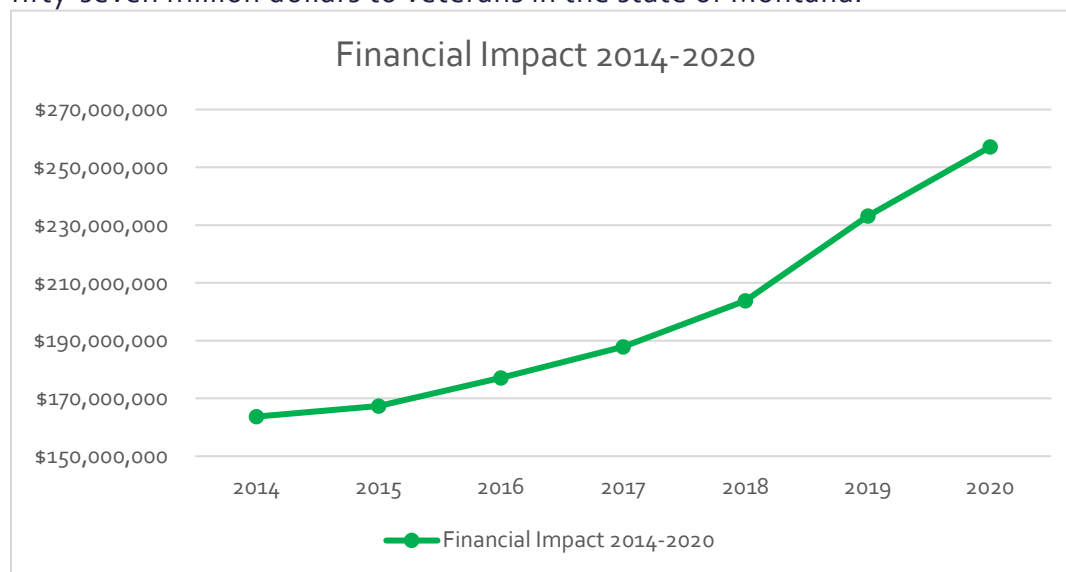
The Montana Veterans Affairs Division is also responsible for three Montana State Veterans Cemeteries located in Ft. Harrison, Miles City, and Missoula. Funding for the Montana State Veterans Cemeteries comes from a fraction of a percent of Montana License Plate Revenue, federal VA plot allowance, and donations. Because the Montana State Veterans Cemetery (MSVC) Program is a Special Revenue fund, MVAD must have cash in the fund before spending authority. Therefore, the most effective way to look at the cemetery budget, is to look at the expenses coming out of MSVC's revenue, in contrast with looking at authority.

MSVC Expenses from Revenue	
Personnel Expenses	\$348,214
Operating Expense	\$118,662
Equipment	\$6,195
Authority Remaining	\$11,739



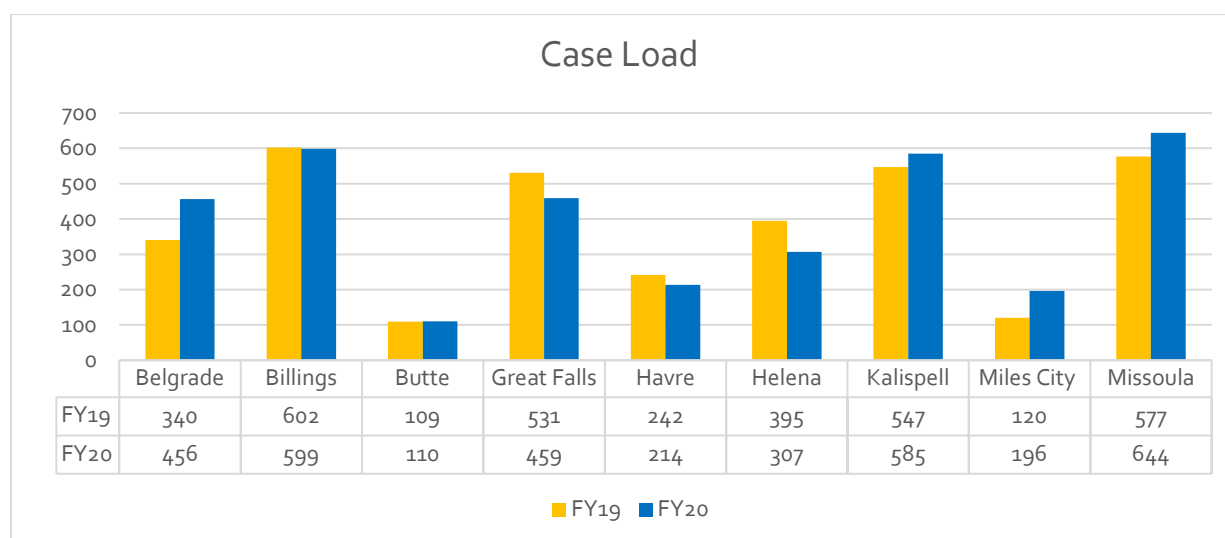
Financial Impact

One of the metric's MVAD uses to measure success is the financial impact produced by VSO's claims. In FY2019, MVAD brought in over two-hundred, thirty-three million dollars to veterans in the state of Montana. In fiscal year 2020, MVAD brought over two-hundred, fifty-seven million dollars to veterans in the state of Montana.



MVAD's financial impact on the state of Montana has been steadily increasing annually for more than seven years.

Case Load



Montana State Veterans Cemeteries

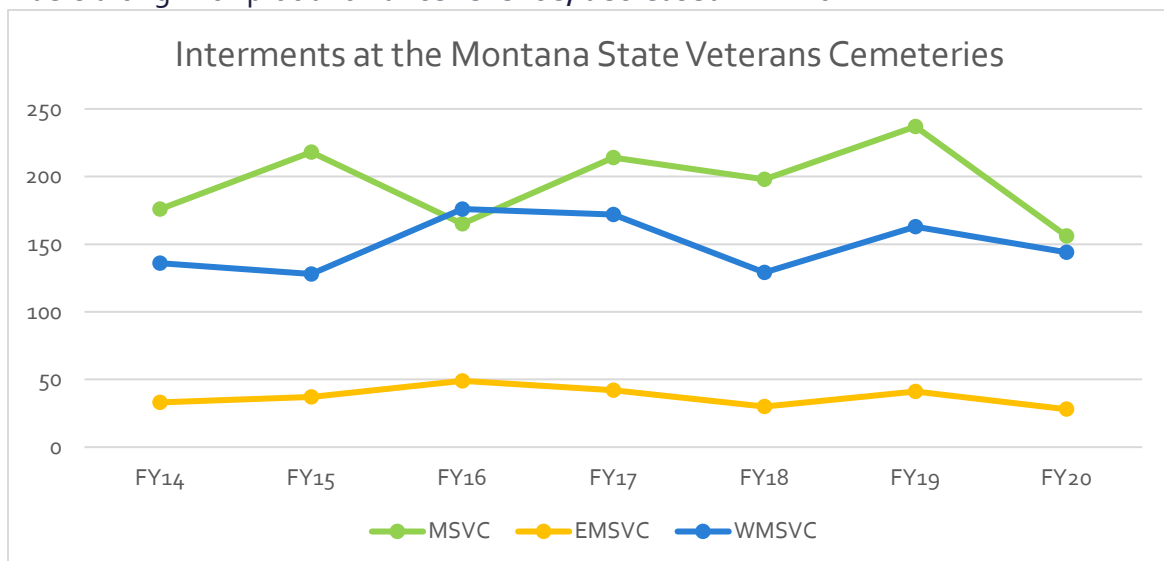
To be interred at one of the Montana State Veterans Cemeteries, a person must be a veteran with an honorable discharge, and if they joined the service after 1980, the servicemember must have twenty-four consecutive months of service. An eligible veteran's spouse as well as dependent child are also eligible to be interred at any of the Montana State Veterans Cemeteries.

The Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Ft. Harrison, Montana was founded in 1988. Currently, there are almost 5,000 veterans and spouses interred in the Montana State Veterans Cemetery (MSVC). In fiscal year 19, MSVC interred 237 people, of which, 139 were veterans.

Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery (EMSVC) in Miles City, Montana was built in 2002. Currently, there are about 720 veterans and spouses interred in the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery. In fiscal year 2019, EMSVC interred 41 people, of which, 27 were veterans.

Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery (WMSVC) was created in 2008. Currently, there are about 1,700 veterans and spouses interred in the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery. WMSVC is in Missoula, Montana and interred 163 people in fiscal year 2019.

In fiscal year 2020, all Montana State Veterans Cemeteries had to suspend interment services due to COVID-19. While there were still burials and interments, many families chose to wait to bury loved ones until there could be a service. Therefore, interment numbers along with plot allowance revenue, decreased in FY20.

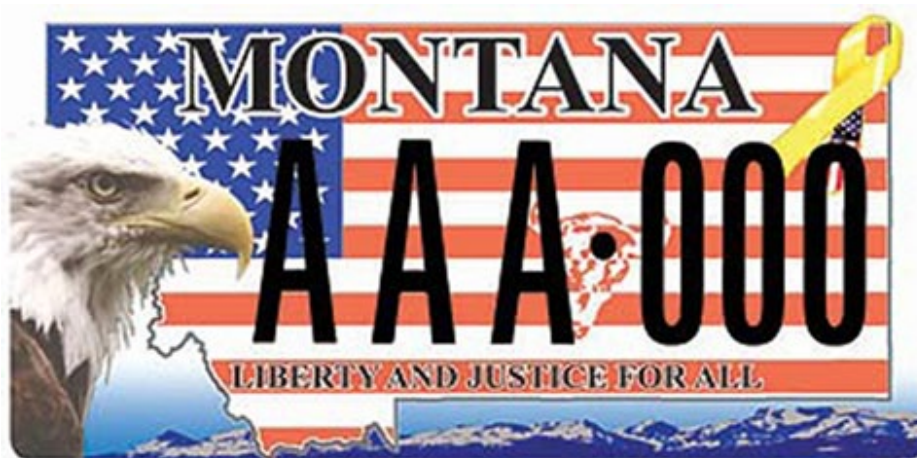


Montana Board of Veterans Affairs

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs is comprised of 11 voting members and 9 nonvoting members. Following MCA 2-15-1205, the board's main responsibilities are cooperating with all levels of government and agencies whose goal is to support veterans, and advocating for veterans and their families.

The 11 voting members are comprised of 10 appointed by the governor of Montana, and the final voting member is appointed by Montana's eight Tribal Councils. Five of the voting members represent geographic regions of the state; one is an "at-large" veterans' representative; one member is a Native American veterans' representative; one is the Montana's Tribal Councils' consensus appointee; finally, three members have training, experience or education related to veteran issues.

The 9 non-voting members include representatives from the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs; the Department of Military Affairs; the Department of Public Health and Human Services; the Department of Veterans Affairs; the U.S. Department of Labor; Montana State Administration; and the Veterans Affairs Interim Committee.



MVAD Office Information:

Belgrade

350 Airport Rd.

Belgrade, MT 59714

(406) 388-4601

Billings

1500 University Dr.

College of Education, Rm 114

Billings, MT 59102

(406) 656-0584

Butte

600 Gilman Ave

Butte, MT 59701

(406) 533-0910

Great Falls

600 Central Plaza #418

Great Falls, MT 59401

(406) 452-2501

Havre

232 1st St W

Havre, MT 59501

(406) 265-4225

Helena

Veterans Dr. BLDG 3633 RM 110E

Ft. Harrison, MT 59636

(406) 495-2080

Kalispell

2989 Hwy 93 N

Kalispell, MT 59901

(406) 755-3795

Miles City

1020 N Hayes

Miles City, MT 59301

(406) 232-1203

Missoula

1911 Tower St

Missoula, MT 59804

(406) 542-2501

Administration

PO Box 5715

Helena, MT 59604

(406)324-3742



Montana State Veteran Cemeteries Information:

Montana State Veterans Cemetery

3550 Heroes Rd.

Fort Harrison, MT 59636

(406)324-4793

Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery

Highway 59 & Cemetery Rd.

Miles City, MT 59301

(406)218-2945

Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery

1911 Tower St.

Missoula, MT 59804

(406) 721-2995



Works Cited

National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics. "Veterans Affairs." VA.gov, US Department of Veterans Affairs, 5 Aug. 2020, www.va.gov/vetdata/Veteran_Population.asp.

