



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Pennsylvania Keeping Pace with State Veterans' Benefits During COVID-19

ANNVILLE, PA – The Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs' (DMVA) commitment to provide benefits to the state's nearly 800,000 veterans during COVID-19 has yielded stronger collaboration with county and federal advocates.

"Veterans are an important part of Pennsylvania's population, having served our country by fighting for our freedoms and keeping us safe," said Maj. Gen. (ret.) Eric Weller, deputy adjutant general of Veterans Affairs at DMVA. "Now we are fighting a different kind of war and veterans need our help more than ever during these times of uncertainty. The Office of Veterans Affairs has steadily fielded thousands of queries from veterans about their much-needed benefits."

For veterans, filing for state and federal benefits often begins with meeting with their county director of veterans affairs. The DMVA has provided counties with extra assistance responding to veterans to assure their needs are met during the pandemic. This has been done mostly through the use of virtual technology and closer coordination with the county and service organization veteran service officers.

A complete list of county directors and their contact information can be found at: www.dmva.pa.gov/veteransaffairs/Pages/Outreach-and-Reintegration/County-Directors.aspx. If a county director is not available due to a county office closure, veterans may contact the DMVA toll-free at 800-547-2838.

The DMVA also collaborated with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to host two Pennsylvania-specific virtual town hall meetings that saw nearly 100,000 veterans and family members participate. Thanks to these events, veterans across the commonwealth were able to receive important information regarding their benefits during the pandemic. Information about how to apply for federal VA health care benefits can be found by going to www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/apply/.

"Serving veterans effectively has to be a collaborative effort on the local, state and federal levels," said Weller. "Planning, networking and relationship building are the keys to success, and that is exactly what we have been able to leverage during COVID-19."

In addition to connecting with a county director or an accredited veteran service organization, Weller recommends that every one of Pennsylvania's veterans sign up for the DMVA Veterans Registry, an extremely helpful, free tool that electronically delivers timely information about the many state benefits, programs and services available to veterans. Veterans, family members and people who work with veterans can sign up by computer or mobile device at www.register.dmva.pa.gov.

Weller cautions that, "Veterans and their dependents should never pay for help to apply for veteran's benefits because plenty of free, professional help is available. There are about 200 veteran service officers in Pennsylvania who work with organizations such as the DMVA, county veterans affairs offices, and several veterans service organizations. They are experienced, accredited professionals who provide veterans with the best advice and assistance at no cost."

For more about the DMVA visit us online at www.dmva.pa.gov or follow us at www.facebook.com/padmva or www.twitter.com/padmva.

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