

Testimony
House Appropriations Committee
March 6, 2019

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Major General Anthony J. Carrelli
The Adjutant General

Good Afternoon, Representatives Saylor and Bradford and members of the House Appropriations Committee. I am privileged to be here today to discuss the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs' 2019-20 budget.

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs' (DMVA) Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20 budget will help build a stronger Pennsylvania by providing vital state funding for our veterans' programs and our Pennsylvania National Guard. Our budget enables DMVA to enhance the care and outreach our veterans deserve and provide a trained National Guard force that is ready to support the demands of our commonwealth and nation.

Our dual mission is to provide quality service to the commonwealth's veterans and their families, and to oversee and support the Pennsylvania National Guard (PNG). PNG trains and conducts domestic operations under the command of the governor and control of DMVA when it is not in active federal service. PNG is the only military force shared by the state and federal governments. DMVA oversees and manages programs to provide benefits and assistance to an estimated 793,000 Pennsylvania veterans. In both missions, DMVA works in close partnership with the federal agencies, including the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), to carry out its dual mission for both the commonwealth and the nation.

Support Pennsylvania Veterans

In the Governor's FY 19/20 Executive Budget, DMVA received an overall 6.83% increase that allows us to support important initiatives that advance veteran programs and services and provide quality care to our most vulnerable Veterans. The budget allows for a 1.53% increase to operate our six Veterans Homes: the Delaware Valley Veterans' Home (DVVH), the Southeastern Veterans' Center (SEVC), the Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center (GMVC), the Hollidaysburg Veterans' Home (HVH), the PA Soldier and Sailors Home (PSSH) and the Southwestern Veterans' Center (SWVC), which affirms the Governor's priorities to support aging Pennsylvania Veterans who have sacrificed for this commonwealth and this country and to assist seniors with remaining in their homes for as long as possible.

Our veteran population across the commonwealth, represents a broad spectrum of diversity and unique needs that are based on the challenges of service that spans from World War II, Korea,

Vietnam, the Gulf War, to the many facets of the current Global War on Terrorism. It, also, involves meeting the unmet needs of today's soldiers. DMVA is implementing new initiatives to meet the unmet needs of our veterans suffering with mental health conditions, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and homelessness.

Our veterans make up approximately 6% of the commonwealth's total population. Roughly 43% of our veteran population is age 70 or older; 36% is between the ages of 50 and 69; and the remaining 21% is between the ages of 18 and 49. Women veterans make up 7.6% of the total veteran population of the commonwealth.

As our veterans continue to age, they are going to require care options that address both medical and personal needs. This budget enables us to pilot a medical supervision model for Adult Day Health Care (ADHC) at SEVC that provides skilled nursing care. It allows veterans to reside at home for as long as possible and, subsequently, provides for a natural transition into one of our Veterans Homes when additional care is required. The VA recognizes ADHC programs and offers per diem payment for these recognized programs that provide services to veterans. DMVA's goal is to expand the ADHC program the other Veterans Homes as other proposed renovations project unfold.

Outreach and delivery of veteran's programs are essential to ensuring that all veteran receive the benefits that they have earned and, rightfully, deserve. This budget provides the funding required to support DMVA's veteran outreach program and the administration of state veterans' benefits and services. In the Governor's Executive Budget for FY19/20, DMVA's Veteran Outreach Services Grant program received an increase, which provides for a cost of living increase for Veteran Service Officers who assist veterans with making applications for benefits and services.

The needs of our veterans and their families goes beyond the programs DMVA provides. We have found no lack of resources to support our veterans across Pennsylvania, but they are ineffectively duplicative, unorganized and difficult to identify for someone attempting to navigate services within the various geographic areas. Therefore, our Office of Veterans Affairs (OVA) has developed a phased approach to regionalization that coordinates outreach efforts

within five geographic regions in order to appropriately network federal, state and local governmental resources, 501(c)(3) organizations and veteran service organizations. This budget enables DMVA to resource a veteran-centric, regional behavioral health unit initiative by developing partnerships across the five regions that will cover, approximately, 13 counties/region within our commonwealth: northeast, southeast, central, northwest and southwest (see attached map). The veteran-centric regional behavioral health team will focus on identifying and coordinating area resources and referral services such as; behavioral health services, substance abuse treatment services and suicide intervention services. The initiative will create a database that network partners can utilize when serving veterans who are seeking housing, job skill training, education, employment, transportation or trying to secure other family needs within their local regions. To date, OVA has already begun to socialize, organize efforts, and seek assistance and support for the development of the database.

Our Bureau of Veterans Homes (BVH) continues to implement the Community Living Concept (CLC) and have completed major renovations and upgrades that have modernized the footprint at both GMVC and PSSH. Currently, BVH is converting 41 personal care beds in to 41 nursing care beds at DVVH based on the needs of the veteran population. Upon completion of the construction projects, three of our six Veterans Homes (DVVH, SWVC and GMVC) will have converted all their personal care beds to skilled nursing.

Pennsylvania National Guard

Pennsylvania has the second largest National Guard in the country with 18,502 total PNG members and authorization for 19,351 members. The Army National Guard is comprised of 14,410 soldiers and is authorized for up to 15,233 soldiers. The Air National Guard is comprised of 4,092 airmen and is authorized for up to 4,118 airmen. In addition to manning, PNG is responsible for federal military equipment valued at \$8.9 billion and real estate valued at over \$2.89 billion. When assessing funding support for PNG only 5% comes from the state; with 95% coming directly from the National Guard. A combination of both state- and federally-funded, full-time personnel maintain the facilities, structures and infrastructure used to store and maintain combat ready equipment and provide state-of-the-art training to our National Guard members.

Over the past three years, PNG manning has dropped below 100 percent for the first time in years due to budget uncertainty, sustained high operational requirements, changes in force structure, and an improved economy. Manning strength is a measure that the Army, the Air Force and the National Guard Bureau use to project increases and reductions in future capabilities. Recruitment and retention of qualified, motivated and trainable guardsmen are essential in maintaining PNG's status as one of the largest and best equipped National Guards in the country and we strive to look for opportunities to advance those efforts.

The Educational Assistance Program and the Health Officer Incentive Program are PNG incentive programs that are funded by the Educational Assistance Program Fund. These programs provide PNG members with educational grants in return for their willingness to enlist and/or continue serving in the PNG. The Governor's FY19/20 Executive Budget provides funding for a new educational grant fund for PNG family members called the Military Family Educational Program (MFEP). The program will enable PNG members, who commit to a second service obligation of six years in the PNG, to earn educational benefits for their spouse and/or children who attend Pennsylvania educational institutions. Not only will this new grant program increase reenlistment, retention and manning, it provides a well-deserved educational benefit to Pennsylvania families by holistically recognizing an entire family's service. MFEP will be the first of its kind in the nation and Pennsylvania is proud to showcase this new educational grant program.

Defend our Nation

The President can mobilize units of the PNG into active federal service in times of war or national emergency, or in support of worldwide military operation. Since September 11, 2001, more than 39,837 PNG members have deployed in support of the global contingencies. From January 2018 to present, the Pennsylvania Army National Guard deployed 576 soldiers to four countries. Currently, we have 219 of our soldiers deployed. During this same time period, the Pennsylvania Air National Guard deployed 812 airmen to 25 countries. Currently, we have 187 airmen deployed. To prepare for overseas deployments, units prepare for combat through realistic, challenging training. In 2018, over 3,872 soldiers of the 56th Stryker Brigade spent several weeks at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California. They, also, conducted live-

fire exercises in a simulated combat environment. Having passed this critical step in training, the unit is now in its “ready year” and is available to deploy.

Protect our Homeland:

Our PNG members live in every county and our 90 readiness centers and air bases are located at 71 sites in 52 counties throughout the commonwealth. We support our communities with limited resources and personnel during Special State Duty (SSD) missions; which include, honor guard details, parade representation, event support and community participation.

The governor, as the commander-in-chief of PNG, can utilize PNG members and units on State Active Duty (SAD) when a disaster occurs in the commonwealth or when tumult, riot or disaster exists or is imminent. From January 2018 to present, SAD was used six times to activate at total of 1,447 PNG members to support Operation Nightingale, Operation J-town Run, Operation LionHART and to provide support during winter storms Toby, Quinn and Riley. In addition to the SAD support provided within Pennsylvania, PNG provides mission support to other states and territories through Emergency Management Assistance Compacts (EMACs). In 2018, PNG provided EMAC support in Florence, South Carolina, Task Force Thompson, Task Force Patrick and Operation Highwater.

The Governor’s FY19/20 Executive Budget provides funding to upgrade the Commonwealth’s 800Mhz radio system to a hybrid VHF/800Mhz P25 trunked radio system, which will allow for enhanced interoperability between state, county and federal agencies. These 1,626 radios are utilized by our firefighters, police officers, Homes’ security officers, environmental and training division staff and military personnel during activated missions.

The Civil Air Patrol (CAP) operates in both a Title 32 status as a federally chartered 501 (c) 3 non-profit and in a Title 10 status as an auxiliary to the U.S. Air Force. CAP provides Pennsylvania with mission capabilities, through its all-volunteer membership; which includes, nearly 1,000 adults and over 900 cadets, equipment comprised of eleven single engine aircraft, 36 vehicles and communications equipment. DMVA, primarily, through the Pennsylvania Air National Guard, has integrated CAP as an option for domestic support for aerial photography, air and ground search and rescue and support operations. CAP’s operational costs are very low;

thereby making CAP a great value. The budget provides funding for cadet training in leadership and Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), equipment maintenance and for exploring the use of new technologies to enhance mission support. Additionally, CAP plays a large role in disaster assessment/relief and counter drug efforts. Finally, CAP provides worthwhile activities and development for Pennsylvania youth, teaching them discipline, leadership skills, courtesy and the importance of community service.

Conclusion

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to present this written report on the fiscal and operational issues affecting DMVA. As a result of the commitment of Governor Wolf and his Administration, we are confident that we can help build a stronger Pennsylvania by helping our veterans to thrive and helping PNG to maintain its force structure and capabilities. Ultimately, we are humbled by the opportunity to work with, and serve, heroes; including our veterans and those in service in PNG.

REGIONAL CONTACTS, BOUNDARY LINES, POPULATION COUNTS, AND VETERAN HOMES LOCATIONS.



