

**Department of Veterans' Affairs
Budget No. 321
Senate Bill No. 2025**

	FTE Positions	General Fund	Other Funds	Total
2017-19 legislative appropriation	7.00	\$1,155,162 ¹	\$2,091,571	\$3,246,733
2015-17 legislative appropriation	<u>9.00</u>	<u>1,506,877</u>	<u>288,018</u>	<u>1,794,895</u>
2017-19 appropriation increase (decrease) to 2015-17 appropriation	(2.00)	(\$351,715)	\$1,803,553	\$1,451,838

¹This amount includes \$18,600 of one-time funding. Excluding this amount, the agency's ongoing general fund appropriation is \$1,136,562.

Item Description

FTE positions - The Legislative Assembly authorized 7 FTE positions for the Department of Veterans' Affairs, a decrease of 2 FTE positions from the 2015-17 biennium. The Legislative Assembly removed 2 undesignated FTE positions.

Transport van replacement plan - The Legislative Assembly provided a general fund appropriation of \$37,200, including \$18,600 of one-time funding, for the purchase of vans to transport veterans to medical appointments.

Veterans' service dog training - In Section 4 of 2017 Senate Bill No. 2025, the Legislative Assembly appropriated \$50,000 from the general fund to the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the purpose of training up to four service dogs to assist North Dakota veterans with post traumatic stress disorder during the 2017-19 biennium. Funding provided for training each service dog is \$12,500, or approximately 50 percent of the total cost of training.

Highly rural transportation grants program - The Legislative Assembly, in Senate Bill No. 2025, appropriated \$1,719,520 of federal funds to the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the highly rural transportation grant program for the 2017-19 biennium. The United States Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Rural Health provides federal funding for the program to purchase wheelchair-accessible vans and to provide associated operational funds and reimbursement of subrecipients providing services for medically related transportation to veterans in rural areas.

The Legislative Assembly designated \$100,000 of the \$1,719,520 appropriation to be used for a portion of the salaries and wages of 2 FTE administrative positions in the transportation program and reduced the department's general fund appropriation for salaries and wages by \$100,000. This amount is dependent on the department receiving at least \$1 million of federal funding from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, as the department may only spend 10 percent of federal grant funds received on administrative costs, including salary expenditures.

Status/Result

The department removed 1 FTE office assistant III position and 1 FTE administrative assistant I position.

As of May 2018 none of the \$37,200 appropriation for transport van replacements has been spent. The department does not anticipate purchasing vans during the 2017-19 biennium, resulting in the \$37,200 general fund appropriation being canceled at the end of the 2017-19 biennium.

Through May 2018 none of the \$50,000 appropriation for service dogs has been spent. The department has several eligible applicants waiting for service dogs to be trained and awarded. The department anticipates the entire \$50,000 will be spent during the 2017-19 biennium.

The department was awarded \$402,730 from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for the highly rural transportation grants program for federal fiscal year 2018. As of May 2018 the department has spent \$168,000 on the transportation grants program, of which \$16,842 was for administrative salary expenditures.

The department anticipates total federal funding received under the grant will be approximately \$600,000, authorizing the department to utilize a total of \$60,000 for administrative salaries related to the transportation program during the 2017-19 biennium, \$40,000 less than the \$100,000 designated for the salaries and wages of 2 FTE administrative positions.

Veterans commemorative memorial coins - Senate Bill No. 2183 (2017) requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs to create and confer a commemorative memorial coin upon a family member of a deceased North Dakota veteran during military funeral honors for that veteran. The department may expend any gifts, grants, or donations received for the creation and conferment of commemorative memorial coins. The bill also contains a section of legislative intent that the Administrative Committee on Veterans' Affairs consider providing funding from the veterans' postwar trust fund for creating at least 4,000 commemorative memorial coins for the 2017-19 biennium.

In March 2018 the department received approval from the Administrative Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Emergency Commission to spend \$25,000 received from donations to purchase commemorative memorial coins. As of May 2018 the department has collected donations of \$11,745 and anticipates collecting an additional \$13,255 by July 2018. The department has completed the coin design and bidding process, and awarded the project to a vendor. The department has ordered coins and created policies and procedures for the conferment and sale of coins. The department will need final approval from the Administrative Committee on Veterans' Affairs regarding the policies and procedures before distributing the memorial coins. The Administrative Committee on Veterans' Affairs does not plan to spend veterans' postwar trust fund money for the commemorative coins.