



## Director's Message

**Mark S. Moses, Maj. U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)  
Director, State Office of Veterans Services**

Aloha to all of you, my friends, and colleagues:

As in any other year, your Office of Veterans Services

(OVS) submitted a budget request to the Gov., despite the economic downturn that began last year; the Gov. didn't reduce our budget request and forwarded it intact to the legislature. The budget is first prepared by the House of Representatives based on the request from the Admin., and then is crossed over to the Senate. Our budget request again left the House intact but the Senate draft would have drastically cut it. When the House and Senate met in conf. committee, with the help of your calls, faxes and Emails, our budget request was restored to the amount we originally submitted to the Gov. Unfortunately, after we submitted this request to the Gov. our contracts at the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery (HSVC) increased by approximately 25%. Several other cost such as rent and electricity also increased. So in the end we successfully got what we asked for which turned out to be much less than required.

In addition, Hawaii's severe financial situation will prove to be a significant challenge for the OVS. At this time, we do not anticipate layoffs, and have plans to function with furloughs. While we must reduce

employees work hours, this will not hinder us from adequately serving the veterans of Hawaii. Unlike most depts., our intention is not to have any days when an office is scheduled to be closed completely, other than state and federal holidays. Currently we have some essential vacancies we are requesting to fill.

The OVS has seen an increase in the number of veterans and their family members seeking to apply for services. OVS provides assistance in many areas, such as filing for a rating upgrade (because a medical condition has become worse), appealing decisions made by the Dept. of Veteran Affairs (VA), verifying eligibility for veteran license plates, preparing name change requests, providing notary services, and seeking other government benefits. Some of this increase is due to the worsening economic and fiscal conditions, and some due to our continuing outreach, and some due to word-of-mouth conversations about our track record in helping veterans.

In FY 2006 the OVS had approximately 30,000 contacts with veterans. This past Fiscal Year (FY) over 46,000 contacts was recorded. OVS's activities on behalf of our veterans can be partially illustrated by realizing that \$368,899,000 in VA dollars was brought into the State in 2007. Included in the above amount are funds for: compensation and pension payments of \$197 mil-

lion; medical care payments of \$126 mil.; education and vocational rehabilitation expenses of \$19 mil. (which are expected to increase this year due to the establishment of the New 911/GI Bill. Additionally 1,481\* veterans received GI home loan guarantees in the amount of \$6,065,518,088\*, in Federal FY 2008, including 24 loans to Native Americans worth \$7,132,638\* (\*FY 2008)

Presently, each week on average, our counselors receive nearly 600 calls and handle approximately 150 personal visits. Unfortunately, given the present workload, OVS counseling personnel are at near full capacity yet must adequately address future claims assistance needs of our National Guard and Reserve veterans returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan in Aug. and Sept. 2009.

### What I plan to do:

Keep all OVS offices operating Mon-Fri with standard business hours.

Decrease the number of in-person Advisory Board meetings normally held each month on Oahu, and look at technology to conduct meetings via video conferencing.

Continue to serve veterans through outreach, to include Molokai and Lanai and areas on each island with pockets of veterans who are under served.

Continue to seek federal funds to expand and enhance our statewide veteran cemetery system.

Continue to advocate for veterans and their dependents with the Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA), State and Federal Legislators.

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## What does the Office of Veterans Services offer veterans?

This is a question that is asked by a number of veterans. Veterans who have not used the Office of Veteran Services (OVS) think that the OVS duplicates services offered by the Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA). While both the OVS and the VA accept new claims filed by veterans, the goal of OVS is to help you obtain the maximum benefits allowed under the law. Also, the OVS specializes in handling appeals and

denials of benefits. Most veterans who seek the services of the OVS do so because they desire personal assistance in putting their claims together, their claims are in the appeal/denial process or, they want to reopen a claim for a service-connected condition that has become worse. OVS is the single office within the State government responsible for the welfare of veterans and their dependents.

It acts as a liaison between the governor and veterans' groups and organizations; its role is to act as an advocate for veterans' issues. The following are interesting facts about OVS and its offered services.

- Client base includes individuals seeking verification of military service, including National Guard and Reservists who performed training during a period of war, so they can receive military service credit for retirement from the State or counties.

- Clients include individuals who are applying for a State Special Housing Grant for totally disabled veterans for the purpose of purchasing or remodeling a home to im-

- prove handicapped-accessibility; those requesting necessary verification of disability status to apply for County tax exemptions on real property owned and occupied as a home by a totally disabled veteran or their spouse; those inquiring about tax exemptions on passenger cars owned by totally disabled veterans; veterans seeking vet-

erans' license plates; and those seeking to obtain copies of death and marriage certificates, when needed for a veteran's claim.

- Offices are located at each neighbor island county and are staffed by a counselor and clerical support providing the same services as the Oahu office.

- OVS is also responsible for the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe and is tasked to provide funds for the maintenance and re-

pair of the seven veterans cemeteries located on the neighbor islands. This role was assigned to the OVS when the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) closed to casket burials; the Federal response to Hawaii's need for this type of burial was that space could be made available in Washington

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### We answer the most frequently asked question about OVS

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## Director's Message (continued from page 1)

As you are aware, we have ongoing contacts within the VA. This spring I met in Washington, D.C. with Gen. Eric Shinseki, VA Sec., and Tammy Duckworth, Dpty. Sec. for Intergovernmental Affairs. In May, the Dpty. Sec. came to Hawaii and after one-on-one talks; she spoke at our Memorial Day ceremony at the HSVC. In Aug., I participated in a working lunch meeting with Gen. Shinseki again to discuss issues concerning Hawaii's veterans. Also in Aug. Sen. Akaka held visits and a hearing, and I had the opportunity to express some needs of Hawaii returning National Guard, Reservist, veterans and their family members.

### Capitol Improvement Projects (CIP):

Certain veteran cemetery CIP projects are, or may be, eligible for reimbursement under the Dept. of VA State Cemetery Grants Program (SCGP).

OVS received VA grant approval based on our request and plans for the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery (WHVC) Phase II. The \$2,755,694 VA grant approval has allowed us to proceed with Phase IIC, and a topping-off blessing of the committal shelter occurred on Jul. 21. The committal shelter is the first permanent bldg. erected at the cemetery. The project also includes 100% funding for the construction of in-ground cremation gravesites, columbaria, a scattering garden, a storage facility with a fenced service yard, a road, a memorial walk, an assembly area, restrooms and supporting infrastructure to include utilities, landscaping and irrigation. It is ongoing and the committal shelter is complete and was used for Veterans Day. The remainder of the project is on schedule and should be completed by the end of calendar year 2009.

Earlier we received a VA grant for \$435,000 for the WHVC Phase IIB expansion. That project was completed at the end of Mar., adding 260 direct burial plots, which more than doubled the size of the cemetery existing before.

OVS completed new assessments of monuments and memorials that include all eight State veterans' cemeteries in compliance with Hawaii State law. OVS determined that certain cemeteries were in need of repair or capitol improvements. Neighbor island cemeteries repair and maintenance is the responsibility of the respective counties. Therefore, we have taken the necessary measures to coordinate with the Mayors and Councils concerning repairs, and offered suggestions for state Capitol Improvement Projects (CIP) that may be eligible for federal reimbursements.

The triennial assessments we conducted in 2008 and again this year led us to develop a list of project needs, which I submitted to the Legislature and to VA. We have VA grant pre-approval to proceed with constructing 14 columbaria statewide. These include nine columbaria with 576 niches for East Hawaii Veterans Cemetery II (EHVC), three columbaria with 192 niches for Kauai Veterans Cemetery, and one each columbarium with 64 niches for Molokai and Lanai Veterans cemeteries. In addition, we have submitted pre-approval requests and are coordinating with VA for enhancements at Kauai Veterans Cemetery to include a maintenance facility, new gates, and road signage as soon as we obtain 5.1 acres of land to double the cemetery size.

For the neighbor island columbaria projects, we have asked and received approval for DAGS to act as our project officer and we are awaiting the start of these neighbor island projects.

### Finally, at HSVC our 3-phase project is progressing.

- Phase I, the slope stabilization is complete. The problem area was graded to lessen the degree of the slope, a concrete swale was built at the top of the problem area to carry the majority of the water runoff to new storm drains and an earthen swale was built at the bottom to redirect the balance of the water runoff. Ground cover foliage was planted between the swales to hold the dirt in place.

- For Phase II, addition of 2,036 niches, we received VA approval to accept a bid and we are proceeding with the installation.

- For Phase III, a multi compartment soil storage shed, we completed our pre-final design to submit for VA approval.

OVS continues to provide Polyguard Burial vaults for all casket burials of Retirees, Veterans, Active Duty members, and eligible dependents in veteran cemeteries statewide. These vaults help stabilize the grounds and reduce both the number and severity of settling gravesites so cemetery groundskeepers can devote less time to grave repair and more efforts to cemetery beautification.

### HSVC operations, maintenance, and repair are the direct responsibility of OVS.

- As I reported in the last Hawaii Veteran, we began minor repair and maintenance projects at HSVC in June to address age deterioration of the Admin. Building and all Plaza areas.

- We completed repainting the Admin. Building, repaired and waterproofed the roof, and repaired the glass sliding doors. We also finished resurveying three sections where survey points had been covered with sediment from the slope. These sections are now available, allowing more active usable area, and minimizing damage in any one specific area.

- We replaced the Admin. Building downspouts.

- We re-leveled and repaired walkways at the Flag Plaza that were damaged due to an earthquake a few years ago.

- We repaired light fixtures throughout the cemetery.

- We repaired mechanisms and replaced pulleys in all 4 flag poles.

OVS continues to purchase screened fill dirt to complete burials in the cemetery. This along with the burial vaults and an improved burial process help to decrease the number and the severity of settling gravesites.

Navy Seal Delivery Vehicle Team One, Mobile Diving Salvage Unit One, and the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command have all been doing volunteer work as a community service project once a month since Aug. 2008. Approximately twenty of them have been coming at a time with the exception of Nov. when they made it a "Command Day" and eighty of them came at one time. Their primary duties are to repair settled graves and to raise and level settled markers and vases. Their services are invaluable.

A new plaque monument was donated by The Independent Order of Odd fellows to the HSVC to honor all of our fallen veterans on Apr. 13, 2009. A dedication ceremony was held on June 18, 2009.

Today your HSVC is a fitting and dignified shrine for all resting there.

Some of the major projects OVS has part-

nered and participated in, involve benefits briefings to troops scheduled for deployment and their families. Troops sent to Iraq and Afghanistan are supplied necessary information and assured a grateful nation would provide resources upon their return.

The annual Governor's Veterans Day Ceremony was held on Nov. 11, 2008 with over 600 honored guests in attendance. State Attorney Gen. Mark Bennett who represented the Gov. gave the Veterans Day Address, Maj. Gen. Robert G.F. Lee offered the Welcome Remarks and I served as the Master of Ceremonies. Special keynote speaker, VA Deputy Undersecretary for Memorial Affairs, Steve Muro also presented me a VA State Cemetery Grant check which represents 100% funding for expansion and improvements at the WHVC on the Island of Hawaii. One of the highlights of this year's ceremony was the honoring of WWII veteran and volunteer at the HSVC, Mr. Zane Schlemmer, by Maj. Gen. Lee and myself.

The Wreaths Across America Ceremony was held on Dec. 13, 2008 at the Flag Pole Plaza on the grounds of the HSVC. For this ceremony, wreaths are placed at the same moment across the continental United States and Hawaii. Unfortunately, with Hawaii's time zone, ours was held at 7 am and was only attended by the participants and the cemetery staff. Six wreaths were presented, one for each branch of service and one for POW/MIAs.

On May 24, 2009, for Memorial Day we had over 200 Girl Scouts from troops across the island to help decorate each grave with



Photo by Jayme Sato

**Duckworth sharing an inside joke with Sen., Akaka and Dir. Moses. Duckworth said, this is a replica of the helicopter I flew. However the helicopter I flew had bullet holes in it.**

an American Flag and lei.

On May 25, 2009 we held the Governor's Memorial Day Ceremony. There were over 700 attendees with Lt. Gov. Duke Aiona giving the Memorial Day address. As Dir. I presided as Master of Ceremonies as the program opened with the Hawaiian Oli (chant) and Hula followed by the traditional Parade of Veterans Org. Flags. Maj. Gen. Lee gave the Welcome Remarks and the Na Leo Lani Choir sang the National and State Anthems. The highlight of this year's ceremony was the Honor and Respect paid to our veterans by the Honorable L. Tammy Duckworth, Maj. ILARNG, Asst. Sec., Dept. of VA. Refreshments, as always, were provided by the Fleet Reserve Assc., Branch #46 and the Women's Auxiliary.

In closing, your Office of Veterans Services is here to serve you and is diligently working for you throughout Hawaii.

I hope you all enjoyed a wonderful Holiday Season and I wish you all a Safe and a most Blessed New Year.

# L. Tammy Duckworth joins us at HSVC on Memorial Day

Assistant Secretary of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs for the United States Department of Veterans Affairs L. Tammy Duckworth was our distinguished guest speaker for this year's Memorial Day Ceremony. Duckworth was confirmed by the U.S. Senate and previously was the director of the Illinois State Department of Veterans Affairs.

Duckworth has many ties to Hawaii. Duckworth is a McKinley high school and University of Hawaii graduate. She is a Maj. in the Illinois Army National Guard and was the director of the Illinois State Dept. of Veterans Affairs. Duckworth was awarded the Purple Heart Medal when the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter she was co-piloting was hit by a rocket propelled grenade, fired by Iraqi insurgents. She is still flying after receiving these severe life threatening injuries. Duckworth received many awards, such as the Air Medal and the Combat action badge. She has dedicated her life to public service by advocating on behalf of disability rights and veterans. Duckworth testified several times before Congress regard-

ing medical care and employment for veterans. Duckworth had the opportunity to speak at hundreds of events in 50 states and 4 territories. Yet she accepted Hawaii's invitation to honor our Hawaii veterans. She is to be considered to be the voice and face of the veteran community. We were very happy to have had her as our distinguished guest speaker.

Duckworth spoke about the price of freedom, that freedom is what we keep fighting for. "As we join together to pay tribute to the men and women who wore our now nation's uniform. And for whom duty to country meant more to them than their own lives." Duckworth participated in the placing of the wreath and waived at the 1st Battalion, 171st Aviation Hawaii Army National Guard pilots as they flew over Memorial Plaza.

Our veterans were pleased that Duckworth stayed after the Me-



Photos by Jayme Sato

**Duckworth gave a most moving speech. She prayed for the troops who are still fighting for our freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan.**



**Juan C. Pineda TSgt., Lt. Gov. James Aiona, L. Tammy Duckworth and Maj. Gen. Robert G.F. Lee place the wreath upon Memorial Plaza.**

## Herring Kalua steps down from the Advisory Board



Photo by Ronald Cole

**Pictured from left to right: Maj. Gen. Robert G.F. Lee, Herring Kalua, Dir. Mark Moses and Gov. Linda Lingle**

Herring Kalua attended his last Advisory Board meeting. His term has ended for the Advisory Board and he wishes to concentrate on other Hilo projects.

Mr. Kalua said that he enjoyed serving on the board. He was happy to see the State Veterans Home in Hilo. Mr. Kalua will still be an active participant in all things relating to veterans. Thank you to Mr. Kalua for his service and dedication to all veterans.

Mr. Norman Stahl will fill in for Mr. Kalua as the East Hawaii Advisory Board member until he is installed as an official board member by the Gov. He is a veteran and is an active participant in veteran issues.



### Hawaii Veteran

State of Hawaii Department of Defense

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# OVS Services List continued from page 1

or California for Hawaii's veterans. Veterans throughout the State wanted another solution - the creation of a veterans cemetery that could accept casket burials on Oahu.

- OVS oversees a 200-bed, long-term care State Veterans Home in Hilo. This facility will utilize funds from the VA and the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation to develop, construct, maintain and operate this facility. One unique feature of this facility is that both veterans and their spouses will be able use it.

- Act 63, passed in 1995, by the 18th Legislature, State of Hawaii, and amended in 1997, tasks the OVS to: "inspect every three years all state war memorials and veterans' cemeteries for repair and maintenance deficiencies, and report all repair and maintenance problems at these memorials and cemeteries to the adjutant general, comptroller, and the legislature prior to the start of the next regular session." The purpose of these inspections is to ensure that these war memorials and cemeteries are in good repair and worthy of the honor and respect due the memories of those they represent.

- The OVS maintains an official copy of the DD214 (the Discharge and Separation Document) given to each individual discharged from the military, including Reservists and National Guard members as long as they were on active duty, listing Hawaii as their home of record.

- OVS offers assistance with name changes, discharge upgrades, short term counseling and notary public services.

- OVS, as a State agency, is able to refer individuals who do not

qualify for VA services to State services.

- OVS main office is co-located with the VA benefits office at Tripler Hospital because it offers direct benefit services to veterans and their family members. OVS has offices on Maui, Kauai and the Big Island.

- In fiscal year 2002, over 22,000 veterans found value in services offered by the OVS. OVS strives to increase outreach to veteran, and in the fiscal year 2008 alone more than 46,000 veterans were seen.

- OVS is one of 56 similar offices with names such as the Office of Veterans Services, State Department of Veterans Affairs, or Commissions for Veterans. They are located in each state as well as Puerto Rico, Guam, Virgin Islands, American Samoa, North Mariana Islands, and Washington D.C.

- OVS helps Hawaii's economy by obtaining VA payments for veterans who qualify for either pension or compensation.

- OVS also ensures that veterans eligible for VA medical care or prescription drugs are aware that they may be eligible for this service for free or with a co-payment.

- In fiscal year 2007, the VA provided \$337,437,000 in total expenditures for treatment, care, and monetary payments to veterans and their family members in Hawaii.

- The staff of the OVS is "Proud to serve those who served our Country."



**OVS is working with the VA to get the most services to Hawaii veterans.**



OVS Staff 2008

Photos by Jayme Sato

## KMR Groundbreaking Ceremony at Hilo

Hawaii Army National Guard Keaukaha Military Reservation (KMR) Joint Military Center.

On hand were Gov. Linda Lingle, Maj. Gen

Robert Lee and Dir. Mark Moses.

KMR will become a one stop shop for military personnel services. A branch office of OVS will be moved into the new KMR building. In the

Community Service Building will be the OVS offices, recruiting office and family support center. There will be a classroom and assembly building as well.



Photos by Keith Ribbentrop

**KMR Artwork of the Joint Military Center**

### Korean War Veterans

The Hawaii Coordinator of the Korea Revisit Program is accepting applications for the 2010 Revisit to Korea. Hawaii veterans who served in Korea between Jun. 25, 1950, and Oct. 15, 1954, are eligible to participate in the ROK Government-sponsored Korea Revisit Program. Also, for those who participated in this program more than 10 (ten) years ago may be eligible to repeat the Revisit. For information and application, contact your nearest KWVA chapter or the Hawaii Coordinator at 808-235-5713, e-mail: magnum44@hawaii.rr.com

### The rising costs to produce the Hawaii Veteran Newsletter

As mailing expenses constitute approximately half of the cost of producing the Hawaii Veteran Newsletter. In an effort to continue providing you with the newsletter, we are asking your cooperation in accepting the newsletters electronically (by email) if at all possible. We understand some of you don't have direct access to computers or email. Therefore you can pick up a hard copy at all the branch offices of OVS. Your assistance will be greatly appreciated. If you wish to participate in this manner, please provide us with your email address. Contact OVS by email [ovs@ovs.hawaii.gov](mailto:ovs@ovs.hawaii.gov) or call us at 433-0420. A copy of the newsletter will be available on the OVS website at [www.hawaii.gov/dod/ovs](http://www.hawaii.gov/dod/ovs)