

Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs (CBVA) December Meeting

Date: 12 December 2025

Location: Veterans Community Project

Time: 9:04 AM

Break: 10:42-10:56

Members Present

Shelia Scanlon, Chair
Raymond Taylor, Vice Chair
Lacey Golonka, Secretary
Jasmine Motupalli, Member

Longinos Gonzalez, Member
Howard Richards, Member
Sheldon Smith, Member

Staff Present

Bruce Cowan - Director
Angela Ingalls, Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado Administrator
Darin Collazo, Western Region One Source Administrator
Lisa Stamm, CDVA Grants Administrator

James Poteet, Appeals Specialist
Carissa Snyder - CDVA Operations Coordinator
Beth Maxwell, CDVA Operations
Alex Martinez - DMVA
Archivist/Webmaster

Guest

Shelly Kalkowski - UVC President
Jennifer Seybold - Veteran Service Project Executive Director
Josh Medina - NASCVSO representative and CCVSOA President
Rick Torres - Montezuma County VSO

Tom Lindahl - Military Officer
Association of Boulder and UVC member
Emma Rage - Civic Round Table
Emily Benz - Civic Round Table

Public Comments

Ms. Kalkowski addressed the board regarding the United Veterans Coalition (UVC), reviewing its 54-year history as a unified voice for veterans. She outlined the UVC's focus on public policy and state legislation, specifically highlighting the federal funds veterans bring to the state through the VA and the Department of Defense. Additionally, she noted that the UVC is prioritizing organizational sustainability in its upcoming strategic plan.

Ms. Seybold of the Veterans Community Project (VCP) led a tour of the facility for the Board prior to the meeting. She stated she is available to conduct future tours and speak with anyone interested in assisting the VCP. Additionally, she reported that the organization was recently featured in The Denver Post for its work with homeless veterans in Longmont.

Civic Round Table

The Board received a presentation on the Civic Round Table (CRT), a centralized technology platform designed to facilitate collaboration between government, non-profits, and constituents. The system features a closed AI tool that utilizes only internal platform resources, with data governance and website whitelisting managed by designated Space Managers. Regarding the Board page, the Board requested that peer-to-peer communication features be disabled to prevent private deliberations and ensure compliance with Type II public meeting requirements. The Colorado Division of Veterans Affairs will utilize a veteran services channel for regional leadership connections, while a separate Board channel will host organized documents and a shared calendar. It was noted that the platform meets OIT accessibility standards.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the December meeting were approved by all with the changes previously emailed. Mr. Smith made the motion. Ms. Golonka seconded. Mr. Richards abstained. Motion carried.

Standing Reports

VCLC Board of Commissioners Minutes - Pat Hammon:

Ms. Hamon was unable to provide a report to the Board, as she was attending the Veteran Community Living Centers Board of Commissioners (VCLCs) meeting, which was held concurrently with the CBVA meeting.

UVC Updates - Shelly Kalkowski

During the recent United Veterans Coalition (UVC) legislative update, the coalition detailed several strategic goals for the 2025 session, including a high-priority initiative to adapt a Pennsylvania-based veteran service model for Colorado. The Board engaged in a critical review of this proposal, raising significant concerns regarding its implementation and the currently undefined fiscal costs. Members specifically questioned how the program would navigate federal Power of Attorney (POA) and VA accreditation requirements, stressing that any expansion must verify that existing county stipend programs effectively secure qualified Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) capable of managing complex claims. In light of these concerns, the Board formally moved to request the specific data and documentation the UVC is utilizing for this initiative, with a particular focus on the historical volume of claims submitted by each VBA-accredited organization in the state. The Board indicated that a more comprehensive, data-driven discussion will be necessary before moving forward with a recommendation on this service model and proposed UVC Legislation.

Parallel to the VSO initiative, the UVC reported on its collaborative efforts with the Defense-State Liaison Office (DSLO) to strengthen educational protections for military-connected families. A primary focus of this partnership involves expanding the Purple Star School program and establishing new requirements for the seamless continuity of Special Education services. This legislation would mandate that Section 504 plans and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) transfer immediately between school districts to prevent service gaps for students moving into or within Colorado. Furthermore, the UVC is advocating for the explicit inclusion of National Guard families in these educational support frameworks to ensure parity across all military components.

The update also addressed broader policy goals, including an initiative to validate Military Protective Orders (MPOs) within civilian jurisdictions to enhance protections in domestic violence cases. While the Board acknowledged the clear merit of providing civilian enforcement for military orders, members clarified that the Board's specific legislative mandate is restricted to veterans rather than active-duty service members.

Additionally, the UVC highlighted its active work on SB25-282, the Veterans' Benefits Claim Protection Act. This bill is designed to align state law with 38 U.S.C. § 5901 by strictly regulating the fees unaccredited organizations can charge for VA claim assistance, thereby curbing predatory "claim shark" practices and ensuring veterans retain the maximum amount of their earned benefits.

Regarding fiscal governance, the UVC sought clarification on the rationale behind the transfer of funds from the Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) to the Veterans Assistance Grant (VAG). The Board clarified that the proposed transfer consists strictly of excess funds from the VTF to supplement the VAG, noting that the VAG historically receives higher spending allocations than the VTF can utilize under current constraints. The Board emphasized that this allowance was created to maximize the reach of available

resources and support a broader demographic of Colorado Veterans. Finally, while the UVC expressed a desire to continue and expand Veteran Treatment Court goals, it was noted that no formal legislative action will be taken during the current session; however, the Board and UVC remain committed to the long-term advancement of these initiatives. The next UVC meeting will be January 15, 2026 at 9:00 am.

Legislative Report - Bruce Cowan

An update was not provided.

Director Report

The Division is scheduled to meet with the Capital Development Committee on Monday to provide a briefing on the Cemetery Capital Project. This specific update will focus on the renovation of the existing administrative building, which is necessary to accommodate additional staff and address evolving cemetery operational needs. This project aims to improve facility efficiency and support the increased service demands of the veteran community.

Veteran Services - Eric Winterrowd:

Mr. Winterrowd provided slides for the Board's review. The Board viewed the presentation materials as presented and proceeded with the remainder of the meeting.

Western Region One Source (WROS) - Darrin Collazo:

A briefing was provided on current events and strategic initiatives at the Western Region One Source (WROS). Upcoming activities include a wreath-laying ceremony at the Blue Star Memorial to honor veterans as part of the wreaths across America commemorations. To ensure consistent veteran engagement regardless of weather

conditions, the WROS is collaborating with the Elks to provide bus passes, alongside ongoing improvements to programming designed to secure long-term support. Operational demand at the WROS remains high, with a waitlist established for new tenants. In response, the facility is planning to redesign underutilized space to create additional offices for incoming partners. Furthermore, plans are underway to commission a new monument on the grounds dedicated to veterans.

The report concluded with a discussion on shifting regional demographics. In response to a specific inquiry from Ms. Seybolt regarding the rising number of unhoused veterans migrating from the Western Slope, it was clarified that a significant reduction in available support resources in that region has contributed to a visible increase in the unhoused veteran population currently residing in the Longmont area.

Veterans Memorial Cemetery of the Western Slope - Anglia Ingalls

Wreaths Across America activities commenced on December 12th, with the formal wreath-laying ceremony taking place on December 13th. During this event, volunteers placed wreaths at gravesites while speaking each veteran's name aloud, followed by a moment of silence observed throughout the day to honor their service.

Ms. Ingalls provided a summary of additional events and outreach initiatives attended by cemetery staff during November. It was noted that the cemetery remained open on Veterans Day; the presence of staff on November 11th received positive feedback, and this practice will continue in future years. Regarding staffing, the current work-study student is wrapping up their semester. Notably, there is no work-study replacement lined up for the spring, marking a significant change as the cemetery has consistently hosted a student in this role for years.

In recent family outreach, a family visited the cemetery to discuss a possible resting place for their grandmother's ashes; she served in the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion. The cemetery is also continuing work on the programs addressed during the

November board meeting. Finally, it was noted that there is currently no update available from the National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

Grants - Lisa Stamm:

The Grants Team completed site visits to current grantees and held a strategic meeting with DAV Colorado. To support the grantee community, the team hosted two office hour sessions for technical assistance. Final edits are being made to the Neighborly Platform, with the formal application window scheduled for January 20th through March 24th. Instructions are currently available online to assist organizations in gathering the necessary documentation for a qualified application. New applicants are required to meet with the grant teams between January 7th and February 20th, and Neighborly will provide applicant training on January 21st, January 28th, and February 4th.

The Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) has executed 32% of its funds, providing services to 475 veterans. Of these requests, 48% were designated for transportation and 22% for housing assistance. Demographic data shows that 51.20% of those assisted were rural or remote veterans, while 37.02% were older veterans. The Veteran Community Living Center (VCLC) served 264 veterans, with expenditures totaling \$113,900.39. Of this, \$65,753.06 was allocated for administrative costs and \$47,441.11 was spent on capital improvements.

During the first quarter, 1,550 veterans were served using Veterans Assistance Grant (VAG) funds, with 47% of this year's budget already executed. Services included 57% for mental health support, 27% for home repairs, and 23% for women veterans.

Mental health invoice processing included 43 invoices for Florence and 189 invoices for Fitzsimons. Additionally, the Military Honors Stipend processed 24 invoices and 79 services, totaling \$3,948.

Colorado County Veteran Service Association (CCVSOA) and National Association of State County Veteran Service Officers (NASCVSO) - Josh Medina

A Legislative Liaison Summit will be held in Washington, D.C., from March 22nd to 26th. This summit will focus on gathering information and resources to better advocate for Colorado veterans at the federal level.

The Colorado County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) Association is currently developing a peer-to-peer communication system to improve networking among VSOs. They are evaluating several platforms, including a dedicated channel on the VA's Microsoft Teams environment, Slack, or Monday.com. Additionally, the presentation on Civic Roundtable highlighted another potential platform for peer-to-peer engagement. The CVSOs are currently working on a survey to gather further input, with updates to follow.

Old Business

Branding - Shelia Scanlon

Ms. Scanlon requested to include a dedicated branding section at the beginning of the January meeting. Mr. Martinez will be present to discuss the specific parameters and guidelines regarding website management at <https://vets.colorado.gov/upcoming-board-meeting>.

During this discussion, the Board expressed interest in enhancing the site by adding photos of board meetings and various outreach events. Additionally, the Board requested Mr. Martinez' assistance in establishing and managing a social media presence. To further improve regional engagement, the Board has also requested that Regional and County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs) attend future meetings to share information regarding local events occurring in their respective areas.

VTF Funds

The Board received a letter from the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) Chief Financial Officer (CFO) regarding administrative matters. The correspondence addressed the inclusion of comfort items within administrative expenditures.

Southern Region One Source - Director Bruce Cowan

There is an additional location situated in a strip mall that is currently owned by the Disabled American Veterans (DAV). Utilization of this site would require the state to purchase the building, followed by necessary renovations to bring the facility up to required standards.

Albuquerque VHA collaboration with Colorado Division of Veteran Affairs - Raymond Taylor

The meeting has been postponed to a future date.

Women Veteran Sub Committee - Sheila Scanlon, Lacey Golonka, Jasmine Montupalli

A meeting has been scheduled for early January to take place at the hospital.

Annual Report

The Board will be working with Brigadier General Michael Bruno to obtain the missing reports from the various Colorado Departments.

New Business:

VCLC Visits

The Board is planning a tour of the Veteran Community Living Centers (VCLCs) via Black Hawk helicopter tentative for March 2026.

Loss of Community Care Dental and Optical Vendors for rural areas

The Board determined that a letter from **Director Cowan** would be the most effective approach, as Colorado utilizes several different Veteran Hospital Administrations (VHA).

Board Remarks

The Board remarked on events they attended in November.

Statewide Veterans Issues:

Access to VA Prescriptions to include providing pharmacies in rural areas

Veterans on the Fringes

Transportation

Homelessness and Food Security

Mental Health Service

Upcoming Meetings

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 09 January 2026 | Virtual |
| 12 February 2026 | VCLC Florence, Colorado |
| 04 March 2026 | RMR Denver, Colorado |
| 10 April 2026 | VCLC, Denver, Colorado |
| 08 May 2026 | Centennial, Colorado |
| 08 May 2026 Grant Review | Centennial, Colorado |
| 05 June 2026 | VCLC Rifle, Colorado |

Adjournment

Mr. Taylor made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Smith seconded. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:38 AM.