

VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION  
OF  
KANE COUNTY, ILLINOIS

*Jacob A. Zimmerman, Superintendent*



# Annual Report

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Fiscal Year 2023

**COUNTY OF KANE**  
**VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION**

**JACOB A. ZIMMERMAN**  
Superintendent



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State of Illinois  
The Honorable JB Pritzker  
207 State House  
Springfield, Illinois 62706-0001

December 26, 2023

Dear Governor Pritzker,

It is with great pleasure that I present you with the annual report of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Kane County, Illinois, pursuant to Chapter 330, Part 45, Section 8 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes.

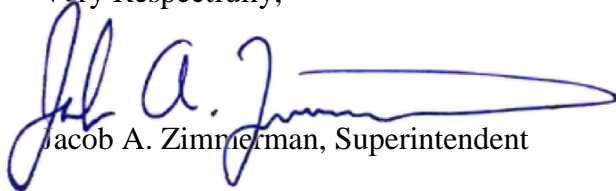
As the foremost veteran advocacy agency in Illinois' seventh most veteran populous county, we provide services in the following categories:

- 1.) Advocacy
- 2.) Benefit Application Filing and Claims Management
- 3.) Transportation to Local VA Medical Appointments
- 4.) Financial Assistance for Indigent Veterans

In Fiscal Year 2023 ending on November 30<sup>th</sup>, the Commission was instrumental in securing \$7,005,475.73 in new monetary benefits for Kane County veterans, their dependents, and their survivors from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). That represents a return to the community of \$15.19 for every dollar of property tax revenue received by the Commission. Additionally, our staff was directly responsible in securing \$987,554.40 in new VA health care benefits for Kane County veterans. Consequently, the Commission continues to be a significant and judicious governmental entity at the county level.

Thank you for your support of our county's veterans. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

Very Respectfully,



Jacob A. Zimmerman, Superintendent

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## Veterans Assistance Commission Delegates and Alternates 2023

**President Dale A. Dopkins** – Hampshire American Legion Post 680  
**Vice-President Andrew J. Balafas** – Saint Charles AMVETS Post 503  
**Secretary Diane M. Ahrens** – Elgin Marine Corps League Detachment 077  
**Treasurer Robert A. Getz** – Elgin VFW Post 1307  
**Chaplain** – Vacant  
**Judge Advocate Gary M. Leonard** – Saint Charles American Legion Post 342  
**Executive Committee Norman E. Welker** – Elburn American Legion Post 630  
**Executive Committee Theodore N. Biever Jr.** – Dundee VFW Post 2298  
**Executive Committee John R. Westphall** – Saint Charles AMVETS Post 503  
**Delegate Robert A. Getz** – Elgin American Legion Post 57  
**Alternate Mark W. Smith** – Elgin American Legion Post 57  
**Delegate Eric W. Teafoe** – Geneva American Legion Post 75  
**Alternate Robert Bigelow** – Geneva American Legion Post 75  
**Delegate Diane M. Ahrens** – Elgin Marine Corps League Detachment 077  
**Delegate John C. Muschler** – Aurora American Legion Post 84  
**Alternate Peter A. Regnier** – Aurora American Legion Post 84  
**Delegate Daniel J. Palmer Jr.** – Aurora AMVETS Post 103  
**Alternate Rob Daniele** – Aurora AMVETS Post 103  
**Delegate Gordon F. Steinway** – Elgin AMVETS Post 202  
**Alternate Joseph P. McKeown III** – Elgin AMVETS Post 202  
**Delegate Kevin H. Kostuchowski** – Maple Park American Legion Post 312  
**Alternate Matt Delegatto** – Maple Park American Legion Post 312  
**Delegate Charles Wittleder** – Saint Charles American Legion Post 342  
**Alternate Dennis Larson** – Saint Charles American Legion Post 342  
**Delegate Ramon Bejarano** – Aurora VFW Post 468  
**Alternate Arthur Lomas** – Aurora VFW Post 468  
**Delegate Andrew J. Balafas** – Saint Charles AMVETS Post 503  
**Alternate John R. Westphall** – Saint Charles AMVETS Post 503  
**Delegate David M. Jordan** – Batavia American Legion Post 504  
**Alternate Nate R. Gustafson** – Batavia American Legion Post 504  
**Delegate Norman E. Welker** – Elburn American Legion Post 630  
**Alternate Charles F. Coffey** – Elburn American Legion Post 630  
**Delegate Michael R. Holt** – Carpentersville American Legion Post 679  
**Alternate Harold D. Otteman** – Carpentersville American Legion Post 679  
**Delegate T.R. Smith** – Hampshire American Legion Post 680  
**Alternate Dale A. Dopkins** – Hampshire American Legion Post 680  
**Delegate Stanley E. Herzog** – Geneva Vietnam Veterans of American Chapter 693  
**Alternate Michael T. Foulkes** – Geneva Vietnam Veterans of American Chapter 693  
**Delegate Lawrence E. Orsborn** – Batavia VFW Post 1197  
**Alternate Sean L. Peter** – Batavia VFW Post 1197  
**Delegate Richard R. Matthys** – Fox Valley Marine Corps League Detachment 1233  
**Alternate Scott D. Roscoe** – Fox Valley Marine Corps League Detachment 1233  
**Delegate Robert A. Getz** – Elgin VFW Post 1307  
**Alternate Shirldine-Kay Nohl** – Elgin VFW Post 1307

## Delegates and Alternates 2023, Continued

**Delegate Clifton R. Houchin** – Aurora American Legion Post 1944

**Alternate Scott F. Maxson** – Aurora American Legion Post 1944

**Delegate Theodore N. Biever Jr.** – Dundee VFW Post 2298

**Alternate John S. Darr** – Dundee VFW Post 2298

**Delegate Mark F. Powell** – Saint Charles VFW Post 5036

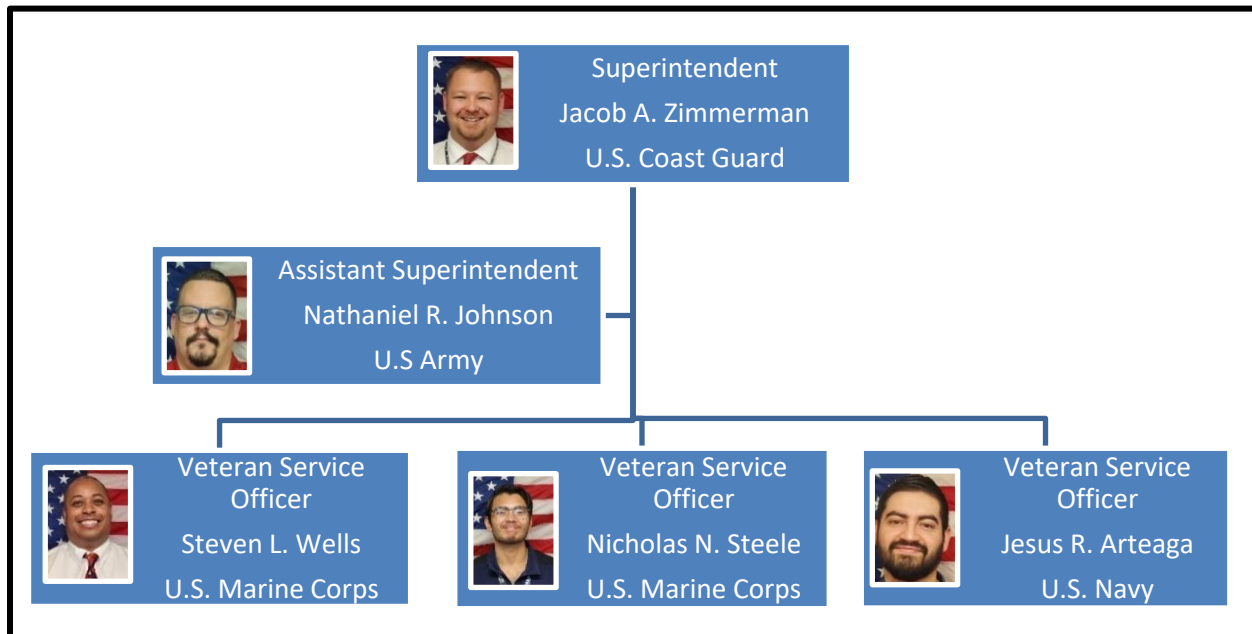
**Alternate Gary M. Leonard** – Saint Charles VFW Post 5036

**Delegate Kenneth Periman** – Montgomery VFW Post 7452

## Our Mission

*To maximize the benefits for and improve the welfare of veterans in the County of Kane by serving as the central assistance and advocacy agency for veterans residing therein.*

## Our Team



*Something that is truly special about our Veterans Assistance Commission is our high-caliber staff. Their expertise and enthusiasm allows us to keep a lower head count than our peers thus providing an excellent level of service at a great cost to taxpayers. Our workload significantly increased in Fiscal Year 2023 due in large part to the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act. As a result, we hired an additional Veteran Service Officer (VSO), Nicholas Steele a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, which is the first time we have had five staff members. All of our VSO's hold the advanced designation of "Certified Veteran Advocate" from the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers, except VSO Steele who must first have more than five years in his role as a VSO before attempting to become a Certified Veteran Advocate.*

## Section I: VA Benefits Assistance

As seen in the following figures, our production and outcome metrics have rebounded nicely as the COVID-19 Pandemic has subsided. These increases are largely a result of the PACT Act signed in to law in 2022, which effected several different cohorts of veterans – many of whom filed disability compensation claims. Our staff increased our community outreach efforts across Kane County. Those initiatives this year included speaking engagements at various community organizations, monthly events in Aurora, Hoffman Estates, Elgin, Huntley, and Saint Charles, a resource fair in Aurora, and a resource fair in Saint Charles. Additionally, after a seven-year hiatus, the Commission once again delved into the transportation business, this time in cooperation with the Kane County Division of Transportation. A grant from the American Rescue Plan, through the Kane County Board, will fund this program through Fiscal Year 2026.

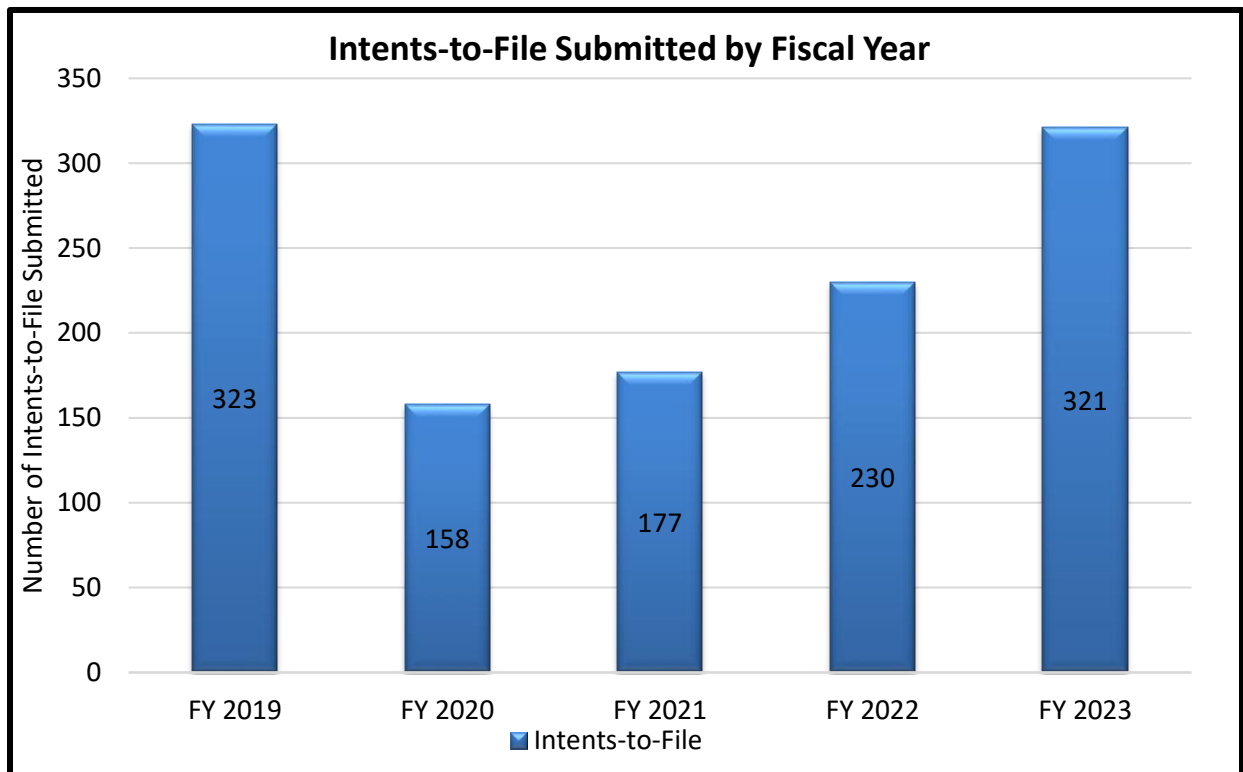


Figure 1. *In Fiscal Year 2023, Commission staff completed 321 Intents-to-File, which is consistent with a return to pre-pandemic workload. Outreach events are the prime generator of Intents-to-File as outreach events are ideal for non-comprehensive intake. Intents-to-File are an important piece of our work as they protect our clients' effective date for benefits while allowing up to one year to gather all necessary documentation to support a claim for VA benefits. This results in larger retroactive payments to our clients when their claims are decided while allowing time for the claim to be fully-developed prior to submission.*

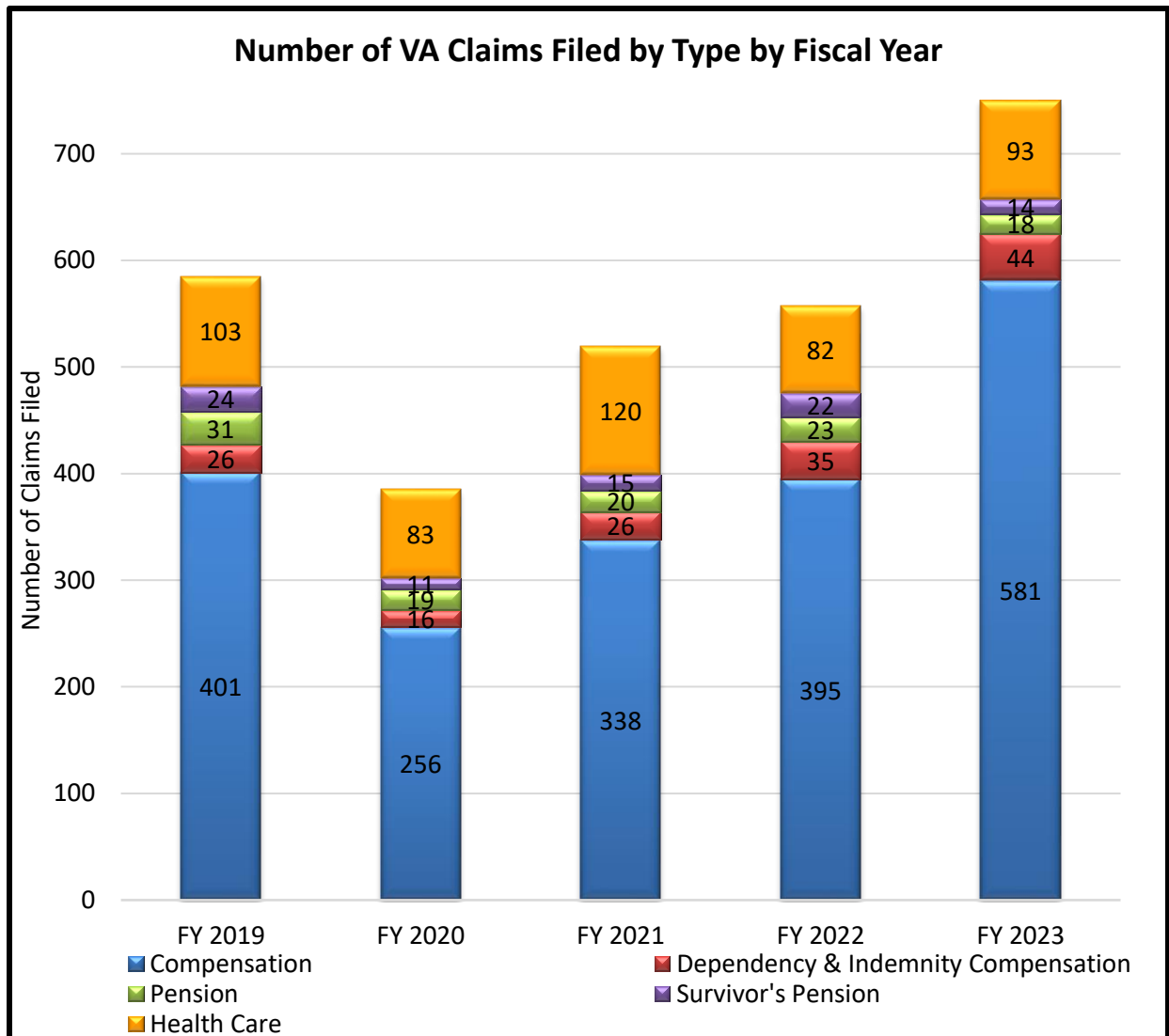


Figure 2. Commission staff completed 35% more claims in FY 2023 than in FY 2022. This represents a record production year for our office. This chart is not a perfect apples-to-apples comparison due to some changes in the VA's appeals process. Prior to February 19, 2019, filing a "reconsideration" claim would be categorized as a compensation claim and therefore be counted in this chart. With VA implementing the Appeals Modernization Act in early 2019, "Reconsiderations" are no longer permitted and instead must be filed as a "Supplemental Claim" which is an appeal and is therefore reported on the next chart. It is also easier to seek out a difference of opinion by filing a "Higher Level Review" appeal. In other words, some of the data on this chart in FY 2019 would instead be included in Figure 3 had those appeals categories existed at that time. Filing applications for VA benefits remains the Commission's focus in its mission to maximize benefits and enhance the welfare of Kane County veterans. It is the Superintendent's forecast that claims applications will continue to increase because of the PACT Act.

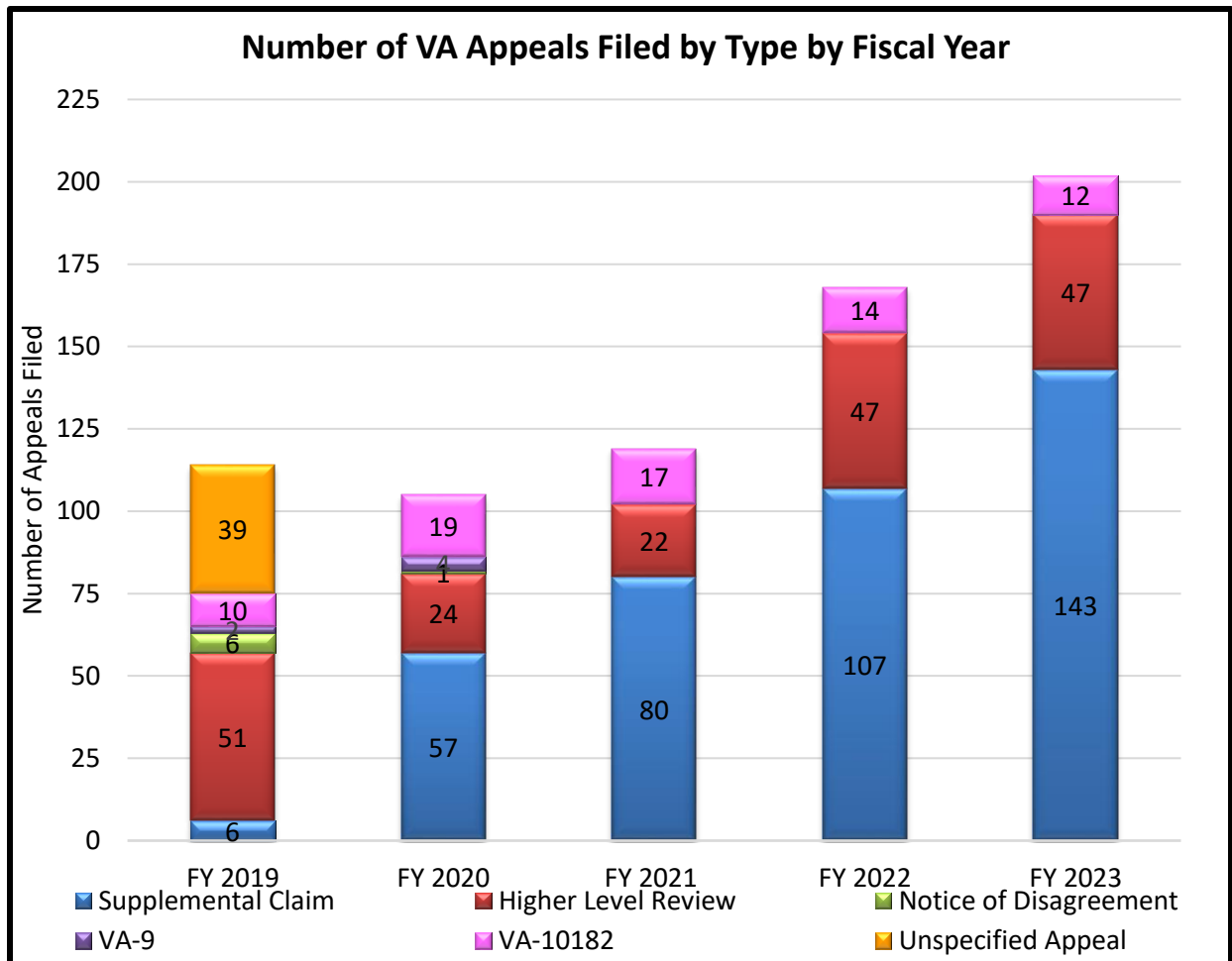


Figure 3. This is the fifth year of this graphic, which features a somewhat opaque look into our appeals workload. It is opaque because this data was not completely captured in FY 2019 and was reconstructed as best as possible. Although the total number of appeals filed is entirely accurate, the individual appeal categories are subject to error in FY 2019. This is due to not having tracked appeal items on an individual basis as well as modernization in the VA’s appeals system. To better understand this graphic, we must first dissect the legacy and modernized appeals systems. Legacy appeals were filed as a “Notice of Disagreement” and then (if needed) a substantive appeal to the Board of Veterans Appeals as a “VA-9.” These types of legacy appeals were sunset in large part in February of 2020. Beginning in FY 2020, “Unspecified Appeal” was no longer tracked as all types of appeals were identified. Beginning in FY 2021, “Notice of Disagreement” and “VA-9” were no longer tracked as they are no longer relevant appeal options. The modernized appeal system replaces the Notice of Disagreement with “Supplemental Claims” and “Higher-Level Reviews” while also allowing a direct appeal to the Board of Veterans Appeals by way of filing a VA-10182. Under the VA’s new appeals modernization, we have seen processing times for initial appeals (Supplemental Claims and Higher Level Reviews) decrease drastically while also achieving results that are more favorable. In FY 2023 our staff conducted a total of 19 Higher Level Review Informal Conferences and Board of Veterans Appeals Hearings.



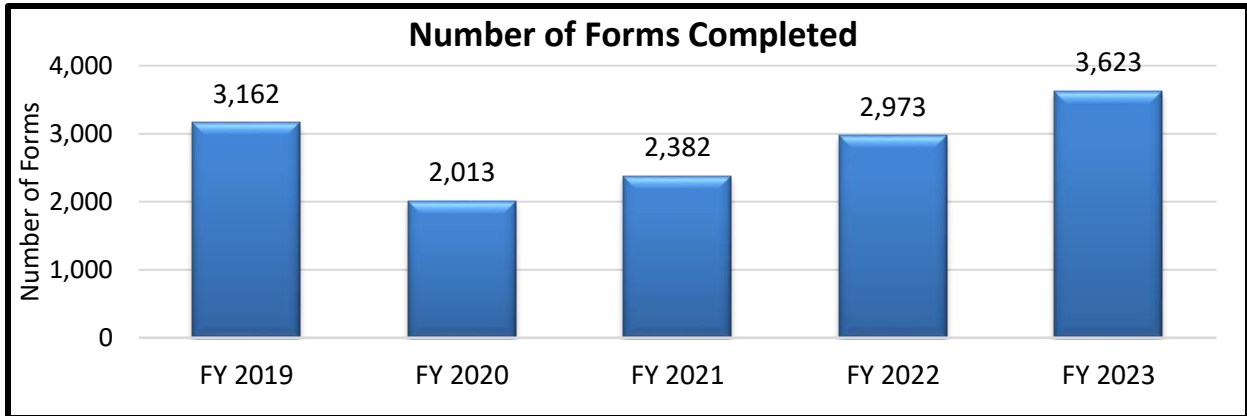


Figure 4. *Rebounding from the COVID-19 Pandemic, the number of forms completed by staff in FY 2023 increased by 22%. The number of claims filed as reported in Figure 2 can be a deceiving workload metric since a “claim filed” could be a single form or could be as many as six or more separate forms being filed for that single claim. Each claim is unique and requires different amounts of effort to prosecute and that effort is reflected in this chart.*

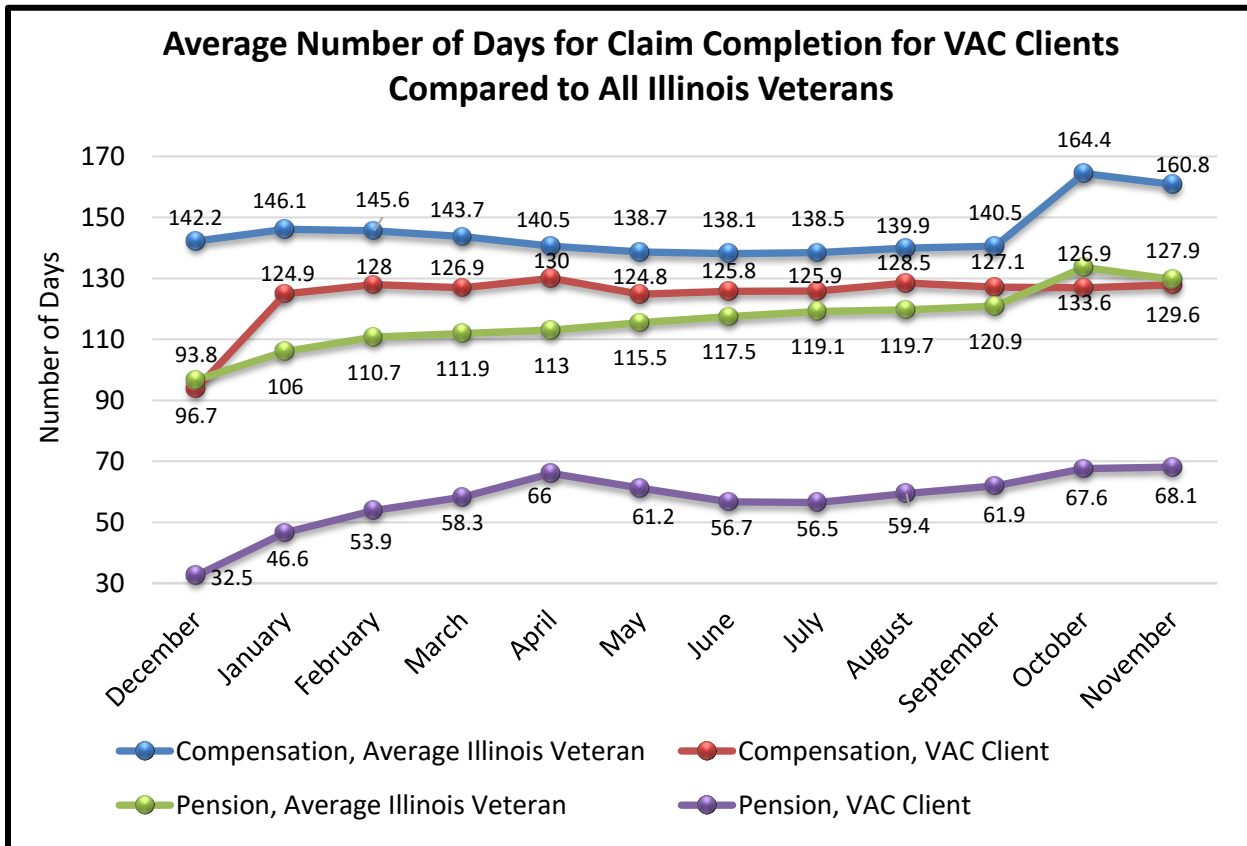


Figure 5. *Commission staff pride themselves in identifying efficiencies in the claims process. Through continuous process improvement, monitoring, and quality control staff identify strategies ensuring claim forms are thoroughly completed and error-free. That usually promotes a faster average processing time. In a time of a record high claims inventory for both our office and the VA nationally, staff is doing a remarkable job in identifying efficiencies and leveraging those in order to obtain faster decisions on average for our clients. [1]*

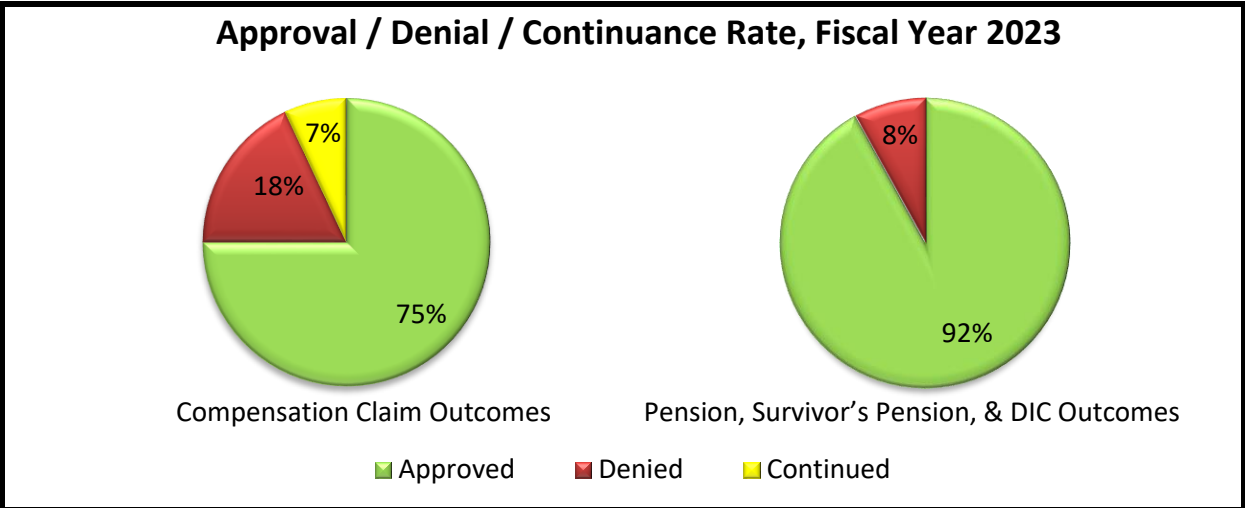


Figure 6. As depicted in this chart, a vast majority of our clients received a favorable decision on their claim. It should be noted that for the purposes of this chart “approved” means that at least one contention on the claim was approved, “denied” means that all contentions on the claim were denied, and “continued” means that the client was already receiving a benefit but our new application did not increase their overall benefit.

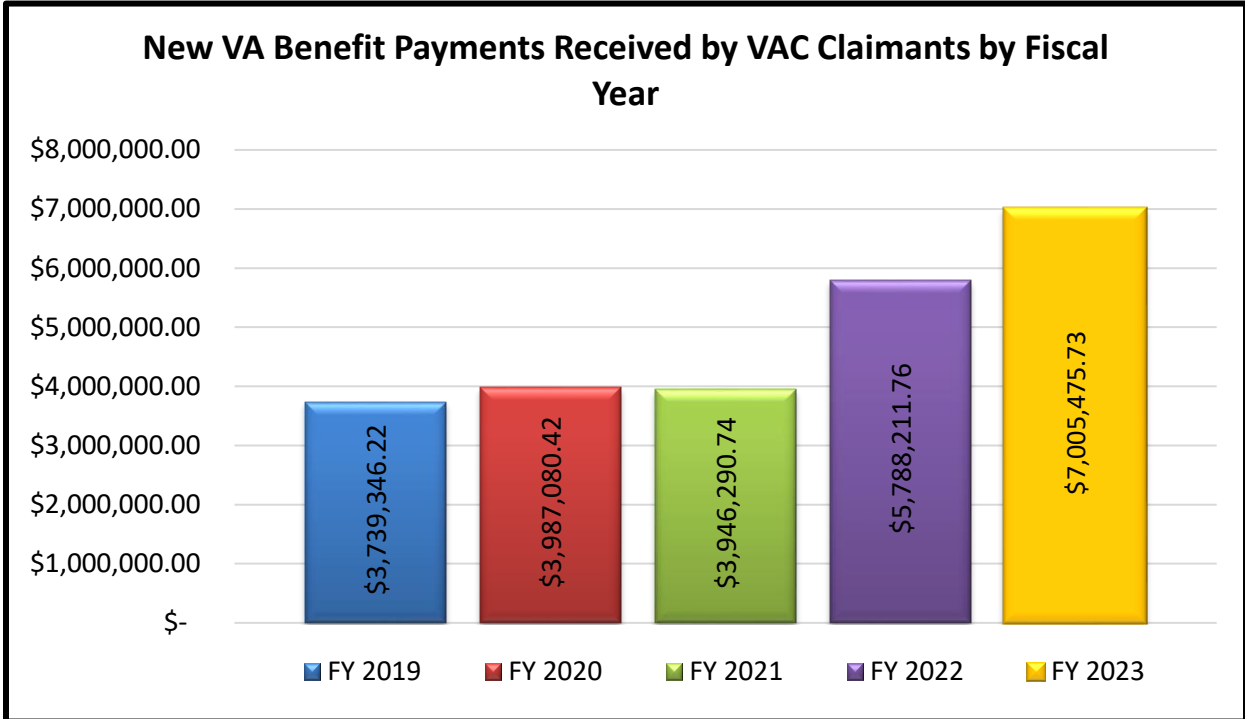


Figure 7. This chart simply shows the amount of new monetary benefits awarded to our clients by the VA per fiscal year. A large part of our success in this Fiscal Year was due to the PACT Act as well as having an additional VSO that allowed us to capture and prosecute the increased workload. This opened up capacity for staff to represent more veterans and keep a manageable caseload.

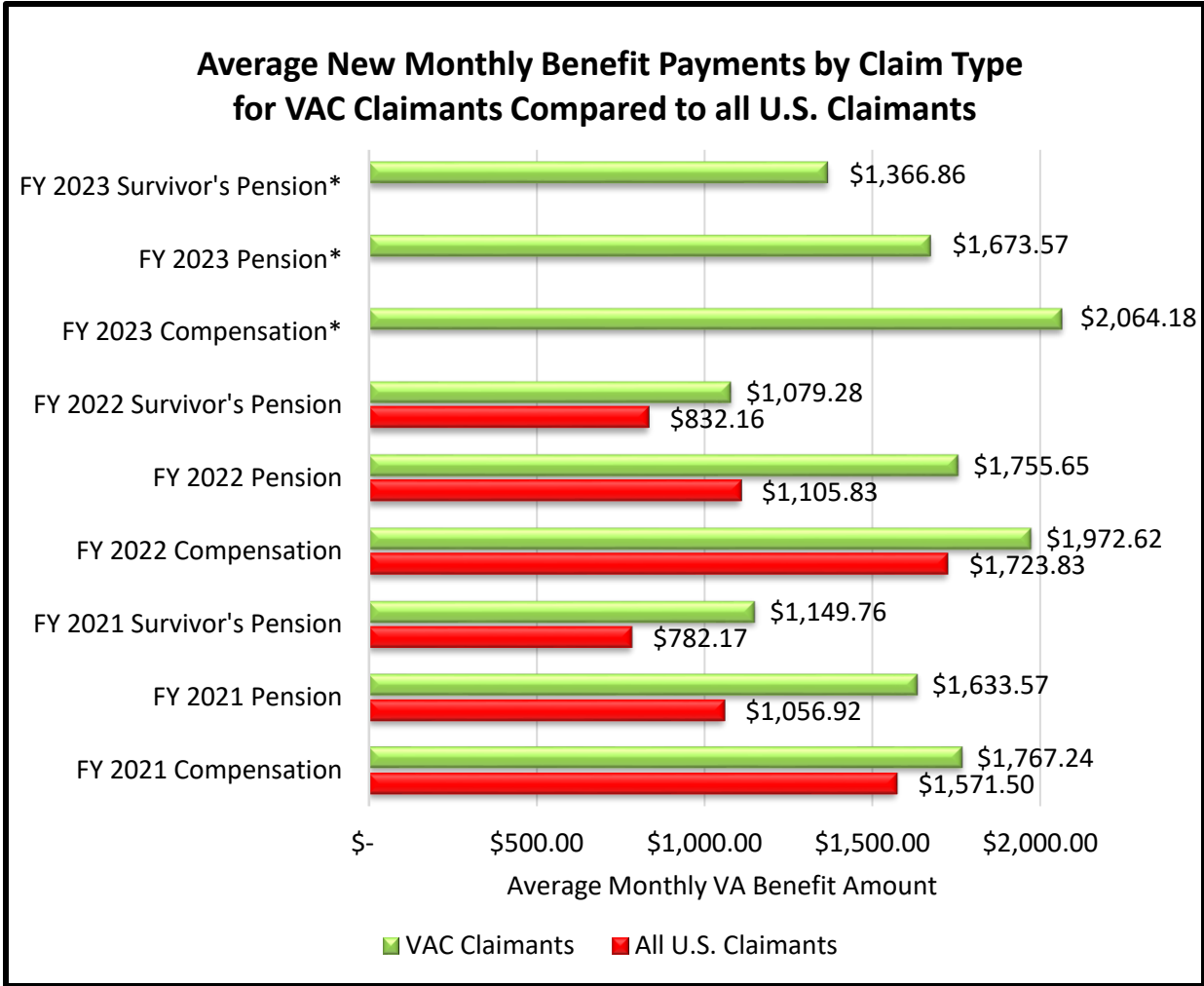


Figure 8. This chart shows that for the previous two fiscal years, claimants who filed their claim through our office received a higher monthly benefit than the average claimant did nationally. \*FY 2023 data not available from the VA. [2]

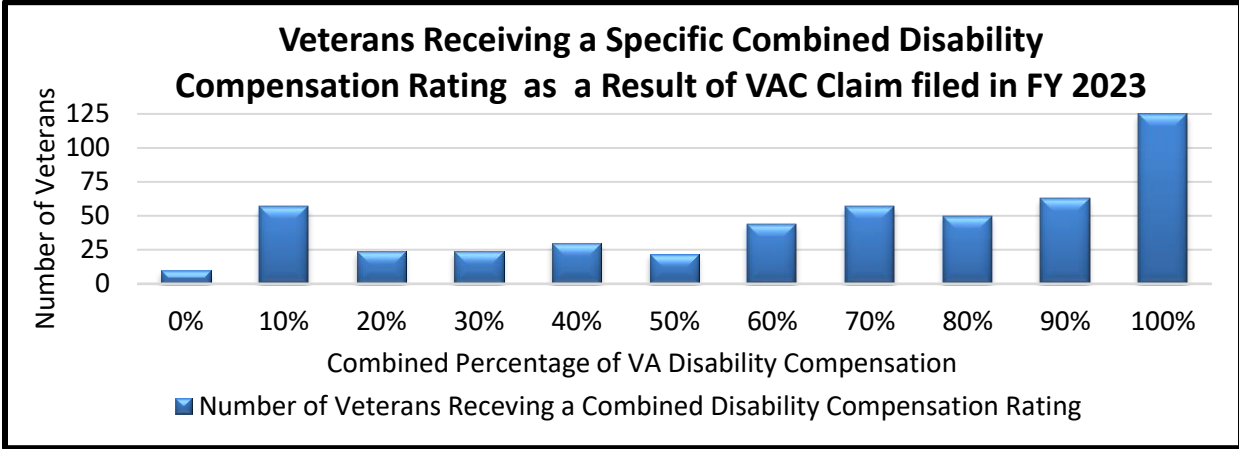


Figure 9. Depicted above is the breakdown of the combined disability compensation rating for the 506 of our clients who received a disability compensation decision in FY 2023. The mean disability compensation rating for our clients this fiscal year is 70% while the mode is 100%.

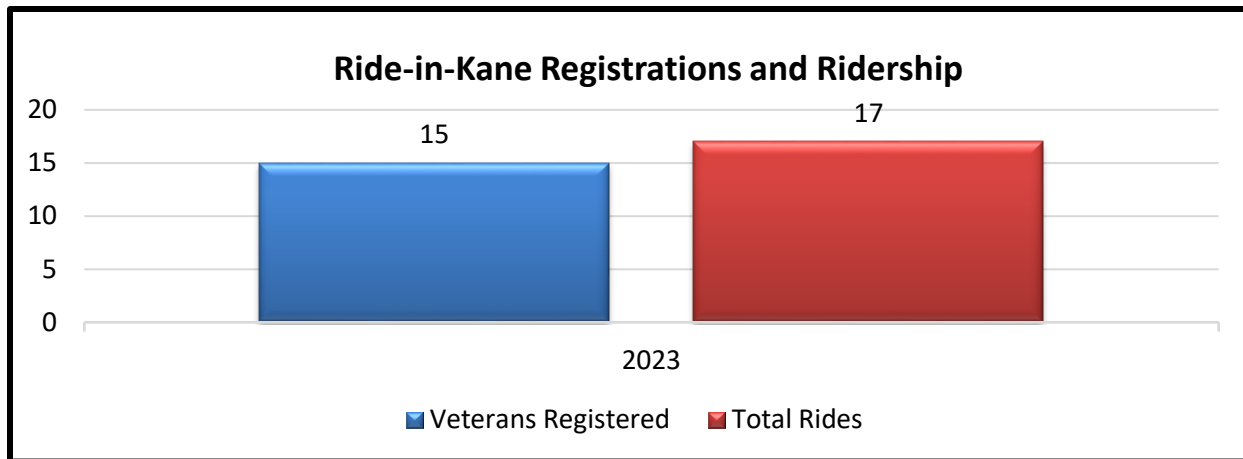


Figure 10. *This is the first year since 2016 that the Commission has a transportation program. In this new program, the Commission acts as a sponsor under Ride-in-Kane where the Commission provides registration support and PACE provides the scheduling, dispatching, and rides. For the remainder of the American Rescue Plan grant (through FY 2026), the Kane County Division of Transportation pays for the cost of these rides. In our first (partial) year of the program, we have 15 veterans registered for the program who took a total of 17 rides to their medical-related VA appointment.*

Finally, the Commission’s Veterans Assistance Program for indigent veterans remained a small, but critical, piece of the Commission’s mission. The program’s utilization has declined because our clients have obtained better federal benefits; veterans in Kane County have a significantly

higher median income than the average non-veteran citizen residing here, and the proliferation of assistance programs due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, the program serves as a vital lifeline for those veterans who have fallen on hard times and helps us triage assistance even if we are unable to provide direct assistance. This program can pay a veteran’s rent, utilities, as well as food and personal needs up to a capped amount that is dependent upon their family size. No funds are paid directly to the veteran with the exception of food and personal needs vouchers which are

given to recipients and are redeemable at Aldi’s – a widely available grocery store in Kane County, which is also headquartered in Batavia and provides vouchers which are not redeemable for

alcoholic beverages. We had 21 applicants to the Veterans Assistance Program that we provided direct or indirect assistance for. In the case of an applicant whom we are unable to provide direct assistance, we do a warm hand-off referral to other organizations that can provide direct assistance.

*We would be remiss if we did not recognize our partner agencies and organizations who help to ensure the continued success of veterans who call Kane County home:*

- Chicago VA Regional Office
- Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital
- Aurora Vet Center
- Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery
- National Personnel Records Center
- Social Security Administration
- Small Business Administration
- Illinois Attorney General's Office
- Illinois Secretary of State
- Illinois Department of Employment Security
- Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs
- Northern Illinois University
- Elgin Community College
- Waubensee Community College
- 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit
- Kane County Board
- Kane County Recorder's Office
- Kane County Assessment Office
- Kane County Division of Transportation
- Kane County Coroner's Office
- Kane County Clerk's Office
- Kane County Court Services
- Kane County Information Technology
- Veterans Smile Program
- Operation Sweet Life
- Senior Services Associates
- Illinois Joining Forces
- Aurora Veterans Advisory Council
- Armed Forces Legal Aid Network
- Prairie State Legal Services
- Nicor Sharing Program
- Rolling Thunder Illinois Chapter 1
- Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #14
- Community Contacts
- Midwest Shelter for Homeless Veterans
- Illinois Armed Forces Legal Aid Network
- Support Over Stigma

## Section II: Veterans Treatment Court

The Veterans Treatment Court began accepting participants in June of 2018 and has a team that consists of Judge Christine Downs and representatives from the Kane County State's Attorney's Office, Kane County Public Defender's Office, Kane County Court Services, Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital, Veterans Assistance Commission, and a mentor coordinator. Veterans Treatment Court has enabled its participants to meet treatment goals and improve their quality of life. Our staff is proud of the work that the participants have done and equally proud of our partners in facilitating that success. While 2023 did not realize any graduations, the participants made significant progress towards living a clean and fulfilling life. The purpose of the program is best described as legislated by the Illinois General Assembly in the Veterans and Servicemembers Court Treatment Act (730 ILCS 167/5):

*The General Assembly recognizes that veterans and active servicemembers, including Reserve and National Guard servicemembers, have provided or are currently providing an invaluable service to our country. Some veterans and active duty servicemembers may suffer from the effects of their service, including, but not limited to, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, depression and may also suffer co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorder problems. As a result, some veterans or active duty servicemembers come into contact with the criminal justice system and are charged with felony or misdemeanor offenses. There is a critical need for the criminal justice system to recognize veterans, provide accountability for their wrongdoing, provide for the safety of the public, and provide for the treatment of such veterans. It is the intent of the General Assembly to create specialized veteran and servicemember courts in accordance with evidence-based practices and Problem-Solving Court Standards for addressing substance use, mental health, and co-occurring disorders with the necessary flexibility to meet the specialized needs for an array of services and supports among participants in certified veteran and servicemember court programs in the State.*

The statistics in this Section are current as of Fiscal Year 2022, were compiled by, and are shared with the consent of Kane County Court Services. We appreciate their generosity.

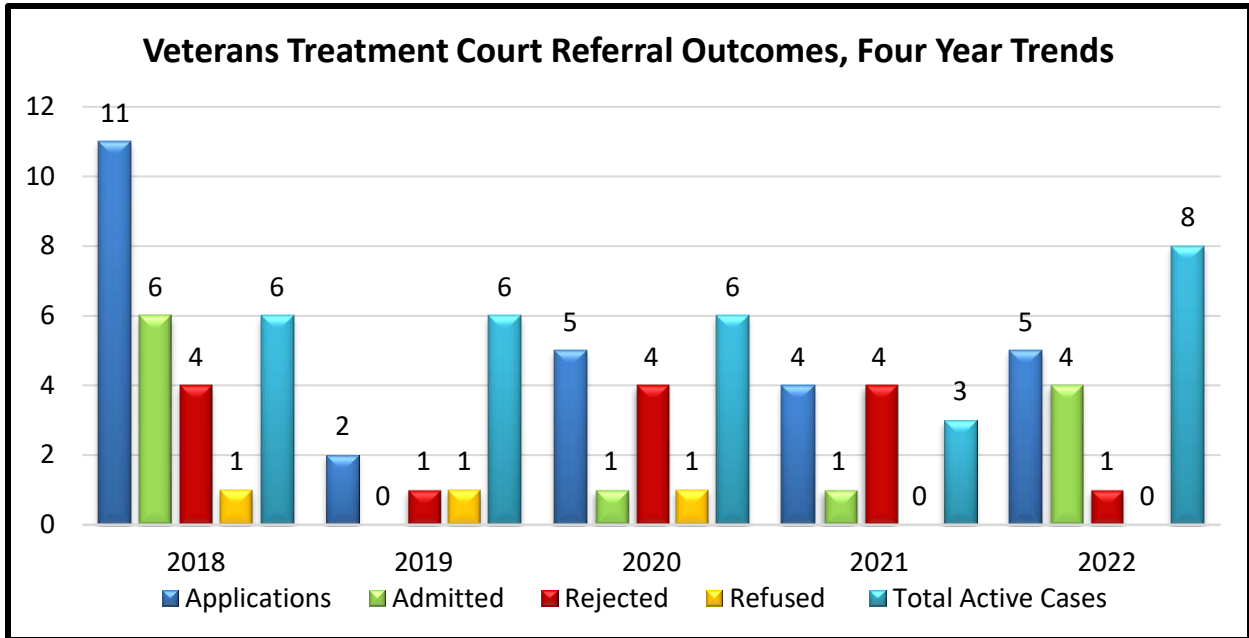


Figure 1. Here, the data shows the trends in admissions to Veterans Treatment Court. The trend continues to fluctuate due to the differences in charges being admitted into the Court as well as the implementation of a new “Low Risk” track. [3]

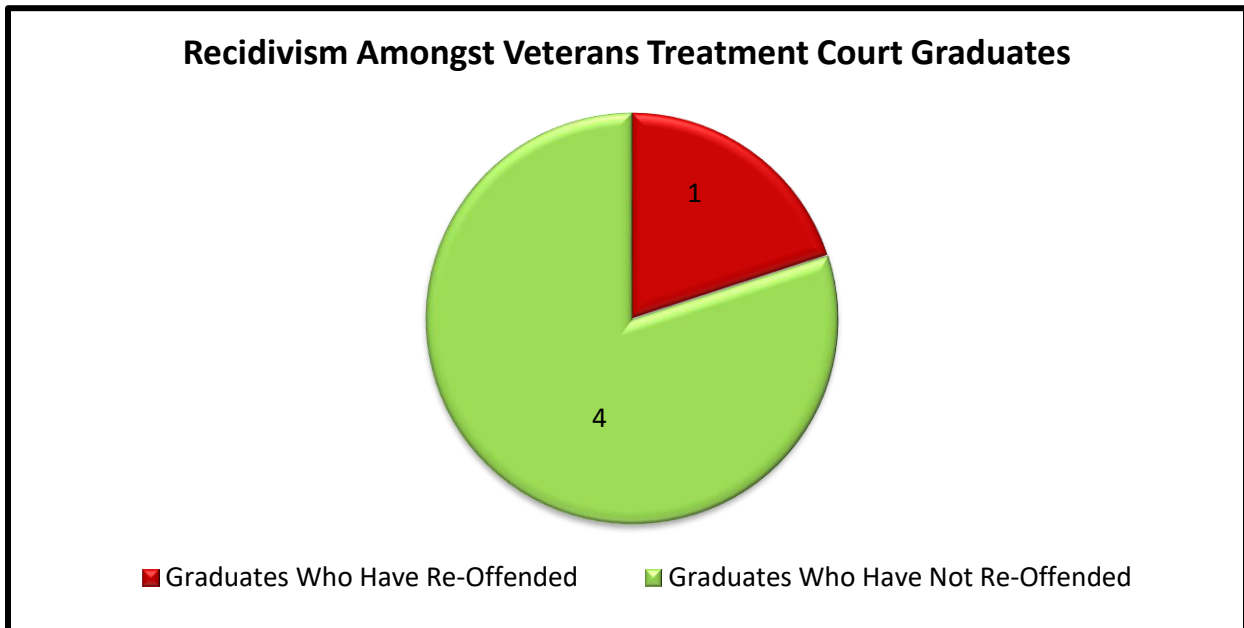


Figure 2. This data is obtained from graduates’ self-reported arrests or was obtained by publicly available court records from Kane and nearby counties. It should be noted that this chart represents arrests and not convictions. We are currently exploring ways to empirically obtain and track this data. So far, the data suggests that our graduates are in large part successful in maintaining their sobriety and crime-free lives.

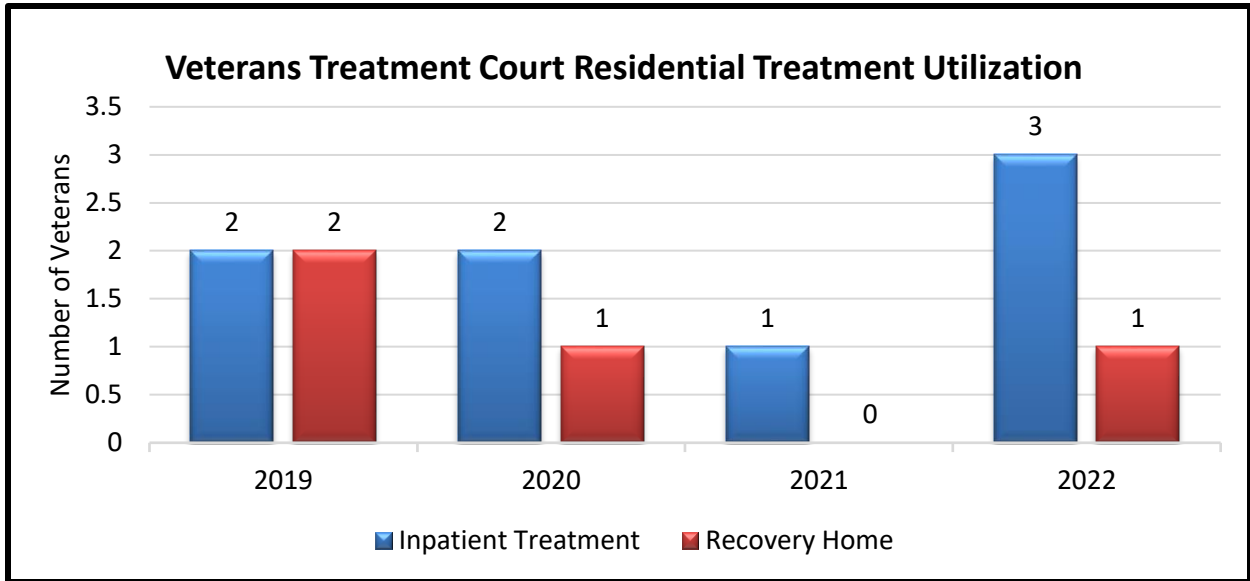


Figure 3. *Veterans Treatment Court uses a variety of VA and non-VA treatment methods including Inpatient Treatment and Recovery homes. Treatment is the focus for the Court, with an individual treatment plan being developed for each participant and then verification of that treatment on an ongoing basis. [3]*

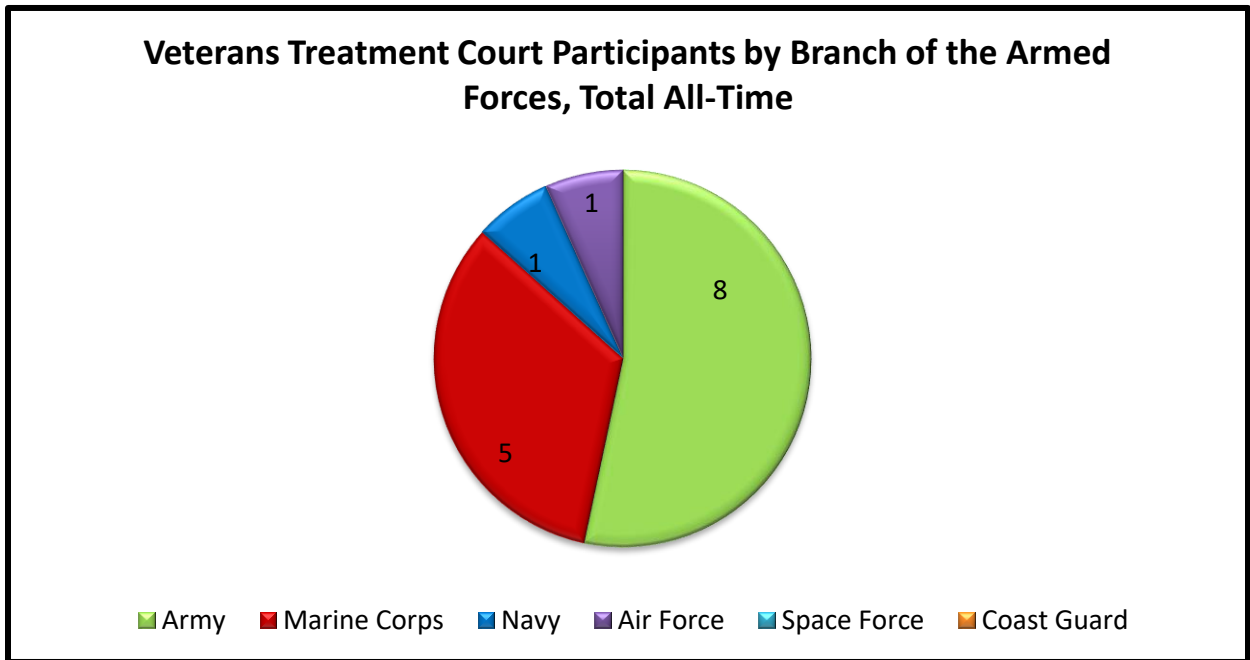


Figure 4. *This chart shows the branch of the Armed Forces that Veterans Treatment Court participant served in. Since some veterans have served in multiple branches of the military, some participants have been counted more than once.*



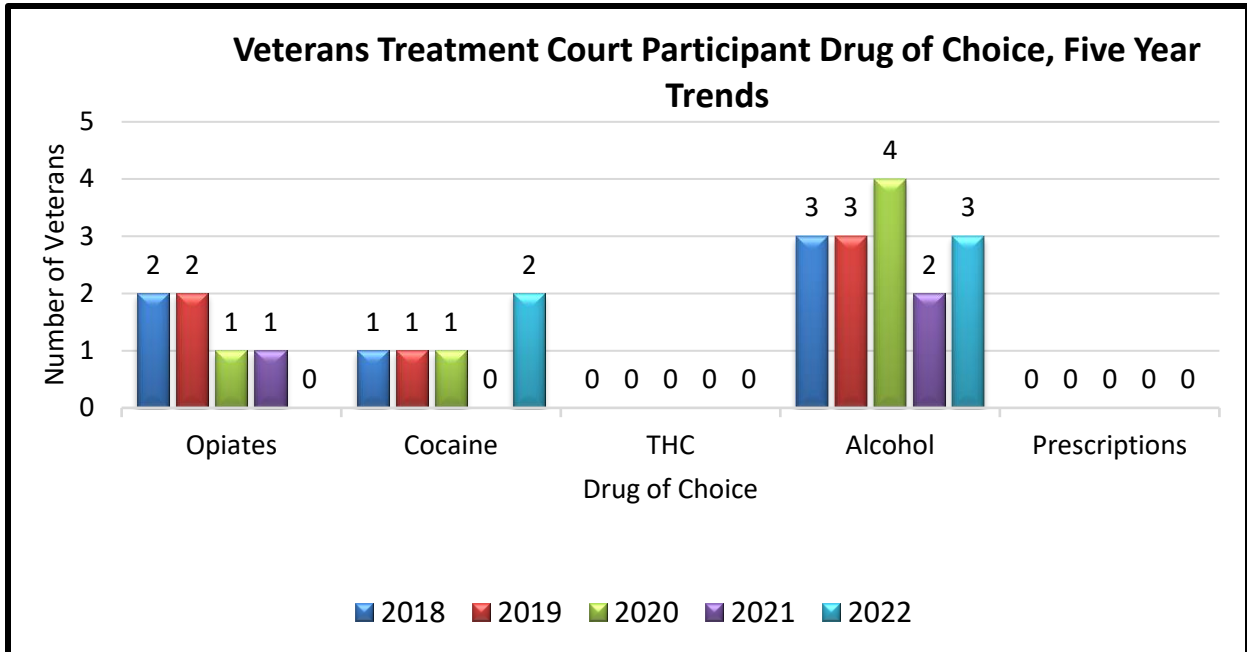


Figure 5. Alcohol has been the predominant drug of choice for Veterans Treatment Court since its inception. [3]

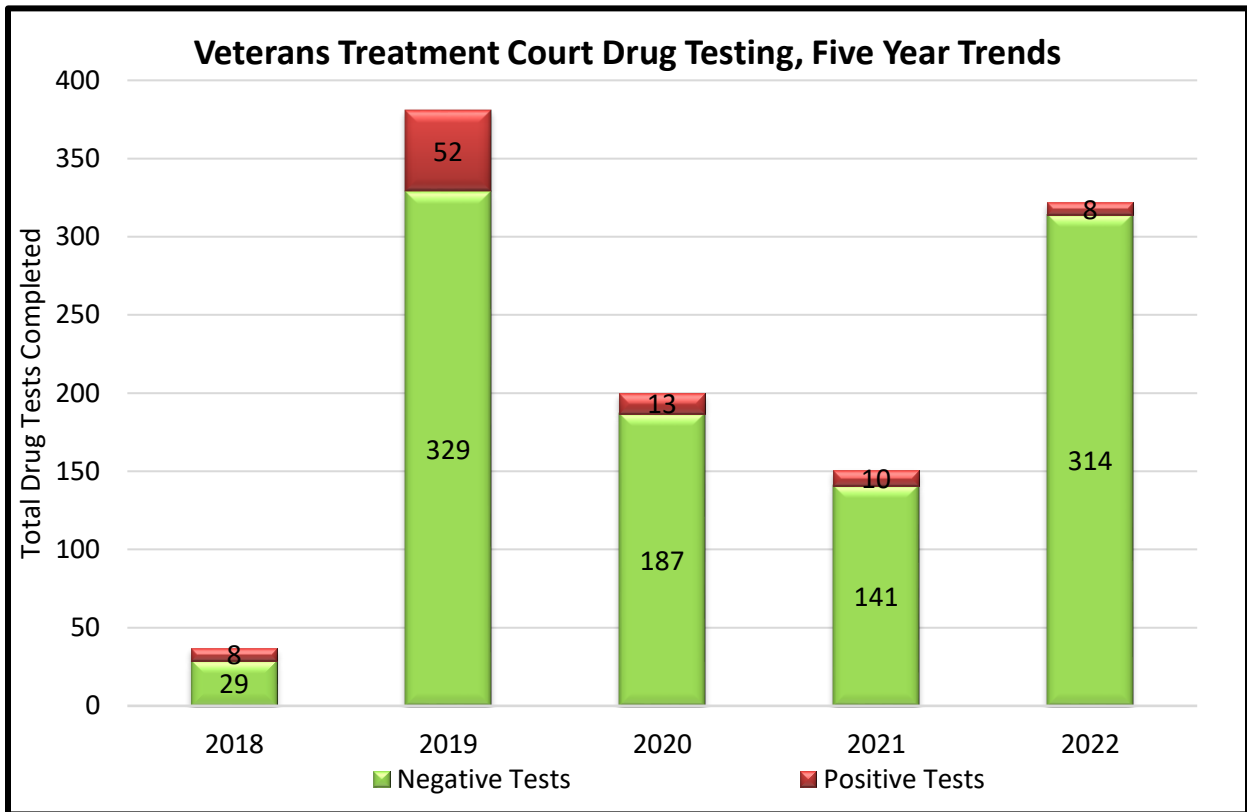


Figure 6. Veterans Treatment Court conducts random drug and alcohol testing on participants multiple times each week throughout the duration of their time in the program. Largely, the participants abstain from substance use throughout their participation and certain milestones must be met in order to progress through the program and ultimately graduate. [3]

### Section III: General Kane County Veteran Statistics

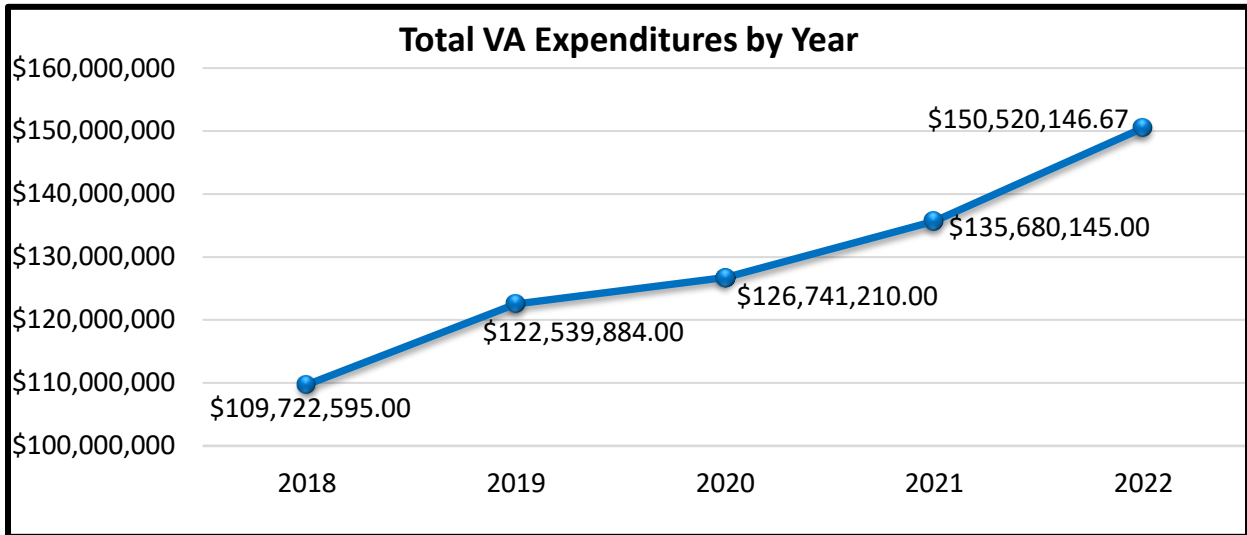


Figure 1. Total VA Expenditures in Kane County by Federal Fiscal Year. \*Fiscal Year 2023 data is not yet available from the VA. [4]

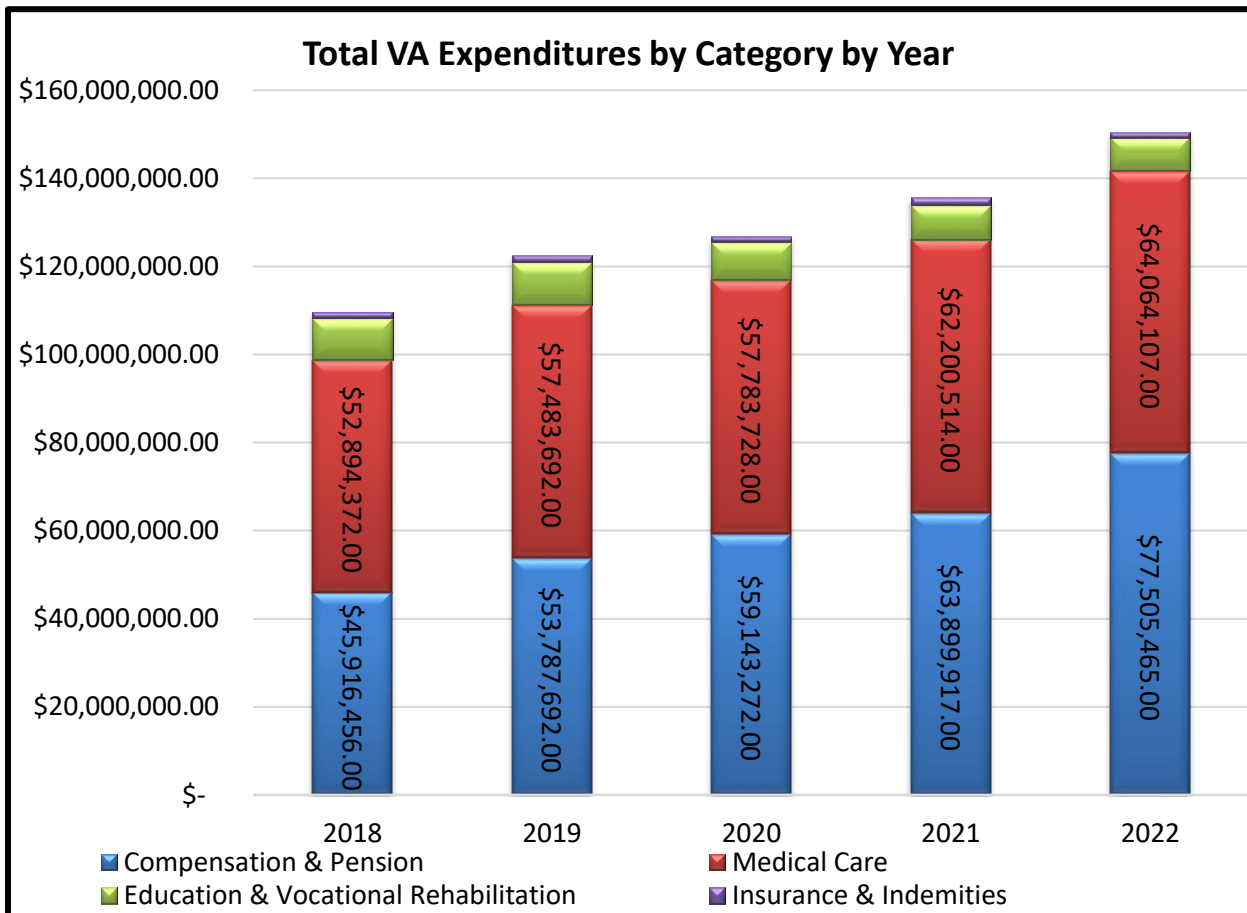


Figure 2. VA Expenditures in Kane County by benefit category by Federal Fiscal Year. \*Fiscal Year 2023 data is not yet available from the VA. [4]

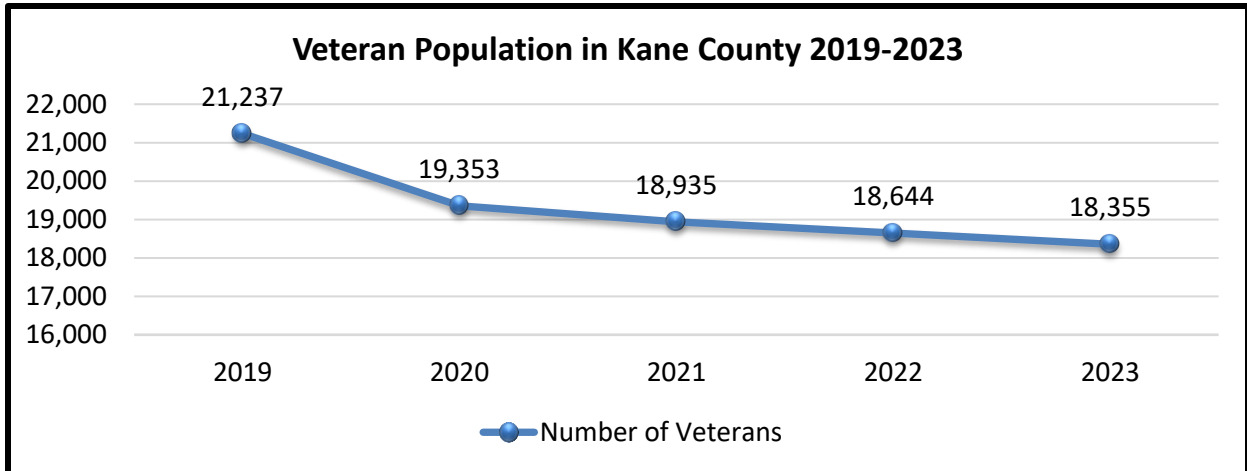


Figure 3. The veteran population in the U.S. is projected to decline by 35% by 2050. [5]

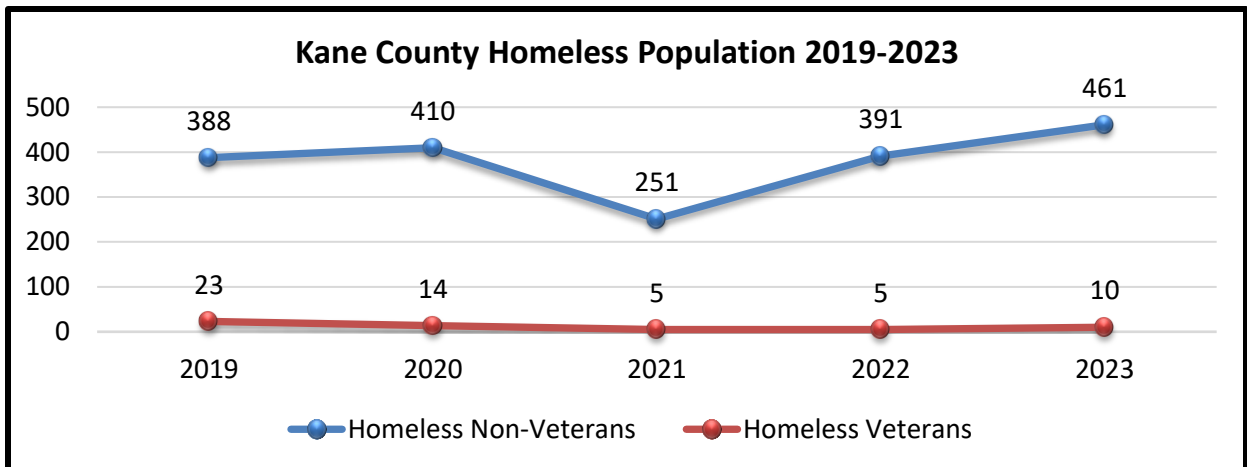


Figure 4. The interagency Kane County Homeless Veterans Task Force is actively engaging the homeless veteran population to reduce its number and achieve “Functional Zero.” [6]

<u>2023 Statistics</u>	<u>Kane County</u>	<u>Illinois</u>	<u>United States</u>
Veteran Population Rate (2022) [5] [8]:	3.6%	4.3%	5.5%
Veterans Over Age 65 [5]:	52.6%	46.6%	46%
Female Veteran Rate [5]:	7.2%	10%	11.3%
Veteran Median Income (2022) [8]:	\$54,979	\$49,976	\$50,476
Civilian Median Income (2022) [8]:	\$42,662	\$40,806	\$38,254

Figure 5. General Statistics for 2023 unless otherwise noted.

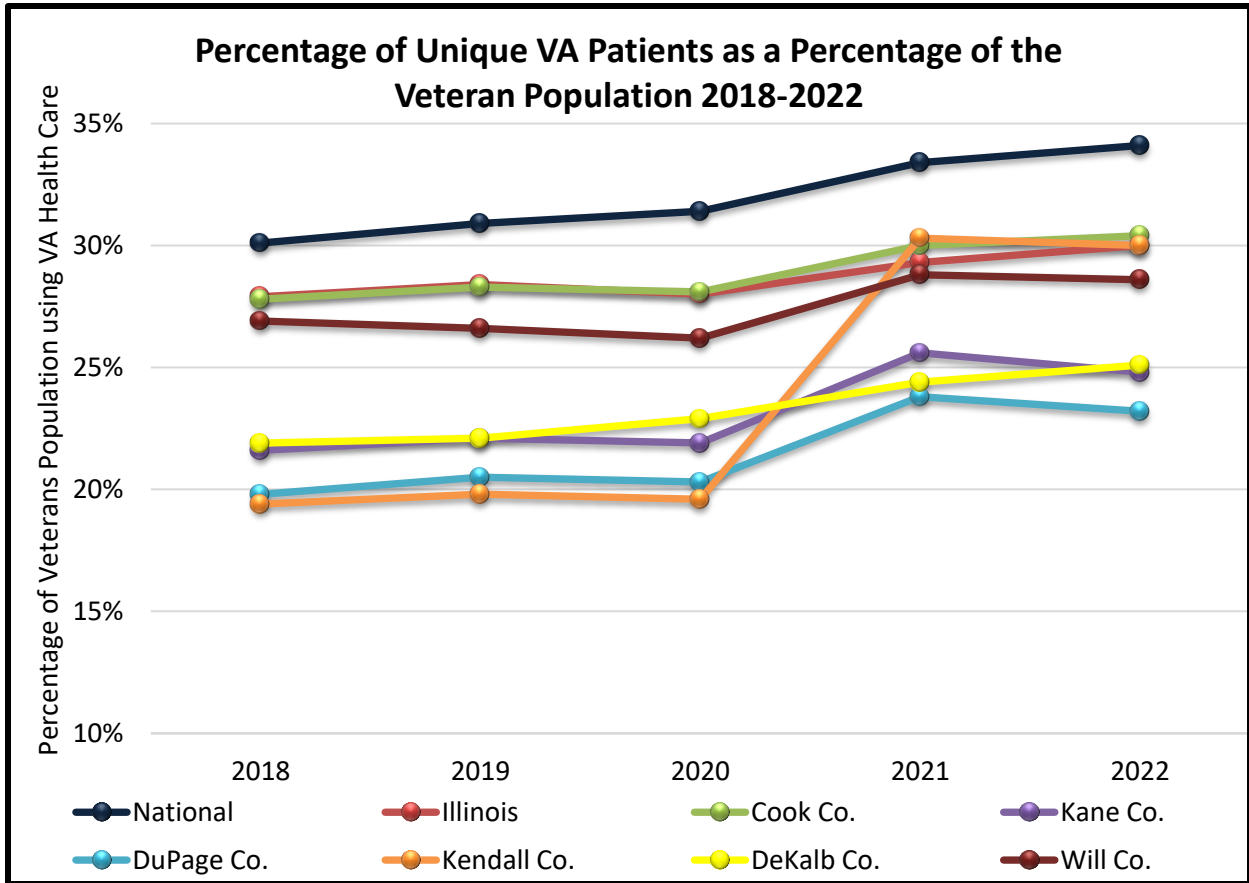


Figure 6. This chart contrasts the percentage of veterans utilizing the VA for their health care locally and nationally. Consistent with the national trend, Kane County veterans continue to use the VA at a greater rate than they had in the past. \*Fiscal Year 2023 data is not yet available from the VA. [4]

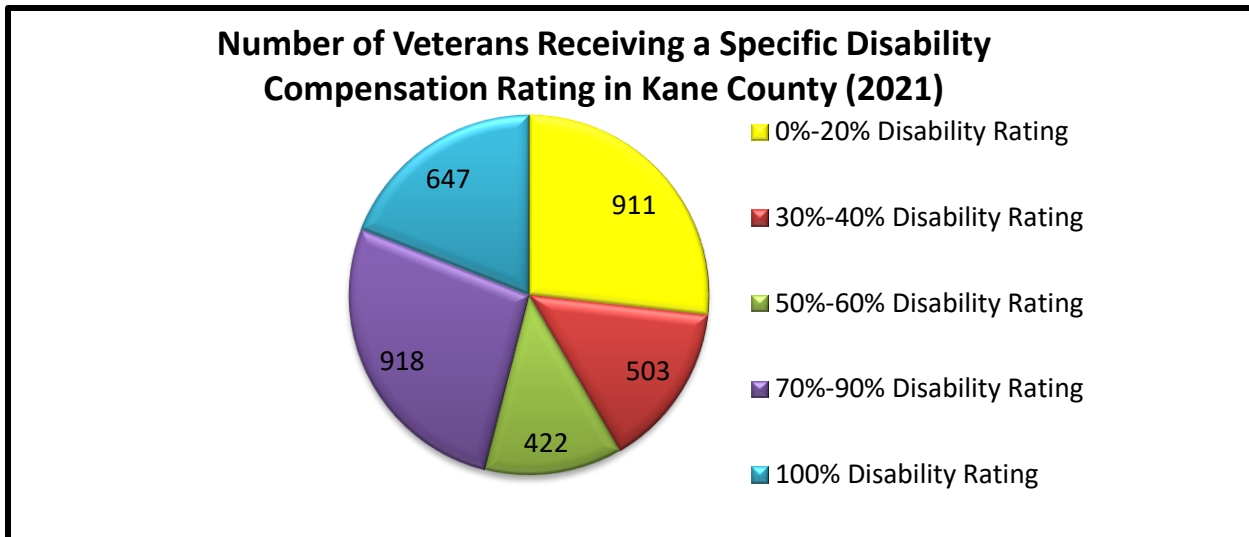




Figure 7. Total number of veterans in Kane County receiving a specific disability rating. \*Fiscal Year 2022 and 2023 data is not yet available from the VA. [7]

## Section IV: Client Reviews




*Words cannot express the gratitude our family has for the work Mr. Arteaga has done to assist my husband to receive compensation for his year in Vietnam.*

*-D.N.*




*On behalf of our Dad, we say our final thank you and extend our deepest gratitude for the assistance you provided to us through our journey of the Aid & Attendance program.*

*-R. W. Family*



*Hi Steven,  
Thank you so much for your expert help and guidance in this rather complex process. We are so grateful.*

*-D.D.*



*Dear Jake,  
I have firsthand experience working with your staff. You are all professional at your jobs and I can't thank you enough for the help.*


*-G.A.*



*Jacob,*

*I want to thank you for all of your help over the past several years. You are a very valuable asset to the veteran community in Kane County.*

*- R. B.*



*On behalf of AMVETS Post 103, we would like to thank the Kane County VAC for providing the opportunity for Veterans Organizations to receive the American Rescue Plan Grant.*

## Section V: Conclusion

Fiscal Year 2023 was a dynamic year for the Veterans Assistance Commission in terms of challenges and rewards. Challenges came quickly and formidably with new legislation – specifically the PACT Act which caused an exceptional increase in our workload – so much so that we had to hire a fifth employee – the first time our staff headcount has been that high. That new workload segment is starting to stabilize but we still are seeing our claims inventory trending higher than normal. One consequence of having a larger inventory is a longer wait time for claim decisions and we have seen that trend correlate with the inventory. The average days to completion of a claim is trending higher than it has in the past few years but there is no doubt that a veteran or dependent who files their claim with our staff realizes a quicker and more favorable decision on average than other claimants nationwide.

Rewards were realized in shattering our previous record in total VA Compensation and Pension dollars secured for our clients, and although that metric is fantastic for our office, the real purpose is to enhance the lives of veterans right here in Kane County and that is what our mission is. Additionally, clients who filed appeals through our office received over \$315,000 in previously denied benefits in Fiscal Year 2023 – to pursue and win a benefit that was unjustly denied is very rewarding for our staff and clients.

Our staff continues to pursue knowledge enhancing training in their respective subject matters. Staff availed itself to a variety of training this year including, annual continuing education training through the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers, subject matter webinars hosted by the National Veterans Legal Services Program, and informal lunch-and-learn webinars hosted by the Illinois Association of County Veterans Assistance Commissions. Assistant Superintendent Nathaniel Johnson and Veteran Service Officer Jesus Arteaga joined the ranks of Certified Veterans Advocates – a coveted title in the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers. We are fortunate to have the hard working and caring staff that we do. It has been our honor to serve Kane County veterans and their families in Fiscal Year 2023.

## Section VI: Fiscal Year 2024 Synopsis

Fiscal Year 2024 will undoubtedly provide challenge and excitement for our staff and veterans. At the time of publication, we have a claims inventory that is on average larger than it has ever been. Some of this backlog is also due to the cohort of veterans who finally qualify for Agent Orange presumptive disability compensation because of their exposure aboard U.S. Navy ships or U.S. Coast Guard cutters that operated in the Blue Waters of Vietnam. The PACT Act also expanded benefits for several cohorts of veterans who participated in Atomic Testing, served in Vietnam, or served in our most recent Middle Eastern wars. While all of those actions have caused a sort of perfect storm for workload, the dividends have started flowing in the form of benefits awarded to Kane County veterans and their families.

Our focus in Fiscal Year 2024 will be to stay the course and ensure that our veterans receive the maximum possible benefits. Our office will also be promoting our participation in the Ride in Kane program to ensure veterans who have a barrier to transportation are able to get to their VA medical appointments. Staff will also put a strong emphasis on enrollment in the VA Health Care system, as that is a statistic that our area lags behind where we would like it to be. At the time that this report went to press, the economic forecast for 2024 is uncertain. In the past, under difficult economic times, we have seen an increased utilization of our Veterans Assistance Program for indigent veterans. Since the last economic downturn, we have concentrated our efforts to ensure that veterans in Kane County are getting the benefits they deserve which has resulted in nearly quadrupling the annual amount of VA Compensation and Pension dollars awarded to Kane County veterans. We hope this, combined with a high median income, serves to inoculate the veterans' community against any moderate or severe economic environment that may arise in the coming months.

In Fiscal Year 2024, we affirm to uphold President Abraham Lincoln's charge:

*"To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan."*

## Glossary of Terms

**Compensation:** See “Disability Compensation”

**Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC):** A tax-free monetary benefit paid to eligible survivors of military service members who died in the line of duty or eligible survivors of veterans whose death resulted from a service-related injury or disease.

**Disability Compensation:** A tax-free monetary benefit paid to veterans with disabilities that are the result of a disease or injury incurred in or aggravated during active military service.

**Functional Zero:** A goal reached when the number of veterans experiencing homelessness within a community is less than the average number of veterans being connected with permanent housing each month.

**Intent-to-File:** An application for veterans and survivors who intend to file a claim for VA compensation, pension, or survivors’ benefits which preserves the effective date of future benefits while the claimant is gathering supporting documentation for their formal claim.

**Non-Service Connected Pension:** A tax-free needs-based monetary benefit paid to wartime veterans, who meet certain age or non-service connected disability requirements.

**Pension:** See “Non-Service Connected Pension”

**Pension Management Center:** A department at certain VA Regional Offices that is responsible for processing and adjudicating claims for Pension, Survivor’s Pension, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, and burial benefits.

**Regional Office:** One of 56 VA offices located nationwide responsible for processing and adjudicating VA benefits which primarily includes disability compensation.

**Superintendent:** Supervisor who has the executive powers of the Veterans Assistance Commission.

**Survivor’s Pension:** A tax-free needs-based monetary benefit payable to a low-income, unremarried surviving spouse and/or unmarried child(ren) of a deceased wartime veteran.

**VA Health Care:** A comprehensive medical benefits package available to qualifying veterans which includes primary and specialty care at VA hospitals and clinics.

**Veterans Service Officer (VSO):** An individual accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and trained to assist veterans and their dependents in filing claims for benefits with the VA.



## References

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- [4] National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, "Geographical Distribution of VA Expenditures Reports," U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington D.C., 2018-2022.
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