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Page 1 of 2

Joint Hearing of the Commonwealth's House and Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committees to Consider the PA War Veterans Council Request for State Funding to Support Veterans Service Offices operated by The American Legion of Pennsylvania, the Department of Pennsylvania Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Disabled American Veterans of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania AMVETS.

AMVETS

Given By AMVETS Executive Director Thomas Minchin

AMVETS, as well as other Veterans Service Organizations, has had to close down a Veterans Center in Wilkes-Barre, PA. The cost of doing business became greater than what AMVETS could sustain. It is evident to AMVETS and other Veterans Service Organizations that more outreach centers be made available – not less.

AMVETS is striving to establish two outreach centers within the Commonwealth. One in Philadelphia, PA to work with the Philadelphia VA Medical Center and another in Pittsburgh, PA to work with the Pittsburgh, PA VA Medical Center. With the combined resources available at each VA Medical Center it is possible that greater numbers of veterans could be served.

There are currently two National Service Officers in Pennsylvania that are eligible to adjudicate a veterans record for compensation through AMVETS. With the assistance of additional staff at each location AMVETS may be able to address the needs of veterans in a timely manner, helping to eliminate the backlog of cases currently pending at the Medical Centers.

Clerical staff is non existent for AMVETS at either Medical Center. The work is completed by the National Service Officer and sits until the NSO gets to it. Simple tasks like mailing printed materials to veterans goes undone because no one is available to send it out. Valuable time is spent trying to play "catch up" and the one who is hurt throughout the process is the veteran.

It is imperative that veterans receive outreach for their concerns and questions. The veteran must be kept up to date to allow that veteran the opportunity to establish a claim for eligibility for service connected disabilities. So many of today's veterans are coming home with disabilities and have little chance of getting what they are eligible to receive.

AMVETS will organize a network of outreach centers, even using the local Posts throughout the Commonwealth. Every Post can have a Service Officer who can assist eligible veterans to make a claim for a disability caused to them by service to our Country. These officers will be able to assist by advising the veteran to apply for benefits granted to them by the VA.

There are nineteen (19) states in these great United States that currently provide funding for its veterans. When compared to the state of Michigan, which has 820,000 veterans, versus the 1.1 million Pennsylvania has, one realizes the potential Pennsylvania has.

Just think if Pennsylvania could duplicate the success that Michigan has accomplished and received a return on investment of \$63.00 received for every dollar spent on the program.