



# NASAA

Protecting and Promoting the GI Bill® for Veterans and Their Families  
**FY2025 ANNUAL REPORT**



*Members of the NASAA Executive Board in DC*

## NASAA & THE GI BILL

The National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) helps make the GI Bill® work. NASAA facilitates the efforts of its member State Approving Agencies in promoting and safeguarding quality education and training programs for Veterans, ensuring greater education and training opportunities for Veterans, and protecting the integrity of the GI Bill. NASAA works hand-in-hand with other organizations to make the GI Bill the best possible educational assistance program for our nation's Veterans. NASAA members work with government agencies, Congress, schools, and employers to ensure that Veterans have access to well-managed, ethical programs they can trust to help them achieve their goals.

**GI Bill ® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government Web site at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## James Henley, Public Affairs Liaison

The National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) is an organization comprised of the State Approving Agencies (SAAs) for each state plus several territories. There is a total of 53 SAAs. State Approving Agencies were established by Congress to work in partnership with the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) to ensure that education and training programs funded under the GI Bill are of quality and represent value to Veterans, their family members and dependents, and the U.S. taxpayers. This annual report summarizes the activities of NASAA in FY 2025.



President Ryan's message reflects on a pivotal year for NASAA, as well as looking forward to the celebration of America's 250th anniversary. Emphasizing themes of resilience and perseverance—qualities rooted in the nation's history. She discusses how NASAA successfully managed a leadership change at VA, welcoming Director Ken Smith to VA Education Service in February 2025. Despite rapid policy shifts, uncertainty, and even a prolonged funding lapse, NASAA maintained close coordination with VA staff, safeguarded critical services, and upheld its commitment to Veterans' access to high-quality education and training. President Ryan also mentions the Association's greatest challenge, however, came with the unexpected loss of its Judge Advocate, John Murray, in August. A longstanding leader and influential figure within NASAA, Murray played a central role in shaping cooperative agreements, legislative priorities, and risk-based survey processes. His passing left a profound impact across the organization and its VA partners.

Ensuring Integrity and Access discusses how NASAA has helped protect the integrity of the GI Bill for 78 years by working closely with VA and partner organizations. NASAA has improved program oversight, streamlined approval processes, expanded educational options, and strengthened partnerships to protect Veterans from fraud and misuse of benefits. As technology and learning methods evolve, NASAA monitors federal policy, promotes high-quality programs, and supports workforce development through apprenticeships and on-the-job training. Throughout these efforts, NASAA remains committed to safeguarding Veterans' benefits and helping them access meaningful, future-ready career opportunities. Awards, Honors and Recognitions recognize the NASAA members who performed outstanding service for the Association during FY 2025.

It is an honor to protect and serve our Veterans and their families.

Respectfully submitted,

*James Henley*

James Henley, USN(Ret), Director-MO SAA

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*Past President Frank Myers (SC), NASAA President Rebecca Ryan (RI), Curtis Washburn (HI), NASAA Vice President David Salgado (TX)*

## *In memory of:*

### **John Murray**

of the Washington SAA passed away August 2025

### **James Thompson**

of the Alabama SAA passed away November 2025



## RETIREES

### **Linda Alexander**

of the Texas State Approving Agency retired August 31, 2025

### **Michael Flynn**

of the Missouri State Approving Agency retired February 28, 2025 after 6+ years of service

### **Deborah Gardner**

of the Tennessee State Approving Agency retired January 3, 2025 with 23 years of service

### **Yvette Martin**

of the Nebraska State Approving Agency

### **Donna Matthews**

of the Pennsylvania State Approving Agency retired September 6, 2025 after 19+ years of service

### **Curtis Washburn**

of the Hawaii State Approving Agency

# MESSAGE FROM THE NASAA PRESIDENT

This summer, the United States of America celebrates its 250th birthday. It has been two and a half centuries since our Founding Fathers signed the Declaration of Independence and embarked on our democratic journey. As a country, we have experienced both remarkable triumphs and deep tragedies throughout our storied history. Yet one of our most defining characteristics as a people is our resiliency in the face of whatever challenge comes our way. That perseverance and spirit is imprinted in every aspect of American life, and it has helped guide us through our experiences as a national association this past year. As this year concludes, I am proud of the strength and resiliency that we have shown as individuals and as the National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA).



Together, NASAA navigated a change in leadership at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and welcomed Director Ken Smith to VA Education Service in February 2025. From our first meeting, we have worked toward continuing a productive partnership to achieve our shared goal of supporting Veterans' access to high quality education and training. During this year's periods of rapid change and uncertainty, NASAA stayed in close contact with VA staff, prioritizing key policy needs and maintaining services for beneficiaries. Even during the prolonged lapse in funding, NASAA remained vigilant to ensure Veterans' interests were protected.

However, as difficult as those challenges may have been, without a doubt our most significant challenge was the loss of one of our own. NASAA's Judge Advocate, John Murray, passed away on August 3rd, while attending our Summer Business & Training Meeting. John had been an enduring presence in NASAA for years, served in several prominent leadership roles, and shaped our cooperative agreement, legislative agenda, and the policies, processes, and procedures governing the conduct of Risk-Based Surveys. Losing John's wisdom, tenacity, and friendship has been, and still is, tremendously and deeply felt throughout the association and by our friends and partners at VA.

In the hours and days after John's death, I watched our members pick themselves up, continue our conference, and carry John's legacy and work forward. It is the same spirit and perseverance that has defined us as a nation, that leads our Veterans back into civilian lives, and that moved us through this year of change and loss. John was a proud member of the U.S. Navy and in the months since his passing, I have often returned to the FDR quote, "A smooth sea never made a skilled sailor." In a year punctuated by frequent storms, I like to think that we have all become stronger sailors. We have demonstrated adaptability, courage, perseverance, and foremost resiliency, in our shared mission to preserve and protect the integrity of the GI Bill. It's a legacy I know that John was so proud to be part of. It's a legacy that we will continue to carry and honor for the next seventy-eight years through whatever may come.

*Rebecca Ryan*

Rebecca Ryan  
NASAA President

# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

State Approving Agencies (SAAs) primarily work with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Education Service Unit. The Under Secretary for Benefits, the Deputy Under Secretary for Economic Opportunity, and the Executive Director of Education Service, make up VA chain of command. Kenneth Smith, Executive Director of Education Service leads a dedicated staff in VA Central Office (VACO), the Regional Processing Offices (RPOs), and Regional Offices (RO) to implement the full range of GI Bill® programs. Each region has a Chief Education Liaison Officer (CELO) who directs the work of the Education Liaison Representatives (ELRs) within its region's states and oversees the coordination of the work contracted to the State Approving Agencies.

## THE CHIEF EDUCATION LIAISON OFFICERS ARE:

East: Sarah Daughton - Buffalo, NY

Central: Sarah Daughton - Acting

South: Wayne Rhoades - Atlanta, GA

West: Tina Keeter - Muskogee, OK

## VA PARTNERS

These dedicated individuals and their staff provide VA systems training to evaluate the performance of the State Approving Agencies. They and their staff also provide VA systems training to enable SAAs to conduct risk-based surveys, supervisory visits, and to utilize Salesforce's shared online platform, E-Force, to upload Approval and Compliance information to VA. A positive working relationship between the State Approving Agencies and the Education Service Unit is a vital part of the delivery of educational services to eligible Veterans, service persons, and dependents.



**MARGARITA DELVIN**  
Principal Deputy Under  
Secretary for Benefits



**THE HONORABLE  
DOUGLAS A. COLLINS**  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs



**KENNETH SMITH**  
Executive Director of  
Education Service,  
Veterans Benefits  
Administration

# STAKEHOLDERS

SAAs coordinate and collaborate with many other entities in providing services to Veterans and their families.

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)

American Council on Education Veterans Programs (ACE)

American Legion

AMVETS National Services Foundation

Association of Veterans Education Certifying Officials (AVECO)

Council of College and Military Educators (CCME)

Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES)

Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

Helmets to Hardhats (H2H)

HillVets

Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)

Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)

MYCAA- Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts

National Association of State Directors of Veteran Affairs (NASDVA)

National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators (NAVPA)

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC)

State Departments of Economic Development

State Departments of Education

State Departments of Labor

State Departments of Veterans Affairs

State Higher Education Executive Officers

State Veteran Educators Organizations

Student Veterans of America (SVA)

The State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO)

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

Troops to Energy

Troops to Teachers (TTT)

United Service Organizations (USO)

U.S. Department of Defense Voluntary Education

U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Labor

Veterans Commission

Veterans Education Project (VEP)

Veterans Education Success (VES)

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)

Western Association of Veterans Education Specialists (WAVES)

Workforce Development

Warrior Scholar Project (WSP)



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*A publication of this type is never completed in isolation. The efforts of several State Approving Agencies' staff members went into the production. Many thanks to all who assisted with this project. Here are some who have contributed time and effort to the project:*

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VA

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# CHANGES TO VETERANS' EDUCATION BENEFITS

## SENATOR ELIZABETH DOLE 21ST CENTURY VETERANS' HEALTHCARE AND BENEFITS IMPROVEMENT ACT

The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21<sup>st</sup> Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act (the “Dole Act”) became law on January 2, 2025 (Public Law 118-210), expanding opportunities and protections for Veterans, their families, and survivors in education, benefits, healthcare, and housing. This legislation implementation aligns with NASAAs efforts to meet the changing needs of Veterans and is intended to provide broader eligibility, fewer barriers to access, and give beneficiaries additional options.

Key education-related changes include but are not limited to expanded eligibility for the Fry Scholarship for surviving spouses and children, a new waiver process for 3675(b)(4) for participation in Title IV (Section 205, Paragraph (4)(B)(i)), full monthly housing stipends for Post-9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries during their final semester, a new requirement for institutions to keep digital transcripts, and overall increased oversight for institutions. NASAA’s Legislative Committee played an active role in advocating for provisions within this Act, such as the option to waive Title IV for accredited schools.

Pursuant of the provisions of the Dole Act, VA has developed and began using a webpage to provide notice of changes to policies and guidance relating to educational programs for Veterans (38 U.S.C. 3699D). Any guidance related to education will require VA to issue a 90-day notice period before they implement the change. The advanced notices are intended to keep Veterans and beneficiaries in the loop on any forthcoming legislative changes that may impact their educational goals. The new requirement set forth by the Dole Act is intended to increase transparency and grant NASAA as well as other related agencies a period to review and respond to any of the VA’s proposed changes.

### TERMINATIONS WITHIN TERM:

#### 100% TUITION REFUNDS

A new guidance published by VA in June of 2025 now requires SCOs to follow a two-step process when reporting a 100% tuition refund withdrawal for Post-9/11 GI Bill students. Instead of requesting these funds back from the student, VA will recover payments directly from the school.

SCOs have been instructed to:

1. Amend the certification of the student to report the tuition and fees as \$0; and
2. Submit a termination using the date of withdrawal.

The streamlined process corresponds with NASAA’s organizational goal of safeguarding students’ earned benefits by recovering funds from the school directly, which as a result reduces the likelihood that a student in this situation will experience unexpected debts or disruptions to their housing and living allowances.

### THE CHOICE ACT:

#### (VETERANS ACCESS, CHOICE, AND

#### ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2014) SEC 702

Beginning in July of 2015, public institutions have been required to charge eligible beneficiaries/covered individuals the in-state tuition rate of the institution under the Choice Act, regardless of if the beneficiary formally resides in that state or not. NASAA and its respective State Approving Agencies received instructions to disapprove any programs that charge more than the resident rate to eligible beneficiaries. In April of 2025, an update to the Choice Act published by VA applied a formalized waiver process for students who would like to opt out of being charged the in-state tuition (for example, if the out-of-state rate benefits the student financially). Students must make the request in writing to the school, and the school must submit the request to VA for review and approval before formally applying for a waiver.

## UNIFORM APPLICATION CHANGES AND DUAL OBJECTIVES

Beginning January 1, 2025, VA rolled out new versions of the Uniform Application (UA), also known as VA Form 22-10287 and VA Form 22-10288. These new forms, developed collaboratively by a NASAA/VA workgroup, replace the previous versions from October 2023, which are no longer accepted. While the January 2025 UA forms are now in use, NASAA has continued to review and edit these versions following the provisions of the Dole Act. Any questions or concerns regarding the revised Uniform Application can continue to be directed to NASAA and/or the State Approving Agencies.

Starting January 1, 2026, dual objective programs (or programs that include a degree and an NCD certificate or diploma) must have specific approval as a combined program. While this has always been a requirement, VA realized that not all SCOs and SAAs were aware of the specific approval. Thus, VA has granted a grace period to allow SCOs to submit the combined program applications that will end on January 1, 2026. Any student currently enrolled in unapproved dual objective programs can continue to be certified without formal SAA approval during this grace period.

## RUDISILL UPDATES AND VA APPROVAL

On April 16, 2024, the Supreme Court's 7-2 ruling in Rudisill v. McDonough determined that Veterans who qualify for both the Montgomery GI Bill and Post-9/11 GI Bill through separate periods of service may use either one, in any order, for up to 48 months. The Rudisill decision removed the previous limitation of 36 months, allowing eligible Veterans to receive up to 12 more months of total GI Bill benefits. This determination impacts 1.04 million Veterans who may be eligible for additional benefits. VA announced that they are currently accepting education claims through October 1, 2030, for impacted Veterans. Eligible Veterans in the Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program who did not previously have Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits will automatically have the difference calculated and paid retroactively.

### Who does this impact?

Veterans who:

- Previously applied for Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) benefits;
- Served two separate qualifying periods of service; and
- Forfeited Montgomery GI Bill eligibility to gain Post-9/11 GI Bill Eligibility.



USDVA: Tina Keeter, Dr. Steve Guell, Ken Smith, Dr. Justin Holloway, Janice Fisher, Josh Martin



John Ware (NASASPS), Dr. Sean Seepersad (NASASPS)  
Sam Erickson (OH), Giancarlo Fusco (CT)

# MISSION & HISTORY

The primary responsibility of the State Approving Agencies (SAAs) is to ensure the quality and integrity of programs of education and training for the use of GI Bill benefits.

## STATE APPROVING AGENCIES:

In many ways, the fundamental mission of State Approving Agencies is the same today as it was when they were founded over 78 years ago.

- Promote and safeguard quality education and training for Veterans;
- Oversight and approval of certificate, diplomas, and degree levels of post-secondary education;
- Ensure greater educational and training opportunities to meet the changing needs of Veterans; and
- Assist VA in preventing fraud, waste, and abuse in the administration of the GI Bill

The scope of responsibility: high schools, adult education centers, employers providing an on-the-job training and apprenticeship training, license and certification testing, vocational training, as well as all certificate and degree levels of post-secondary education.

Essentially, for someone to receive GI Bill benefits, an SAA has approved their program of education or training. Several years after the passage of the 1944 GI Bill of Rights, Congress added State Approving Agencies to the law in 1947. SAAs were the answer to the problems of abuse experienced by the new program. Congress believed that the states' control of education and approval of programs was the best avenue to safeguard both Veterans and institutions.

As state entities acting on behalf of the federal government, SAAs have been an outstanding example of the workability of the federal-state partnership, allowing federal interests to be pursued at the local level while preserving the identity, interests, and sovereignty of states' rights in education. Under Title 38, United States Code, each governor is requested to designate a state bureau or department as the State Approving Agency for the state.

Today there are 53 State Approving Agencies with 223 professional and support personnel, supervising over 12,000 active facilities and over 250,000 programs. SAAs are located in various state, district or territory offices, including: departments of education, higher education boards, departments of labor, departments of Veterans affairs, and standalone agencies. SAA professionals bring a wealth of formal education, training, and experience to the approval of programs for Veterans benefits.



NASAA  
Directors  
Meeting at  
Midwinter

# NASAA YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2025, our nation celebrated three distinctive military birthdays with the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps celebrating their 250<sup>th</sup> anniversaries. The Army was established on June 14, 1775, followed by the country's Navy on October 13, 1775, and supplemented with the Marine Corps' inception on November 10, 1775. Each branch played an integral role in the development of the nation's long-standing dedication to service and sacrifice. NASAA continues that dedication by honoring the legacy of soldiers who defended the United States and its allies throughout its relatively short history as a united democratic republic.

While the nation's Army, Navy, and Marine Corps served the country's interest for 250 years, it has only been a short 81 years since the GI Bill program was created to assist Veterans with their transition to civilian life. This hard-earned benefit has since paid out more than \$400 billion in education benefits to over 30 million Veterans and their immediate family members.

In FY2025, State Approving Agencies began the process of initiating SAA best practices. NASAA's committees work extremely hard to collaborate, identify, and suggest best practices to guide national SAAs with a commitment to excellence and consistency. Fiscal year 2025 yielded the creation of two notable best practices initiatives: 1) Clock Hour Based Certificates at Accredited IHLs and 2) Approvals at Out-of-State Extensions.

FY2025 was a highly collaborative year for NASAA. NASAA began the year strong by implementing Vice President Salgado's (TX) VP Bulletins; these bulletins highlight NASAA leadership activities by sharing its collaborative efforts and activities with membership, typically monthly. In October 2024, NASAA's liaison and outreach collaborations started the fiscal year with a flourish: President Ryan (RI) represented NASAA at the NAVPA Conference in Kansas City, MO and presented on the role of NASAA and SAAs as well as Risk-Based Surveys (RBS) and Supervisory Visits (SV) then sat on NAVPA's Legislative Panel to represent NASAA's legislative priorities. February 2025 had NASAA leadership presenting in Austin, Texas at the Texas Association of Collegiate Veteran Program Officials (TACVPO) Conference with President Ryan presenting on the role of NASAA and SAAs, RBS, and SVs as well as Dole Act updates with South Region VP Lily Snyder (GA). In May 2025, 23 SAAs were represented at NASAA's National Training Institute (NTI) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, yielding a total of 31 graduates. 2025's NTI training was notable from previous NTI training because the faculty completely reworked all NTI training modules, integrating novel interactive methods to promote active learning techniques. June 2025 was a fruitful month with a series of virtual SAA Flight Training activities which covered flight approvals at IHLs and NCDs. July 2025 honors belong to our very own Shane Ferrebee (CA) who received the Diana Davis Service Award for Excellence at the 2025 WAVES conference in Reno, NV. Mr. Ferrebee also presented to certifying officials on the approval process. Also, in attendance at WAVES 2025 was Curtis Washburn (HI) who presented on common survey findings as well as NASAA's President Ryan presenting on the role of NASAA and SAAs, RBS, and SVs as well as Dole Act updates. Proving to be a very conference heavy month with AVECO also hosting a conference for certifying officials in St. Louis, MO, July highlights include several SAA's contributing to its certifying officials' training activities: Karol Scheetz (OH) conducted a mini-breakout session for SCOs on Flight Training on behalf of NASAA Flight Committee, SAAs Torrence Joseph (LA) and Ed Godfrey (MN) provided APP/OJT and educational benefits training, Everette D Jackson Jr (MD) and Lori J Thompson (KS) also presented on key certifying officials' training topics, President Ryan presented on the role of NASAA and SAAs, as well as updated certifying officials on Dole Act updates rounding out AVECO's conference with President Ryan co-presented with NASAA's Immediate Past President Frank Myers (SC) on RBSs. To end FY2025's collaborative work on an exceedingly high note, NASAA's president and vice president both represented NASAA at September's National Association of State Administrators and Supervisors of Private Schools (NASASPS) in Chicago, IL. Both President Ryan and Vice President Salgado co-presented on NASAA, what SAAs do, and proposed ways NASAA could partner with NASASPS.

# CORE FUNCTIONS

## TO ACHIEVE OUR MISSION, WE ENGAGE IN SEVEN CORE FUNCTIONS:

### APPROVAL OF PROGRAMS:

Review, evaluate, and approve quality programs of education (secondary and postsecondary, public and private) and training utilizing pre-established state and federal criteria. Eligible programs leading to a standard college degree at an accredited public or nonprofit institution of higher learning are “deemed approved” in accordance with PL 111- 377 and PL 114- 315.

### RISK-BASED SURVEYS:

Conduct on-site visits to approved educational institutions, training establishments, and flight schools to assess various legislative and Department determined risk factors, as well as continued compliance with appropriate state and federal laws and VA regulations. The on-site visit is a holistic review consisting of reviews of policies and practices of the institution, to include equipment, instructional staff, and administrators, along with a detailed review of a random sampling of the Veteran student files, which includes reviewing transcripts of grades, records of previous education, granting of appropriate credit, other relevant records, and VA payments under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

### SUPERVISORY VISITS:

Conducted at IHL, NCD, OJT, Non-Registered Apprenticeships, and Vocational Flight Schools, supervisory visits help establish and maintain professional relations and foster ongoing, positive communication with approved Education Training Institutions (ETI). They also provide an opportunity for SAAs to reacquaint ETIs with approval matters and ensure ETIs understand the differing roles and responsibilities of the SCO, the SAA, and VA. Through collaboration with the SCO, these visits help identify solutions to problems and provide guidance or intervention to avoid noncompliance with approval standards, certification requirements, or issues potentially leading to such noncompliance.

### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

Directly assist facility officials or businesses with any aspect of the approval process, veteran student certification process, and clarification of statute or policy changes.

### OUTREACH:

Promote the increased usage of GI Bill benefits through briefings and presentations, mass media marketing, and networking with a wide variety of stakeholders, to include providers of education and training, employers, military installations, and Veterans groups.

### LIAISON:

Collaborate with government, Veteran, and educational entities to resolve issues, identify and formulate training needs, share best practices, and identify opportunities for success.

### COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT COMPLIANCE:

Fulfill all VA cooperative requirements on time and on target. These requirements include submission of reimbursement invoices and biannual activity reports and completing annual security and privacy training requirements.

# NASAA 2025-26 EXECUTIVE BOARD OFFICERS

The Officers of the Association are elected by the Association Membership or appointed by the President of the Association. Officers manage and administer the affairs of the Association through the Executive Board and the Committee system. The Association, through Association Membership, votes on rulings or rules at the Annual and Midwinter Business and Training meetings and has full and complete authority over the officers and committee members. The Officers of the Association shall perform duties as generally defined in Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised and as specifically defined in the articles of the Constitution and the Bylaws.

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

Rebecca Ryan (RI)	President	Ed Godfrey (MN)	Central Region Vice President
David Salgado (TX)	Vice President	Everette Jackson (MD)	East Region Vice President
Tara Monk (TX)	Secretary	Lily Snyder (GA)	South Region Vice President
Tramaine Carroll-Payne (VA)	Treasurer	Katherine Snyder (NM)	West Region Vice President
Chris Garcia (TX)	Financial Secretary	Chris Kratochvil (ND)	Central Region Alternate
Robert Kohutek (UT)	Judge Advocate	Emily Butler (PA)	East Region Alternate
James Henley (MO)	Public Affairs Liaison	Torrence Joseph (LA)	South Region Alternate
Gwen Hacker (KY)	Legislative Director	Darlene Bartlett (WA)	West Region Alternate

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

### COMMITTEE

Apprenticeship & OJT  
Archives & History  
Audit  
Automation & Technology  
Communications  
Conference Planning

Constitution & Bylaws  
Contract / Cooperative Agreement  
Flight Training  
Honors, Awards, Membership & Alumni  
IHL & NCD  
Legislative  
Military Transition Assistance  
Past President's Council / Nominating  
Professional Development  
Risk Based Survey / Supervisory Visit

### CHAIR

Torrence Joseph (LA)  
Paula Plum (MN)  
Everette Jackson (MD)  
Judy Schuler (TX)  
Shannon Patenoude (ID)  
David Salgado (TX)

Robert Kohutek (UT)  
Stephen Rudnick (HI)  
Bill Schroeder (OH)  
Lane Anderson (WA)  
Andrew Martin (WI)  
Gwen Hacker (KY)  
Chris Kratochvil (ND)  
Frank Myers (SC)  
Gwen Hacker (KY)  
Crystal Standifer (SC)

### VICE CHAIR

Kaleb Cornett (KY)  
Lisa Deneen (OR)  
Cheryl Iannello (CA)  
Brigette Hayes (KS)  
Lisa Deneen (OR)  
Judy Schuler (TX) &  
Frank Myers (SC)  
Samantha Erikson (OH)  
Shane Ferrebee (CA)  
Dexter Smith (TX)  
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John Stankowiak (MT)  
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Delma Chapa (AK)

Bill Schroeder (OH)  
Shane Ferrebee (CA)

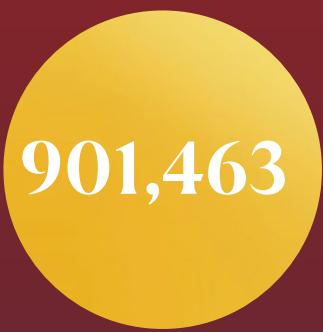
# NASAA BY THE NUMBERS



STATE  
APPROVING  
AGENCIES



STATE APPROVING  
AGENCIES STAFF  
MEMBERS

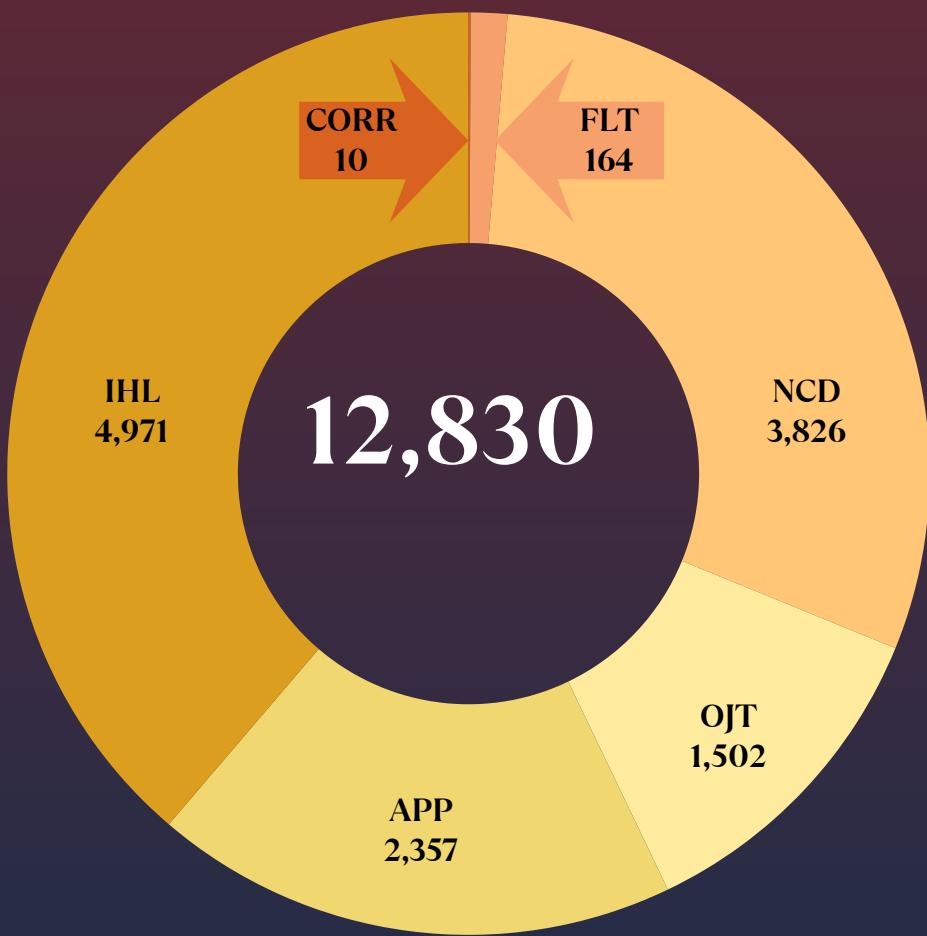


VETERANS &  
THEIR  
BENEFICIARIES

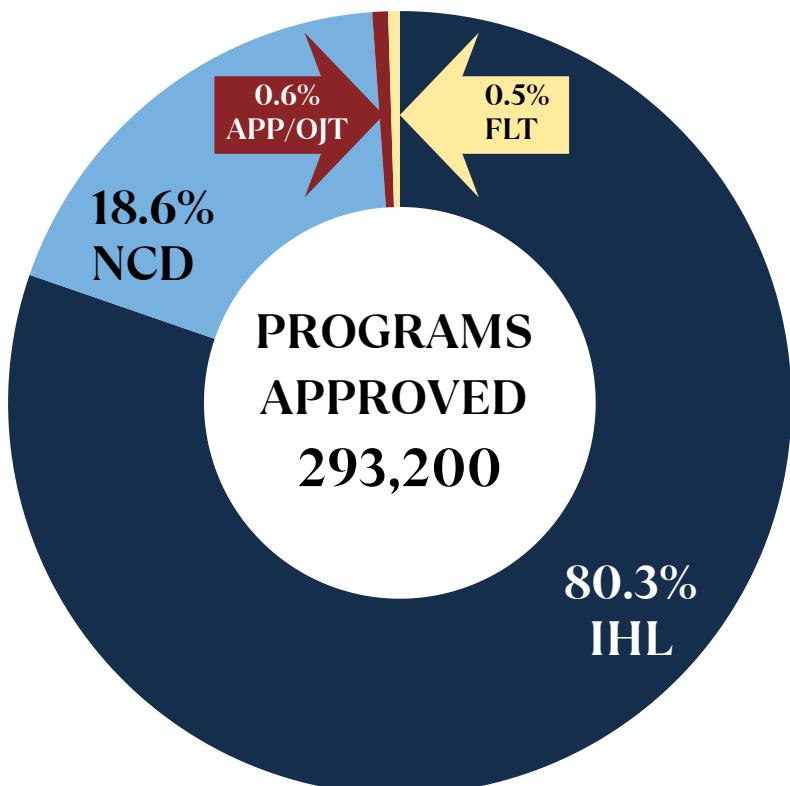


EDUCATION  
PROGRAM  
PAYMENTS

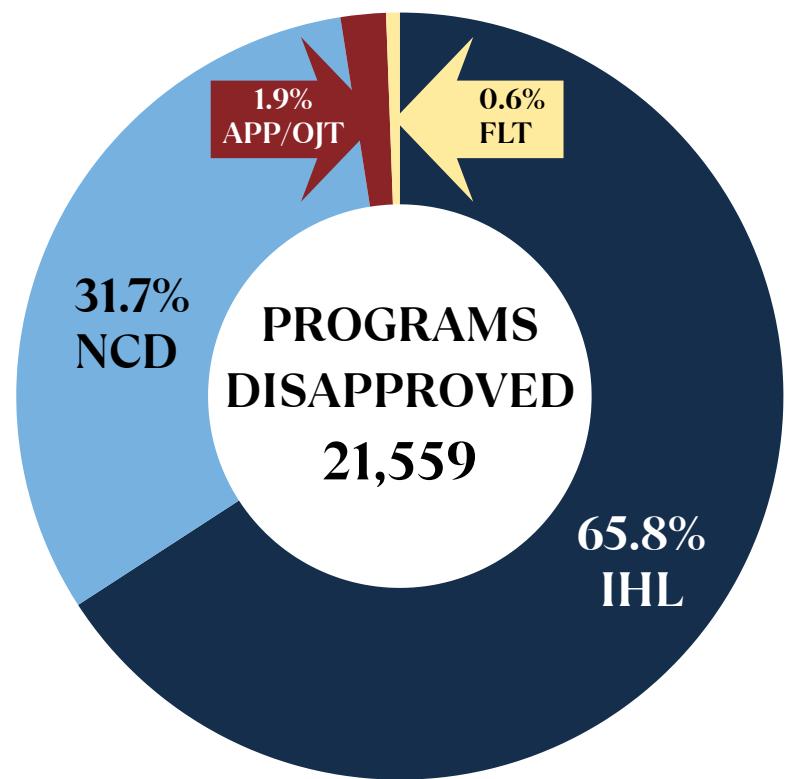
## ACTIVE FACILITIES



Sources: FY2025 Biannual Report Data provided by SAAs  
U.S. Department of Veterans Benefits Administration Annual Benefits Report Fiscal Year 2024



**15,933**  
APPROVALS  
SUBMITTED  
TO VA



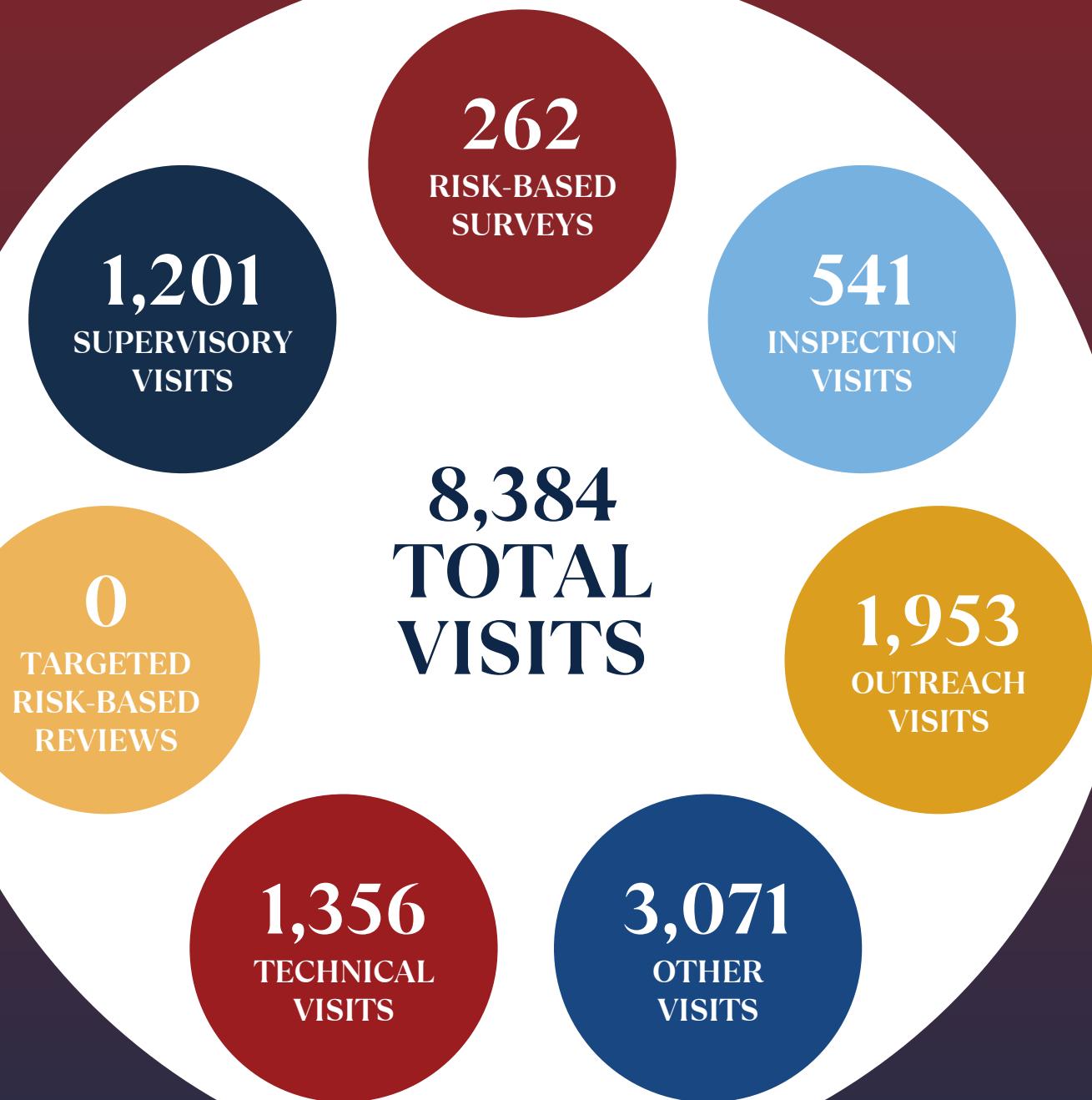
**865**  
FACILITIES  
WITHDRAWN

**74,014**  
TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE  
ACTIONS

IHL = INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING  
NCD = NON-COLLEGE DEGREE  
APP = APPRENTICESHIP  
OJT = ON-THE-JOB TRAINING  
FLT = FLIGHT

Sources: FY2025 Biannual Report Data provided by SAAs  
U.S. Department of Veterans Benefits Administration Annual Benefits Report Fiscal Year 2024

# FACILITY VISITS



Sources: FY2025 Biannual Report Data provided by SAAs  
U.S. Department of Veterans Benefits Administration Annual Benefits Report Fiscal Year 2024

# NASAA REGIONS

## WEST

Alaska  
Arizona  
California  
Colorado  
Hawaii  
Idaho  
Montana  
Nevada  
New Mexico  
Oregon  
Utah  
Washington  
Wyoming

## CENTRAL

Illinois  
Indiana  
Iowa  
Kansas  
Minnesota  
Missouri  
Nebraska  
North Dakota  
South Dakota  
Wisconsin

## SOUTH

Alabama  
Arkansas  
Florida  
Georgia  
Kentucky  
Louisiana  
Mississippi  
North Carolina  
Oklahoma  
Puerto Rico  
South Carolina  
Tennessee  
Texas  
Virginia  
West Virginia

## EAST

Connecticut  
Delaware  
District of Columbia  
Maine  
Maryland  
Massachusetts  
Michigan  
New Hampshire  
New Jersey  
New York  
Ohio  
Pennsylvania  
Rhode Island  
Vermont

# COMMITTEE SUMMARIES

## PERMANENT COMMITTEES

1. Apprenticeship and On-the-Job Training
2. Contract / Cooperative Agreement
3. Flight Committee
4. Institutions of Higher Learning and Non-College Degree
5. Legislative
6. Military Transition Assistance
7. Professional Development

## SPECIAL COMMITTEES

### CONSTITUTED ANNUALLY BY THE PRESIDENT

1. Audit
2. Automation and Technology
3. Communications
4. Conference Planning
5. Constitution and Bylaws
6. Honors and Awards / Membership / Alumni
7. Past Presidents Council
8. Archives and History
9. Joint Peer Review Group
10. Risk-Based Survey and Supervisory Visit



*Darlene Bartlett (WA), Stephen Rudnick (HI), Lane Anderson (WA), Rebecca Ryan (RI), Anthony Whitesides (WA), John Murray (WA), Shannon Patenoude (ID), Dr. Jan Del Signore (NAVPA), Betsy Wickham (FL)*

# PERMANENT COMMITTEES

## APPRENTICESHIP AND ON-THE-JOB TRAINING (OJT) COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Review and make recommendations on regulatory and procedural changes affecting the approval and supervision of Apprenticeship and On-The-Job Training Programs; seek review with Executive Board
- Advise the Chair of the Legislative Committee on matters which the Committee determines within the purview of this Committee
- Prepare reports and recommendations for submission to the Association and the Executive Board
- Conduct activities (workshops, telephone conference calls, etc.) which afford the opportunity for an open exchange of ideas concerning all aspects of Apprenticeship / On-The-Job Training

## CONTRACT/COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

### COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Conduct general contract/Cooperative Agreement deliberations on behalf of the Association with the Department of Veterans Affairs; seek review with the Executive Board
- Keep the Association informed of all modifications or changes to the contract/Cooperative Agreement; report to the Executive Board and the Association about the overall contract/Cooperative Agreement status

## INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING AND NON-COLLEGE DEGREE COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Review and make recommendations on regulatory and procedural changes affecting the approval, survey and supervision of Institutions of Higher Learning and Non-College Degree Institutions
- Advise the Chair of the Legislative Committee on matters the Committee determines are within the purview of this Committee and may affect the Association
- Prepare reports and recommendations for submission to the Executive Board and Association

## FLIGHT COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Review and make recommendations on regulatory and procedural changes affecting the approval and supervision of Flight Training Programs

- Advise the Chair of the Legislative Committee on matters the Committee determines are within the purview of this Committee
- Prepare reports and recommendations for submission to the Executive Board and Association

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Develop, maintain, publish, and manage the Legislative Agenda for the Association; seek review with the Executive Board and direct approval from the Association
- Secure, evaluate, and prepare recommendations on all proposed legislation pertinent to Veterans' education and submit them to the President for action
- Maintain liaison with appropriate Committees and Subcommittees of the Congress of the United States and their staffs
- Maintain regular contact with members of the Association whose states have legislators on the Veterans Affairs Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives
- Arrange for testimony at appropriate congressional committee and subcommittee hearings
- Involve all members of the Association in communication with their legislators on matters of vital concern to the Association
- Draft proposed legislation pertinent to State Approving Agency roles and responsibilities and submit to the President for action

## MILITARY TRANSITION ASSISTANCE

### COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Monitor, review, and make recommendations on regulatory and procedural changes affecting the participation of in-service military personnel in the Educational and Training Program under Title 38 and Title 10, U.S. Code
- Work with the appropriate service-related organizations regarding the participation of in-service personnel in the use of Title 38 and Title 10, U.S. Code provisions
- Advise the Chair of the Legislative Committee on matters under the purview of this Committee that are deemed appropriate for inclusion in the Legislative Agenda

- Advise the Executive Board and Association on matters brought to the committee for review and possible inclusion in committee actions relating to Military Education and Transition Assistance
- Prepare reports and recommendations for submission to the Executive Board and the Association

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Exercise oversight for the training and education of professional State Approving Agency staff members
- Advise the Executive Board and Association in matters related to professional development that may require action, impact the conduct of business, or affect the general welfare of the Association or its members
- Act on the behalf of the Executive Board as directed in the development, implementation, administration, and monitoring of training and education requirements and provide oversight, along with the Regional VPs in the Mentoring of newly assigned State Directors and as requested by

the State for all other members

- Monitor the professional development of the members and make recommendations, to the Association through the Executive Board, about how to enhance or assure professional development through
  - The integration of education and training with the Association's routine or specific activities
  - The recommendation of procedures in which education and training on a continuing basis can become a part of the annual evaluation process, be recognized in performance standards and professional qualification and become a component of the annual contract
- Represent the Association in meetings with other organizations, agencies, or individuals whenever the purpose of the meeting is primarily related to education and training, as approved or directed by the President
- Perform other duties related to education and training that may be assigned by the Executive Board of the Association

## SPECIAL COMMITTEES

### AUDIT COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Review the financial records of the Association at all national meetings
- Make recommendations the Committee deems appropriate concerning the finances and accounting procedures of the Association

### AUTOMATION AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

### RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Provide leadership in issues involving existing and future technologies
- Promote technology as a tool to improve quality of service
- Develop partnerships with other service providers to maximize NASAA technology resources
- Develop and manage a viable Internet web site for the Association and include, as a minimum, the following capabilities: Training, News group / List serve, Information dissemination, and Outreach
- Promote online approval capabilities with VA

- Develop and distribute information to the membership to improve understanding and usage of existing and future technologies
- Develop and update a viable technology plan to be the blueprint for the acquisition and use of existing and future technologies

### COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

### RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Develop, implement, and manage NASAA's strategic communications plan
- Prepare and disseminate news and public affairs items
- Create and maintain an effective communications infrastructure
- Provide input and support regarding the NASAA website content
- Oversee publication of NASAA newsletters and Annual Report
- Develop social media outlets to connect and inform NASAA members

## CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE

### RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Plan and develop agendas and programs for the Annual, Midwinter and other general membership meetings, in cooperation with the President
- Review and make decisions or make recommendations to the Association about bids received for general membership meetings at the Annual Business and Training Meetings
- Make logistical and fiscal arrangements for general membership meetings, to include, but not limited to, hotel and meeting accommodations, invitations to guests, outreach and support activities, and administrative support
- Make preliminary plans and arrangements for the succeeding Annual Business and Training Meetings, two years in advance
- Consult with the Alumni Group Coordinator to prepare and coordinate activities for Alumni Group members and extend invitation to attend the Annual Business and Training Meeting

## CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE

### RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Review the Constitution and Bylaws and prepare amendments or revisions as necessary, either for clarity or Association administration; receive amendments from Association members, review and assess proposals and present to the Association for consideration when the amendments or revisions meet criteria established under the Constitution
- Publish and distribute the Constitution and Bylaws of the Association; ensure publication is available through the web site
- Members of the committee will assist the Judge Advocate, as directed, in conducting the duties of the Judge Advocate and acting as Parliamentarian

## HONORS AND AWARDS / MEMBERSHIP /

### ALUMNI COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Ascertain names of members retiring during the year and prepare certificates of appreciation for presentation at the Annual Business and Training Meeting
- Prepare recommendations for Honors and Awards which the Committee deems appropriate or as directed by the President, Executive Board or Association; present recommendations to the

Executive Board for approval; prepare certificates and ceremony for presentation at the Annual Business and Training Meeting

- Refer issues or problems to the President and Executive Board, as needed
- Coordinate database of NASAA Alumni members; encourage Alumni to become members and participate in Association activities
- Serve as liaison to the Alumni Group Coordinator to provide support for, and coordination with, the Alumni Group

## PAST PRESIDENTS COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Serve as a resource of individuals with experience and expertise in matters related to the Association
- Assist the President, at the discretion and specific request of the President, in matters which benefit the Association and are not generally and appropriately within the purview of other Committees of the Association
- Serve as a complement to other committee, subcommittee, council, or task force at the request of the President and Executive Board, or at the request of the group, when appropriate and approved by the President and Board
- Serve as the Nominating Committee with the Immediate Past President serving as Chair
  - Present a slate of officers to the Association at the Annual Business and Training Meeting
  - Recommend candidates for committee membership or office vacancies, as requested by the Executive Board

## ARCHIVES AND HISTORY COMMITTEE

### RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Compile and maintain the Archive for documents and records; develop, maintain and document the History for the Association; provide a secured depository for the collection
- Collect information from the Secretary and other sources relating to NASAA activities for the year
- Collate and deposit information in the NASAA Archives depository
- Create historical reports or documents, as requested by the President

## JOINT PEER REVIEW GROUP RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Meet, as the Joint Peer Review Group, when and where assembled by the Department of Veterans Affairs
- Provide peer group review and evaluation of the State Approving Agencies' end-of-year reports
- Assign joint peer review assessment for each State Approving Agency, in accordance with policies and procedures

- Develop and conduct trainings to membership as needed throughout the year and at the Annual Business and Training Meetings.
- Serve as a resource for membership regarding the execution of Risk Based Surveys and Supervisory Visits throughout the year.

## RISK-BASED SURVEY AND SUPERVISORY VISIT COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Develop and improve annual processes for Risk-Based Surveys (RBS) and Supervisory Visits (SV) in partnership with representatives from the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Review and make decisions or make recommendations regarding the annual Standard Operating Procedures for both RBS and SVs in coordination with VA staff.
- Create and edit RBS and SV worksheets, spreadsheets, and other tools as needed for successful completion of these visits.



*John Murray (WA) & President Ryan (RI)*



*NTI Faculty*

# FY 2025 NASAA MOMENTS



Rep. Derrick Van Orden (WI)  
& Gwen Hacker (KY)



Tila Jernigan (TACVPO)  
& President Ryan (RI)



Carlton Lawyer (AR) & Torrence Joseph (LA)



Dr. Jan Del  
Signore (NAVPA)  
& President Ryan



Colorado SAA NCD Conference



Eileen Miazga (ME)  
Daryl Reed (ME)



Andrea Wheeler (AVECO) & President Ryan



WTECB WA SAA



Cleo Wallace (LA) & Betsy Wickham (FL)

# 2024-25 HIGHLIGHT EVENTS

## OCTOBER

- National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators (NAVPA) Conference in Washington D.C.
- Idaho Education Summit at Idaho State University in Pocatello, ID
- Colorado NCD SCO Workshop in Denver, CO
- Oklahoma Veteran Education Specialist Association (OVSEA) Conference at University of Oklahoma, OK

## NOVEMBER

- VASCO Lunch and Learn
- West Virginia SCO Meeting in South Charleston, WV

## DECEMBER

- NASAA/VACO Meeting in Washington, DC

## JANUARY

- Florida Association of Veterans Education Specialists (FAVES) National Flight Conference at Palm Beach State College, FL

## FEBRUARY

- NASAA Midwinter Conference and Training in Washington, DC
- Texas Association of Collegiate Veteran Program Officials (TACVPO) in Austin, TX

## MARCH

- Tennessee Educational Association of Veterans Program Administrators (TEAVPA) Conference in Mt. Juliet, TN
- Louisiana Association of Veterans Education School Certifying Officials (LAVECO) Conference at Bossier Parish Community College

## APRIL

- Arizona Veterans Program Association at Mesa Community College
- Oklahoma Veteran Education Specialist Association (OVSEA) Conference at Oklahoma Community College, OK
- South Carolina Association of County Veterans' Affairs Officers Conference in Greenville, SC
- Spring 2025 SCO Workshop at Ashland University, OH
- VASCO Spring Training
- Tennessee Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

## MAY

- NASAA National Training Institute (NTI) in Minneapolis, MN
- WSAC & WTECB Joint Virtual SCO Spring Workshop
- Tennessee Veteran Reconnect Conference
- West Virginia SCO Meeting in South Charleston, WV

## JUNE

- FAVES Annual School Certifying Official Conference in St. Pete Beach, FL
- Veterans Resource Fair and Ready to Rate Claims Clinic in Kansas City, KS
- Montana IHL SCO Training Conference at Helena College, Helena, MT
- SCO Summit in Camp Keys, ME
- GI Bill 8<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Lunch & Learn
- Massachusetts SCO Training at Mass Bay Community College for NCDs and Fitchburg State University for IHLS

## JULY

- Western Association of Veteran Education Specialists (WAVES) Conference in Reno, NV
- Association of Veterans Education Certifying Officials (AVECO) Conference in St. Louis, MO

## AUGUST

- NASAA Summer Business Meeting in Minneapolis, MN
- Veterans Resource Fair and Claims Clinic in Garden City, KS

## SEPTEMBER

- CT Veterans Affairs Stand Down 2025



Everette Jackson (MD) & Director Smith

# Ensuring Integrity and Access

## NASAA's Continued Commitment to Veterans Education and Training

For more than 81 years, Congress has entrusted the states with a vital mission—protecting the integrity of the GI Bill. The National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) proudly carries this responsibility, working hand in hand with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that Veterans and their families can fully access the educational and training opportunities they've earned through service.

In recent years, NASAA has strengthened its commitment to Veterans by streamlining approval processes, enhancing oversight through Risk-Based Surveys and Supervisory Visits, and expanding program options to include preparatory courses.

NASAA's collaboration with Veteran Service Organizations remains a cornerstone of its mission. Ongoing partnerships with the American Legion, Student Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the National Association of Veterans Program Administrators, the Association of Veterans Education Certifying Officials, the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, and many others amplify our shared commitment to protecting Veterans from fraud, waste, and misuse of benefits. Through active engagement with Congress and the broader Veterans' education community, NASAA continues to play a central role in shaping policies that enhance program integrity and preservation.

As technology reshapes the learning process through Artificial Intelligence, virtual learning, and advancements in technical trades, NASAA remains steadfast in balancing modernization with strong oversight. The Legislative Committee's goal is to monitor federal policy changes for NASAA membership that will keep pace with the ever-changing learning methods and modalities while enhancing standards for quality review. The committee keeps the association informed of current legislation and develops the core agenda as a focus on future recommendations to Congress. Our ongoing priorities include expanding awareness and participation in the GI Bill, promoting workforce development through on-the-job training and apprenticeships, and helping Veterans achieve meaningful, future-ready careers in growing industries.

Through every initiative, NASAA stays true to its core mission—protecting Veterans and their families by safeguarding the GI Bill. With continued partnership, innovation, and purpose, we look forward to another year of progress in service to those who serve our nation.



*Faye Fernandes, Counsel, U.S. Senate &  
President Ryan (RI)*



*Kristina Keenan (VFW), Faisal Sulman (SVA), Will Hubbard (VES),  
Dr. Joseph Wescott (NASAA Legislative Liaison), Ashlynne Haycock-  
Lohmann (TAPS), Dr. Jan Del Signore (NAVPA)*

# STATE APPROVING AGENCIES DIRECTORY

## WHERE ARE THE STATE APPROVING AGENCIES?

The location of a State Approving Agency within a state's governmental structure varies from state to state.

The decision of where to place a SAA within a state rests with the governor of that state.

In FY25 there were 53 state approving agencies covering all 50 states plus Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. Washington State is now the only state with 2 SAAs. There are 29 SAAs in state Veteran affairs agencies, nine in state higher education agencies, eight in state post-secondary education agencies, three in elementary and secondary education agencies, three in state workforce development agencies, and one in the state military department.

### ALABAMA

**Alabama State Approving Agency**  
**Alabama Community College System**  
135 South Union Street  
P.O. Box 302130  
Montgomery, AL 36104  
Kimberly Minniefield: SAA Director  
kimberly.minniefield@accs.edu  
Phone: 334-293-4503

### ALASKA

**Office of Veterans Affairs**  
**State of Alaska**  
Delma Chapa: SAA Director  
4600 Debarr Rd., Ste. 180  
Anchorage, AK 99508  
delma.chapa@alaska.gov  
Phone: 907- 334-0871

### ARIZONA

**Arizona Department of Veterans' Services**  
**Arizona State Approving Agency**  
Jeff Escobar: SAA Director  
3839 North 3rd Street, Suite 209  
Phoenix, AZ 85012  
jesobar@azdvs.gov  
Phone: 602-255- 5395

### ARKANSAS

**Arkansas State Approving Agency for Veterans Training**  
**Arkansas Department of Workforce Education**  
Bill Dedner: SAA Director  
101 E. Capitol Avenue, Suite 300  
Little Rock, AR 72201  
bill.dedner@adhe.edu  
Phone: 501- 324-9473

### CALIFORNIA

**California State Approving Agency for Veterans Education (CSAAVE)**  
Cheryl Iannello: SAA Director  
1227 O Street, Ste. 500  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
csaaveinfo@calvet.ca.gov  
Phone: 916-503-8317

### COLORADO

**Office of Veterans Education and Training**  
Mike Roberts: SAA Director  
9101 East Lowry Boulevard  
Denver, CO 80230-6011  
michael.roberts@cccs.edu  
Phone: 720-858-2814

### CONNECTICUT

**State Approving Agency**  
**Connecticut Office of Higher Education**  
Giancarlo Fusco: SAA Director  
450 Columbus Blvd., Suite 707  
Hartford, CT 06103  
Giancarlo.fusco@ct.gov  
Phone: 860-947-1816

### DELAWARE

**Delaware State Approving Agency**  
Patricia Keeton: SAA Director  
35 Commerce Way  
Dover, DE 19904  
patricia.keeton@doe.k12.de.us  
Phone: 302-857-3313

### FLORIDA

**Bureau of State Approving for Veterans' Training**  
**Florida Department of Veterans Affairs**  
Betsy Wickham: SAA Director  
9500 Bay Pines Boulevard, Room 214  
Bay Pines, FL 33744  
betsy.wickham@fdva.fl.gov  
Phone: 727-319-7402

### GEORGIA

**State Approving Agency**  
**Georgia Department of Veterans Service**  
Lily Snyder: SAA Director  
Floyd Veterans Memorial Bldg.,  
Suite E-970  
Atlanta, GA 30334-4800  
saals@vs.ga.gov  
Phone: 404-656-2306

### HAWAII

**Hawaii State Approving Agency**  
Stephen Rudnick: SAA Director  
3949 Diamond Head Road,  
Building 300, Room 14  
Honolulu, HI 96816  
stephen.l.rudnick@hawaii.edu  
Phone: 808-369-3559

### IDAHO

**Idaho Division of Veterans Services State Approving Agency**  
Paul Spannknebel: SAA Director  
351 Collins Road  
Boise, ID 83702  
education@veterans.idaho.gov  
Phone: 208-780-1334

# SAA DIRECTORY

## ILLINOIS

### Department of Veterans' Affairs

Jeffrey Lewis: SAA Director  
833 South Spring Street  
P. O. Box 19432  
Springfield, IL 62794-9432  
jeffrey.lewis@illinois.gov  
Phone: 618-367-3064

## INDIANA

### Indiana Department of Veterans

#### Affairs

Amber Mertens: SAA Director  
777 North Meridian Street,  
Suite 300  
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2738  
amertens@dva.in.gov  
Phone: 317-232-3917

## IOWA

### Iowa Department of Education

#### Veterans and Military Education

Monte Burroughs: SAA Director  
Grimes State Office Building  
400 East 14th Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146  
monte.burroughs@iowa.gov  
Phone: 515-631-9207

## KANSAS

### Kansas Office of Veterans Services

Eric Rohleder: SAA Director  
Landon State Office Building  
900 SW Jackson Street, Suite 504-N  
Topeka, KS 66612  
eric.rohleder@ks.gov  
Phone: 785-296-3976

## KENTUCKY

### Kentucky Approving Agency for Veterans Education

Gwen Hacker: SAA Director  
300 North Main Street  
Versailles, KY 40383  
gwen.hacker@kctcs.edu  
Phone: 859-256-3352

## LOUISIANA

### Louisiana Department of Veterans

#### Affairs

Cleophus Wallace: SAA Director  
602 North 5th Street  
P. O. Box 94095, Capitol Station  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9095  
cleophus.wallace@la.gov  
Phone: 225-219-5013

## MAINE

### State Approving Agency for

#### Veterans Education Programs

Maine Bureau of Veterans Services  
Eileen Miazga: SAA Director  
117 State House Station  
Augusta, MA 04333-0117  
eileen.miazga@maine.gov  
Phone: 207-430-6033

## MARYLAND

### Maryland Higher Education Commission

Everette Jackson: SAA Director  
200 E. Redwood Street, Suite 2100  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
everetted.jackson@maryland.gov  
Phone: 410-767- 3301

## MASSACHUSETTS

### Massachusetts Department of

#### Higher Education

### Office of Veterans Education

George O'Connor: SAA Director  
One Ashburton Place,  
Room 1401  
Boston, MA 02108  
go'connor@dhe.mass.edu  
Phone: 617-994-6925

## MICHIGAN

### Michigan State Approving Agency

#### Workforce Development Agency

#### Michigan Department of Labor and

#### Economic Opportunity

Shaftone Dunklin: SAA Director  
Elliott-Larsen Building  
320 S Walnut Street  
Lansing, MI 48933  
dunklins@michigan.gov  
Phone: 517-896-7805

## MINNESOTA

### Minnesota State Approving Agency

#### Minnesota Department of Veterans

#### Affairs

Jim Miller: SAA Director  
Veterans Service Building  
20 West 12th Street,  
2nd Floor  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
james.allan.miller@state.mn.us  
Phone: 651-757-1569

## MISSISSIPPI

### Mississippi Veterans Affairs

### Mississippi State Approving Agency

Cathy McGruder: SAA Director  
600 North Street, Suite 200  
Jackson, MS 39202  
cmcgruder@msva.ms.gov  
Phone: 601-576-4867

## MISSOURI

### Veterans' Education & Training Section

### Department of Elementary & Secondary Education

James Henley: SAA Director  
3024 Dupont Circle  
Jefferson City, MO 65109  
james.henley@dese.mo.gov  
Phone: 573-751-2571

## MONTANA

### Montana State Approving Agency

#### Department of Labor and Industry

John Stankowiak: SAA Director  
PO Box 1728  
Helena, MT 59624-1728  
saa@mt.gov  
Phone: 406-444-4122

## NEBRASKA

### Private Postsecondary Career

#### Schools & Veterans Education

#### Nebraska Department of Education

Marisol Birth: SAA Director  
500 S. 84th Street, 2nd Floor  
Lincoln, NE 68510-2611  
marisol.birth@nebraska.gov  
Phone: 402- 326-4519

**NEVADA**  
**Commission on Postsecondary Education**  
Kelly Wuest: SAA Director  
2800 E. St. Louis Avenue  
Las Vegas, NV 89104  
kdwuest@detr.nv.gov  
Phone: 702-486-7330

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**  
**Department of Veterans Affairs & Public Services**  
**Division of Community Based Military Programs**  
Benjamin Whelihan: SAA Director  
1 Minuteman Way, Building 1, Room 175  
Concord, NH 03301  
Benjamin.M.Whelihan@DMAVS.nh.gov  
Phone: 603-202-0234

**NEW JERSEY**  
**New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs (NJDVA)**  
Matthew Moticha: SAA Director  
Eggert Crossing Road  
P. O. Box 340  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0340  
DMAVA-SAA@dmava.nj.gov  
Phone: 609-530-6849

**NEW MEXICO**  
**State Approving Agency for Veterans' Education and Training**  
**New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services**  
Katherine Snyder: SAA Director  
4801 Indian School Road NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87113  
katherine.snyder@dvs.nm.gov  
Phone: 505-280-1047

**NEW YORK**  
**Bureau of Veterans Education**  
**William Clarke: SAA Director**  
2 Empire State Plaza, 17th Floor  
Albany, NY 12223  
william.clarke@veterans.ny.gov  
Phone: 518-474-7606  
116 West 32nd Street, 5th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
Phone: 212-564-8414

**NORTH CAROLINA**  
**North Carolina State Approving Agency**  
Timothy Freeman: SAA Director  
P.O. Box 1362  
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709  
tim.freeman@milvets.nc.gov  
Phone: 984-202-6673

**NORTH DAKOTA**  
**State Approving Agency**  
**ND Department of Veterans Affairs**  
Chris Kratochvil: SAA Director  
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# SAA DIRECTORY

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## TEXAS

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### Coordinating Board

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## WASHINGTON, D.C.

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## WEST VIRGINIA

**Office of Veterans Education and**  
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NASAA Central Region

# AWARDS, HONORS AND RECOGNITIONS

The success of NASAA relies on the hard work of our membership and their willingness to contribute their time through various leadership roles, committee work, and projects. Their devotion to our mission and to protecting the integrity of the GI Bill® not only is a reflection of the work our SAA members do each and every day within their states but demonstrates a desire to be part of something greater than themselves.

In honor of these individual's voluntary work, NASAA makes every effort to recognize the exemplary contributions each year.

NASAA truly appreciates each of our members and is honored to recognize the following individuals for the FY 2025 year!



*Past President Myers (SC), Cleo Wallace (LA), President Ryan (RI)*

## **NASAA LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD** Cleo Wallace (LA)

## **NASAA PRESIDENT'S AWARD** Crystal Standifer (SC)

## **NASAA MENTORSHIP AWARD** Gwen Hacker (KY)

## **NASAA SERVICE AWARD** Faye Fernandes, Counsel U.S. Senate

## **NASAA LEADERSHIP AWARD** Representative Derrick Van Orden (WI)

## **DR JOSEPH WESCOTT LEGISLATIVE AWARD** Joseph Sharpe Jr., Director, American Legion

## **NASAA DIAMOND AWARD** Dr. Ed Godfrey (MN) Lily Snyder (GA) Tramaine Carroll-Payne (VA) Judy Schuler (TX)

## **NASAA STAR AWARDS** Frank Myers (SC) Torrence Joseph (LA) Shannon Patenoude (ID) Andrew Martin (WI) Kathy Snyder (NM)

Everette Jackson (MD)  
Shane Ferrebee (CA)  
Tara Monk (TX)

**2025 MIDWINTER CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION**  
Amber Mertens (IN)  
Andrea Watts (TX)  
Andrew Martin (WI)  
Anthony Whitesides (WA)  
Bill Schroeder (OH)  
Brigette Hayes (KS)  
Chris Kratochvil (ND)  
Curtis Washburn (HI)  
Darlene Bartlett (WA)  
Dexter Smith (TX)  
Frank Myers (SC)  
Gwen Hacker (KY)  
James Henley (MO)  
John Murray (WA)  
Judy Schuler (TX)  
Jusup McChesney (PA)  
Kathy Snyder (NM)  
Ken Hanson (TN)  
Lane Anderson (WA)  
Lily Snyder (GA)  
Lisa Deneen (OR)  
Loren Stevens (DC)  
Penny Starr (TN)  
Rachael Summary (MO)  
Rebecca Ryan (RI)  
Samantha Erickson (OH)  
Tara Monk (TX)  
Tara Sienkiewicz (PA)  
Timothy Freeman (NC)

Tony Schnellbach (MN)  
Zachary Berry (NE)

**2025 SUMMER CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION**  
Abby Edgar (ID)  
Aileen O'Rourke (MA)  
Alaska SAA  
Andrew Martin (WI)  
Anthony Whitesides (WA)  
Arizona SAA  
Benjamin Whelihan (NH)  
Bill Schroeder (OH)  
Brigette Hayes (KS)  
California SAA  
Cheryl Iannello (CA)  
Cleo Wallace (LA)  
Colorado SAA  
Crystal Standifer (SC)  
Curtis Washburn (HI)  
Daniel Hof (OH)  
Darlene Bartlett (WA)  
David Salgado (TX)  
Deb O'Neill (WA)  
Debbie Brower (VA)  
Delma Chapa (AK)  
Donna Matthews (PA)  
Ed Godfrey (MN)  
Joe Wescott (NC)  
Emily Butler (PA)  
Everette Jackson (MD)  
Frank Myers (SC)  
George O'Connor (MA)  
Giancarlo Fusco (CT)  
Gwen Hacker (KY)  
Hannah Bartlett (WA)  
Hawaii SAA  
Idaho SAA  
Jennifer St. Jean (VT)  
John Murray (WA)  
John Stankowiak (MT)  
Judy Schuler (TX)  
Kathy Snyder (NM)  
Ken Hanson (TN)  
Kim Bloodgood (IN)  
Lane Anderson (WA)  
Lily Snyder (GA)  
Lisa Deneen (OR)  
Madeline Mendez (FL)  
Mark Seabury (NY)  
Matthew Benko (PA)  
Montana SAA  
Nevada SAA  
New Mexico SAA  
Oregon SAA  
Penny Starr (TN)  
Phil Blanchard (MI)  
Rachael Summary (MO)  
Robert Kohutek (UT)  
Ronnie Smith (KY)  
Samantha Erickson (OH)  
Shafton Dunklin (MI)  
Shannon Patenoude (ID)  
Tara Monk (TX)  
Torrence Joseph (LA)  
Tramaine Carroll-Payne (VA)  
Utah SAA  
Wanda Jackson (OH)  
Washington WSAC SAA  
Washington WTECB SAA  
Wendy Van Zeeland (ID)  
Wyoming SAA  
Zachary Berry (NE)



# EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS



**FRANK MYERS**  
IMMEDIATE  
PAST PRESIDENT



**REBECCA RYAN**  
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**DAVID SALGADO**  
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**TARA MONK**  
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**ROBERT KOHUTEK**  
JUDGE ADVOCATE



**GWEN HACKER**  
LEGISLATIVE  
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**JAMES HENLEY**  
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**EVERETTE  
JACKSON JR.**  
EAST REGION  
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**LILY SNYDER**  
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**KATHERINE  
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WEST REGION  
VICE PRESIDENT

# CONNECT WITH US



*NASAA South Region*

To improve and promote branding of the National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) including current projects, upcoming events, as well as providing resource information to the public and our Veteran beneficiary population.

## CONTENT

NASAA uses social media to highlight its materials, including programs, website updates, media topics from trusted sources, and reports. The information and views shared from outside media sources are not endorsed by the NASAA organization. The goal of sharing sites and media stories is to promote news in higher education and Veterans' education/training.

## COMMUNITY

**FACEBOOK:** <https://www.facebook.com/NASAAVETSEducation/>

**LINKEDIN:** <https://www.linkedin.com/company/natl-assoc-of-state-approving-agencies>

**INSTAGRAM:** [https://www.instagram.com/nasaa\\_vetsed/](https://www.instagram.com/nasaa_vetsed/)

**WEBSITE:** <http://www.nasaa-vetseducation.com>

# In Loving Memory of John Murray



John Murray's legacy is one of service, advocacy, and integrity. He improved systems, fought for resources, and touched lives across Washington and the nation. His passion, excellence, and unwavering commitment to veterans, were amazing, I could always count on him. I will miss my friend.

~Darlene Bartlett (WA)

We went searching for photos of John and came up empty, which was a little surprising, because we all worked with John on so many things. We realized we never needed photos before now, simply because John was always there. Always contributing, always in his Brady Bunch virtual meeting window in some goofy Seahawks gear, always fighting the good fight for clarity and purpose, always willing to argue the minutiae to get it just right; John was always there, always making us better. Until sadly, so suddenly, he wasn't.

And now we all find ourselves a little lost, and looking for photos. Photos or not, he remains such a large part of who we are and what we do. When we strive for perfection, the sort that feeds the greater good and makes life easier for everyone in the long run, John is there. When we find something that brings us joy and own it - wear it loud and proud and enthusiastically share it with others, John is there. If we honor his memory by putting our all into everything we do, both on and off the clock, John will be there, too. So, if we proofread voraciously, check the math fearlessly, and balance fun and dedication, we won't need a photo. John will still be there, still making us better.

~NY SAA



When I think of John, the first image that pops into my head is him standing with a legal pad full of meticulous notes, ready to go toe to toe with a Congressional staffer about the intricacies of a statute. John put so much energy and passion into his work in NASAA, and his enthusiasm will be so sorely missed. He was also kind and considerate- the type of gentleman who would walk with you to the hotel after an excursion to make sure you got back safely. I miss him as a colleague and as a friend.

~Rebecca Ryan (RI)



John was one of the most thoughtful, dedicated, selfless, and kind individuals I have ever known. He was a wonderful NASAA colleague and friend to us all. As busy as he was, he never hesitated to immediately respond to someone's question, provide insight, guidance, and/or support.

I have great memories of John throughout all the years I knew him. He will be dearly missed.

~Kathy Snyder (NM)

John will always be missed and never forgotten. His spirit for NASAA and for veterans was truly inspiring and he was a wonderful friend.

-Gwen Hacker (KY)

John Murray. Always smiling. Always helpful. Always seeing the best that we can do and be as an organization. I would not say I was close to John, but for me, he was someone who mentored-adjacent. New SAAs could identify him from the more senior SAAs. I say this because John was so very approachable and down to earth. John had an easy laugh and gentle-giant nature that put you at ease immediately. John listened quietly, took copious notes, and was never quick to judge. The qualities John personified were key to helping others learn, tailored from his experience in the Navy and as a seasoned SAA director; these positive learning behaviors also allowed others to draw from their own experiences tempered by the way John engaged and collaborated with his SAA peers.

John's sudden passing is a loss for the entire organization: I will keep the lessons I learned from him over the past 3.5 years close to heart. It is my hope that NASAA membership works to hold John's memory in the forefront by asking ourselves: "and what would John say...or what would John do?". Farewell and safe journey but know you are not forgotten.

~Shannon Patenoude (ID)

I had the pleasure of working with John through my time with NASAA. Whenever there was a question about regulations, or how we best do this job of SAA, John was the person to get answers from. He was a tireless advocate for veterans and was widely regarded as one of the most knowledgeable people in the country regarding all things related to VA benefits and how to best work with VA. His importance to NASAA was immeasurable and his impact on the lives of the veterans we serve will live on.

~Curtis Washburn (HI)

John was a humble and uplifting person that I've had the pleasure of working with. I will always remember his smile and humorous behavior that he displayed over and over each time that I was in his company. Whenever, I asked him to do something or for some information on a subject matter, he would always say yes and let me research this information and I'll get back to you as soon as possible.

John's spirit will live on within NASAA!

Rest in peace my friend, rest in peace!!!

All the best because John was the very best!

~Frank Myers (SC)

Many will speak about John's extraordinary work ethic and his unwavering dedication to NASAA. But I will always remember him as the person who unexpectedly drew me into countless adventures with the WA SAA - gondola rides, county fairs, even a Grand Canyon helicopter tour. I will miss his spirit of exploration and his eagerness to try something new, but most of all, I will miss John himself. I'm only sorry we never got to make that journey to Antarctica together.

~Lily Snyder (GA)

Sadly, John died without ever knowing the details of the Cioffi Model.

~Larry Graves (WI)





# NASAA

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<https://riopc.edu/services/help-for-students/>