

# Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs

2018 AFTER ACTION REPORT



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# about us

The mission of the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs is to provide comprehensive care and quality service to Louisiana's veterans, and their families, with regard to health care, education, disability benefits, long-term care, and burial honors. We exist for you!

## our team

### **JOEY STRICKLAND**

*Secretary*

### **HOMER RODGERS**

*Undersecretary*

### **JULIE BAXTER PAYER**

*Executive Counsel*

### **LISA BRUHL**

*Deputy Assistant Secretary - Homes*

### **VANESSA MELANCON**

*Deputy Assistant Secretary - Benefits*

### **CLEO WALLACE**

*Deputy Assistant Secretary - SAA*

### **DUSTIN GUY**

*Human Resources Director*

### **BILLY ROBBINS**

*Cemeteries Program Director*

### **ALEJANDRA JUAN**

*Communications Director*

## commission

### **RAY BASS**

*Veterans of Foreign Wars*

### **RYAN BESSINGER**

*Member At-Large*

### **RUDY BOURG**

*American Veterans*

### **BILL DETWEILLER**

*American Legion*

### **PAUL HERMANN**

*Disabled American Veterans*

### **SULANDA LONNETTE**

*Member At-Large*

### **MARY MILLS**

*American Legion*

### **RICK O'BRIEN**

*Military Order of the Purple Heart*

### **DERON SANTINY**

*Member At-Large*

# department highlights

## VETERANS BENEFITS

In fiscal year 2017, LDVA Benefits Division's Contact Assistance Section helped bring in \$1,296,849,000.00 in federal VA compensation & pension to 284,074 Louisiana veterans, their families and/or dependents.

## VETERANS HOMES

Since 2016, \$7,421,608.73 has been spent on renovations and/or facility upgrades that helped us improve the quality of care we provide at our five state-of-the-art veterans homes. We continue to deliver valuable services in a professional and steadfast way to our Louisiana veterans and their families.

## VETERANS CEMETERIES

In 2018, we paid tribute to the lives of 952 of our fallen service members and their eligible dependents. We received \$7,486,250.00 from the federal VA to break ground on our fifth and final cemetery in Jennings, La.. And, we received an additional \$1,696,886.00 from the federal VA to expand our cemetery in Slidell, La.

## STUDENT VETERANS

In 2018, LDVA's State Approving Agency helped bring in over \$180 million from federal VA for veterans' education benefits. LDVA was also awarded a LaVetCorps program grant. Our newly hired program director is working on establishing a minimum of 30 veteran centers across the state by Aug, 2019.

# significant contributions

## LA GOLD STAR FAMILIES MEMORIAL

LDVA coordinated the placement and dedication of the Louisiana Gold Star Families Memorial Monument. This memorial honors Gold Star Families, preserves the memory of the fallen, and stands as a stark reminder that freedom isn't free.

## SUICIDE PREVENTION SUMMIT

In 2018, the LDVA hosted its first annual, statewide Suicide Prevention Summit at the Historic Hotel Bentley. The summit helped increase the attendees' understanding of suicide, its prevalence, risk factors for veteran populations, and assisted them in acquiring the needed tools for prevention, assessment, and intervention.

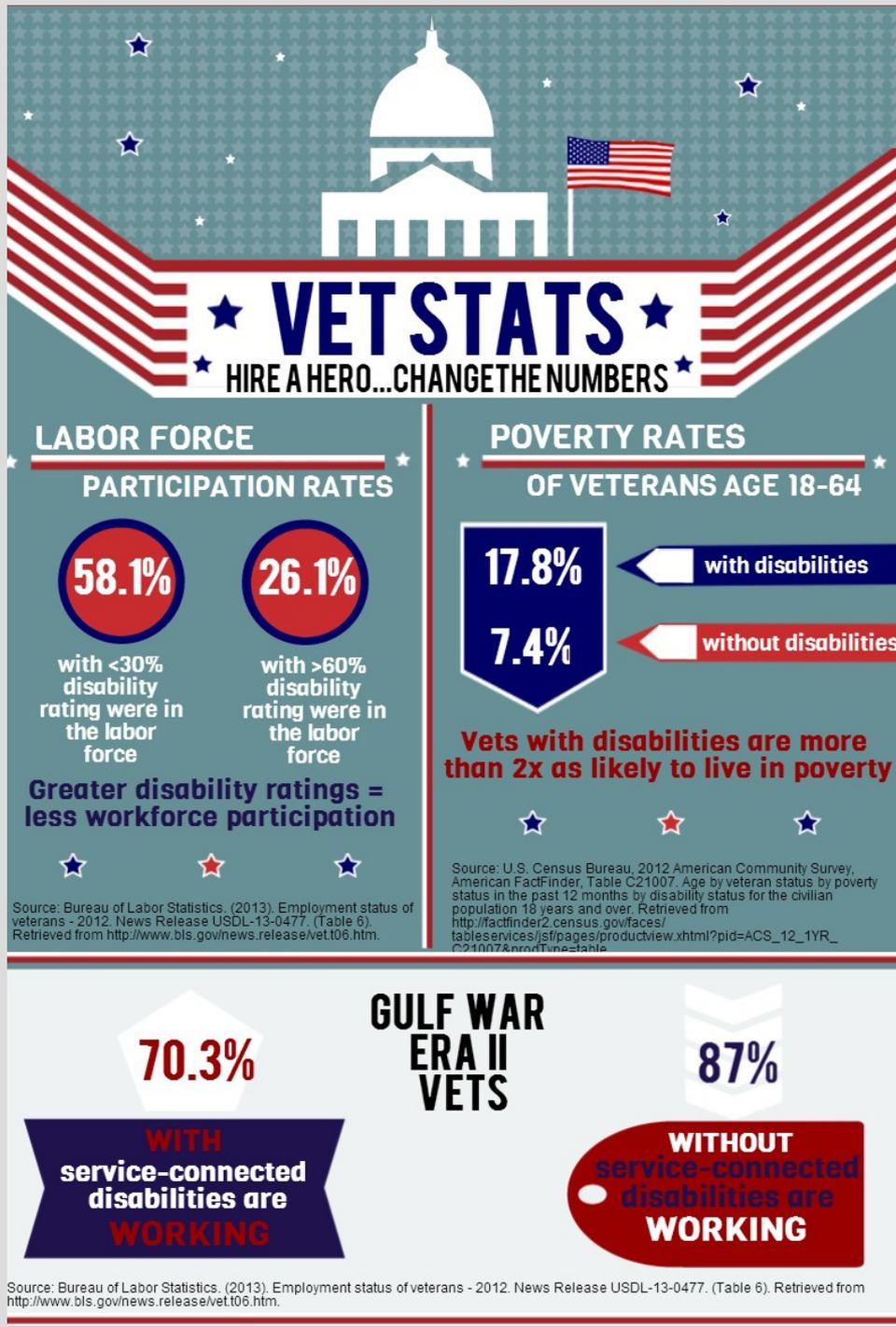
## INCARCERATED VETERANS

The LDVA exists for all veterans; including those that are homeless, and/or incarcerated. Secretary Strickland has made incarcerated veterans a priority in his administration by visiting prisons, listening to their concerns, and ensuring that they are aware of the benefits they earned. Our Department now has two dedicated Incarcerated Veterans Program Liaisons working with these vets.

## MILITARY FAMILY ASSISTANCE FUND

In 2018, LDVA's Military Family Assistance Fund awarded \$78,012.56 to deploying Louisiana National Guard members and to Louisiana veterans facing financial hardships. Qualifying Louisiana military families can be awarded up to \$10k per year. Additionally, our team members helped coordinate temporary housing vouchers, food, clothing, and counseling referrals to vets when needed.

# vet population statistics



## summary

Our Department continues to provide quality services to our veterans and their families. Our vision of helping to establish Louisiana as "veteran friendly state" is slowly coming to fruition.

We're working closely with a myriad of organizations across the state that are helping us to further develop the Louisiana Veterans Memorial Park. Plans are in place to both open the Old Arsenal Museum and to dedicate a Native American Veterans Memorial in 2019. On the national level, LDVA Secretary Strickland's appointment to the VA's Advisory Committee on Cemeteries and Memorials will help our state have a bigger voice on all issues concerning veterans cemetery operations. Our team members are proud to continue to serve Louisiana's military families.