

The Florida Senate  
**COMMITTEE MEETING EXPANDED AGENDA**  
**MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, SPACE, AND  
DOMESTIC SECURITY**  
**Senator Wright, Chair**  
**Senator Torres, Vice Chair**

**MEETING DATE:** Wednesday, January 4, 2023

**TIME:** 1:30—2:30 p.m.

**PLACE:** Mallory Horne Committee Room, 37 Senate Building

**MEMBERS:** Senator Wright, Chair; Senator Torres, Vice Chair; Senators Berman, Calatayud, Collins, Pizzo, and Rodriguez

TAB		BILL NO. and INTRODUCER	BILL DESCRIPTION and SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIONS	COMMITTEE ACTION
		Remarks by Chair Wright		Presented
		Introductions		Presented
1		Presentation by Bob Asztalos, Deputy Executive Director, Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs		Presented
		Other Related Meeting Documents		



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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*Honoring those who served U.S.*

## Department Update

*January 4, 2023*

***Bob Asztalos***

***Deputy Executive Director***

# “The Big Picture”



**VA - Federal:** Medical Care through VA Medical Centers, Outpatient Clinics & Vet Centers; Education Benefits, Pension, Service Connected Claims, Burial, VA Home Loans, more...

BOLDLY SERVING MORE THAN 30 YEARS



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

[www.FloridaVets.org](http://www.FloridaVets.org)

**FDVA - State:** Veterans' Outreach Services, State Veterans' Homes, Property Tax Exemptions, State Veterans' Legislation, many state benefits & services, more...



# Our Mission & Vision

***Mission:*** To advocate with purpose and passion for Florida Veterans and link them to superior services, benefits & support.

***Vision:*** FDVA is premier point of entry for Florida Veterans to access earned services, benefits & support.



# Why We Serve



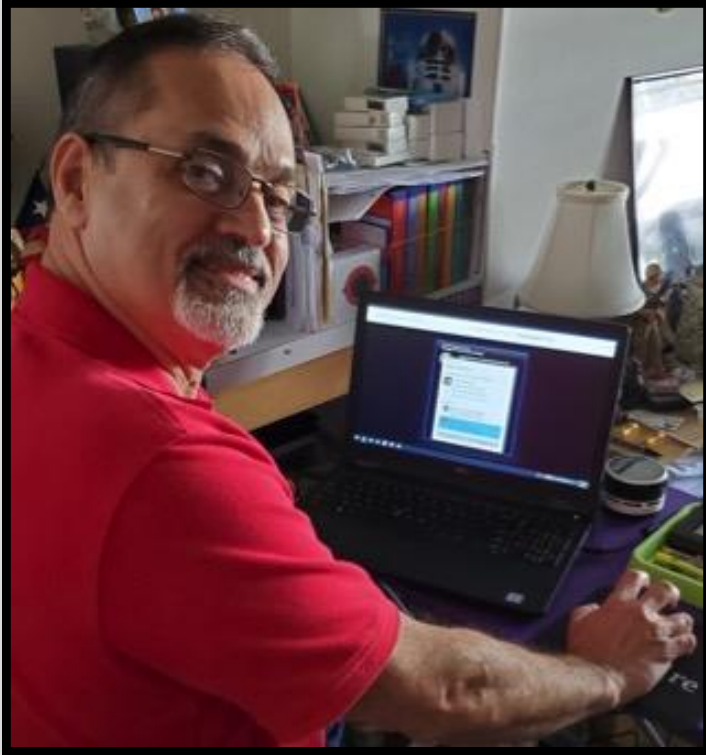
***More than 1.5 Million Veterans,  
including  
164,000 Women Veterans!***

- **Nation's 3rd largest veteran population**
  - **753,000 veterans over 65 years of age**
  - **384,000 service-connected disabled veterans**
  - **24,000 World War II**
  - **93,000 Korean War**
  - **485,000 Vietnam War**
  - **205,000 Gulf War**
  - **234,000 Afghanistan/Iraq**





# Veterans' Claims Examiners



- 272,000 Florida Veterans provided information & counsel
- 35,000 new claims processed for Florida Veterans
- \$194 million in retroactive benefits for Florida Veterans

# Locations



## Veterans' Claim Examiners (VCE) Offices



# We Receive All Types of Questions

To contact a Veterans' Claims Examiner,  
call (727) 319-7440, or connect with them  
via e-mail at [VSO@fdva.state.fl.us](mailto:VSO@fdva.state.fl.us)



Health Care Information, Disability Claims & Appeals, Pension, Education Benefits, Discharge Paperwork, Property Tax Exemptions, License & Fee Waivers, Veterans Preference in Employment, Homeless Veteran Issues, etc...





# County Veterans Service Officers



- CVSOs in all 67 counties
- County employees; must be wartime veteran by statute
- Connect veterans & families with earned services, benefits and support
- Trained & accredited annually by the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs
- <https://floridavets.org/locations/>

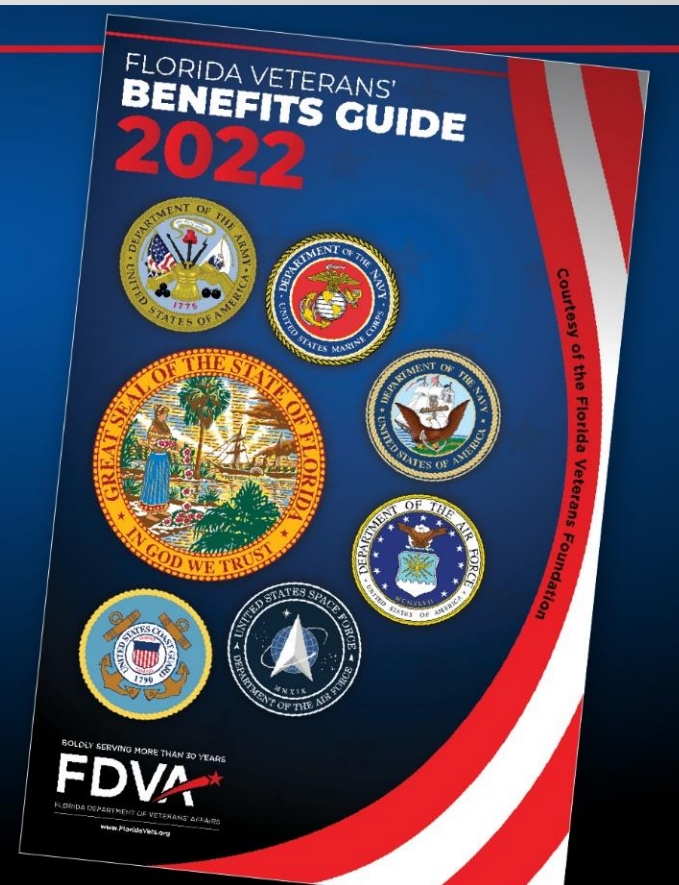
# Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide

## FLORIDA VETERANS' **BENEFITS GUIDE**

# 2022

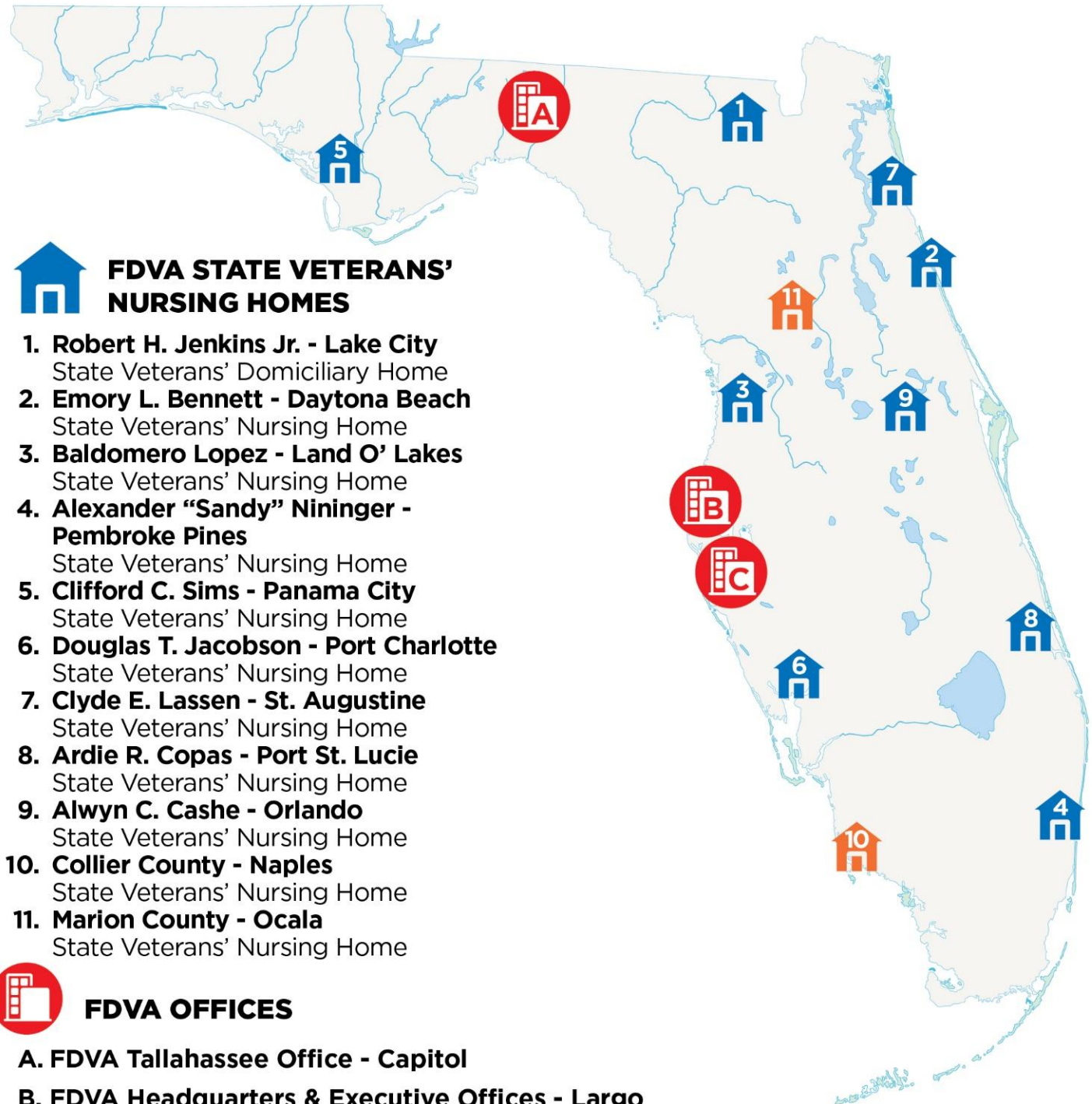
## **NOW AVAILABLE!**

FDVA is proud to announce  
the updated 2022 version of the  
Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide.



Order online at <https://floridavets.org/resources/va-benefits-guide/>  
or call (850) 487-1533, Extension 9.

# Locations





# Veterans' Homes Program



Call (727) 518-3202, Ext. 5562  
for more information.

- Eight state veterans' nursing homes, One veterans' assisted living facility
- Admission:
  1. Honorable Discharge
  2. Florida Resident
  3. Certification of need by VA



# Focus: Women Veterans

***Demographics:*** 2nd largest population of Women Veterans in nation - more than 164,000.

***Goal:*** Connect Women Veterans with earned benefits & services.

***Action Steps:*** Advisory Group formed. Town Hall Meetings conducted in 2022. Report submitted to FDVA. Public Service Announcement shot, Women Veterans Advisory Board formed.



# Focus: Vietnam Veterans

**Demographics:** Approximately one out of every three Veterans in Florida is a Vietnam-era Veteran - more than 484,000; projected tops in nation in 2025.

**Goal:** Connect Vietnam Veterans with earned benefits & services.

Educate on impact of exposure to Agent Orange & other herbicides.

**Action Steps:** Statewide Town Hall Meetings underway; 2 in late 2022 with 8 remaining.





**FLORIDA**  
**Governor's**  
**Challenge**  
Preventing Suicide Among Service  
Members, Veterans & Their Families  
[www.SaveFLVets.org](http://www.SaveFLVets.org)

# Governor's Challenge

## Veteran Suicide Prevention

- **“Overwatch” suicide prevention training program for Veterans’ Claims Examiners and County Veteran Service Officers was piloted on Dec. 9 and will be implemented across 8 regional training sites starting Jan. 20, 2023.**
- **More than 3,000 Watch Standers and 50+ Veteran Safe Place Businesses.**
- **Developing a public poll to assess community awareness of issues and resources related to suicide prevention.**
- **Medal of Honor recipients Sal Guinta and Clint Romesha partnering to release suicide prevention public service announcement.**



# 2022 Florida Legislative Session

## Major veteran-related bills

***Educator Certification Pathways for Veterans:*** Senate Bill 896 helps veterans access jobs in education by allowing their military service to count toward the requirement for a temporary educator certificate under the mentorship of a certified teacher.

***Veteran Suicide Prevention Training Pilot Program:*** Senate Bill 1712 provides an appropriation of \$500,000 to create a pilot program within the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs to provide Veteran Suicide Prevention Training for County Veteran Service Officers and FDVA Veterans' Claims Examiners.



# Florida Veterans Foundation

- Direct Support Organization of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs
  - Established by Florida Legislature in 2008 as 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization
  - Assistance to Florida Veterans & families in times of financial need
- [www.HelpFLVets.org](http://www.HelpFLVets.org)
- (850) 488-4181



FLORIDA VETERANS  
— F O U N D A T I O N —



# Veterans Florida

- *Veterans Florida* is a non-profit created by the State of Florida to help military veterans transition to civilian life & to promote Florida's status as the nation's most veteran-friendly state.
  - Transition assistance through SkillBridge internships
  - Strengthen Florida businesses by educating them on the value and skillsets Veterans bring to the workforce and providing training resources for their Veteran hires
  - Enhance the entrepreneurial skills of Veterans
- [www.VeteransFlorida.org](http://www.VeteransFlorida.org)
- (850) 898-1444



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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*Honoring those who served U.S.*



***[www.FloridaVets.org](http://www.FloridaVets.org)***

**APPEARANCE RECORD**

Deliver both copies of this form to  
Senate professional staff conducting the meeting

Veterans Affairs Brief  
Bill Number or Topic

1/4/2023  
Meeting Date  
Military & Veterans Affairs  
Committee

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name Bob ASZTALOS Phone 850-487-1533

Address The Capitol Suite 2105 400 S. Monroe Email ASZTALOSR@FDVA.State.FL.us

TALLAHASSEE FL 32399  
City State Zip

Speaking: ☐ For ☐ Against ☒ Information

**OR**

Waive Speaking: ☐ In Support ☐ Against

**PLEASE CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:**

☐ I am appearing without  
compensation or sponsorship.

☒ I am a registered lobbyist,  
representing: FDVA

☐ I am not a lobbyist, but received  
something of value for my appearance  
(travel, meals, lodging, etc.),  
sponsored by:

While it is a tradition to encourage public testimony, time may not permit all persons wishing to speak to be heard at this hearing. Those who do speak may be asked to limit their remarks so that as many persons as possible can be heard. If you have questions about registering to lobby please see Fla. Stat. §11.045 and Joint Rule 1. [2020-2022 Joint Rules.pdf \(flsenate.gov\)](#)

This form is part of the public record for this meeting.

S-001 (08/10/2021)



The Florida Senate

APPEARANCE RECORD

1/4/2023

Meeting Date

Military & Veterans Affairs

Committee

Deliver both copies of this form to  
Senate professional staff conducting the meeting

Bill Number or Topic

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name Roy Clark

Phone (850) 491-5146

Address 400 S. Monroe St

Email CLARK@FDVA.STATE.FL.US

Street

Tallahassee

FL

32399

City

State

Zip

Speaking: ☐ For ☐ Against ☒ Information

OR

Waive Speaking: ☐ In Support ☐ Against

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S-001 (08/10/2021)

# CourtSmart Tag Report

**Room:** SB 37

**Case No.:**

**Type:**

**Caption:** Senate Military and Veterans Affairs, Space and Domestic Security Committee **Judge:**

**Started:** 1/4/2023 1:32:39 PM

**Ends:** 1/4/2023 2:30:02 PM **Length:** 00:57:24

1:32:38 PM	Meeting called to order by Chair Wright
1:32:49 PM	CAA calls the roll
1:32:59 PM	Quorum announced
1:33:04 PM	Chair with opening comments
1:33:10 PM	Senator Pizzo leads the pledge of allegiance
1:33:33 PM	Chair with opening comments
1:35:21 PM	Introduction of committee
1:35:31 PM	Senator Torres, Vice-Chair with comments
1:37:05 PM	Senator Berman with comments
1:37:23 PM	Senator Calatayud with comments
1:38:02 PM	Senator Collins with comments
1:38:12 PM	Senator Pizzo with comments
1:39:04 PM	Senator Rodriguez with comments
1:40:33 PM	Chair with comments
1:40:45 PM	Introduction of committee staff
1:41:11 PM	Tab 1 Presentation by Bob Asztalos, Deputy Executive Director, FDVA
1:41:30 PM	Mr. Asztalos presents
2:06:23 PM	Senator Pizzo with questions
2:06:29 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:06:40 PM	Senator Pizzo with follow-up
2:07:00 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:07:11 PM	Senator Pizzo with question
2:07:17 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:07:23 PM	Senator Pizzo with question
2:07:29 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:07:39 PM	Senator Pizzo with question
2:07:45 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:08:44 PM	Senator Pizzo with question
2:08:51 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:09:00 PM	Senator Collins with question
2:09:18 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:11:45 PM	Senator Collins with question
2:11:48 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:13:12 PM	Senator Collins with question
2:14:09 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:14:26 PM	Senator Collins with question
2:14:31 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:14:44 PM	Senator Collins with question
2:14:54 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:16:11 PM	Senator Collins with comments
2:16:16 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:16:26 PM	Senator Berman with question
2:16:50 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:17:12 PM	Senator Calatayud with question
2:17:42 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:21:01 PM	Senator Calatayud with question
2:21:11 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:23:53 PM	Senator Torres with question
2:24:01 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:24:11 PM	Senator Torres with follow-up
2:24:21 PM	Mr. Asztalos responds
2:24:32 PM	Senator Torres with question

<b>2:24:34 PM</b>	Mr. Roy Clark, FDVA responds
<b>2:24:54 PM</b>	Senator Torres with follow-up
<b>2:25:09 PM</b>	Mr. Clark responds
<b>2:25:49 PM</b>	Senator Torres with question
<b>2:25:53 PM</b>	Mr. Clark responds
<b>2:27:14 PM</b>	Senator Torres with comments
<b>2:28:03 PM</b>	Senator Torres with question
<b>2:28:07 PM</b>	Mr. Asztalos responds
<b>2:29:15 PM</b>	Chair with comments
<b>2:29:33 PM</b>	Senator Collins moves to adjourn
<b>2:29:50 PM</b>	Meeting adjourned