



House Budget and Research Office

COVERDELL LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 412
ATLANTA, GEORGIA, 30334
404-656-5050

CHRISTINE KILLACKY
DIRECTOR

2026 SESSION: DEFENSE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS BUDGET AND LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

According to the Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS), there are over 652,169 veterans living across the state of Georgia, and the state is projected to have the 5th largest number of veterans by 2030.¹ GDVS assisted Georgia veterans and their families receive \$5.2 billion in compensation and pension payments in federal FY 2023.

Budget Highlights

- In HB 974, the FY 2027 budget, GDVS receives \$1.5 million for a veteran case management platform that connects veterans with vital community services. From November 2022 to January 2026, the GDVS care coordination team served 10,160 veterans, identifying 16,398 needs with a 94.9% case resolution rate. Veterans are referred to services to address challenges including loneliness, housing, food insecurity, and behavioral health conditions.
- GDVS is provided \$2.5 million in FY 2027 and \$1 million in HB 973, the Amended FY 2026 budget, for quality improvements and to provide for additional staff to expand bed capacity at the Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home in Milledgeville.
- GDVS is provided \$2.5 million in the FY 2027 budget and \$5 million in the Amended FY 2026 budget to assist in the elimination of veteran homelessness. The department also receives \$1.1 million in the FY 2027 and Amended FY 2026 budgets to match federal funds to establish a new veterans cemetery in Augusta.

Legislative Highlights

- **HB 185** (Rep. Ginny Ehrhart, 36th) requires the Georgia Board of Examiners of Licensed Dietitian Nutritionists and Licensed Nutritionists to license potential nutritionists or dietitians and provide requirements for licensed nutritionists and dietitians. The bill also enables Georgia to enter into the Dietitian Licensure Compact and allows the board to administer that compact.
- **HB 985** (Rep. Josh Bonner, 73rd) revises several provisions related to eligibility for burial in Georgia veteran cemeteries. A "full term of service" is redefined as those who served in the U.S. armed forces or, if conscripted, for at least 24 consecutive months. A Georgia resident who served honorably in the Hmong Laotian special guerrilla unit from February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975 and submits necessary

¹ https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/Demographics/New_Vetpop_Model/Vetpop_Infographic2020.pdf

documentation is eligible for burial. Additionally, provisions relating to service date, dependency, prohibitions, and fee collection are updated in accordance with federal regulations.

- [HB 1328](#) (Rep. Will Wade, 9th) increases the maximum number of persons who can receive the University of North Georgia military scholarships.
- [SB 76](#) (Sen. Drew Echols, 49th) adds the Navy Corps Medal, Marine Corps Medal, Airman's Medal, Coast Guard Medal, and Combat Infantryman Badge to the list of eligible military medal awards for which veterans will be eligible for special and distinctive vehicle license plates. The bill creates special and distinctive license plates for members and retired members of the U.S. Navy submarine service, created by the state revenue commissioner and available for a manufacturing fee of \$25. The bill provides that multipurpose off-highway vehicles will only be authorized to be operated on highways with a maximum speed limit of 60 miles per hour or less. The bill has an effective date of July 1, 2027.
- [SB 553](#) (Sen. Bo Hatchett, 50th) creates a committee under the licensing boards to determine if any current or former member of the military has received military training that can fulfill the requirements necessary to receive a professional license.
- [SB 591](#) (Sen. Steve Gooch, 51st) amends O.C.G.A. 16-11-34.2, relating to disorderly conduct, to prohibit disorderly conduct disrupting any religious service. Disorderly or disruptive conduct at a funeral or memorial service of an individual receiving military funeral honors is an aggravated misdemeanor.