

STATE OF COLORADO

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Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor

GOV. BILL RITTER VETERANS ISSUES & ACHIEVEMENTS

As commander-in-chief of the Colorado National Guard and leader of a state that is home to many active-duty installations and 425,000 veterans, Gov. Ritter and First Lady Jeannie Ritter place a high priority on supporting Colorado's veterans. In December 2007, Gov. Ritter personally visited Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait to meet with Colorado Guard, reserve and active-duty personnel.

Since taking office, Gov. Ritter has taken numerous steps to advance veterans issues, including:

Funding Requests

- Requested \$200,000 in fiscal 2009-10 to begin planning for a proposed residential care facility for combat veterans on the Fitzsimons campus in Aurora. This first-of-its-kind facility would focus on mental-health needs, traumatic brain injuries and other needs. The planning process will rely on input from veterans groups, veterans' families, community members and local residents. That input will help determine the size, location, population and operating parameters of the facility.
- Requested an additional \$220,354 for the Colorado National Guard Tuition Assistance Program for FY09-10, a 34 percent increase from current FY08-09, which would bring total funding to \$1 million. With this increase, the program will provide more than 680 semesters worth of tuition assistance for Guard members in FY09-10.
- Restored the Veterans Trust Fund, which had been used to help balance the General Fund during the 2002-03 recession.
- Increased funding for County Veteran Office Payments in Arapahoe, Denver, El Paso, Jefferson and Mesa counties. These offices help veterans obtain compensation, pension, health care, education, job-training and other benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Administration.
- Approved funding to renovate 46 residential cottages at the Veterans Center at Homelake.

- Assisted the McCandless State Veterans Home in Florence in obtaining acceptance into the Eden Registry. The registry is a global nonprofit organization whose mission is based on the belief that aging should be a continued stage of development and growth rather than a period of decline. McCandless is the first State Veterans Home in the nation to become Eden Registered.

Appointments to Boards and Commissions

- Seven appointments to the Colorado Board of Veterans' Affairs.
- Eight appointments to the Board of Commissioners of State and Veterans' Nursing Homes.

Signed Legislation

2008

- HB08-1078 (Buescher/Morse), Repay Colo. State Veterans Trust Fund
- HB08-1175 (Garza-Hicks/Kopp), Fourth Infantry Special License Plate
- HB08-1180 (Stephens/Shaffer), UI Benefits Active Military Transfer
- HB08-1317 (Gallegos/Tapia), Compact to Educate Military Children
- SB08-101 (Schultheis/B. Gardner), NORAD Commemorative License Plates
- SB08-143 (Tupa/Frangas), Special License Plate Fees
- SB08-166 (Shaffer/McNulty), National Guard College Opportunity Fund

2007

- HB07-1050 (A. Kerry/Williams), Concerning the Display of Flags
- HB07-1105 (Roberts/Penry), Eligibility Dates for Korean War Plates
- HB07-1200 (Liston/Tochtrop), Creation of Air Force License Plate
- HB07-1211 (Jahn/Tochtrop), State & Vet Nursing Home Commission
- HB07-1212 (Jahn/Penry), Local Advisory Boards for Nursing Homes
- HB07-1251 (Gallegos/Wiens), Prop. Tax Exemption for Disabled Vets
- HB07-1275 (Rice/Penry), National Guard to Receive Forfeited Property
- HB07-1352 (Rice/Ward), Armed Forces/Special Forces License Plates
- SB07-014 (Taylor/Balmer), Appropriation of Funds for Nursing Homes
- SB07-027 (Tupa/Witwer), U.S. Coast Guard Specialty License Plate
- SB07-042 (Kopp/Hodge), Enrollment in Motorcycle Safety Program
- SB07-086 (Kopp/Balmer), Fallen Heroes Memorial
- SB07-146 (Morse/Rice), Mental Health Services for New Veterans
- SB07-183 (Romer/Weissman), Continuation Board of Veteran Affairs
- SB07-195 (McElhany/Rice), Limited License Preference Programs