

Rock Island County Committee of the Whole Minutes

Wednesday 11 February 2026

Chairman Richard "Quijas" Brunk, Vice-Chairman Brian Vyncke

The Committee of the Whole of the Rock Island County Board met on Wednesday February 11th 2026 at 5:30pm in the County Board Chambers on the Third floor Room 316 of the County Office Building located at 1504 3rd Ave, Rock Island, IL. Meeting minutes are as follows:

1. Call to order and roll call:

Chairman Brian Vyncke called the meeting to order at 5:30pm and asked to call the roll.

Members present: Richard Morthland, Melissa Moreno-Baker, Cindy Ramos, Drue Mielke, Larry Burns, Dr. Luis Moreno, David Adams, Brian Vyncke, Richard Brunk, Timothy Foster, Enyo Dewith, Bob Perkins, Kai Swanson, Dr. Rodney Simmer, Bob Westpfahl.

Member Absent: Carla Enburg, Johnnie Woods, Chuck Layer

Also Present: County Administrator Jim Grafton, Jim Nelson, Sheriff Darren Hart, Patty Castro with the States Attorney's Office, IT Director Kurt Davis, April Palmer, Brad Bigford Superintendent of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Rock Island County, Paris Silvis Deputy Superintendent of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Rock Island County.

2. Public Comment: Vice Chairman Brian Vyncke made three calls for public comment:

There were no requests for public comment.

3. Approval of the minutes from Thursday January 14th, 2025 Committee of the Whole Meeting Motion to approve: Bob Perkins

Second: Kai Swanson

Voice vote

Motion Carried

4. Presentation: Brad Bigford Superintendent of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Rock Island County, Paris Silvis Deputy Superintendent of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Rock Island County gave the 2025 Annual report for the Veterans Assistance Commission of Rock Island County. Please click on link to view presentation.

Vice Chairman Brian Vyncke thanked Brad & Paris for all they do and for giving the report to the County Board and for their service to the Veterans of this area. Vice-Chairman Vyncke opened the floor for any questions that any Board members may have for the Veterans Assistance Commission.

Dr. Rodney Simmer asked if there is anything they can do for the spouse of a veteran who has passed away. Deputy Commissioner Silvis answered that there is nothing they can do for a veteran who has already passed away unless there are some funeral benefits that the family was left to pay and they have the receipts then we can look at that and see if there is anything we can do. But unfortunately, as time gets away after a veteran passes away it gets harder to recover. Bob Westpfahl in regards of your helping the homeless veterans how big of a problem is that in Rock Island County. Do you ever have them come in and tell you they have no place to go? Do you have someplace that you can send them. Commissioner Brad answered that they do have homeless veterans that come to us and we work with them to get them into a home and that is the first part. Luckily Christian Services right here in Rock Island so we can refer them to there. We also can refer them to our program in Davenport, we also get them over to a CRRC where we have a great relationship with them and a great relationship with the VA on Perry Street the CRRC is a referral and that is who sets up those programs that are specifically for Veterans. Dr. Moreno asked if the work with Tom Reagan at Blackhawk College? They answered yes. Dr. Simmer asked about the new building project down off of 11th Street. How many residents are going to be in there, how will they be taken care of and how they will be vetted. Paris answered that he thought 25 would be the minimum number of residents. As far as I know from Fr. Chow they have not completed the whole process of how they will do it.

5. Condition of Funds Report: County Auditor April Palmer explained that her email to all members has the report.

6. Staff Reports: None

7. Finance & Personnel Committee Report:

Dr. Moreno reported that the Finance & Personnel Committee met on Tuesday February 10th at 8:30 am
The Finance & Personnel Committee heard reports from:

- County Auditor April Palmer reported that work continues on the implementation of the contract software program.
- County Treasurer Nick Camlin reported that the County will be paying off the full retiree health benefit debt for Hope Creek in the amount of \$653,438.30 on Friday, February 13. Which leaves just a little over \$2M in Bond and interest payments ending December of 2027.
- County Clerk Karen Kinney gave a brief explanation about the early voting.
- County Finance Director Ryan Berger reported that moving forward we will be managing to the line item in the budget, aligning with our actual budget process. Formerly New World Systems allowed lines within an office's budget to go negative, without notifying the user, simply pulling from another line in that category. This will provide for more accurate budgeting and overall clarity. He also reported that we are now using simplified new money resolutions that have journals that pull directly from the financial software system. This will reduce the possibility for errors and create great efficiencies in both Finance and the Auditor's Office.

All routine reports were approved

There were no Delinquent Tax Resolutions for the Month of February.

The following were considered and recommend for approval:

- A Temporary Cashier Training Position in the Treasurer's Office, providing for a one-month training period, to ensure continuity as the office begins this year's tax cycle. This proposal is beyond budget neutral, actually still providing for a budget surplus.
- A Renewal Agreement for the Jail Medical Services Provider, Advanced Correctional Healthcare reflecting a 4% increase over last year, at \$1,268,846.80
- Consideration of three additional part time positions for Animal Care & Control was brought back to the committee with additional information. This request would allow the director to be freed up from covering call ins and PTO time, to work on managing and promoting to increase adoptions. The committee had significant discussion about the over population of animals as well as shelter operational costs. While there was some opposition expressed, the committee voted to move the request forward.

Two Emergency Purchases were considered:

- FY25 Fleet Start-up Costs related to non-billable hours, at \$213,756.43 from the general fund.
- And, \$23,120 from the general fund for Painting completed at Court Services in 2023. The invoice was just recently received and had been sent to the previous director just days prior to retirement.
- A New Money Allocation for pre-paid expenses not included in the States Attorney's original budget request of \$38,734.09. This is for accounting purposes and is related to a multi-year contract for services.
- A Renewal Agreement for Laserfiche Software, for Document Organization and Retention at a cost of \$10,075. A 4.9% increase over last year.

- And a one-year service agreement with Johnson Controls for 40 hours of mechanical labor for repairs at a cost of \$19,512. These hours will be utilized between the County Office Building and the Animal Control Shelter

Also Considered were:

- Transfer of Appropriations and Appropriation Resolutions for Funds
- Claims in the Amount of \$2,161,714.91
- Treasurer's Disbursements in the amount of \$783,842.57 for FY25
and \$1,563,260.18 for FY26
- And, the Board Member Per Diem and Mileage Report

Last month the consideration of the Group Violence Intervention Strategy was pulled from board action at the request of the State's Attorney and Sheriff, to allow for an expanded presentation on the strategy this month. With that said, as of today they continue work on a plan and will bring it forward once that plan is complete.

This Concludes the Report of the Finance & Personnel Committee

8. Governance, Health & Administration Committee Report

The Governance, Health and Administration Committee met on Monday February 9th 2026 at 10:00am

- County Clerk Karen Kinney provided her vital records report. She also report on early voting, sharing the sample ballots for the primary election.
- Regional Superintendent of Schools Tammy Muerhoff reported on a Teacher Job Fair that will take place on March 2nd at the Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency and is also co-sponsored by the Regional Office of Education. She also spoke about Student County Government Day, which will take place on April 20th, with area high school students visiting numerous county offices.

All routine reports were approved.

The Committee considered the following items:

- A Proclamation designating March 2026 as Development Disabilities Awareness Month in Rock Island County.
- An update to the Emergency Telephone System Board (ETSB) By-Laws, reflecting a change in location of their principal offices and location of their meetings.

The Committee also approved and forwarded the Laserfiche Software Renewal to the Finance & Personnel Committee for further consideration.

This concludes the report of the Governance, Health and Administration Committee

9. Public Works & Facilities Report

The Public Works & Facilities Committee met on Monday February 9th, 2026 at 8:30 AM

The committee heard reports from the following:

- Zoning & Building Director Greg Thorpe reported 141 receipts in January, for a revenue of \$22,720.00, with estimated value of work was \$1.37M. This compared to last January with 112 receipts, revenue of \$12,000 and an estimated value of \$300,000. He also noted three new housing starts, with new home construction costs up to \$223 per sq. ft.
- County Engineer Matt Miller reported that the Highway Department is taking advantage of the frozen ground, cutting down trees.

County Administrator Jim Grafton reported that he is reviewing trash and recycling services at the County, with an eye on efficiencies and cost savings likely through vendor consolidation of services for the various buildings. He also spoke to new efforts related to risk mitigation at county properties, to ensure safe environments.

All routine reports were approved
There were No Zoning Board of Appeals cases:

A one-year service agreement with Johnson Controls was considered and forwarded to Finance & Personnel for further consideration:

This concludes the report of the Public Works & Facilities Committee

10. Approval of the County Board Agenda

Motion by: Enyo Dewith Seconded by: Dr. Rodney Simmer

Motion carried via voice vote

11. Closed Session: none

12. No action necessary on closed session

13. Committee Member opportunity for brief comment:

CBC Richard "Quijas" Brunk noted that as of a few days ago it was announced that the Tariff's on products from India were going down so, I reached out to the monument contractor and once we have confirmed that the new tariff is actually in place we will pull the trigger and have the granite shipped and hope nothing changes while the product is in transit. Kai Swanson brought up something from the Veterans Affairs report and as a resident of the City of Rock Island I am used to my City being thrown under the bus and it hurts when it is done by residents of my own city. Recently there has been a lot of criticism against the city for its uncaring allegations and attitude toward the homeless. But, I point out that Brad mentioned homeless veteran in need he was taken to a shelter in Rock Island and that is great news. I am very excited that the city of Moline under Mayor Rayapati and the Moline City Council has opened up 60 emergency shelter beds and that is great news. But, you don't want to lose sight of the fact that day in and day out there are 62 beds in downtown Rock Island. These allegations of the City Council somehow uncaring are absurd. Also, they mentioned Mr. Childs great work and leadership in the new veterans housing facility on 31st Avenue. This is not happening anywhere else it is happening in the City of Rock Island and that means 25 disabled veterans will a place to stay. As I am surrounded by a group of Community leaders when you hear the statements made about Rock Island being uncaring you can remind them that no city in Rock Island County Does more for the homeless day in and day out than the City of Rock Island they are lying. Richard Morthland reminded everyone that your text messages are included in FOIA and a group text was sent out by someone using the Chairman's information. The

difficulty of this was it became personal and our devices are then FOIA-able. Dr. Simmer spoke about the Animal Care and Control Center. Chairman Brunk noted that there are ongoing talks for a collaborative and comprehensive approach to a potential remedy about homelessness.

14. Adjourn

Motion: Larry Burns Second: Enyo Dewith

Motion Carried

The 11 February 2026 meeting of the Committee of the Whole adjourned at 6:41pm

The next Committee of the Whole meeting will be held on Wednesday 11 March 2026 at 5:30pm

Respectfully submitted by,

Jim Nelson

Rock Island County Administration

Veterans Assistance Commission of Rock Island County (VACRICO)

Bradley Bigford, Superintendent



VACRICO

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2025

[Veterans Assistance Commission of Rock Island County](#)

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Our Mission	2
VACRICO’s Team.....	2
Section I: VACRICO’s Operational Impact	3
Section II: VACRICO’s Educational results	6
Section III: VACRICO’s Legislative 2025 conversation	7
Section IV: VACRICO’s Advocacy and Outreach Impact	8
Section V: VACRICO’s summary of growth FY 2025	10
Section VI VARICO’s Directory.....	11
Glossary of Terms.....	13

Website: <https://www.rockislandcountyil.gov/356/Veterans-Assistance-Commission-of-Rock-I>



Veterans Assistance Commission of Rock Island County

January 21, 2025

Dear Stakeholder,

It is with great pleasure that I present you with the annual report for the Veterans Assistance Commission of Rock Island County (VACRICO). As the VAC charged with supporting County Veterans and families across Rock Island County Illinois, we provided the following services in Fiscal Year 2025:

- 1.) Veteran Benefits and Claims Management
- 2.) Community Outreach and informative presentations for Veterans.
- 3.) Emergency and Temporary Financial Assistance for Indigent Veterans
- 4.) Advocacy

In Fiscal Year 2025 ending on November 30th, you will see that our VAC was instrumental in securing \$3,156,898.85 in new benefits for Illinois veterans, their dependents, and their survivors from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). That amount does not take into account money that we helped our veterans save by helping them access VA disability claims assistance, VA health care, home loan, education, or other benefits. Our VAC was instrumental in providing \$150,879.25 in financial assistance to indigent Illinois Veterans. Consequently, our VAC continues to be a significant, judicious, and economically stimulating government entity at the county level.

Thank you for your support of our State's Veterans governmental entities and organizations throughout the county. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

Very Truly Yours,

Bradley A. Bigford

Superintendent

Our Mission

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Rock Island County (VACRICO) is made up of delegates and alternates from the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and Veterans organizations in Rock Island County. The organization makes it possible for Rock Island County to staff full time accredited Veteran Service Officers and administrative staff to support Veterans and their families with Veteran assistance and benefits.

Our mission is to proudly serve those Veterans and families who honorably served us

Meet our Team



Section I: VACRICO Operational Impact

Below you will find our VAC's cumulative impact on veterans' benefits. As a disclaimer, these statistics are pulled and maintained from our system which is analyzed monthly to review trends and progress. This year, we had some new VSO's contribute their data and we had some VSO's that contributed their data last year, but not contribute it this year. This year, we had 6 VSO's contribute to this report, three more than last year. With that disclaimer, these statistics are impressive and show that our VAC has an incredible impact and remain an essential unit of local government. These numbers show the growth we have encountered as we expand our staff and outreach we do in our community.

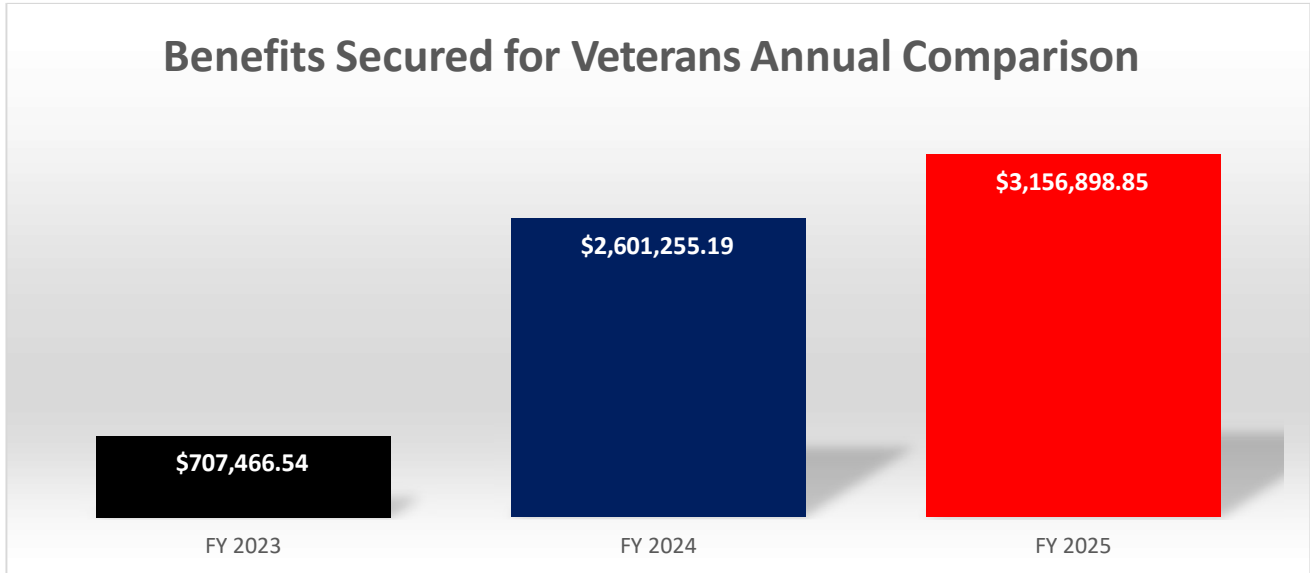


Figure 1. *This chart shows the total amount of federal VA service-connected disability or non- service connected pension, DIC benefits received by our VAC clients by fiscal year. The large jump between FY 2023 – FY 2025 years can largely be attributed to increased Veterans as a result of outreach, increased staff, along with new implemented vision within new VAC leadership and staff. (VETPRO-Submittal Decisions)*

Section I: VACRICO Operational Impact (Continued)

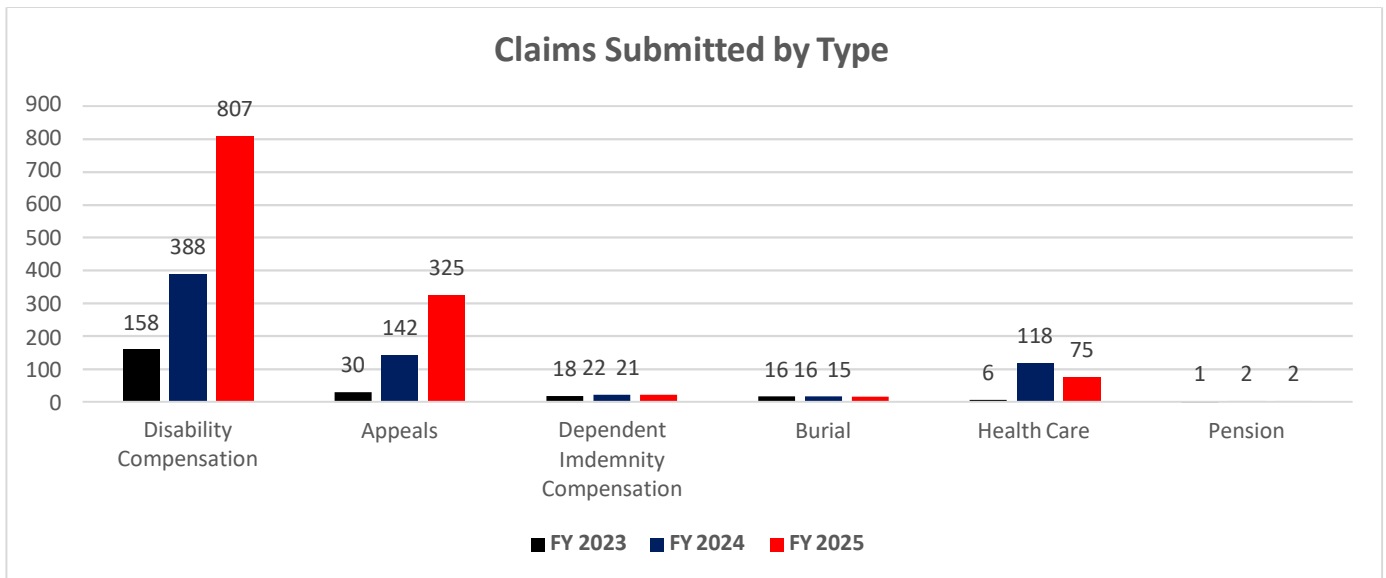


Figure 2. Fiscal Year 2025 was very productive and successful year for submission of claims due to increased staff and networking with other Veteran environment organizations. (VETPRO-Forms Created and Submitted)

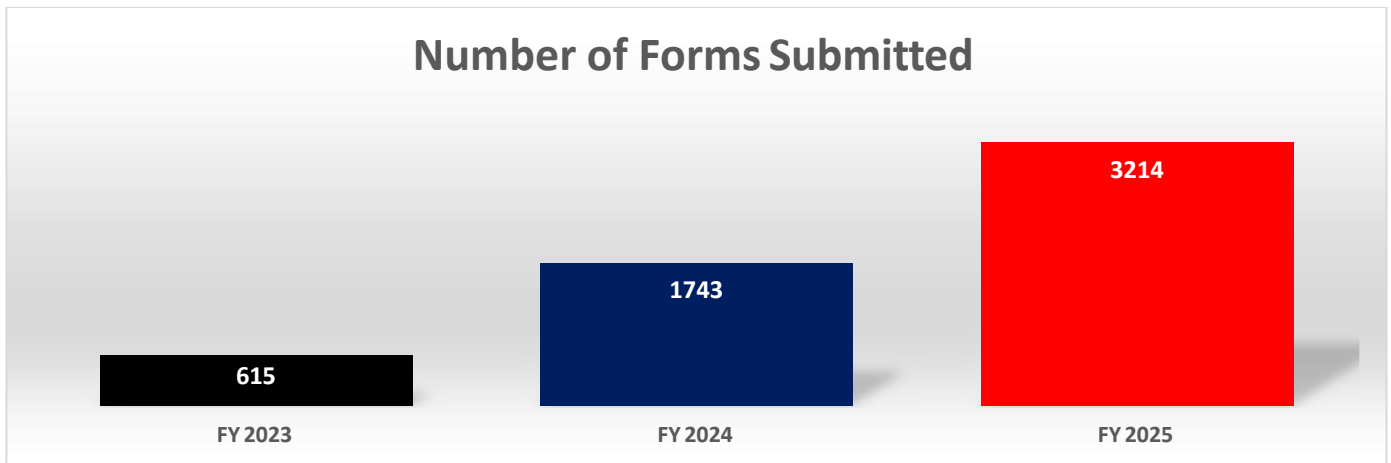


Figure 3. Number of forms produced by Fiscal Year. The large jump between FY 2023 – FY 2025 years can largely be attributed to increased Veterans as a result of outreach, increased staff, along with new implemented vision within new VAC leadership and staff. (VETPRO-Forms Created and Submitted)

Section I: VACRICO Operational Impact (Continued)

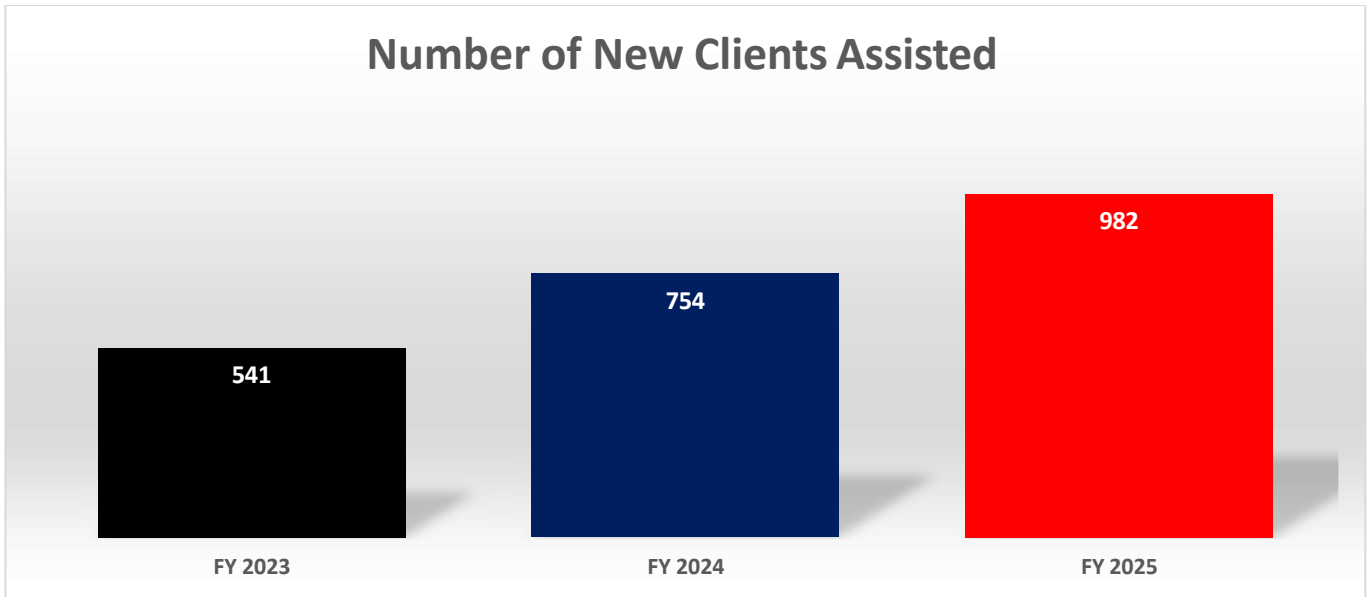


Figure 4. The number of new clients assisted by our VAC has increased since the previous years. This figure has fluctuated over the last three years which we attribute largely due to standardized data reporting integrity improvements and increasing staff. (VETPRO activity and Workload)

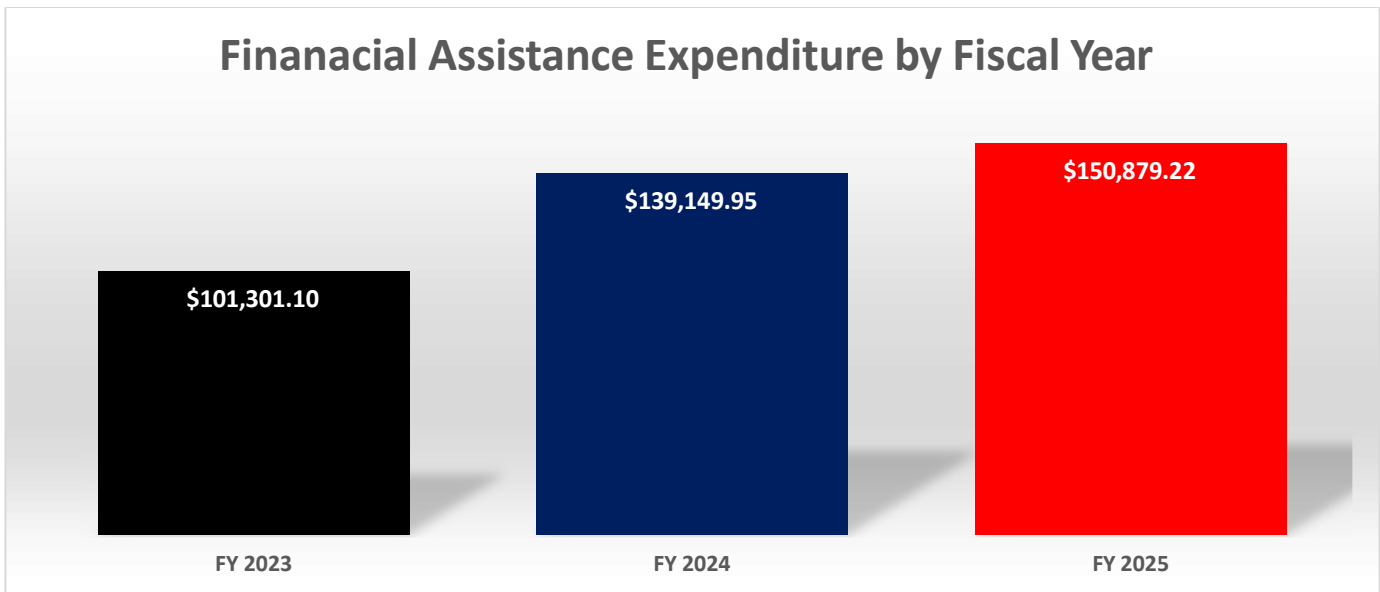


Figure 5. A critical service provided by our VAC is providing financial assistance to indigent veterans and their families. There is a marginal increase in financial assistance payments over the previous fiscal year. (New World Accounting System Budget Performance Report)

Section II: VACRICO's Educational Results



*Presentation during IACVAC Fall 2025
Continuing Education Conference*

Initial and Continuing education is important for our VAC to effectively assist Veterans and their families. **We had 4 VSO's attend the Basic benefits course in 2025** accrediting them to be a qualified Accredited Veteran Service Officers under the National Association of County Veteran Service Officer (NACVSO) accrediting body.

We had Veterans Service officers attend the IACVAC Fall conference where presenters included former Board of Veterans Appeals Chairman Chicago VA Regional Office Veterans Service Center, Board of Veterans Appeals Veterans Law Judges as well as representatives from the Illinois Attorney General's Office and Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund.

We sent representation to the NACVSO national conference in Louisville, KY where many key leaders in the VA and Veteran environment presented education ensuring we capture the latest and up to date information to assist our Veterans in keeping with our mission.

Our national association and the VA require a minimum of 16 hours of continuing education units (CEU) per year to maintain a VSO's VA Accreditation. These trainings help accomplish that requirement.

Due to overwhelming need of people that are trained in how to speak and work with Veterans who find them struggling with mental health challenges, **we sent 2 Veteran service officers to Counseling on Access to Lethal Mean (CALM) training.**

Section III: VAC Legislative 2025 Conversation

Our VAC has the concern for legislation and ensuring that the law is in line with today's Veteran's needs. Along with that we find it important that we have a relationship with our law makers and ensure they see the importance of our VAC and what we do for Veterans in our area.

We have had the honor of the below legislator's staff request an in-person visit to our VAC in 2025:

- U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (Illinois 8th Congressional District)
- U.S Representative Eric Sorensen (Illinois 17th Congressional District)
- Rock Island County Board

We enjoyed and appreciated the time they spent here with us at our VAC listening to us and wanting to know what we see as needs in our field of work to better assist Veterans.

Topics we expressed and/or had success regarding above legislators in 2025:

- Outdated or unfair legislation requiring retired from service Veterans who receive below 50% VA disability to fund their own disability by having to choose between receiving their service pension or taking VA disability. These Veterans are required to give up the same amount in their pension if they choose to receive their disability compensation.
- Outdated or unfair legislation that requires Veterans who assisted the Department of Defense in meeting their goal of downsizing the military, pay back their severance pay before they can start receiving their VA disability pay.
- Continuing Tax incentives for disabled Veterans and Spouses of Veterans who pass away from their VA disability. (Success)
- Streamlining the process for copies of military records within the county. (Success)

Section IV: VACRICO's Advocacy and Outreach Impact

Throughout Fiscal Year 2025, the VACRICO continued to increase its advocacy for Illinois Veterans. This involved meeting with local county officials, legislators on our concerns discussed in Section III,

County Legislators

The VAC continued its close working relationships with County partners throughout Fiscal Year 2025, assisting them with outreach events, Veteran benefit input, and meeting with them in both in our office and in the county building during official meetings. Specifically, in November 2025 leadership of the VAC was specifically requested to attend a special presentation to accept the Rock Island County proclamation dedicating November as Veteran and Military Families month alongside Rock Island Arsenal garrison commander.

VACRICO grew its relationship with the county by starting and communicating new leadership guidance and vision for growth through goal oriented collaboration between VACRICO and the county board/employees.



Brad Bigford (Superintendent Right) and Parris Silvis (Asst Superintendent Left) accept Rock Island County proclamation naming November Veteran and Military Families month. [1]

The VAC continued its Veteran advocacy in 2025 by continuing to work with and hold a board member position on the Unity Point Health Community Veterans Engagement Board. We were requested to keep a position on the board after the retirement of our previous superintendent. We were honored to continue working with them on Veterans benefits and care.

Click here for more information: [Quad Cities CVEB](#)

Section IV: VACRICO’s Advocacy and Outreach Impact (Continued)

Our VAC is deeply embedded into community outreach advocating and providing in person outreach on a continuous basis at the below locations:

- Quad Cities VA Outpatient Clinic (2X a month)
- Quad Cities Veterans Network Event (1X a month)
- Quad Cities Success Fair (1X a year)
- Rock Island Arsenal Armed Forces Day and upon requests (Various)
- Employer presentations upon requests (Various)
- Quad Cities VA Veterans Action Center (VEAC) (Biennial)

Our VAC leadership had reached an agreement in 2025 to start by request in-person outreach at the below locations starting in new 2026 fiscal Year) due to the great work we continue to do in our community and results we get from our ongoing outreach:

- Quad Cities VA Community Resource and Referral Center (1X a month, Starting in December 2025)
- Quad Cities VA Vet Center (2X a month, Starting in January 2026)

Our VAC was an important part of the Veterans Experience Action Center 2025 at Black Hawk College providing VA disability claim benefits assistance to Veterans:

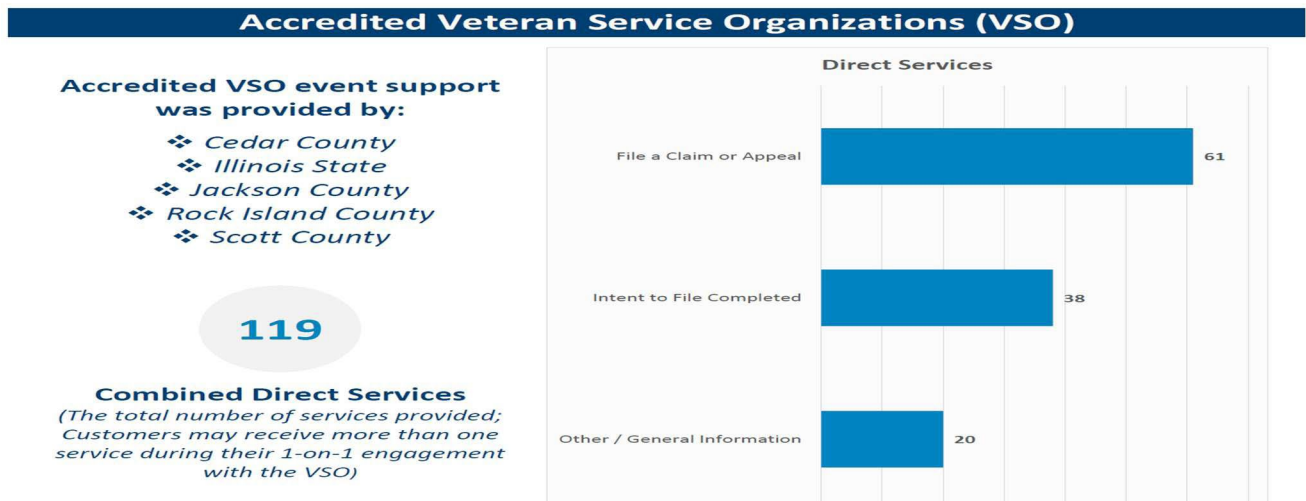


Figure 6. Combined services provided during VEAC. (Courtesy of VEO analytics July 3, 2025)

Section V: VACRICO summary of growth in FY 2025

- New website at: [VACRICO](https://www.rockislandcountyil.gov/356/Veterans-Assistance-Commission-of-Rock-I) or paste into browser
[h https://www.rockislandcountyil.gov/356/Veterans-Assistance-Commission-
_ of-Rock-I](https://www.rockislandcountyil.gov/356/Veterans-Assistance-Commission-of-Rock-I)
- Started Monthly Newsletters to support Veterans and Veteran organizations that support to increase collaboration. See at above link.
- Monthly VACRICO meetings being held at our local Veteran Service Organizations that support us.
- Increased staff members from 6 to 8

Section VI: VACRICO Directory

**VACRICO operates within the 2nd division of the Illinois Association of
County Veterans Assistance Commissions Map**



<p style="text-align: center;"> Brad Bigford - Superintendent 4000 46th Avenue Rock Island, Illinois Phone: (309) 558-3547 Fax: (309) 558-3548 bbigford@rockislandcountyil.gov </p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> Parris Silvis – Asst Superintendent 4000 46th Avenue Rock Island, Illinois Phone: (309) 558-3544 Fax: (309) 558-3548 psilvis@rockislandcountyil.gov </p>
<p style="text-align: center;"> Rock Island County 4000 46th Avenue Rock Island, IL 61201 Phone: (309) 558-3545 Fax: (309) 558-3548 vac@rockislandcountyil.gov </p>	

Section V: VACRICO Directory (Continued)

Veterans Assistance Commission of Rock Island County Board Members/Delegates

Veteran Servie Organization	Primary	Position	Alt Delegate
American Legion Post 227 - East Moline, IL	Jerry Goodwin	President	Vacant
American Legion Post 246 - Moline	Kevin Kastelice	Vice President	John Mursho
American Legion Post 421 - Port Byron	Roger Oliver		Vacant
American Legion Post 569 - Milan	Charlie Thompson		Rick Freymann
American Legion Post 1033 - Community Post	Edward Klundt	Chaplain	Terry Young
American Legion Post 1166 - Reynolds	Kevin Kilkenny	Treasurer	Vacant
VFW Post 2153 - Moline	Jerry Kroeger		Vacant
VFW Post 8890 - East Moline	Andy Ortiz		Vacant
Marine Corp League - Lincoln Det	Joe Pollock		Jeff Meincke
VN Vets of America Chap 299 - Moline	Al Bradley		Tom Courtney
VN Vets of America Chap 669 - Rock Island	Jack Brown	Secretary	Mark Pattison
KWV Assoc Chapter 168	Dennis Johnson		Vacant

Glossary of Terms

Compensation: See “Disability Compensation”

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC): A tax-free monetary benefit paid to eligible survivors of military service members who died in the line of duty or eligible survivors of veterans whose death resulted from a service-related injury or disease.

Disability Compensation: A tax-free monetary benefit paid to veterans with disabilities that are the result of a disease or injury incurred in or aggravated during active military service.

Intent-to-File: An application for veterans and survivors who intend to file a claim for VA compensation, pension, or survivors’ benefits which preserves the effective date of future benefits while the claimant is gathering supporting documentation for their formal claim.

Non-Service Connected Pension: A tax-free needs-based monetary benefit paid to wartime veterans, who meet certain age or non-service connected disability requirements.

Pension: See “Non-Service Connected Pension”

Superintendent: Supervisor who has the executive powers of the Veterans Assistance Commission.

Survivor’s Pension: A tax-free needs-based monetary benefit payable to a low-income, unremarried surviving spouse and/or unmarried child(ren) of a deceased wartime veteran.

VA Health Care: A comprehensive medical benefits package available to qualifying veterans which includes primary and specialty care at VA hospitals and clinics.

Veterans Service Officer (VSO): An individual accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and trained to assist veterans and their dependents in filing claims for benefits with the VA.

VACRICO: Veterans Assistance Commission of Rock Island County