



A Tradition of Stewardship  
A Commitment to Service

**Board of Supervisors**

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**Mark Luce**  
Chairman

July 15, 2014

The Honorable Rodney Stone  
Presiding Judge  
Superior Court of California, County of Napa  
825 Brown Street  
Napa, CA 94559

**FILED**

**JUL 21 2014**

Clerk of the Napa Superior Court  
By: C. Brennan  
Deputy

Dear Judge Stone:

As required by Penal Code Section 933(c), enclosed is the response to the 2013-2014 Final Report on Veterans Services and Outreach. Grand Jury activity takes place over the course of a number of months. As such, their findings and recommendations often address issues which county departments have already identified as problems and to which solutions are in the process of being developed.

The Board acknowledges the members of the 2013-2014 Grand Jury for the time they have devoted in preparing their report.

Sincerely,

Mark Luce, Chairman  
Napa County Board of Supervisors

Enclosure

cc: Foreman, 2014-2015 Grand Jury

**RECEIVED**

**JUL 21 2014**

**Napa Superior Court  
Court Executive Office**

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NAPA COUNTY  
RESPONSE TO THE GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT ON  
VETERANS SERVICES AND OUTREACH  
APRIL 2014

The Grand Jury requested responses from the Napa County Board of Supervisors.

**Finding 1.** The Napa County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) provides a critical service by assisting veterans to identify and apply for benefits they are entitled to receive.

***Board of Supervisors Response:*** The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

**Finding 2.** There are 11,400 veterans in Napa County that are within the service area of the Napa CVSO.

***Board of Supervisors Response:*** The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

**Finding 3.** As of 2012 (the latest available data), the Napa CVSO has assisted a total of 1,435 veterans through the VA claims process.

***Board of Supervisors Response:*** The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

**Finding 4.** The Napa CVSO has a claims granting rate of 98% from the VA, ranking it seventh among all California counties.

***Board of Supervisors Response:*** The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

**Finding 5.** The amount of new claim benefits received by Napa County veterans through the CVSO has increased steadily over the last several years, reaching a new annual high of \$3,496,513 in 2013.

***Board of Supervisors Response:*** The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

**Finding 6.** In recent years Napa County has understaffed and underfunded its CVSO in comparison to other, small California counties.

***Board of Supervisors Response:*** The Board of Supervisors partially agrees with this finding. Recently the CVSO hired Veterans Representative to meet with veterans and provide claims assistance.

**Finding 7.** The Napa CVSO presently has a backlog of four to six weeks in scheduling non-emergency meetings with veterans.

***Board of Supervisors Response:*** The Board of Supervisors partially agrees with this finding. The current backlog is approximately four to six weeks due to scheduled staff leaves; however, the CVSO estimates that in August that will be reduced to two weeks.

**Finding 8.** Due to understaffing, the Napa CVSO in recent years has not engaged in effective outreach to veterans in Napa County.

**Board of Supervisors Response:** The Board of Supervisors partially agrees with this finding. The CVSO has done outreach each year since the current Napa County Veterans Services Officer (VSO) was hired in 2006. This outreach has included community presentations throughout the entire Napa Valley, participation at Veteran's Benefits Fairs, conducting benefits presentations, as well as presentations to Sons In Retirement and other veterans groups at nursing homes, care facilities and retirement communities. However, the Board of Supervisors agrees that more outreach can and should be done.

**Finding 9.** Many veterans do not have documents on their person that identify themselves as veterans.

**Board of Supervisors Response:** The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

**Recommendation No 1:** The Napa CVSO should set a goal of scheduling a meeting with a veteran within a two-week period.

**Board of Supervisors Response:** The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. With the addition of a new Veterans Representative staff person, the CVSO anticipates being able to reach this goal within one year (no later than April 2015).

**Recommendation No 2:** The Napa CVSO should develop an outreach program that ensures that veterans in Napa County are fully aware of its services, including that it will make home visits.

**Board of Supervisors Response:** The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The VSO had previously done only limited outreach, due to low staffing levels. With the new Veterans Representative hired, the VSO will more frequently attend events and arrange presentations throughout Napa Valley. In addition to outreach, the VSO anticipates being more available to perform home visits as the Veterans Representative takes on an increasing workload over the next year.

**Recommendation No 3:** The Napa CVSO should report annually, in writing, to the Board of Supervisors on the effectiveness of its outreach programs, including not just what it has done but what in its assessment should be done.

**Board of Supervisors Response:** The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The VSO will:

- track outreach activities and claims activity starting with Fiscal Year 2014-15;
- assess effectiveness and seek opportunities to increase outreach; and
- report these findings to the Board of Supervisors annually beginning in November 2015 (to coincide with Veteran's Day).

**Recommendation No 4:** Napa County should implement changes to its website that facilitate the finding of veteran services on its website.

**Board of Supervisors Response:** This recommendation requires further analysis. Using the search feature on the County of Napa's website will take users directly to Veterans Services information and contacts. However, there may be additional changes to information or links on the website that would assist users. The County's website is under continual review for possible improvements. The Webmaster and CVSO staff will review the information and evaluate whether additional changes should be made.

**Recommendation No 5:** The Napa CVSO should make available a Veteran Identification Card for Napa County veterans to enable veterans to receive additional benefits from Napa County businesses with special benefits for veterans.

**Board of Supervisors Response:** The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Equipment to make Veteran Identification cards has been ordered and received, and staff are currently designing the identification card. Staff is also communicating with the local Chamber of Commerce to identify the most effective way to encourage businesses to offer veteran benefits and communicate the availability of these benefits to patrons with a Veteran ID card or other military identification. Staff expect to start advertising the availability of these cards no later than September 2014, with a "soft roll out" starting in July for veterans who are already at our office for other services.