

**Department of Veterans' Affairs
Budget No. 321
Senate Bill No. 2025**

	FTE Positions	General Fund	Other Funds	Total
2017-19 legislative appropriations	7.00	\$1,155,162	\$2,091,571	\$3,246,733
2017-19 base budget	9.00	1,429,982	288,018	1,718,000
Legislative increase (decrease) to base budget	(2.00)	(\$274,820)	\$1,803,553	\$1,528,733

ONGOING AND ONE-TIME GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATIONS

	Ongoing General Fund Appropriation	One-Time General Fund Appropriation	Total General Fund Appropriation
2017-19 legislative appropriations	\$1,136,562	\$18,600	\$1,155,162
2015-17 adjusted legislative appropriations	1,429,982	76,895	1,506,877
2017-19 legislative increase (decrease) to 2015-17 adjusted appropriations	(\$293,420)	(\$58,295)	(\$351,715)
Percentage increase (decrease) to 2015-17 adjusted appropriations	(20.5%)	(75.8%)	(23.3%)

SUMMARY OF LEGISLATIVE CHANGES TO THE BASE BUDGET AND MAJOR FUNDING ITEMS

Salaries and Wages

The Legislative Assembly did not include funding for employee salary increases.

	Changes to Base Budget		Total	
	FTE Positions	General Fund		
The legislative action:				
Adjusted funding for base payroll changes for cost-to-continue 2015-17 biennium salaries and benefit increases and for other base payroll changes.		\$37,290	(\$32,972)	\$4,318
Added funding for employee health insurance premiums to reflect a revised premium rate of \$1,240.83 per month.		21,156	3,149	24,305
Removed 2 undesignated FTE positions and related funding of \$260,000 from the general fund.	(2.00)	(260,000)		(260,000)
Adjusted the funding source from the general fund to federal funds for a portion of the salaries and wages of 2 FTE administrative positions in the transportation program.		(100,000)	100,000	0
Removed funding for stand down events.		(20,000)		(20,000)
Removed funding for the Agent Orange program.		(50,000)		(50,000)
Restored funding for desktop support services.		26,640		26,640
Reduced funding for operating expenses.		(2,106)		(2,106)

Added funding for service dogs.	50,000	50,000
Added funding for the purchase of one nonhighly rural transport van to provide total ongoing funding of \$18,600.	3,600	3,600
Added one-time funding from the general fund for the purchase of one nonhighly rural transport van.	18,600	18,600
Increased funding for the State Approving Agency to provide a total of \$271,998.		13,856
Added federal funding for the highly rural transportation grant program.		1,719,520
Total	<u>(2.00)</u>	<u>\$1,803,553</u>
	<u>(\$274,820)</u>	<u>\$1,528,733</u>

FTE Changes

The 2017-19 biennium appropriations for the Department of Veterans' Affairs include funding for 7 FTE positions, a decrease of 2 FTE positions from the 2015-17 biennium. The Legislative Assembly removed 2 undesignated FTE positions. The Legislative Assembly also changed the funding source from the general fund to federal funds for a portion of salaries and wages of 2 FTE administrative positions in the transportation program.

One-Time Funding

In Section 3 of Senate Bill No. 2025, the Legislative Assembly identified \$18,600 from the general fund as one-time funding for the purchase of one transport van during the 2017-19 biennium.

Service Dogs

Service dogs - Section 4 of Senate Bill No. 2025 provides an appropriation of \$50,000 from the general fund to the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the purpose of training up to four service dogs to assist North Dakota veterans with post traumatic stress disorder during the 2017-19 biennium. Funding provided for training each service dog is \$12,500, or approximately 50 percent of the total cost of training. The department also received funding of \$50,000 from the general fund during the 2015-17 biennium for training four service dogs.

Nonhighly Rural Transport Vans

The 2017 Legislative Assembly provided a total appropriation of \$37,200 from the general fund to the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the purchase of two nonhighly rural transport vans to transport veterans to medical appointments at the Veterans' Hospital in Fargo during the 2017-19 biennium. Of this amount, \$18,600 is considered ongoing funding and \$18,600 is considered one-time funding. The 2015 Legislative Assembly provided a general fund appropriation of \$15,000 for the purchase of one transport van. This amount was reduced as part of the August 2016 budget reductions, resulting in no nonhighly rural transport vans being purchased during the 2015-17 biennium.

Highly Rural Transportation Grants Program

The highly rural transportation grant program is a federal grant program that provides funding to the Department of Veterans' Affairs to purchase transport vans and to provide transportation to medical appointments for veterans of highly rural counties. The primary purpose of using the vans must be for medical reasons, although vans are generally allowed to transport veterans to other locations, such as groceries or other locations, as long as the additional stop is reasonable and does not require an unreasonable amount of time. The department pays for all maintenance, gas, insurance, and other costs associated with the transport vans using federal funds.

The 2017 Legislative Assembly appropriated \$1,719,520 of federal funds to the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the highly rural transportation grant program for the 2017-19 biennium. Of this amount, the department anticipates spending approximately \$350,000 during the 2017-19 biennium. The department received \$379,612 of federal funding through the program during the 2013-15 biennium, of which \$316,400 was spent during the biennium. The department received \$1,264,612 of federal funding through the program during the 2015-17 biennium, of which \$174,964 was spent during the biennium.

Other Sections in Senate Bill No. 2025

Health insurance increase - Section 2 identifies the amount of funding included in the agency budget for state employee health insurance premium rate increases during the 2017-19 biennium.

Related Legislation

Veterans commemorative memorial coins - Senate Bill No. 2183 requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs to create and confer a commemorative memorial coin upon a family member of a deceased North Dakota veteran during military funeral honors for that veteran. The department may expend any gifts, grants, or donations received for the creation and conferment of commemorative memorial coins. The bill also contains a section of legislative intent that the Administrative Committee on Veterans' Affairs consider providing funding from the veterans' postwar trust fund for creating at least 4,000 commemorative memorial coins for the 2017-19 biennium.