

**Department of Veterans' Affairs
Budget No. 321
House Bill No. 1025**

	FTE Positions	General Fund	Other Funds	Total
2019-21 legislative appropriation	7.00	\$1,416,430 ¹	\$1,377,157	\$2,793,587
2017-19 legislative appropriation	7.00	1,155,162	2,091,571	3,246,733
2019-21 appropriation increase (decrease) to 2017-19 appropriation	0.00	\$261,268	(\$714,414)	(\$453,146)

¹This amount includes \$147,500 of one-time funding. Excluding this amount, the agency's ongoing general fund appropriation is \$1,268,930.

Item Description

One-time funding - In Section 2 of House Bill No. 1025, the Legislative Assembly identified \$439,000 of one-time funding for the Department of Veterans' Affairs, of which \$147,500 was from the general fund and \$291,500 is from other funds. The table below summarizes one-time funding provided to the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the 2019-21 biennium.

	General Fund	Other Funds	Total
Grant database enhancements	\$7,500		\$7,500
Temporary loan and grant position	140,000		140,000
Veterans' Home cemetery ¹		\$291,500	291,500
Total	\$147,500	\$291,500	\$439,000

¹Funding for repairs and maintenance of the cemetery located on the Veterans' Home campus during the 2019-21 biennium includes \$265,000 from federal funds and \$26,500 of matching funds from the Melvin Norgard memorial fund.

Veterans' service dog training - In Section 3 of House Bill No. 1025, the Legislative Assembly authorized the department to continue the \$50,000 of funding received during the 2017-19 biennium for the posttraumatic stress disorder service dogs program into the 2019-21 biennium.

The Legislative Assembly authorized a 2019-21 biennium appropriation of \$50,000 from the general fund, the same amount provided for the 2017-19 biennium. The funding is for training up to four service dogs to assist North Dakota veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder during the 2019-21 biennium. Funding provided for training each service dog is \$12,500, or approximately 50 percent of the total cost of training.

Transport van replacement plan - The Legislative Assembly provided a general fund appropriation of \$18,800 for the purchase of a van to transport veterans to medical appointments.

Highly rural transportation grants program - The Legislative Assembly appropriated \$800,000 of federal funds to the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the highly rural transportation grant program for the 2019-21 biennium. The

Status/Result

The following is a summary of the status of the department's one-time funding item:

- **Grants database enhancements** - Through March 2020, the department has spent \$3,861 and anticipates spending the remaining amount by the end of the biennium.
- **Temporary loan and grant position** - The department anticipates hiring a temporary position in the 2nd year of the biennium.
- **Veterans' Home cemetery** - The department does not anticipate spending the appropriation during the 2019-21 biennium. The department applied for a grant from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration, but funding recipients have not been announced.

The department continued \$50,000 into the 2019-21 biennium for the program. Through March 2020 the department has not spent any funding on the program. The department had a number of eligible veterans waiting to be awarded service dogs, but the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed the training process. The department anticipates at least four service dogs will be awarded to veterans during the 2019-21 biennium, resulting in at least \$50,000 of the available \$100,000 of funding being spent during the biennium. Additional service dogs may be trained and awarded to veterans, but the department does not anticipate spending the entire \$100,000 for eight service dogs during the 2019-21 biennium.

Through April 2020, the department used \$13,845 of the \$18,800 appropriation to purchase one transport van. The department does not anticipate spending the remaining \$4,955 of the appropriation.

The department was awarded \$676,700 from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for the highly rural transportation grants program for federal fiscal year 2020. Through March 2020 the department has spent \$308,880 on the

United States Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Rural Health provides federal funding for the program to purchase wheelchair-accessible vans and to provide associated operational funds and reimbursement of subrecipients providing services for medically related transportation to veterans in rural areas.

Veterans commemorative memorial coins - Senate Bill No. 2183 (2017) required 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 contained a section of legislative intent that the Administrative Committee on Veterans' Affairs (ACOVA) consider providing funding from the veterans' postwar trust fund for creating at least 4,000 commemorative memorial coins for the 2017-19 biennium.

transportation grants program and anticipates spending approximately \$400,000 through federal fiscal year 2020. It is unknown how much the department will be awarded for federal fiscal year 2021. The department anticipates spending nearly all of the \$800,000 appropriation.

In March 2018 the department received approval from ACOVA and the Emergency Commission to spend \$25,000 received from donations to purchase commemorative memorial coins. The department, with approval from ACOVA, completed the coin design process, ordered coins, and created policies and procedures for the conferment and sale of coins. The department and ACOVA chose not to spend veterans' postwar trust fund money for the program, instead relying on donations.

The department collected donations of \$400 during the 2015-17 biennium and \$15,295 during the 2017-19 biennium. The department also collected \$8,460 from the sale of coins during the 2017-19 biennium, resulting in total revenue from the 2015-17 and 2017-19 bienniums of \$24,155. The department spent \$12,101 on the program during the 2017-19 biennium, resulting in \$12,054 of funding available at the beginning of the 2019-21 biennium.

Through April 2020, the department has collected \$1,500 of donations and received \$5,980 from the sale of coins for the program. The department has spent \$12,270 on the program during this time, primarily for the purchase of 5,000 coins for sale at \$10 per coin during the biennium. The department anticipates shipping and postage costs will result in total program expenditures of approximately \$13,000 for the 2019-21 biennium. The department has conferred approximately 3,200 coins to North Dakota veteran family members and sold approximately 1,400 additional coins since the inception of the program.