

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

	FTE Positions	General Fund	Other Funds	Total
2021-23 legislative appropriations	8.00	\$1,570,624	\$1,803,650	\$3,374,274
2021-23 base budget	7.00	1,268,930	1,085,657	2,354,587
Legislative increase (decrease) to base budget	1.00	\$301,694	\$717,993	\$1,019,687

ONGOING AND ONE-TIME GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATIONS

	Ongoing General Fund Appropriation	One-Time General Fund Appropriation	Total General Fund Appropriation
2021-23 legislative appropriations	\$1,570,624	\$0	\$1,570,624
2019-21 legislative appropriations	1,268,930	147,500	1,416,430
2021-23 legislative increase (decrease) to 2019-21 appropriations	\$301,694	(\$147,500)	\$154,194
Percentage increase (decrease) to 2019-21 appropriations	23.8%	(100.0%)	10.9%

**SUMMARY OF LEGISLATIVE CHANGES TO THE BASE BUDGET AND MAJOR FUNDING ITEMS
Changes to Base Budget**

	FTE Positions	General Fund	Other Funds	Total
The legislative action:				
Adjusted funding for base payroll changes		\$118,503	(\$78,734)	\$39,769
Added funding to provide employee salary increases of 1.5 percent on July 1, 2021, with a minimum monthly increase of \$100 and 2.0 percent on July 1, 2022		25,802	5,043	30,845
Added funding for employee health insurance premiums to reflect a revised premium estimate of \$1,428.77 per month		284	57	341
Added funding for 1 FTE loan and grant officer position, including \$68,000 from federal funds	1.00	90,910	68,000	158,910
Added funding for a temporary half-time training and information officer position		70,000		70,000
Added funding for Microsoft Office 365 license expenses		1,195	127	1,322
Removed funding for stand down events to provide a total of \$0		(\$5,000)		(\$5,000)

Added federal funding for the highly rural transportation grant program to provide a total of \$1.22 million			432,000	432,000
Added one-time funding from federal funds for the Veterans' Home cemetery grant program for the purpose of repairing and maintaining the cemetery located on the Veterans' Home campus			291,500	291,500
Total	<u>1.00</u>	<u>\$301,694</u>	<u>\$717,993</u>	<u>\$1,019,687</u>

FTE Changes

The Legislative Assembly approved 8 FTE positions for the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the 2021-23 biennium, an increase of 1 FTE position from the 2019-21 biennium level of 7 FTE positions. The Legislative Assembly added 1 FTE loan and grant officer position.

One-Time Funding

Section 2 identifies one-time funding of \$291,500 from federal funds for the Veterans' Home cemetery grant program for the purpose of repairing and maintaining the cemetery located on the Veterans' Home campus.

Federal COVID-19 Funding - 2019-21 Biennium

In House Bill No. 1395, the Legislative Assembly appropriated \$2,860 of federal coronavirus relief funds to the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the 2019-21 biennium to purchase ultraviolet sanitizers and telework equipment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Service Dogs

Service dogs exemption - Section 3 allows the Department of Veterans' Affairs to continue the \$50,000 of funding appropriated in the 2019-21 biennium for the posttraumatic stress disorder service dogs program into the 2021-23 biennium. The 2021-23 biennium appropriation for this program is \$50,000 from the general fund, the same as provided for the 2019-21 biennium. The funding is for the purpose of training up to four service dogs to assist North Dakota veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder during the 2021-23 biennium. Funding provided for training each service dog is \$12,500, or approximately 50 percent of the total cost of training.

Nonhighly Rural Transport Vans

The Legislative Assembly provided a total appropriation of \$18,800 from the general fund for the purchase of one nonhighly rural transport van to transport veterans to medical appointments at the Veterans' Hospital in Fargo during the 2021-23 biennium, the same as provided for the 2019-21 biennium.

Highly Rural Transportation Grant 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 grocery stores 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 2021 Legislative Assembly appropriated \$1,220,000 of federal funds to the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the highly rural transportation grant program for the 2021-23 biennium, an increase of \$420,000 from the 2019-21 biennium authorized level of \$800,000. In September 2020, the Emergency Commission and Budget Section authorized a federal funds spending authority increase of \$400,000, resulting in total federal funds spending authority of \$1,200,000 during the 2019-21 biennium. The total estimated expenditures for the program during the 2019-21 biennium is approximately \$950,000. Of the \$1,719,520 of federal funds authorized for the 2017-19 biennium, the department spent \$723,755.

Related Legislation

House Bill No. 1211 - Investment of veteran funds - This bill expands the State Treasurer's ability to invest funds of the veterans' aid fund and the income from the veterans' postwar trust fund by allowing investment in assets not held by the Bank of North Dakota.

House Bill No. 1395 - COVID-19 funds - This bill provides a 2019-21 biennium appropriation of \$2,860 from the federal Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Department of Veterans' Affairs.