

Maj. Gen. Torrence Saxe

Commissioner & Adjutant General

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Alaska National Guard

*Department of Military
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STATE OF ALASKA

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By Pfc. Grace Nechanicky

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Director of the Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs appointed to serve on federal committee

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Verdie Bowen, director of the Alaska State Office of Veterans Affairs, was appointed to the Federal Advisory Committee on the Readjustment of Veterans for a two-year term that began January 1.

Bowen was appointed by Robert Wilkie, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, to serve on what will be his third committee while in his current position. Wilkie additionally requested that Bowen serve as the new chair of the committee.

“The best part of this board will be my ability to work directly with all of our Veterans Centers,” said Bowen, “and my dream is one day to have one center beside every VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic.”

VA Veteran Centers are community-based counseling centers that provide a wide range of social and psychological services.

On the committee, Bowen will work specifically on the improvement of veterans’ mental healthcare, involving issues such as suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder, drug and alcohol abuse, employment, family adjustment and more.

“By adjusting healthcare across the nation, I’d like to improve mental healthcare in Alaska to help our veterans and active military with these issues,” said Bowen.

The Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs is dedicated to providing help to every veteran in the state of Alaska, including those in rural Alaskan communities.

“That is my goal,” said Bowen, “to help every veteran in Alaska.”

In the time that he has served as director for the past ten years, the state went from about 54 percent of veterans having access to healthcare to 94 percent of veterans with access.

The Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs has emphasized the importance of helping veterans in rural communities within Alaska.

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“We have to bridge the gap by reaching our veterans in rural communities,” said Bowen. “Veterans are people who have served for a specific amount of time, and they have earned benefits for that period of service.”

Some of the notable programs that Bowen’s office has started in order to improve rural representation include the Native Healthcare Sharing Agreement, which allows veterans in rural communities to use local native clinics at the expense of the VA; and the Highly Rural Transportation Grant, which allows eligible veterans to use transportation to healthcare facilities at the expense of the VA as well.

The Native Healthcare Sharing Agreement multiplied the number of clinics available through the Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs from 5 clinics in 2011 to 127 clinics a year later.

Additionally, the Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs provided guidance, recommendations and technical assistance for seven different federal laws to accommodate the needs of local veterans.

“The most effective way we can get change here is to go to D.C. and do things on the national level,” said Bowen.

The Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs is at 4600 Debarr Rd., Ste. 180. The office is open 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, and may be reached via email at alaska.veterans@alaska.gov, or via phone at 888-248-3682 or 907-334-0874.

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PHOTOS

DVIDS link includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/358754/director-alaska-office-veterans-affairs-appointed-serve-federal-committee>



World War II veteran Arthur W. Owens, left, shakes hands with Verdie Bowen Sr., director of veterans affairs for the state of Alaska, after being awarded the Silver Star and Purple Heart 68 years after his heroic actions while fighting near Ludwigshafen, Germany. On March 23, 1945, Owens' tank was hit by a shell from an anti-tank gun. After evacuating the vehicle, he returned twice under heavy enemy fire - and despite his wounds - to rescue injured comrades. After a review of his records, Secretary of the Army John McHugh recently signed orders to recognize Owens. Brig. Gen. Mike Bridges, commander of the Alaska Army National Guard, presented the medals during a ceremony at the Alaska National Guard headquarters on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Thursday, Sept. 19, 2013. (U.S. Air Force photo by Justin Connaher/Released)



Verdie Bowen Sr., director of the state of Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs, presents the Distinguished Honor Coin to Andronik P. Kashevarov for his service in the Alaska Territorial Guard during an informal ceremony at Kashevarov's house in Anchorage, Alaska, Dec. 19, 2014. Kashevarov served in the Alaska Territorial Guard's St. George Island unit during World War II until 1947 when the ATG was disbanded. It was not until 2000 that the ATG were officially recognized as members of the U.S. Army. Since then, the state of Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs has been working to locate approximately 6,400 people who served in the ATG in order to recognize them for their service and ensure they receive Veterans Affairs coverage offered to all veterans of the U.S. armed forces. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton)



Mr. Verdie Bowen, the director of veterans affairs, Alaska, delivers welcoming remarks for the annual Veterans Day ceremony held at the National Guard Armory at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Nov. 11, 2019. The ceremony included speeches from various individuals, a fallen warrior ceremony, a presentation of wreaths and a moment of silence for those who have fallen. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Grace Nechanicky/Released)



Commander, Navy Recruiting Command, Rear Adm. Brendan R. McLane, meets with the director of the Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs, Verdie Bowen, during his visit to raise awareness of the Navy's relationship with Alaska, May 23, 2019. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Zachary S. Eshleman/Released)