



January 22, 2026

Orange County Board of Supervisors
333 W. Santa Ana Blvd.
Santa Ana, California 92701

Re: Orange County Veterans Advisory Council Annual Report

Dear Chair Chaffee and Orange County Supervisors:

This letter constitutes the Orange County Veterans Advisory Council's ("OCVAC") Annual Report on Council Activities. The report contains background information on OCVAC, OCVAC meeting information, a recap of OCVAC's 2025 recommendations to the Board of Supervisors, OCVAC's goals for 2026, and general veterans-related event information.

I. Background.

OCVAC was created on March 28, 1978, and is tasked with advising the Board of Supervisors on issues of importance to veterans and their dependents based on input from the veteran community; providing a source of liaison and communication with various groups relative to veterans' issues; and, promoting involvement in veterans' related events and functions within the County. In 2025, Steven Vargas served as OCVAC Chair and Eric Duane served as the Vice Chair. On November 12, 2025, OCVAC elected Vice Chair Eric Duane to serve as the 2026 Chair and Kathryn Morrison as the 2026 Vice-Chair.

OCVAC consists of volunteer members appointed by the Board of Supervisors who are U.S. military veterans with Honorable Discharges and are residents of Orange County. Each of the five (5) County Supervisors may appoint a veteran from their district, and there are four (4) at-large positions. Here are the current OCVAC councilmembers

District

Member

District 1	Erik Duane, Vice-Chair 2025
District 2	Vacant – Scoba Rhodes appointed Dec., 2025
District 3	Robert “Bobby” McDonald
District 4	Steven Vargas, Chair 2025
District 5	Alexis Paschedag Federico
Member At Large	John Burick
Member At Large	Michael Radigan
Member At Large	Stephanie Wade
Member At Large	Kathryn Morrison

II. Meetings.

The first meeting of 2025 was held January 8th at the county offices on Grand Street in Santa Ana. To increase its presence and accessibility to Orange County veterans, OCVAC committed to rotating its meeting location within the five (5) Orange County Supervisorial District communities when space becomes available.

On January 22nd, a Special meeting was held to approve the 2024 Annual Report, approved unanimously and sent. We also received a presentation from the Interim County Executive Officer, Michelle Aguirre, on the OC Veterans Data Report from the Data Analytics Sr. Manager, Chrislyn Nefas.

The second meeting was held on March 12th we received a brief on Homeless Veteran Rehabilitation Services by Parisa Mehrinfar, Regional Clinical Director, Mental Health Association of Orange County, and an update on the Orange County Veterans Cemetery by Nick Berardino, President, VALOR.

The third meeting was held on May 14 at the Norman P Murray Community Center in Mission Viejo. We received updates on Senate Bills from VALOR President Nick Bernadino and discussed support letters for AB-571, CA EQA Exemption for Gypsum Canyon Veterans Cemetery, and SB-55, State Park Gold Star Free Day Use. Both bills were supported by the BOS, recommendations passed unanimously, letters signed and sent.

The fourth meeting was held on June 11th at the Grand Street offices, where we received a presentation on Sheltering Pets of Veterans in Need by Penny Lambright from Patriots and Paws. We also received a final report from the Pet Ad Hoc committee with a recommendation to send a final report letter to BOS for action to support temporarily sheltering pets of veterans needing short-term medical care.

The fifth meeting was held on August 13th at the Tierney Center in Tustin. We received a follow-up report on the Veterans in Orange County Report FY 2023-2024 by Chrislyn Nefas-Ferencz and a Year in Review report from the Tierney Center with a highlight on the Wall That Heals, the traveling Vietnam Memorial, that will be in Orange County in September. Several OCVAC members will attend as active volunteers.

The sixth meeting was held on October 8th at the Grand Street location, where we received a presentation from the American Legion Veterans Service Officer, Matt Jackson. Matt is the State coordinator for all service officers in California associated with the American Legion, including the 21 Posts within Orange County. .

The seventh and final meeting was held on November 12th at the Grand Street location, where we received a presentation by Jamboree Housing on veterans housing accomplishments by Richard Owens, VP of Business Development. At this meeting, we approved the recommendation letter to the BOS in support of Hardship Relief Related to Pet Ownership for veterans experiencing medical emergencies or short-term incarceration. We also elected new officers for the incoming year: Erik Dwayne was elected Chair, and Kathryn Morrison was elected Vice Chair.

In 2026, OCVAC will meet on January 14, March 11, May 13, June 10, August 12, October 14, and November 18. OCVAC will hold its annual election on November 18, 2026.

III. 2025 Accomplishments.

OCVAC raised awareness of the stress and isolation veterans experience due to the limitations of pet options in housing opportunities and/or short-term treatment programs, such as substance abuse or diversion programs. The potential loss of the final loyal friend, their pet, limits options to these veterans. More needs to be done. The continuation of moving meeting locations throughout the county was achieved moderately; the promulgation will continue in 2026.

IV. OCVAC's 2026 Goals.

OCVAC will continue to advocate for and support the Orange County Veterans Cemetery.

OCVAC will make recommendations on veterans' service priorities and needs based on County-provided veteran data and other sources.

OCVAC will focus on Homeless Veterans' priorities throughout the year. The incoming Chairman has made this a primary focus area.

As a general matter, we would like to highlight the following annual events important to veterans and their families. The 250th Anniversary of the Navy passed on October 13th, 2025, without much fanfare except for the one-point victory in the Army-Navy game in December; however, on June 14th, 2026, we will be able to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the [U.S. Army's 250th](#)

Birthday Celebration. This should be highlighted throughout the first part of the year and event planning should be in place at the county level.

On May 25, 2026, various veterans service organizations, veterans, and cities in Orange County will honor and mourn U.S. military personnel who died while serving in the United States Armed Forces by hosting Memorial Day events.

On November 11, 2025, various veterans service organizations, veterans, and cities in Orange County will celebrate and honor veterans of the United States Armed Forces by hosting Veterans Day events.

It has been our pleasure to serve the Board of Supervisors and the Orange County veteran community in 2025, and we look forward to continuing our service in 2026.

Sincerely,

Steve Vargas,
Outgoing Chair
Orange County Veterans Advisory Council

CC: Supervisor Janet Nguyen, District 1
Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento, District 2
Supervisor Donald P. Wagner, District 3
Supervisor Doug Chaffee, Chair District 4
Supervisor Katrina Foley, Vice-Chair, District 5
Dylan Wright, OCCR Director
Renee Ramirez, OCCS Director