



Orange County Veterans Advisory Council

1300 S. Grand Avenue, Building B, Rm 247
Santa Ana, CA 92705
714-480-6555
714-567-7577 Fax

January 22, 2025

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 2024 recommendations to the Board of Supervisors, OCVAC's goals for 2025, 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.

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	Kathryn Morrison
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	Vacant

In 2024, Alexis Paschedag Federico served as OCVAC Chair and Steven Vargas served as the Vice Chair. On December 4, 2024, OCVAC elected Steven Vargas as the 2025 Chair and Erik Duane as the 2025 Vice-Chair.

II. Meetings.

The first meeting of 2024 was held January 10th at the county offices on Grand Street in Santa Ana. To increase its presence and accessibility to Orange County veterans, OCVAC started rotating its meeting location within the five (5) Orange County Supervisorial District communities. At this meeting OCVAC also voted unanimously to forward the 2023 Annual Report to the Board of Supervisors and heard a presentation describing the services available to Orange County veterans via the Veterans Legal Institute.

The second meeting was held on March 13th at the Brea City Council Chambers. The principal business of this meeting was presentation on the Brown Act given by John Cleveland, the Senior Deputy County Counsel.

The third meeting was held on May 8th at Dana Point City Council Chambers. The meeting featured a presentation on preventing fentanyl deaths. The presentation was given by Shane Wood, Executive Director and Christine Kirkwood, Executive Assistant of FentanylSolution.org

The fourth meeting was held on June 12th at Seal Beach City Council Chambers. The council heard a presentation by the Orange County Healthcare Agency on smoking and tobacco-use cessation assistance available to county residents.

The fifth meeting was held on August 21st at the Anaheim Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 72. This meeting was deliberately scheduled to allow OCVAC members to attend the post's annual "Veterans in Business Luncheon", hosted in conjunction with the Orange County Black Chamber of Commerce. Six of the seven members of OCVAC attended the meeting and also the luncheon that preceded it where the learned about veterans' programs and met executives from Walt Disney, Kaiser-Permanente, Southern California Edison, the Metropolitan Water Authority and several other employers.

The sixth meeting was held on October 16th at City of Newport Community Room. The meeting included a presentation on the County's legislative process and a report on the California State Leadership Summit held in San Diego October 6-9 and attended by Commissioners Wade and MacDonald.

The seventh meeting was held on November 13th at OC Workforce Solutions Center in Brea. The Council was one commissioner short of quorum so no business was conducted and the two scheduled presentations were rescheduled for the December meeting. The people in attendance were, however, able to receive a tour of the Solutions Center and learn about the veterans related resources available there.

The eighth and final meeting of 2024 was held on December 4th at the Tierney Center in Tustin. The meeting featured one presentations that had been rescheduled from the November meeting. The first of these was a presentation about the Orange County Veterans and Military Families Collaborative (OCVMFC) and its effort to coordinate care among the counties many veterans service organization. The meeting also included the 2025 OCVAC elections at which Steve Vargas was elected Chair, and Erik Dwayne elected Vice Chair.

In 2025, OCVAC will meet on January 22, March 12, May 14, June 11, August 13, October 8, and November 12. OCVAC will hold its annual election on November 12, 2025.

III. 2024 Accomplishments.

OCVAC established an ad hoc committee to evaluate the Orange County Veterans Service Office's ("VSO") reporting metrics. The evaluation compared 54 county VSO metrics to determine OCVSO efficiency in bringing back federal dollars to Orange County veterans. Report submitted to CVSO for evaluation. Bottom line is OCVSO is above the mean on return of federal dollars per claim comparing six largest county's (\$1,550 v \$1,433), managing service volume per VSO (88) at a sustainable level (<100/per VSO is best practice) and seeing more veterans per VSO in person (8 daily) than comparable large counties.

Veterans-Annual-Report-2023										2023 CAL Vet Staffing Numbers							
COUNTY	Veteran Pop.	Count	In Person	By Mail or Phone	New Claims by CVSO	New Awards by CVSO	Ave. New Awards	By County Size		Number of Contacts	Efficiency by contact	Percent of Vet Pop. Served	Qualified VSR's	Monthly Claims per VSR	Total Office Staff	Contacts per month per FTE	In Person per Day by VSR
								MEAN	MEDIAN								
1 Los Angeles	260,075	L	26,243	6,500	24,072	\$ 23,439,596	\$ 974			32,743	73.5%	9.3%	30	67	50	55	4
2 San Diego	230,507	L	23,956	75,222	19,507	\$ 16,675,473	\$ 855			99,178	19.7%	8.5%	18	90	30	275	6
3 Riverside	115,937	L	8,124	22,935	13,603	\$ 29,860,307	\$ 2,195	\$ 1,433	\$ 1,294	31,059	43.8%	11.7%	15	76	25	104	2
4 Orange	101,674	L	23,990	10,893	12,641	\$ 19,594,152	\$ 1,550			34,883	36.2%	12.4%	12	88	20	145	8
5 San Bernardino	91,652	L	19,089	12,237	55,784	\$ 57,895,384	\$ 1,038			31,326	178.1%	60.9%	12	387	20	131	7
6 Sacramento	77,794	L	6,000	11,000	5,183	\$ 10,285,017	\$ 1,984			17,000	30.5%	6.7%	9	48	15	94	3

IV. OCVAC's 2025 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.

In 2024, OCVAC committed to increase its presence and accessibility in various Orange County communities, 7 of our 8 regularly scheduled meetings were held within each of the five

supervisory districts. OCVAC members routinely participated in monthly veterans-related events. OCVAC will continue to meet the public to connect with veterans throughout the county.

OCVAC also established an ad-hoc committee to evaluate the extent to which lack of animal care and resources for veterans with pets affected whether the veterans took advantage of housing offered to them. The ad hoc is exploring potential resources and other actions that may help house these veterans.

OCVAC will also look into whether County-affiliated governmental entities and cities in Orange County have adopted policies and programs similar to the County's Veteran Employment Policy and the Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise ("DVBE") programs, which were approved by the Board of Supervisors in 2020 and have greatly benefited Orange County veterans.

V. 2025 Veterans' Events in Orange County.

Orange County is one of the most veteran-friendly counties primarily because of the support of the County, its Board of Supervisors and the tireless dedication of various Orange County veterans service groups. If any Supervisor would like specific information concerning veterans-related events in their District or anywhere in Orange County, please feel free to contact me or your district OCVAC member. As a general matter, we would like to highlight the following annual events important to veterans and their families.

April is designated as the Month of the Military Child and is a time to honor the sacrifices made by military families worldwide. On average, military families move every two to three years, which means military children change schools and support networks roughly six to nine times during their school years. Military OneSource, an official Department of Defense website, offers free ideas and resources to celebrate military children.

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/parenting/children-youth-teens/month-of-the-militarychild/#events>

On May 26, 2025, 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 Orange County veteran community in 2024 and we look forward to continuing our service in 2025.

Sincerely,

Steve Vargas
Chairperson
Orange County Veterans Advisory Council

CC: Supervisor Janet Nguyen, District 1

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