

1 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
2 COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

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4 DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS  
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6 House Appropriations Committee

7 Main Capitol Building  
8 Majority Caucus, Room 140  
9 Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

10 Wednesday, February 28, 2018

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12 MAJORITY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

13 Honorable Stanley Saylor, Majority Chairman  
14 Honorable Karen Boback  
15 Honorable Sheryl Delozier  
16 Honorable George Dunbar  
17 Honorable Garth Everett  
18 Honorable Keith Greiner  
19 Honorable Marcia Hahn  
20 Honorable Doyle Heffley  
21 Honorable Susan Helm  
22 Honorable Lee James  
23 Honorable Warren Kampf  
24 Honorable Fred Keller  
25 Honorable Duane Milne  
Honorable Jason Ortitay  
Honorable Michael Peifer  
Honorable Marguerite Quinn  
Honorable Brad Roae  
Honorable Jamie Santora  
Honorable Curtis Sonney

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MINORITY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Honorable Joseph Markosek, Minority Chairman  
Honorable Kevin Boyle  
Honorable Tim Briggs  
Honorable Donna Bullock  
Honorable Maria Donatucci  
Honorable Marty Flynn  
Honorable Patty Kim  
Honorable Stephen Kinsey  
Honorable Leanne Krueger-Braneky  
Honorable Michael O'Brien  
Honorable Mark Rozzi  
Honorable Peter Schweyer

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Honorable Stephen Barrar, Majority Chairman  
Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness  
Committee  
Honorable Cris Dush  
Honorable Harold English  
Honorable Eli Evankovich  
Honorable Adam Harris  
Honorable Francis Ryan  
Honorable Tommy Sankey  
Honorable Judy Ward  
  
Honorable Chris Sainato, Minority Chairman  
Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness  
Committee  
Honorable Bryan Barbin  
Honorable Frank Burns  
Honorable Dom Costa  
Honorable Paul Costa  
Honorable William Kortz  
Honorable Brian Sims

1 STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

2 David Donley  
3 Majority Executive Director

4 Ritchie LaFaver  
5 Majority Deputy Executive Director

6 Miriam Fox  
7 Minority Executive Director

8 Tara Trees, Esquire  
9 Minority Chief Counsel

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INDEX OF TESTIFIERS

DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS

Anthony Carrelli  
The Adjutant General

Major General (USFA Retired) Eric Weller,  
Deputy Adjutant General - Veterans Affairs

Brigadier General Mark Schindler  
Deputy Adjutant General - Army

Brigadier Mike Regan  
Deputy Adjutant General - Air Guard

Mark Ferraro  
Deputy Facilities & Engineering

Darren McNoldy  
Director of Human Resources

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Very good.  
2 We'll start the hearing. I want to welcome  
3 everybody. If you all, who are going to provide  
4 testimony, would rise and raise your right hand.

5 (All testifiers were sworn en masse by  
6 Chairman Saylor).

7 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Very good.  
8 Chairman Markosek, an opening comment or  
9 anything?

10 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Just to  
11 welcome everybody here today. I'm looking forward  
12 to hearing about all the great things that you do.

13 Having done this for a while, it's -- I  
14 know there are -- That's a long list, all the great  
15 things you do. I'm anxious to hear that, and thank  
16 you for coming.

17 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I'm going to  
18 start off today's hearing with one or two questions  
19 that I have as Chairman.

20 Gentlemen, as you know, I have been a  
21 big advocate of the Youth Challenge Program, which  
22 is so successful in other states with getting high  
23 school dropouts back into school and into higher  
24 education and getting them jobs.

25 Would you talk about that a little bit?

1           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.

2           The Youth Challenge Program, a  
3 phenomenal program sponsored in part by the  
4 National Guard -- a National Guard program,  
5 obviously, we wouldn't be the only -- it's not a  
6 National Guard-only program. When you run a  
7 successful program in the state, there's a lot of  
8 other state partners, different agencies, that are  
9 going to have to participate to have a successful  
10 program.

11           It would reside under the Department of  
12 Military and Veterans Affairs because of that  
13 National Guard nexus in the sense to get the  
14 funding for that, the 75 percent funding.  
15 Essentially, just about every program runs two  
16 six-month classes; about 200 students per class,  
17 and they've had phenomenal successes.

18           If you talk to states that have had the  
19 program for any period of time, great, great  
20 stories about how many of the troubled youth they  
21 have been able to make a serious impact on and turn  
22 their lives around. So, in that aspect, it is a  
23 great youth program; a great support of our  
24 troubled youth. It's really an investment in their  
25 future, and to make them more productive citizens

1 and not necessarily a drain on resources is a -- is  
2 a phenomenal thing to do.

3 I was just at the adjunct general  
4 meetings last week down in D.C., and we had some  
5 discussions about the program. There's not a state  
6 that has a youth challenge program that regrets  
7 having that program. So it is extremely  
8 beneficial.

9 We certainly, in the department, would  
10 love to get to the point where we can -- where we  
11 can do that. I know the legislature has been taken  
12 up. We had the Senate side, and we're waiting for,  
13 I guess, for a final House vote as well. But, we  
14 certainly look forward to working with the  
15 legislature and the staff, if the state decides to  
16 go in that direction. I think it would be a --  
17 beneficial for all.

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Thank you.

19 I want to read you a quote and have a  
20 question after that. This is a quote from Governor  
21 Wolf. I am always proud of our emergency  
22 management teams and our first responders, and no  
23 more so than today as we recognize the work of the  
24 Civil Air Patrol. That's what Governor Wolf said.

25 He said: These volunteers give new

1 meaning to the definition of first responders with  
2 their incredible dedication and quick action to  
3 help in emergency situations, such as the one in  
4 Erie. Yet, the Governor zeroed them out. And they  
5 are immense help to you and many other agencies;  
6 PEMA.

7 Does the Governor not really understand  
8 the functions of the Civil Air Patrol? Why zero  
9 something out that's so critical to the life and  
10 safety of Pennsylvanians?

11 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Sir, I  
12 believe the Governor does understand. I've talked  
13 to him about the Civil Air Patrol. When we had the  
14 response that we did during the snowstorm, as well  
15 as, I might add, during the winter ice-flow  
16 problems that we had, the Civil Air Patrol was --  
17 was crucial in being able to get that aerial  
18 reconnaissance that we needed to be able to predict  
19 where those flooding issues were going to be with  
20 the ice flows.

21 As an agency, we support the Civil Air  
22 Patrol in a bunch of other ways. Of course, their  
23 headquarters is on the Gap. We do provide other  
24 services and funding like the sources for the Civil  
25 Air Patrol. As an example, they have a major



1 encampment on the Gap every summer. We were able  
2 to support them with transportation needs and  
3 housing needs and training areas, which we could  
4 provide at no cost. We used guardsmen training  
5 opportunities for us to provide some transportation  
6 for them so they wouldn't have to pay the cost.  
7 So, there's a lot of other ways that we support the  
8 National Guard.

9 We are still in a -- in a funding-tight  
10 situation and could not prioritize funding for the  
11 Civil Air Patrol in this proposed budget. However,  
12 we are looking forward to a time -- I don't want to  
13 discount the importance of the Civil Air Patrol.  
14 We hope that in future budgets that we do have the  
15 flexibility, and with further legislation we're  
16 trying to more formalize that relationship to make  
17 that a program of record that they certainly can  
18 depend on year after year after year.

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: It's my  
20 understanding that, if we don't put that line item,  
21 that they can't even be of any help to you or PEMA  
22 or anybody else. If that line item is not there  
23 for Civil Air Patrol, it doesn't allow you to use  
24 your resources.

25 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: They use

1 that funding for training. It is certainly a great  
2 help to them. It is not their only funding source.  
3 There are some other federal sources. As I  
4 mentioned, we do contribute to them in other ways.  
5 But it is an important source for them.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: What I guess  
7 I meant was, if we don't have that hundred thousand  
8 dollars in there, those federal resources go away.  
9 There are -- The federal dollars are contingent  
10 upon Pennsylvania's allocation of dollars is my  
11 understanding.

12 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Sir, that is  
13 not the way I understand that. General.

14 BRIGADIER GENERAL REGAN: My  
15 understanding is, that's not the way the model is,  
16 sir. The national -- what they refer to as their  
17 national headquarters provides, in Pennsylvania,  
18 actually, close to 2 million in aircraft support,  
19 all those types of things that they provide direct  
20 funding for.

21 And as General Carrelli mentioned, the  
22 support we provide to CAP is not just monetary. A  
23 lot of non-monetary stuff is provided to them. But  
24 they continue to receive their funding if they --  
25 If a federally-recognized search and rescue

1 operation were to be required, all that funding  
2 would flow and that mission would -- that mission  
3 would happen without fail, as it has in the past.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Very good.

5 With that, we'll move to the first  
6 questioner, after me, is Representative Boback.

7 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you, Mr.  
8 Chairman.

9 Good afternoon, gentlemen. I have the  
10 honor of serving on the Gino Merli Center. So,  
11 veteran centers are certainly near and dear to my  
12 heart. But, there again, it gives me privy to some  
13 information with our veterans home, and I'm really  
14 concerned about the earnings with Medicaid  
15 reimbursement because, I understand that our homes  
16 are earning substantially lower Medicaid program  
17 reimbursements, the EVR, than was originally  
18 promised, so -- or projected. So that concerns me.  
19 That's number 1.

20 Number 2. Since that's in Lackawanna  
21 County, and I try to do good advertisement for it,  
22 I think it's a great place. Many of my friends and  
23 colleagues and neighbors say it's too far. They  
24 live in upper Luzerne, and they will rather put  
25 their mom or dad veterans in another center closer

1 to their homes so that they and their grandchildren  
2 can go every day. So I'm thinking, maybe we need a  
3 satellite for Gino Merli.

4 The third thing that I'm finding out is,  
5 looking at the modern community living center that  
6 we have in Hollidaysburg, I think that has day  
7 care, doesn't it? Doesn't it offer a day care  
8 program for veterans that you can bring your  
9 veteran who needs extra help and support during the  
10 day and then be picked up at night? I think that  
11 services our veterans that way.

12 So I'm always looking for different ways  
13 to expand instead of going to the center, and when  
14 it's so far away for so many people -- I think we  
15 have only six in the whole state.

16 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, ma'am.

17 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: So, I know I  
18 threw a lot at you. Can you address that, because  
19 I want to bring us back now into this century that  
20 we're in by 20 years now and make our centers a  
21 little bit more progressive to accommodate the  
22 needs, particularly of Korean War veterans. We  
23 have some World War II veterans, but I do see an  
24 increase in need. So, if you could address --

25 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, ma'am.

1 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you.

2 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: And I'll  
3 take your questions backwards --

4 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Okay.

5 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: -- from the  
6 way that you presented them.

7 So the day care piece, we -- we do not  
8 currently offer any adult day care in any of our  
9 homes. This is a new initiative that the federal  
10 V.A. has proposed that we have been studying. And  
11 we're gonna do a pilot program in the next year to  
12 two years. The first place we're gonna pilot, I  
13 believe, is Southeast Veterans Home, and I think  
14 the second place for the follow-on pilot I think is  
15 Hollidaysburg. So, maybe that's where you heard it  
16 from first, but we have -- we do not yet have that  
17 program.

18 But, what the federal V.A. will do, they  
19 will give us a per diem reimbursement for having  
20 this program in the home. So, if we can set up the  
21 space within -- within our existing home to bring  
22 that veteran resident essentially into the home for  
23 the day--we won't have to provide bed space--but  
24 we'll have to provide activity space and any of the  
25 services that we currently provide during the day

1 would be provided, and then that family would pick  
2 their veteran up at the end of the day.

3           So, this is perfect for families that  
4 both members of the family work, and they're taking  
5 care of an elderly vet -- veteran, but they have  
6 nothing -- the veteran cannot be left alone, but  
7 they -- they're gone during the day and they have  
8 nothing else to turn to. So this would be a great  
9 fit for that type of program. And what we're  
10 looking at is, trying to be -- add more and more  
11 flexibility to how we care for our veterans.

12           Our veterans' families, essentially  
13 every time they come to us we hear almost the same  
14 extra story; that they have just been overwhelmed.  
15 They really have no other options. They do not  
16 want to put their veteran family member in a home,  
17 but they just can't make it -- make it work in any  
18 other fashion.

19           So, if we can provide them better  
20 options earlier, so that when -- if dementia is the  
21 problem, if a disability is a problem, or PTSD or  
22 mental health is a problem, if we can provide them  
23 first, maybe some in-home type services, we're  
24 exploring how we can partner with the federal V.A.  
25 to do that first. And then, if it progresses more

1 than and it can't be an in-home-type thing, well,  
2 maybe it's an adult day care where they spend the  
3 day with us, but they will still spend their nights  
4 at home.

5           And then, finally, as they progress, say  
6 they get older or their conditions get more  
7 serious--let's say dementia, for instance, and they  
8 just do not have the capacity to care for them at  
9 all, then we're looking at, really, what we provide  
10 now as a full-up dementia care-type setting in some  
11 of our homes. So, we'd like to be able to set up  
12 that progressive care.

13           So we have the -- we have the  
14 significant end now done. We're working our way  
15 kind of backwards and looking at piloting this  
16 adult day care.

17           We're going to need some construction  
18 money to build space to be able to do that in some  
19 of the homes. So Southeast and Hollidaysburg were  
20 easier ones to pilot because they actually do have  
21 some space. It will cost us less money to be able  
22 to do that; to study to see how this would work.  
23 But the key is to be able to get that federal  
24 reimbursement as well, so we would be able to take  
25 more veterans.

1           But we feel, just looking at the initial  
2 numbers, that the actual federal reimbursement  
3 might cover most of our expenses, so it may not be  
4 that much additional cost, if any, to the  
5 Commonwealth to add those type of services. But,  
6 if we can continue to work our way backwards to  
7 keep those veterans home longer, that's the goal.  
8 So that was the -- That was the third question.

9           Your second question is essentially the  
10 geography. Having the six homes that we have --  
11 And that is one of our biggest issues. We have  
12 1300 residents in our six veterans homes at this  
13 point. Some homes have a waiting list; other homes  
14 don't have a waiting list.

15           Every single person -- I'll use the  
16 Philadelphia home. Delaware Valley, for instance,  
17 they have probably our longest waiting list. And  
18 every single person that goes on that waiting list,  
19 we offer -- because that family says, well, we need  
20 a bed today. It's like, well, if you absolutely  
21 need a bed today, we have other beds in our system,  
22 for instance, out at Hollidaysburg, we will get you  
23 that bed tonight.

24           More times than not, most of the time a  
25 family would rather go on the waiting list and wait



1 for that home that's in their local area. So  
2 geography is a significant decision factor to these  
3 families, because they do want to stay in the area  
4 that they grew up; in the area that the family is  
5 already in. Rarely do we see someone willing to  
6 move to an open bed at -- at some other location.

7 So the question is, how do we -- how do  
8 we cover more locations?

9 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Yes.

10 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: One of the  
11 early proposals was a seventh home. Well, that's  
12 -- Okay. It's a significant cost to build. It's a  
13 significant cost to man, but that's just one more  
14 location. Okay. And that's not gonna help a lot  
15 of other people throughout the Commonwealth.

16 Another thing that we've been studying  
17 that we think has maybe greater merit in this case  
18 is partnering with county homes. And if we can  
19 partner with a county home -- And we're not talking  
20 about building space for 200 people. We're talking  
21 about maybe just taking a floor or taking a wing of  
22 a county home. We use their license. We use their  
23 feeding. We use their custodial. It wouldn't take  
24 a significant investment of state employees or --  
25 or medical care and feeding, because we're already

1 using some existing facility. But maybe we can put  
2 20, 30, 40 people there. If we can do that in six,  
3 eight, 10, 12 more locations, then 10 years from  
4 now we don't have this problem, because pretty much  
5 anywhere you are -- you have options to do that.  
6 So we're looking in that direction to be able to do  
7 that.

8 The EVR, we have worked to maximize all  
9 of the federal funding that we can possibly do. We  
10 always try to spend federal dollars first. The EVR  
11 initially was overestimated, and it just did not  
12 bear that fruit. We have stabilized out now and,  
13 essentially, we're getting about 16 and a half  
14 million dollars a year in EVR. We've stabilized on  
15 -- PACE is about 900,000 a year, and our Medicaid  
16 Part D, I think, is another -- I think it's 3 and a  
17 half million. Those have stabilized.

18 We certainly do take a look at those.  
19 We try to maximize as much as we can. But, it's  
20 just the population we have in the homes. Not  
21 everyone -- It's just over 20 percent of people  
22 that are actually eligible for it, but we look to  
23 maximize those federal dollars whenever we can.

24 I hope that answers your questions.

25 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: You did a good

1 job. Thank you for your dedication to the cause.

2 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, ma'am.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I want to  
5 recognize, we have Representative Ryan here as  
6 well, one of our military gentlemen.

7 Next questioner is Representative Kim.

8 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Over here,  
9 gentlemen. Good afternoon.

10 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Good  
11 afternoon, ma'am.

12 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: I'm so pleased to  
13 see that adjusting homelessness among veterans is a  
14 high priority for you and the Governor. In 2016,  
15 if it's true, you placed 2200 veterans. Looking  
16 for the numbers of 2017, it's a high priority for  
17 myself as well.

18 What do you need from us to continue on  
19 this mission, and how can we help more veterans?  
20 Thank you.

21 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, ma'am.  
22 It's extremely important to us, and the  
23 homelessness piece, I think our numbers essentially  
24 are, since we started this Governor's challenge  
25 initiative, we've housed about 3,000; 2,900 some.

1 And the latest point in count survey within the  
2 Commonwealth tells us that there's still about 1100  
3 homeless veterans. Of course, that various every  
4 single day. We'll have some that we help today,  
5 and new homeless people -- So this will be a  
6 continuing challenge. There will not be a single  
7 day where we can, okay, we're done with  
8 homelessness, because it will always happen.

9 Our biggest emphasis right now is  
10 partnering with a lot of these organizations. If  
11 you'll look at the 17 line items that we have in  
12 our budget, there is not a single line item that  
13 says, this is the homelessness fund.

14 So, there's a lot of other different  
15 ways that we get money to those organizations; for  
16 instance, our grants through the Veterans Trust  
17 Fund. Some of those grants go to organizations  
18 that help. But our main effort in this is  
19 partnering with many of these other agencies that  
20 do that direct, such as our veterans service  
21 organizations, other counties, other service  
22 centers in some of the cities and some of the other  
23 townships around the Commonwealth that do that.

24 What the emphasis needs to be on, and  
25 if you guys can help us shine that light of

1 awareness out there is, that just providing someone  
2 a roof over their head tonight is not going to  
3 solve their homeless issue. It's a whole array.  
4 We need to make sure that we fix their addiction  
5 problems. We need to be able to get them the  
6 mental health resources that they need. If they  
7 have physical disabilities, we need to get them to  
8 care to best be able to live with those. We need  
9 to get them counseling services that they need. We  
10 need to get them employment help in order to be  
11 able to do that.

12           And if we use that as a whole continuum  
13 of service to these veterans, that's how we're  
14 gonna keep them off the streets. You can't just  
15 provide any one of those things without providing  
16 the others. So, those are areas that we're working  
17 a lot with other agencies.

18           And I'll let General Weller jump into  
19 that, because part of his staff is solely focused  
20 on making those connections and putting those  
21 agencies together to be able to provide that  
22 service to our veterans.

23           MAJOR GENERAL WELLER: Just tagging on  
24 with what General Carrelli had to say, that is one  
25 of our functions. Again, obviously, we're not

1 funded to do anything in relation to homeless  
2 people. Where it really hits home for us, though,  
3 is, starting with our veterans homes, we provide  
4 what's called domicile care for probably about 60  
5 people right now; generally speaking, they were  
6 homeless people. Not quite on the fringe of -- or  
7 on the fringe of needing personal care, but not  
8 quite there.

9           So, the idea was to provide them a  
10 stable place to live to get them, you know,  
11 oriented again; a bed to sleep in, three meals a  
12 day. And just in our estimation, probably  
13 50 percent of those people could move on if there  
14 was a place to move on to.

15           So, that's how we really became  
16 involved. They're just looking for that transition  
17 point. We're trying to identify any partner that  
18 we can to move that 50 percent along so that we can  
19 free up beds again for additional folks.

20           Also, as General Carrelli said, we've  
21 been working with organizations, DOH, DHS, Aging.  
22 There's a number of departments involved; Vision 4  
23 from the federal side of the House; Continuum of  
24 Care, numerous 501(3)(c)s (sic). Again, we just  
25 help in the organization referrals, that type of

1 thing, as they're establishing different programs  
2 to help homeless people.

3 Like General Carrelli said, it's not a  
4 program of record in our budget. So, you know,  
5 we're gonna continue to try to identify the  
6 appropriate partners that we can work with in order  
7 to, you know, first of all, identify the homeless  
8 people; identify what their problems are; figure  
9 out which organization to pass them off to, and try  
10 our best to get people off the street.

11 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: And, ma'am,  
12 just to add one more thing. I think if you take a  
13 step back even further on the preventive side, and  
14 we do a lot to support the outreach to actually  
15 register our veterans and let them be aware of the  
16 benefits.

17 You know, most of these homeless people  
18 we're finding on the streets, we verify their  
19 veteran eligibility. They certainly have not been  
20 receiving any benefits. They're not registered.  
21 They're not -- So, if we can reach out to more of  
22 our veterans before they get to that point --

23 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Right.

24 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: -- get them  
25 those resources that they need; things that they

1 may be able eligible for, federal and state  
2 benefits, we can prevent them from getting to that  
3 point in the first place. It's very common for us  
4 to find them, verify their eligibility, and then  
5 connect them to benefits; benefits they had no idea  
6 that they were even entitled to.

7 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Okay. I've run out  
8 of time. Thank you so much --

9 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, ma'am.

10 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: -- for your answer.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:

12 Representative Hahn.

13 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: Thank you, Mr.  
14 Chairman.

15 On this side, gentlemen. Good  
16 afternoon. Thank you for testifying.

17 Several years ago, I want to say maybe  
18 '15--time goes fast--there were federal dollars, I  
19 believe, that came through Labor and Industry. And  
20 then we had a veteran service coordinator that  
21 would come around to district offices, and those  
22 dollars went away from what I know. So, I don't  
23 think those are coming back. I haven't heard  
24 anything that those are coming back.

25 But, I see you have proposed an increase



1 of 500,000 to enhance the current program for  
2 outreach. And even now, I know we have a service  
3 coordinator that comes in. I believe the American  
4 Legion sponsors the person that comes in.

5 So, how many accredited veteran service  
6 organizations support the veterans across the  
7 Commonwealth, and do you have any idea how many are  
8 being served?

9 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Ma'am, we  
10 have a number of veteran service organizations that  
11 apply for those -- for the grants for the outreach.  
12 I believe we split that I think, five or six ways?

13 MAJOR GENERAL WELLER: Six ways.

14 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Six ways to  
15 different veteran organizations that have those  
16 programs, and those service officers are trained  
17 and accredited by our department. They join  
18 veteran service organiza -- officers that are in  
19 our department as well, as well as at the county  
20 levels, to essentially create that recruiting force  
21 that goes out there to try to outreach. That money  
22 for outreach is extremely critical.

23 If you look over the past few years,  
24 that has remained constant. We have tried to add  
25 additional funds to -- to that outreach.

1       Essentially, if you look at the life of this  
2       program, go back to the -- to the beginnings, I  
3       believe around seven or eight years ago, we have  
4       been able to sign up 180,000 veterans using this  
5       program to connect them with their federal  
6       benefits. Those federal benefits that are now  
7       coming into Pennsylvania warrant essentially about  
8       \$135 million just from this one program for those  
9       180,000 people.

10                I mean, that approach is what you fund  
11       us totally for our state budget; just over 150 some  
12       million dollars; 135 million just from this program  
13       that are coming into veterans. So, it's  
14       essentially critical. It's been a great  
15       investment-type program.

16                Last year's funds, essentially for every  
17       dollar we spent, we got \$34 back in federal  
18       benefits to our veterans. It's not coming to the  
19       department. It doesn't come to the state. It  
20       comes directly into our veterans' pockets.

21                If you talk to Congressman (sic) Barrar,  
22       we had -- we had a hearing previously as our  
23       oversight hearing. The department testified, the  
24       State Veterans Commission testified, the State War  
25       Veterans Council testified. Every single one

1 consecutively testified that this is an absolute  
2 high priority that we be able to get this increase  
3 in funding for our outreach.

4           If you look at how much money we give,  
5 and we split it six ways, essentially, over the  
6 last four years that money has been stagnant, and  
7 that's what they're using to pay these veterans  
8 service officers, and they've been losing. They  
9 haven't been able to keep them because, they'll get  
10 paid much more now at a county or at some other  
11 opportunity.

12           So, we need to keep, essentially, the  
13 worth of that money, that fund, going by  
14 increasing. We haven't been able to keep up with  
15 the cost of living. This has been the number 1  
16 priority of those veterans service organizations,  
17 those councils, those commissions. So that's why  
18 we're asking for your support for that.

19           REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: Like I said, we  
20 have one. An officer comes in every month and we  
21 always have a waiting list. They have helped a lot  
22 of veterans. So I thank you for that. It is an  
23 important program.

24           Just quickly a follow-up. When you were  
25 talking about using county homes, do you have a

1 pilot program, or are there any county homes that  
2 are doing it for you yet, or are you just looking  
3 into that?

4 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: No, ma'am.  
5 We've been studying it. We've been looking and  
6 working with the federal V.A. about how this would  
7 work and how the money would change hands. We've  
8 not yet got to the point to selection, so we're  
9 still looking at homes.

10 As you can imagine, as we -- the more  
11 homes that we look at -- Not every county home is  
12 exactly the same. So, we have to look at what best  
13 fits, and then we'll have to do probably a  
14 follow-on study at some places to see where the  
15 greatest needs in the Commonwealth are to decide.  
16 But, we're not at that point yet.

17 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: Check out  
18 Northampton County when you're looking.

19 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, ma'am.

20 REPRESENTATIVE HAHN: Thank you. Thank  
21 you, Mr. Chairman.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:  
23 Representative Donatucci.

24 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Thank you,  
25 Mr. Chairman.

1           Good to see all of you today, even  
2 though I spoke to you all earlier.

3           Act 44 of 2017 allocated \$750,000 for  
4 behavioral health programs directed towards  
5 veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress  
6 disorder. These funds haven't been expanded.

7           How does the department tend to utilize  
8 those funds?

9           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Ma'am, the  
10 750,000 is still in budgetary reserve. We're  
11 working with the sponsor of the legislation. We're  
12 working with their office to work out the details  
13 of how that money is going to be implemented. I  
14 believe we're very close, and we're excited about  
15 the opportunities.

16           General Weller attended a meeting to  
17 talk about some of the organizations that possibly  
18 could be used. That's why I'll let him add some  
19 details. But we're very excited about the  
20 opportunity to, ah -- to go out and help more  
21 people.

22           MAJOR GENERAL WELLER: Okay.

23           Going back to my original theme,  
24 obviously, aside from the 750,000, we don't have a  
25 program of record to deal with mental health, PTSD

1 drug and alcohol problems, so I take us back to the  
2 state veterans homes. And this is where we're  
3 trying to get our foot in the door.

4 I can't tell you how many people we  
5 denied admission to because of those types of  
6 problems that we don't have the expertise to deal  
7 with. What I don't want to do is turn somebody  
8 away and say, I can't admit you. See you later.  
9 I'd rather have the opportunity to do a hand-off to  
10 an accredited organization, a trusted agent, that  
11 type of thing, where they can get the help they  
12 possibly need.

13 The same would be said of any resident  
14 that we have in our home that, as we're weening  
15 them off as many pharmaceuticals as possible, and  
16 it's ultimately determined they have a mental  
17 health problem that we couldn't identify upfront,  
18 we need a place to take them to.

19 So, we started, you know, working with  
20 the sponsor of that money that you're talking about  
21 and started reaching out to a number of different  
22 organizations that we could potentially utilize --  
23 or that could potentially utilize those funding;  
24 that type of funding. We're starting a great  
25 partnership, and where there's one there's two, and

1 where there's two, there's three, and we're just  
2 trying to identify as many as we can near our  
3 veterans homes as possible. So --

4 And, naturally, we did pay a visit to a  
5 couple of the facilities already, which is a real  
6 eye-opener for me. In fact, those agencies  
7 actually were using -- or running off of donations.  
8 And, as General Carrelli said, we were able to send  
9 some service officers up to any veterans they had  
10 in the facility, identify the federal benefits that  
11 they had coming to them and that helped to defray  
12 the cost.

13 The bottom line is, in this particular  
14 place I'm thinking about, there's 10 people that  
15 have mental health disorders that are now properly  
16 being taken care of as a result of that -- that  
17 warm handoff and that partnership.

18 I would also say, with that same group,  
19 we started talking with them about Fairweather  
20 Lodge concept. You know, the opportunity to put  
21 three or four people in a home with some  
22 supervision, some retraining; help them get back on  
23 their feet; let them start either their own  
24 business as a group or, you know, turn them on to  
25 different employment in the area, but force them to

1 take responsibility for the home.

2 We talked with this group, this  
3 organization, probably six months ago about this in  
4 our last visit about two weeks ago. Lo and behold,  
5 we toured their facility again, and they have three  
6 of these homes set up. So, there's a lot of good  
7 things happening out there where we can start, you  
8 know, partnering with these other organizations.

9 Our ultimate goal is to maybe turn that  
10 \$750,000 into a program of record.

11 In the meantime, though, we've been  
12 working with the inner agency through the  
13 Governor's Advisory Council for Veterans Services,  
14 and specifically working on some of the other  
15 issues along with mental health that we've been  
16 talking about: Adult health day care, county home  
17 partnerships, mental health issues, those types of  
18 things. And, again, all the different departments  
19 that you could imagine should be involved are  
20 involved in those types of things.

21 I give you an example of one of the  
22 projects that they're working on now besides mental  
23 health is just ensuring that the different Area  
24 Agencies on Aging are aware that they should be  
25 doing a handoff to the county home for veterans --



1 or county directors for veterans affairs.

2 You go ahead. I'm sorry.

3 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: That's okay.

4 Can I just squeeze in one quick question? I'm  
5 sorry.

6 But having talked about all this, I  
7 always say that veterans, the military, always put  
8 their personal lives on the back burner and they go  
9 out to protect the rest of us and our freedoms and  
10 everything.

11 So my next question was going to be, in  
12 the same mode about, when they are reentering  
13 civilian life, what's the department doing to help  
14 veterans get employment and to obtain higher  
15 education?

16 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Ma'am, we  
17 have a number of transition programs. And, of  
18 course, for -- we look at it as two different ways  
19 within Pennsylvania because of our department.

20 We have almost 20,000 National  
21 Guardsmen, and our National Guardsmen -- most of  
22 our National Guardsmen have other civilian jobs.  
23 So, when we talk about them leaving the military  
24 service, there's not really a transition for them  
25 because they already work in the communities.

1           So what you're talking about, generally,  
2           is the active duty forces that may be in the state.  
3           And with Pennsylvania only having the one active  
4           duty base, essentially, at Carlisle, we do have  
5           other active duty retiring or transitioning service  
6           members that are from Pennsylvania that move back  
7           to Pennsylvania. So, there are programs set up by  
8           the active duty to help them in their transition.

9           But what we've been trying to do, and  
10          we've been partnering with the Office of  
11          Administration on this, is to essentially be able  
12          to translate a military resume. I mean, we can  
13          take anyone in uniform that's sitting up here today  
14          and give you one of our resumes. And as you look  
15          through there at the schools and some of the jobs  
16          that we've hold -- held, you'll look at it and say,  
17          I have no idea what that means, because it doesn't  
18          directly translate.

19          A lot of the things that we do don't  
20          directly translate to civilian workplace. You know  
21          what, we can be able to translate that. There are  
22          leadership skills, discipline skills, job skills  
23          that we all get in the military that do translate,  
24          but we need someone to do that.

25          So we're working with the Office of

1 Administration to make it easier for state  
2 government, state agencies and even the private  
3 sector to be able to hire people transitioning off  
4 of military duty. They have great experiences.  
5 They're great people, and they are energetic and,  
6 obviously, high level of discipline and integrity,  
7 but a lot of the problem is, you look at their  
8 resume and you really have no idea what it means.  
9 So, we're putting a lot of work into that effort to  
10 make Pennsylvania more friendly to people that are  
11 transitioning.

12 We're still relying on the active duty  
13 programs to provide that transition experience  
14 because, before people do leave--And we've seen it  
15 time and time again--they are presenting interview  
16 skills, resume writing. They're getting that kind  
17 of help from the active duty before they leave, but  
18 then they show up here and they provide a resume  
19 that is cryptic to the rest of us. So, we're  
20 trying to help them in those ways.

21 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Thank you.  
22 Thank you for all you do.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the leeway.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: We'll charge  
25 that to you the next time.

1           Representative Ward has joined us, and I  
2 want to direct that Representative Judy Ward is  
3 here.

4           Our next questioner is Representative  
5 James.

6           REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Thank you, Mr.  
7 Chairman. Did Representative Donatucci use all my  
8 time?

9           (Laughter).

10          REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Thank you,  
11 General Carrelli. It's been a pleasure to get to  
12 know you, and thank you for your 37 years of  
13 service to this country, and all the gentlemen in  
14 your panel and the folks that came with you as  
15 well.

16          There's been a common thread today in  
17 our interviews and, really, for a couple other  
18 agencies as well, and I believe it's a  
19 cost-accounting maneuver. But there's a little  
20 thing called the Statewide Radio Upgrade  
21 Initiative. And I'm curious, in your collective  
22 wisdom, if this has been a benefit to the  
23 Indiantown Gap post or any of your other local  
24 facilities?

25          ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Well, sir,

1 the new radio program that I believe you reference  
2 is, is a replacement for our emergency radios.  
3 I'll tell you, it's absolutely critical for us to  
4 be able to talk directly with other state agencies  
5 and to be able to have essentially over-the-  
6 horizon-type capability.

7 On the old systems, I can tell you I've  
8 been on the ground in Pittsburgh and Erie -- and  
9 some of our military equipment, for instance, the  
10 helicopter that do have these state radios  
11 installed, and on the ground in Erie I am able to  
12 talk to Fort Indiantown Gap.

13 You can just talk about any massive type  
14 of response that we're doing in the Commonwealth.  
15 Being able to talk outside the line of sight, and  
16 then be able to be compatible to talk with other  
17 responding agencies, PEMA, PSP, PennDOT, whoever it  
18 might be, is extremely critical for us.

19 This new radio buy, the money is in our  
20 budget. You'll see, specifically, if you look at  
21 our GGO, you'll see about a 21 percent increase.  
22 You'll say, wow, a 21 percent. That's -- that's  
23 quite a healthy cost to carry.

24 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Two-thirds of  
25 that is for this.

1           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: The radios,  
2           yes, sir. So, the radios, there's \$3.6 million in  
3           for radios this year for us. We'll be asking for  
4           another 3.6 the next year, and 4.6 the final year  
5           of the buy. That gives our department 588 radios.  
6           And I know, over the Commonwealth you'll see from  
7           other agencies that are purchasing -- I think PSP  
8           is the lead. There's also some other --

9           You know, we're just buying the radios.  
10          I think the Commonwealth also needs to purchase  
11          some of the towers and some of the other equipment  
12          that goes with this system.

13          REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: I'm glad to hear  
14          it's working. I'm on a short leash here. So, I'd  
15          like to move to a slightly different question --  
16          questioning, please.

17          I'm concerned when I hear about the  
18          Department of Defense reports that there may be  
19          another round of -- Well, it's BRAC.

20          ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: BRAC.

21          REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: It's Base, yeah,  
22          Realignment and Closure. I see there might even be  
23          \$600,000 in Department of Community and Economic  
24          Development's budget to look at bases in  
25          Pennsylvania. Can you comment on that, please?

1           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir. I  
2 was at Adjunct General meetings last week in  
3 Washington D.C. One of the undersecretaries of  
4 defense came and briefed us. We directly asked him  
5 about BRAC and where -- where is the department on  
6 that. And the services are still --

7           They feel there is an over -- an  
8 overextension of infrastructure within the  
9 Department of Defense, and they do want to pursue  
10 BRAC. They understand there's not much labor for  
11 it in Congress right now. It is not part of their  
12 strategy.

13           We, obviously, don't have a budget yet  
14 for '18. They have already drafted the budget for  
15 '19. It is not in '19 either. So he said, the  
16 official stance is, the Department of Defense still  
17 wants a BRAC. The earliest opportunity for them to  
18 put a line item in for BRAC would be in the FY '20  
19 budget, which would -- which, if it passed, would  
20 enact a BRAC round for '20-23.

21           So, if the Department of Defense did get  
22 their way, the earliest we would see the actual  
23 BRAC would be '20-23.

24           REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: As you know, Oil  
25 City experienced just such a --

1           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.

2           REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: -- realignment  
3 situation, and it was not without pain.

4           Thank you very much. That's all my  
5 questions for this afternoon.

6           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.

7 Thank you.

8           REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Thank you,  
9 Mr. Chairman.

10           MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:  
11 Representative Bullock.

12           REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you,  
13 Mr. Chairman.

14           Good afternoon, gentlemen.

15           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Good  
16 afternoon, ma'am.

17           REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Last year, the  
18 fine men and women of our National Guard were  
19 deployed seven times to respond to emergencies  
20 throughout our country, including three major  
21 hurricanes in Houston, Florida and Puerto Rico.  
22 This number of deployment was higher than in  
23 previous years.

24           Could you share with us whether you  
25 believe, given the increase in the number of these



1 kinds of national emergencies and whether  
2 emergencies should -- do you need additional  
3 resources to staff and to -- to -- to handle these  
4 unusual number of deployments both last year and  
5 possibly in the future?

6 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Thank you  
7 for the question, ma'am.

8 Of course, we are spoiled here in  
9 Pennsylvania when we look at the size of our  
10 National Guard. We have the third largest in the  
11 country. So Pennsylvania is resource rich as far  
12 as military capability, and we use those same  
13 military capabilities. We use that same equipment  
14 that we would go to war with to use in these  
15 natural disasters, and the nation did rely heavily  
16 on Pennsylvania for these.

17 But we're well-equipped and well-trained  
18 federally, which makes us well-prepared for that.  
19 And I'll tell you, our forces were incredible the  
20 way they responded and very selfishly, and in many  
21 cases volunteered to go.

22 You would think that in a case of a  
23 hurricane, when you hear that these forces are  
24 going to be needed, that we would be calling people  
25 out of the blue and they would be surprised by that

1 phone call in the middle of the night saying, hey,  
2 we need you to pack your bag and come up because I  
3 need you to go to Texas; I need you to go to  
4 Florida.

5 In many cases, we had Guardsmen calling  
6 us saying, I'm watching the news. Are we going?  
7 I'm ready to go. So, the men and women we have in  
8 today's Guard are absolutely phenomenal in their  
9 dedication to -- to this mission.

10 As far as the funding for that goes,  
11 initially, we take a lot of that out of hide, the  
12 resource-wise, but we get paid back by the states  
13 that we respond to. Certainly, if it's a response  
14 here in Pennsylvania, right on our home turf, we're  
15 bearing the brunt of those resources. The money is  
16 coming from the Commonwealth to go to those  
17 resources.

18 But when we respond to out-of-state  
19 events, we will -- we will get reimbursed. Now, it  
20 is a long process that the federal government will  
21 do its declaration. FEMA will have their money  
22 flow down, and it will eventually go to the state  
23 that was affected, and then they will reimburse us.  
24 We cannot get direct pay from federal government or  
25 from FEMA. That's something we're trying to change

1 in the legislation because it would certainly speed  
2 up our reimbursement if we can get direct pay, but  
3 the law does not read that way yet.

4           So, for that matter, it's not  
5 necessarily a drain on our resources. What it is a  
6 drain on, it's our Guardsmen's time. It's time  
7 away from their families. It's time away from  
8 their employers. We're worried about their state  
9 of mind, about the retention of those soldiers and  
10 those airmen that are continually getting called  
11 in. And our federal deployment ops tempo is higher  
12 than it's been, and our disaster response tempo has  
13 high as well.

14           And this year, we hope it was just an  
15 anomaly with the hurricanes. We don't really  
16 usually see that many of those in a row. But we're  
17 worried about the wear and tear on our people.

18           The other thing I can mention, which  
19 would be near and dear to the subject of this  
20 hearing, part of our GGO account, a lot of times  
21 our state employees get overlooked. We have an  
22 army of state employees that are working with us at  
23 the department that are doing all of this  
24 reimbursement work; that every time that we have a  
25 response out for a snowstorm; we're going to Erie;

1 we're going to Texas; we are going to Puerto Rico;  
2 we're going to the Virgin Islands, there's hundreds  
3 and hundreds of man hours that they do. And that  
4 mainly is on the shoulders of our Budget Office and  
5 Administration. They all have regular state jobs.  
6 They all have regular oppor -- things that they  
7 have to do, and this is all in addition to that.

8 So, when it comes time to talk about  
9 complement; when it comes time to talk about our  
10 staffing, these are the people that we need to make  
11 all of this work. So, if you talk about  
12 resourcing, they are absolutely critical to our  
13 success. And then, it's really on the backs of our  
14 Guardsmen that -- the rest of it.

15 Hopefully, we can continue programs like  
16 the Education Assistance Program to pay for their  
17 school if they're a member of the National Guard.  
18 These are the perks. These are the things that a  
19 lot young people join the National Guard to get.  
20 So, hopefully we can continue programs like that  
21 which motivate people to stay in the Guard.

22 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you.

23 You mentioned your staffing. If you  
24 don't have those numbers with you, you can send  
25 them into our Chairman; if you could share the

1 diversity of your staffing; not the National Guard,  
2 but the 2,000-plus employees that work on your  
3 behalf.

4 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, ma'am.  
5 And most of those -- Almost 2,000 of those are  
6 working with the veterans homes. The people I'm  
7 talking about working these domestic operations are  
8 the -- a lot of those are in the two twenty-seven  
9 that we have in our GGO account. Yes, ma'am.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:  
11 Representative Helm.

12 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: Thank you, Mr.  
13 Chairman. Welcome.

14 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Hello,  
15 ma'am.

16 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: You talked about  
17 mental health. What specifically is being done  
18 about the veterans' suicide rate? Do you have  
19 enough funds and staff to handle whatever you're  
20 doing?

21 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Ma'am,  
22 suicide is an extremely difficult issue. In  
23 Pennsylvania, our last -- the last survey that we  
24 got from the federal government, I believe it was a  
25 2015 or a 2016 number, is that there were 311

1 veteran suicides in Pennsylvania. 311. That's  
2 almost one a day.

3 If you look at Pennsylvania's suicide  
4 rate, it's almost twice what the federal rate is.  
5 So, do we have a problem in Pennsylvania? Yes, we  
6 do.

7 We, obviously, don't have a funded  
8 program of record for suicide, but we -- A lot of  
9 the programs that General Weller talked about also  
10 go to aiding suicide counseling and mental health  
11 counseling. That is -- That is what we feel is one  
12 of the most important ways to get at this problem.  
13 We use a lot of the funds out of the Veterans Trust  
14 Fund, for instance; some of our grants to focus  
15 money in those directions. I know there are other  
16 state agency help in the Department of Health,  
17 Department of Human Services that also apply  
18 resources to this.

19 We have been working closely with the  
20 Veterans Service organizations because, one of the  
21 leading thing is, really -- You know, our veterans,  
22 if you talk to our veterans, when they served in  
23 the military and they were in uniform, there was a  
24 camaraderie. There was a battle-buddy, a wing-man  
25 attitude. I've got your back, you've got my back.

1 And when I'm having problems, I talk to you about  
2 my problems. Just having someone to discuss those.

3 We see in the National Guard, which we  
4 -- we also have a suicide problem in the National  
5 Guard. In Pennsylvania, last year we lost seven  
6 soldiers to suicide, which is seven way too many.  
7 But I can point to numerous cases of distraught  
8 soldiers who were considering suicide, but their  
9 battle buddy, the person next to them noticed the  
10 signs; noticed the Facebook page; noticed a text  
11 that seemed out of character, and that person  
12 offered their help and we were able to counteract  
13 that.

14 And that's part of what we're asking for  
15 in outreach is, we need to make the veterans know  
16 that we appreciate their service. We need to let  
17 them understand that there's benefits out there.  
18 There's people out here that are ready to help  
19 them, whatever those needs might be. And the more  
20 they can feel like they're still part of the team  
21 here in Pennsylvania, I think we can -- we can shed  
22 more awareness on that problem.

23 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: Thank you for  
24 doing what you're doing. I have one quick  
25 question.

1           Last year the Governor proposed to sell  
2 a portion of land from the grounds of the  
3 Hollidaysburg Veterans Home for over \$2 million.  
4 Was that sale completed?

5           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: No, ma'am.  
6 We completed the original -- There had to be  
7 surveying and studies done to determine what -- how  
8 much of that property we could access, so we're  
9 still going through that. And then, of course,  
10 we're going to need, I believe, legislation to make  
11 that work as well. So we have two of the veterans  
12 -- of the six veterans homes, there's two homes  
13 that we are gonna be selling property at, Southeast  
14 Veterans Center and Hollidaysburg, but those sales  
15 are not complete yet.

16           REPRESENTATIVE HELM: And when they are,  
17 the money, I hope, goes back to the military?

18           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: No, ma'am.  
19 When we sell armories, it goes back to the state  
20 Treasury Armory Fund. But I believe the veterans  
21 home property is just regular state property.

22           REPRESENTATIVE HELM: Thank you.

23           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, ma'am.

24           MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:

25 Representative Schweyer.



1                   REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Thank you,  
2 Mr. Chairman.

3                   Gentlemen, over here; the other side;  
4 the liberal side of the room. Thank you.

5                   The budget hearings really are a  
6 legislative game of Red Rover. Anyway, welcome to  
7 you all. I -- The previous member, I appreciate  
8 her bringing up the questions of veteran suicide.  
9 That's where I was going, given I've had  
10 resolutions in legislation about this very topic.  
11 I just want to kind of harken back and go to the  
12 way deep recesses of my memory from previous budget  
13 years.

14                   In previous budget years, the department  
15 has spent something like \$250,000 a year out of the  
16 Veterans Trust Fund. Not all of it has gone toward  
17 veteran suicide, but have gone to various  
18 organizations that tangentially on veteran suicide;  
19 is that correct?

20                   ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.

21                   REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay. And is  
22 that what we're planning on for next year as well?

23                   ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.

24                   REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Without our  
25 action?

1           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: We -- We  
2 have a -- we have the latitude, essentially, on our  
3 Veterans Trust Fund grants to set parameters. And  
4 this year is one of the focused parameters for  
5 Veterans Trust Fund grants is mental health, which  
6 again is related to the suicide. So we're trying  
7 to make that a focused area.

8           REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: So you're  
9 going to have latitude to be able to spend more  
10 resources of the Veterans Trust Fund?

11          ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Of the  
12 Veterans Trust Fund.

13          REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Right.

14          ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Those  
15 grants.

16          REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Which, the  
17 Veterans Trust Fund, again, for the folks back  
18 home, is basically a government-run charity that is  
19 funded by optional donations and not one nickel of  
20 it is paid for by any General Fund dollars,  
21 correct?

22          ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: To this  
23 point, yes, sir.

24          REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay.

25          ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: The initial

1 seed money was from the sale of Scotland schools.

2 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay.

3 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Since then,  
4 selling license plates, checkoffs for driver's  
5 license, car registration, et cetera.

6 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: So, in  
7 previous years, although that number may grow a  
8 little bit, in previous years we've spent about  
9 \$250,000. How many veterans do we have in the  
10 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania?

11 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: 820,000,  
12 sir.

13 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: And some  
14 studies, although it's lower here in Pennsylvania  
15 according to your information, we have all seen  
16 multiple studies that say veterans' suicide rates  
17 are upwards of 22 a day; is that correct?

18 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Sir, the  
19 current number is 20, and that's a national number.

20 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Correct. Not  
21 Pennsylvania, but national?

22 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.

23 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: So knowing  
24 that there's not something special in the water or  
25 the air of Pennsylvania, although I think all of us

1 would be good politicians and say our air and water  
2 is more special than other states, we do -- we are  
3 faced with those same challenges that veterans --  
4 our veterans, Pennsylvania veterans are faced with  
5 those same conditions that are leading to 20 to 22  
6 suicides a year in places outside of Pennsylvania.

7 So my point is, spending \$250,000 of  
8 charitable contributions for 850,000 veterans, give  
9 or take, who, in places outside of Pennsylvania,  
10 are subjected to 22 suicides a day, nationally.  
11 So, I guess what I'm saying is, that seems dumb.  
12 That seems heartless and, frankly, that seems like  
13 a complete and total rejection of our  
14 responsibility as legislators to provide you with  
15 the resources that you actually have a real program  
16 to combat what is nothing less than a national  
17 epidemic of veterans' suicides.

18 And that is my opportunity to  
19 pontificate. I'm going to continue to work with  
20 any legislator who's willing to take a brief step  
21 and actually say, maybe we need dedicated funding  
22 for you in addition to just simple charitable  
23 contributions from the good people of Pennsylvania,  
24 who are willing to step up and actually give you  
25 the resources to do the things that you need to do,

1 to make sure that our vets that are coming home  
2 with PTSD or multiple diagnoses have the resources  
3 that they need to--I don't know--not commit  
4 suicide.

5 Thank you for all your efforts,  
6 gentlemen. I appreciate it.

7 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Thank you,  
9 sir.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:  
11 Representative Delozier.

12 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Thank you,  
13 Mr. Chairman.

14 Actually, I'll continue on that line,  
15 talking about those with PTSD. The behavioral line  
16 in the budget was cut. So, going along with what  
17 was just said and the need for dedicated funding  
18 from the -- from the generous donations that are in  
19 there, we do have a dedicated line of funding for  
20 PTSD, but yet it was cut.

21 So, if I have it correctly here, the  
22 elimination of the \$750,000 appropriation to treat  
23 veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress  
24 disorder, which is one of the leading reasons for  
25 suicide, if I am correct.

1           So, my question would be, why did we cut  
2 that, then?

3           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, ma'am.  
4 The 750,000 is not a -- is not a program of record.  
5 It was a legislative add. So, don't get me wrong.  
6 We appreciate the support, and we're going to make  
7 sure that that funding goes to -- goes to great  
8 resource to get it to the people that need the  
9 help.

10           Again, the Department of Military and  
11 Veterans Affairs is not the end-all agency for  
12 mental health, for substance abuse addiction. I  
13 mean, there's other state agencies that do work in  
14 those areas.

15           So the question remains: Do we -- do we  
16 set up our own mental health program just for  
17 veterans? Do we set up our own suicide veteran  
18 program just for veterans? Or do we piggy-back on  
19 existing state programs and try to modify that  
20 program to additionally understand the unique  
21 considerations for veterans.

22           REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay.

23           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: That's the  
24 approach that we've been taking.

25           Now, if the seven fifty -- Again, we'd

1 love to have it. It's still budgetary reserve, so  
2 it hasn't been executed yet, but we're looking at  
3 some very good ways to use that money.

4 If the legislature could support an  
5 enduring fund, we would certainly be happy to work  
6 with anyone or any other department to -- to do a  
7 lasting program of record. But that seven fifty  
8 was an add that was --

9 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. So the  
10 Governor's elimination of it, in and of itself,  
11 making it just a one-time deal. So if we want to  
12 put that back in, it's on the legislator side to  
13 put that back in, if I'm understanding correctly?

14 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: That's  
15 correct. And if you want a -- Like, we don't have  
16 mental health expertise in our department. If the  
17 -- If the wants or the wishes are to get us a  
18 permanent program of record, okay, we'll discuss  
19 how we staff that. How do we tie that to existing  
20 programs that are already in existence in the  
21 state?

22 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay.

23 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: So, we would  
24 look forward to going to those discussions if --

25 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: So the 750,000

1 that was given in the past should not have been  
2 necessarily given to military and veterans affairs?  
3 It should have been gone to other programs, then,  
4 that would have been better served for our veterans  
5 or --

6 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: I can't tell  
7 you what would have happened to the money if it was  
8 given to the -- to the other agency. I think this  
9 -- this puts an emphasis that it was -- that it was  
10 to be used for veterans.

11 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Right.

12 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: So, how do  
13 you give -- And I'm not an appropriations expert.  
14 How do you give money to another agency and say,  
15 well, this is for veterans?

16 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. And I'm  
17 not arguing. It's more of a matter of issue. I  
18 just want the veterans to get their services.

19 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, ma'am.

20 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: And the  
21 ability to stop suicide and --

22 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Sure.

23 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: -- and PTSD is  
24 one of those leading --

25 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: And I would



1 love to have that conversation as to how you  
2 resource things specifically for veterans, but  
3 maybe it's in a -- in a program that has the staff  
4 and expertise to help us execute that.

5 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. And  
6 just real quick before my light changes here.

7 Coordination of services. We have here  
8 in Cumberland County in Camp Hill -- which I know  
9 is federal and mostly federal funding and  
10 everything else, that's moving into Upper Allen and  
11 Rossmoyne. We're getting high-tech.

12 So my question is, the coordination  
13 between the state and the feds and making sure our  
14 veterans get -- we're lucky that this new center  
15 that's opening will have many high-tech for rehab,  
16 as well as counseling; a lot of great services for  
17 our veterans.

18 What is the coordination, then, with our  
19 state and basically referring folks to this new  
20 center? I don't know exactly what they're going to  
21 call it, but it's in the Rossmoyne Corporate  
22 Center. So what is the coordination that will  
23 happen? Will it just be the same as usual from  
24 what's happening in Camp Hill? Now that there's  
25 expanded opportunities in this new facility, will

1 we be able to serve more veterans?

2 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Ma'am,  
3 there's essentially two ties to reach veterans.  
4 One is the county level. That's the primary level.  
5 It goes through the county office.

6 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay.

7 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: And the  
8 other is through our department. So, if that  
9 center was willing to do some sort of open house or  
10 something, we would love to be able to come to see  
11 that; bring the county affairs office as well.

12 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: And they are  
13 involved. The county is definitely involved.

14 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: To be able  
15 to see what those capabilities are, and then we can  
16 greater -- greater -- We can put that in, for  
17 instance, our registry. We have weekly mailers  
18 with all kinds of employment information and things  
19 like that.

20 We have the network of care, that  
21 website, which is area specific. We can get  
22 information for that in there as well. So, we  
23 would love to make that connection.

24 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. Great.

25 And I just add two things that have

1 already been hit on, but I adamantly support the  
2 Civil Air Patrol and their ability to do their job.  
3 We have them in our local area. And the BRAC  
4 issue, we have in our local area.

5 We have a committee, a group that meets  
6 on a regular basis. We don't want to be caught up  
7 short because Cumberland County has a tremendous  
8 presence with our military between New Cumberland  
9 and Mechanicsburg and the War College and the  
10 Carlisle Barracks. So, we would just ask that any  
11 coordination that could be had in support of that  
12 endeavor would be had.

13 So, thank you very much.

14 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, ma'am.  
15 Thank you.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR:  
17 Representative Kinsey.

18 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Thank you,  
19 Mr. Chairman.

20 Good afternoon, gentlemen. First and  
21 foremost, I want to say thank you for the work  
22 you've done, and all the men and women of this  
23 Commonwealth and of the country who been willing be  
24 put in uniform and serve.

25 Also, I want to give a shout out to my

1 staff. She happens to be a sergeant in the  
2 National Guard. Her name is Sergeant Mildred  
3 Jenkins. And I didn't know what the other part was  
4 for, but she's with the National Guard HSC 628th  
5 Aviation Support Battalion. You guys know what  
6 that is.

7 But, I just appreciate the work that  
8 she's done directly. I know she was deployed some  
9 time ago for almost a year and has come back and  
10 jumped right back into the workforce here at the  
11 Capitol. So again, I want to say thank you for --  
12 to you and all the men and women that serve.

13 We all know and recognize that the State  
14 of Pennsylvania and the country as a whole has been  
15 dealing with the opioid crisis. And we know that  
16 men and women in the Armed Forces, you guys go out  
17 and deal with things that many of us can only  
18 imagine. Or actually, can't imagine. You're out  
19 there in the forefront well-trained to handle those  
20 things.

21 But, recognizing where this country is  
22 as a whole, and recognizing that sometimes folks  
23 come back and try to find that crutch to lean on to  
24 help them get through each and every day. Speaking  
25 specifically to the opioids, do you find that they

1 are like unique or disproportion impacts on the  
2 community that the veterans come from or that they  
3 go back to.

4 Like, are we finding that veterans are  
5 leaning on the use of opioid as a crutch to help  
6 deal with, you know, maybe some of the trials and  
7 tribulations that they may have incurred while they  
8 were serving?

9 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Sir, I will  
10 tell you that, over-prescribing of opioids is a  
11 concern within the military and our veterans  
12 community as well. We have a number of people have  
13 returned with some horrific injuries and have had  
14 to have series of surgeries, multiple; you know,  
15 ongoing care for a couple of years just to get back  
16 to where they could have a semblance of a normal  
17 life; having a very difficult time then eventually  
18 trying to wean themselves off of those, so we do  
19 have cases of that.

20 When I look at the opioid epidemic and  
21 look at how many -- how many Pennsylvanians we lose  
22 every year to overdoses, I certainly see that  
23 within our forces in the National Guard, but it is  
24 a rare occurrence. We're talking barely a handful  
25 of overdose-type situations. I think maybe we had

1 one death --one, or maybe two deaths that I can  
2 recall last year within our actively serving force  
3 that were considered overdose deaths.

4 So, I don't think, overall, we're  
5 showing big numbers there.

6 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Okay.

7 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: I think our  
8 numbers are still under what the average is in  
9 Pennsylvania.

10 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Sure.

11 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: But, you do  
12 hear of instance after instance of some veterans  
13 who do have a drug problem, but it started as a  
14 legal prescription and it was just -- it was just  
15 too long for them to be on that and their bodies  
16 just could not adjust.

17 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: I know the  
18 Governor is actively leading the charge to address  
19 the opioid crisis here in the State of  
20 Pennsylvania.

21 I guess my question to you, General, is  
22 there anything else we can do as a body to support  
23 the men and women? You know, it's like one death  
24 is one too many, and then finding that folks are  
25 leaning on this opioid. That's one too many.

1           Is there anything that we can do as a  
2 legislative body to support the work that you and  
3 your staff are doing to address this crisis among  
4 the veterans?

5           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.  
6 And I think it's all about awareness. You know, we  
7 have to raise that awareness up there.

8           Pennsylvania, this is not one of the  
9 things that we want to be one of the leaders in the  
10 nation in. I think -- I think I have an issue more  
11 with spouses and children that are serving than we  
12 do with the actual members. I mean, I hear more  
13 horror stories about the overdoses and some of  
14 those types of stories from family members than we  
15 do about the actual service member.

16           So, if we're going to get after this,  
17 this is a problem for all of Pennsylvania. It is  
18 -- it is not a directed veteran's problem.

19           REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Sure.

20           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: But we are  
21 certainly affected by it, and it -- and it  
22 certainly hurts us as much as it hurts everyone  
23 else.

24           REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: So, as you  
25 talked earlier about awareness, is there anything

1 that your department is doing to maybe work with  
2 the spouses and the children to also address, like,  
3 little signals that--I don't know--like, maybe an  
4 educational piece that you might do for the family?

5 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Sure. We  
6 certainly do have the family programs and things.  
7 Most of those are centered around the unique  
8 sacrifices of family that have military service;  
9 you know, the long separations and dealing with  
10 some of the deployments, and even some of the  
11 injuries when our people return home.

12 We, of course, within the National Guard  
13 also have a counterdrug training center and we have  
14 a counterdrug program, so we help to augment the  
15 opioid fight within the Commonwealth of  
16 Pennsylvania. Now, that is fully federally funded,  
17 so you're not going to see it on any of our line  
18 items that we're discussing here in our budget.  
19 All of that money is pure federal money.

20 But, we do -- we do a lot to serve the  
21 communities. We sponsor classes for local, county,  
22 state police. We do surrounding -- We are the  
23 Northeast Counterdrug Training Center, so we do a  
24 lot of the surrounding states as well.

25 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Great. Again, I



1 just want to close by saying thanks very much for  
2 all that you and the men and women do to protect  
3 us. Thank you very much.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.

6 ACTING CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank you,  
7 Representative.

8 Next will be Representative Heffley.

9 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: Thank you, Mr.  
10 Chairman.

11 Thank you for your service and your  
12 commitment to the veterans and to our safety.

13 I wanted to just add, my district office  
14 staff, her son has just joined the National Guard  
15 and is going for the college and benefit of the  
16 college and education.

17 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: On the  
18 school money, yes, sir.

19 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: I commend him  
20 on his service as well.

21 The question I had was: The federal  
22 construction grants under the general government  
23 operations, appropriation, the funding is  
24 decreasing from 110 million down to -- from  
25 110 million down to 25 million.

1           A few years ago, the committee was out  
2 and taken a tour of Fort Indiantown Gap and all the  
3 training. I know you bring people in from all over  
4 the world to train there in the simulators. And  
5 just some of it -- the high-tech infrastructure and  
6 everything, do you see any of that decrease in  
7 funding compromising anything that you're going to  
8 be doing and going forward as far as maintaining  
9 and being -- you know, continue to upgrade the  
10 training techniques and what's needed as far as the  
11 new technologies?

12           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.  
13 And I understand the confusion when you look at it  
14 the way it is stated on the paper. That is not  
15 actually federal funding. That is spending  
16 authorization. So, we're lowering the  
17 authorization.

18           We still compete across the country for  
19 military construction dollars in order to be able  
20 to upgrade our facilities; build new facilities.  
21 The early 2000s, essentially, were boon years for  
22 military construction in Pennsylvania with the  
23 advent of the striker barricade that came here. It  
24 brought billions of dollars of new construction and  
25 new equipment. We had to modify our training

1 centers to be able to fit that new equipment.

2 So, we got used to having very high  
3 spending authorizations because there were lots of  
4 projects in Pennsylvania. Now that that major move  
5 is essentially over and we've replaced a number of  
6 new armories, we're coming back down to where our  
7 normal spending would be. And that's why we're  
8 lowering those spending authorization to be  
9 essentially where we would be for normal spending.

10 We do not anticipate -- We're going to  
11 be able to -- Hopefully, we will favorably compete  
12 and be able to build a new armory, a new training  
13 center here and there. We've been able to ribbon  
14 cut, essentially, maybe two major facilities a  
15 year. If you've been out to Fort Indiantown Gap,  
16 17 and a half thousand acres, 734 buildings just on  
17 the Gap, 200 miles of road, 300 miles of utilities  
18 and piping and sewer lines. We have our own sewer  
19 plant.

20 We trained 132,000 people last year at  
21 Fort Indiantown Gap; the busiest National Guard  
22 training center in the country. A lot of federal  
23 money coming in.

24 But those construction funds you're  
25 talking about, that's spending authorization.

1 That's not gonna limit our ability to continue to  
2 compete for projects, but it's just a recognition  
3 of the boon years essentially being over with all  
4 the big projects being done.

5 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: Thank you. And  
6 I just wanted to thank you for last June, or I  
7 think it was May of last year we had done an event  
8 here. I sponsored a resolution recognizing Mission  
9 22. We had a display done by a young man from the  
10 122nd District who fell victim to PTSD and had  
11 committed suicide and his family was here, and you  
12 spoke very eloquently. I think we did a couple  
13 pushups as well that day.

14 I thank you and all the work you do. My  
15 daughter this past year had attended the legion  
16 state -- I think it is the state police camp that  
17 they do in --

18 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.  
19 Yes, sir.

20 REPRESENTATIVE HEFFLEY: -- with the  
21 National Guard and very impressed with all the  
22 members of the National Guard that was there and  
23 given their time. Keep up the good work. It's  
24 something that all Pennsylvanians should be proud  
25 for the National Guard and the service --

1                   ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Thank you,  
2                   sir. And I appreciate that. I take your example  
3                   of joining the Guard for school money. We have  
4                   that time and time again. That is the life blood  
5                   to our recruiting efforts here in the State of  
6                   Pennsylvania.

7                   There are some states out there that do  
8                   not have a program like that, and they are  
9                   extremely jealous and no one can compete like that.  
10                  It's getting harder and harder to recruit. The  
11                  National Guard service is not easy. It's harder  
12                  than it was three years ago, five years ago, 10  
13                  years ago.

14                  The same with active duty service.  
15                  We're asking more and more of our people and our  
16                  families. So, to be able to compete with programs  
17                  like that are the life blood to being able to get  
18                  good motivated people in the National Guard.

19                  Thank you.

20                  ACTING CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank you.

21                  As always has been the case, we allow  
22                  our related standing committee Chairmen an  
23                  opportunity to ask some questions. So we'll start  
24                  with Chairman Barrar.

25                  CHAIRMAN BARRAR: Thank you, General.

1 Good to see you again today.

2 As you can tell, mental health is a  
3 very, very important topic here with the members.  
4 Probably, I guess half the members here had  
5 mentioned -- touched on the access to mental health  
6 care. There is the funding, the \$750,000 this  
7 year, and that won't be put in the budget. The  
8 following year I think that's a concern to us.

9 But I think the question we all have to  
10 ask here is, we're taking state resources, putting  
11 this into the PTSD programs and mental health  
12 program. Is the federal government doing enough to  
13 help our veterans with PTSD and the suicide rate?  
14 Or, is this something that's falling on the states  
15 to handle?

16 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Sir, I think  
17 the federal government can always do more, and they  
18 are -- they are also riding this roller coaster of  
19 funding, up and down, up and down. And on the  
20 federal side, of course, the continuing resolution  
21 after continuing resolution also complicates how we  
22 can spend federal money.

23 Federal government -- And I think if you  
24 look at Secretary Shulkin and the way he's trying  
25 to transform the federal V.A. these days, he is

1 trying to be more flexible. He's trying to get out  
2 of the, just the brick-and-mortar mentality that if  
3 you need help you have to go to the federal V.A.  
4 And he's trying to transform it. But, you know,  
5 that transformation is late to need. We needed to  
6 do that 10 years ago. So, I believe they're moving  
7 in the right direction to try and make it more  
8 flexible.

9           Again, I see stuff like the adult day  
10 care that was mentioned earlier. That's an  
11 initiative by them that they're willing to  
12 compensate the states for if we will do. So you're  
13 seeing moves by the federal V.A. where they're  
14 trying to push money to the state if the state is  
15 willing to take advantage of it. So, that's  
16 encouraging to me that they're moving towards  
17 programs.

18           I think it is late to need, but we need  
19 to be able to respond to those. Of course, these  
20 programs generally are gonna come with some sort of  
21 state share; not necessarily on the adult day care  
22 piece, a share per se. But, if we need the space  
23 and we have to do some sort of construction  
24 project, there will be a state share to that.

25           If the per diem piece that they're

1 allotting us doesn't cover the full cost of care,  
2 well, the state will have to make up the  
3 difference, so there are some state pieces to that.  
4 So that's the challenges. When the federal  
5 government make those opportunities available, that  
6 we're in a place within the manning of the  
7 department and the budgetary concerns that we can  
8 take advantage of that.

9 CHAIRMAN BARRAR: Any adult day care  
10 program, I'm so glad to see us embracing that. It  
11 means a lot to us.

12 This year in your GGO, your government  
13 operations here, you're probably -- I think the  
14 Governor's requesting almost \$5 million more. Will  
15 that allow you to complete part of the mission last  
16 year that you had? Will it allow you to complete  
17 some of those projects that you add on that I think  
18 you put on hold last year? Your department took a  
19 pretty good cut last year in the budget.

20 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.

21 Unfortunately, most of that -- As was  
22 discussed earlier, most of that new money has gone  
23 to the emergency radios. We also have cost to  
24 carry and salaries and some of the benefit rates  
25 and things like that that are in there.



1           It will allow us to make some purchases  
2 which were delayed, but, essentially, there's no  
3 new major initiatives in that money other than the  
4 radios.

5           CHAIRMAN BARRAR: Are you falling behind  
6 on your maintenance and construction projects?

7           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: I believe --  
8 You know, we certainly could -- If you look, we  
9 have facilities that need to be upgraded. A lot of  
10 that is a federal responsibility to where there's a  
11 state share for. Most of our problem right now is  
12 getting the federal support for that.

13           And then, I don't -- I don't think to  
14 this point we've lost the project because we could  
15 not produce the state share. So, we're doing good  
16 on the state side, but we do need more support from  
17 the federal government on upgrading some of these  
18 facilities.

19           CHAIRMAN BARRAR: We had spoken, I guess  
20 it was probably sometime last year, that there was  
21 an opportunity within the, um, additional money  
22 could come from the DOD that would allow us to  
23 expand the ranks of our National Guard. If that  
24 happens, is that going to add new missions to the  
25 National Guard, or is it gonna be an expansion of

1 what we're -- the missions we're currently involved  
2 in?

3 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Sir, that  
4 would depend on how the Army and -- essentially  
5 we're looking at it, the Air is slow steady growth  
6 right now. The numbers, we are seeing an increase  
7 of, I believe, 25 or 30 bodies in the Air Guard  
8 this year. So we're seeing slow, steady growth in  
9 the Air Guard.

10 On the Army said, we do have the  
11 potential for gaining hundreds of more soldiers;  
12 you know, four to 600, the range, but none of that  
13 has been worked out yet. The Guard Bureau is  
14 looking. There are states that cannot recruit to  
15 their four structures they have now, and the  
16 Director of the Army Guard has put pressure on the  
17 states to essentially pull four structure away from  
18 states that can't recruit and give it to states  
19 that have proven that they can fill those spots.  
20 We're hoping to be identified as one of those fill  
21 states and -- and be able to take advantage of  
22 that. But, that's something that's going to be  
23 worked out in the next probably a year.

24 CHAIRMAN BARRAR: One last request if  
25 I'm allowed. The expansion, you're getting an

1 increase in the Tuition Assistance Program. Is  
2 that -- In the past there has been lapsing funds in  
3 that program. Are we using all those funds up  
4 today or is this --

5 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.  
6 We entered a point at the end of last spring where  
7 we actually thought we had run out, and we were  
8 gonna have to turn down some Guardsmen, which I  
9 didn't want to do.

10 We went to the Governor's office. They  
11 made a pledge that they would find the money to be  
12 able to continue. We were under a hundred thousand  
13 dollars left in the program, which, if you remember  
14 four or five years ago, we had three, four,  
15 \$5 million carrying over. So that's been totally  
16 exhausted.

17 We were able -- We had some students  
18 that enrolled but later dropped out. So we ended  
19 up, actually do just barely making it last year,  
20 and we anticipate a little higher cost this year.  
21 That's why we raised the amount slightly; another  
22 \$500,000, I believe, from 12 and a half to  
23 \$13 million.

24 But with our increased deployments this  
25 year -- We have a lot more deployments this year.

1 And usually when our deployments go up, our  
2 enrollment goes down. So we feel that's a good  
3 number for us this year, that 13-million-dollar  
4 number.

5 CHAIRMAN BARRAR: Great. I thank you  
6 for your willingness to work with us.

7 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: Thank you,  
8 Mr. Chairman. Chairman Sainato.

9 CHAIRMAN SAINATO: Thank you,  
10 Mr. Chairman.

11 Thank each and every one of you for your  
12 service. It's been a pleasure working with many of  
13 you for the past seven years with the Veterans  
14 Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee. I  
15 think we've really developed a great relationship  
16 with each and every one of you. Chairman Barrar  
17 asked great questions, and I just want to follow  
18 up.

19 Aging veterans, many of the Vietnam War  
20 veterans are reaching that retirement age. What  
21 effect will that have on, like, the veterans' home,  
22 on the programs that are out there? Are we  
23 preparing for this? Is there something that we can  
24 do?

25 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir,

1 and that's a great question. I think a lot of  
2 people, they look at the overall veterans  
3 population in Pennsylvania and they say, four years  
4 ago we were -- four or five years ago we were at a  
5 million veterans. Then we were 900,000. Now we're  
6 below 800,000.

7           Those numbers are shrinking. We're  
8 probably not gonna have a need for a lot of these  
9 services in a couple more years because the number  
10 of veterans are going away.

11           While the overall number of veterans is  
12 shrinking, the age of our veterans is rapidly going  
13 up. So, we're seeing an increased need  
14 particularly for mental health services;  
15 particularly for the number of very needy veterans  
16 that have to go in the home. And let's face it.  
17 We're not designed in our veterans homes to house  
18 820,000, but not all of our veterans are in that  
19 situation where they need that help.

20           We're talking about the lower number of  
21 percentage of veterans. The federal V.A. says,  
22 they quote a number of 18,000 veterans in  
23 Pennsylvania that are a hundred percent disabled  
24 according to the federal V.A. They're our needy  
25 most veterans that we know about. I'm sure there

1 are other ones out there that would qualify for a  
2 hundred percent disability that we don't know about  
3 yet because they're not registered; they're not  
4 filed. But, those are the ones that we're really  
5 targeting.

6 And I think as our veterans' population  
7 ages, essentially now, 75 to 80 percent of our  
8 veterans in Pennsylvania are over 50 years old.  
9 So, as that age continues to climb, we are going to  
10 see an increased need for care and care in those  
11 facilities.

12 Again, if through the outreach we're  
13 able to connect more veterans to benefits,  
14 hopefully, we can head that off so that we don't  
15 get as many people that get into such dire straits  
16 that they have to be in a home; they have no other  
17 choice.

18 CHAIRMAN SAINATO: To follow up even on  
19 that, when you look at the VSO members that come to  
20 my office, okay, they come once a month. They do  
21 an outstanding job. It's a great program. That's  
22 something we want to expand on, and I agree a  
23 hundred percent what you're saying. They need to  
24 be compensated. They need to make --

25 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.

1                   CHAIRMAN SAINATO: -- a wage, because we  
2 don't want to lose these -- They're very good. But  
3 each month there's always people waiting in line to  
4 see them and going back. They are aging. Now they  
5 have needs. They want to know what's out there.

6                   And, you know -- I just think that, you  
7 know, it's showing up just with what I've seen.  
8 I've had the officer for probably four or  
9 five years now. The demand is going up. It's not  
10 going down.

11                   ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.  
12 And that's a great point. And we thank you for  
13 your office and those that also participate. Bring  
14 a VSO to your district offices. Set up once a  
15 month for a couple hours, that you'll register  
16 veterans.

17                   Do a veterans' appreciation event.  
18 Invite any of us to come and speak. We've done  
19 many of your events already. Those are  
20 opportunities for us to bring the outreach van out;  
21 to bring VSOs out; get people registered. It's not  
22 just our older veterans. If we could just get  
23 every one of our youngest veterans, our newly  
24 minted veterans to be registered, they're  
25 registered for the rest of their life.

1           So, we have to get ahead of the ball on  
2 that and not be in the situation where we are  
3 today; trying to register such a great number of  
4 people that are already in their 80s, and we're  
5 just registering them now for the first time.

6           CHAIRMAN SAINATO: Thank you very much  
7 and keep up the great work each and every one of  
8 you. Thank you for your service.

9           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Thank you  
10 for your support, sir.

11          ACTING CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank you.

12          We'll go to Chairman Markosek for  
13 closing comments.

14          MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Thank you.  
15 And, General, and gentlemen, thank you very much  
16 for your testimony today. It's very interesting.

17          I think the one thing that folks  
18 watching this will understand is, you do so much  
19 more than what most people think you do. You're  
20 really involved in the great fabric of our  
21 community here. So I want to thank you for that.  
22 You did an excellent job of your presentation.  
23 Thank you.

24          ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Thank you,  
25 sir. We appreciate your support.



1           To Representative Boback, ma'am, one of  
2           the numbers I gave you was incorrect and it was  
3           bugging me so I looked it up. I think I told you  
4           our Medicare Part D was three and a half million.  
5           It's actually six and a half. So six and a half  
6           for Part D; almost a million, 900,000 for our PACE  
7           and our EVR is 16 and a half million. It was  
8           bugging me. I just wanted to get the record  
9           straight.

10           ACTING CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: And I will echo  
11           Chairman Markosek's comments. Major General, and  
12           all the Generals, thank you so much for your  
13           service, and thank you for spending the afternoon  
14           with us and enlightening us.

15           For the members' edification, the  
16           committee will reconvene tomorrow morning at  
17           10 o'clock. We'll have a hearing on combatting the  
18           opioid crisis.

19           With that, we're adjourned. Thank you.

20           ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Thank you,  
21           sir.

22           (Whereupon, the Appropriations Committee  
23           concluded).

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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