

# VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, ILLINOIS

Matthew S. Kasten, Superintendent



## Annual Report Fiscal Year 2025

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December 2025

Honorable Governor J.B. Pritzker  
207 State House  
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker,

It is my honor to present the annual report of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Washington County, Illinois, as required under Chapter 330, Part 45, Section 8 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes.

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Washington County provides essential support and services to the military Veterans who have served in the United States Armed Forces and received a discharge other than dishonorable. The Commission also extends fair and necessary assistance to the families of Veterans—both living and deceased—ensuring they receive the resources and support they need.

Fiscal Year 2025 marks the official launch of our Commission’s “boots on ground” mission to serve Washington County’s Veterans, following my hiring in October. Since that time, we have directly engaged with 47 Veterans across the county, initiated 13 VA claims, assisted Veterans with admission and relocation to the Illinois Veterans Home at Anna, supported families of deceased Veterans in properly preparing military dress uniforms for memorial observances, and submitted four referrals to other county VACs. All of this has been completed while also fulfilling the required training through the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

We are grateful for your continued and steadfast support of the Veterans of Washington County. Your commitment to those who have served is deeply appreciated. Should you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Very respectfully,



**Matthew S. Kastan**  
Superintendent  
Veterans Assistance Commission of Washington County

# Veterans Assistance Commission of Washington County

## Delegates and Alternates 2025

Larry Harrison, Chairman, Alternate Delegate, American Legion Post 110

Lance Carr, Vice Chairman, Delegate, American Legion Post 233

Vanessa McCollum, Secretary/Treasurer, Delegate, American Legion Post 110

Steve Elliott, Delegate, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5596

Kevin Pierce, Alternate Delegate, American Legion Post 233

Ken Storck, Alternate Delegate, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5596

### **American Legion John C. Atchison Post 110**

533 E. Legion Drive  
Nashville, IL 62263  
(618) 327-8324

### **American Legion Post 233**

205 N Hanover St  
Okawville, IL 62271  
(618) 243-6545

### **Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5596**

205 N Hanover St  
Okawville, IL 62271  
(618) 243-6545

## Our Mission

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Washington County (VACWC) is an independent, veteran-led commission dedicated to promoting the welfare of military Veterans and their families. Our mission is to serve as a central resource for all Veteran organizations in the county and to provide support with VA claims and related services referred to the Commission by member organizations and the community.

The VACWC maintains general oversight of the distribution of relief and supplies that may be appropriated for the benefit of Veterans and their families. Our services include, but are not limited to:

1. Access to all local, state, and federal Veteran resources and connections
2. Enrollment assistance for the VA health care system
3. Filing VA disability compensation claims for service-connected conditions
4. Applying for VA disability pensions for wartime Veterans and surviving spouses
5. Financial assistance for eligible Veterans and dependents for basic needs
6. Guidance on VA educational benefits, including the GI Bill
7. Burial and memorial benefits, including grave markers
8. Retrieval of military service records
9. Referrals to other programs and services, including those offered by the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) and other Washington County agencies

Although the VACWC officially began offering services in October of this year, the work that made this possible began long before. The Commission members and the three Veterans Service Organizations in Washington County dedicated more than a year of effort to ensure the successful establishment of this vital resource. Thanks to these efforts, Veterans in Washington County have access to the assistance, connections, and support they need to improve their quality of life, strengthen their financial stability, and receive the health care and benefits they have earned.

## Financial Assistance

While no financial assistance requests have been submitted as of Fiscal Year 2025, the Veterans Assistance Commission of Washington County stands ready to provide financial support to eligible Veterans throughout the county. This assistance may include rental or mortgage aid, utility payments, support for medically indigent Veterans, emergency shelter for homeless Veterans, and assistance for those at risk of homelessness or displaced by natural disasters.

## Outlook For Fiscal Year 2026

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Washington County encountered several challenges during Fiscal Year 2025. Despite these obstacles, the Commission successfully navigated the initiation, start-up, and implementation of the VACWC while simultaneously working to increase public awareness and understanding of why this resource is so essential to our community.

During this period, I was hired as Superintendent, we established a physical office within the Washington County Courthouse, completed all required training, and began assisting local Veterans. To me, this represents the heart and soul of the Veterans Assistance Commission's mission: **to help**. That mission may be simple in concept, but its impact is profound.

However, even basic assistance requires adequate resources. Based on the sustained growth and increasing workload experienced over the past several months, we anticipate the need for additional funding in Fiscal Year 2026. Washington County's Veteran population is aging, and an increasing number of Veterans now require more hands-on, individualized assistance. This demographic shift will continue to drive higher demand for VACWC services.

Like many counties across Illinois, Washington County is experiencing ongoing funding challenges. However, our situation is uniquely affected by the County's population size and the absence of large urban centers, both of which directly limit the funding available to the Veterans Assistance Commission of Washington County. While the County currently levies the statutory minimum of 0.02% of Equalized Assessed Value (EAV), this level of funding is insufficient to operate the Commission meeting the "just and necessary" standard stated in the statute or to adequately meet the growing and increasingly complex needs of our local Veterans and their families.

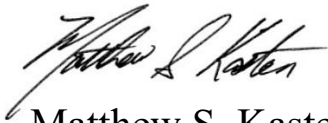
It is my hope that an equitable and sustainable solution can be identified for smaller counties across the State of Illinois to ensure Veterans receive consistent and reliable support regardless of where they reside. The VACWC is aware of, and actively tracking, pending legislation in the Illinois General Assembly that seeks to address these funding disparities. Should such legislation be enacted, it could provide meaningful relief to smaller counties and help stabilize Veterans services statewide. Until that time, continued evaluation of local funding mechanisms remains necessary to ensure the VACWC can fulfill its statutory obligations and continue providing essential assistance to Washington County Veterans.

We remain committed to working closely with the community and stand prepared to support our most vulnerable brothers and sisters in arms. We deeply appreciate your commitment and resolve

to continue caring for the Veterans who willingly raised their hands and swore an oath to the Constitution—and to all of us.

It is both our task and our privilege to honor that allegiance by serving the honorable men and women of the State of Illinois and Washington County who have given so much. Thank you for your time.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew S. Kasten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "S".

**Matthew S. Kasten**

Superintendent

101 E. St. Louis St

Office 203

Nashville, IL 62263

618-327-4800 ext 178