

April 1, 2023

# MONTANA VETERANS AFFAIRS

## Spring 2023 Newsletter



### A Message from the Administrator

To all of our dedicated Board members, we have been working hard during this legislative session . We have several bills brought forward that would impact our veterans and their family members, both financially and policy based. I have listed a few pieces of legislation that directly impact our veterans, and I encourage everyone to review the bills at [leg.mt.gov](http://leg.mt.gov).

These bills include but not limited to:

- ⇒ HB 81—Create a new state veterans' cemetery
- ⇒ HB 298—Revise board of veterans affairs law
- ⇒ HB 663—Establish a Montana veterans hall of fame
- ⇒ HB 669—Revise laws related to allocation of marijuana tax revenues
- ⇒ HB 852—Provide for recognition of family members of deceased veterans
- ⇒ HB 264—Establishing a decennial veterans long-term care needs study
- ⇒ HB 223—Revising the disabled vet property tax assistance
- ⇒ SB 442—Allow marijuana tax revenue...

This is not a complete list, but again, I encourage you to read through the current legislation and listen to the testimonies. Thank you again for all you do!

**Montana Veterans Affairs • P.O. Box 4789, Fort Harrison, MT 59636 • (406) 324-3742**

## 2023 Flag Holidays:

The flag should be displayed from sunrise to sunset every day, but especially on these holidays.

**January 1** – New Year’s Day

**January 16**– Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

**January 20** – Inauguration Day

**February 12** – Lincoln’s Birthday

**February 20** – President’s Day

**February 20** – Washington’s Birthday

**March 29** - National Vietnam War Veteran’s Day

**April 9** – Easter Sunday

**May 4** – Fire Fighters Memorial Day

**May 14** – Mother’s Day

**May 15** – Peace Officer’s Memorial Day (half mast)

**May 29** – Memorial Day (half mast until noon)

**June 14** – Flag Day

**June 18** – Father’s Day

**June 24** – Armed Forces Day

**July 4** – Independence Day

**July 27** – Korean War Veterans Day

**September 4** – Labor Day

**September 11** – Patriot Day (half mast)

**September 15** - National POW/MIA Recognition Day

**September 17** – Constitution Day

**September 24** – Gold Star Mother’s Day

**October 9** – Indigenous Peoples’ Day

**October 27** – Navy Day

**November 11** – Veteran’s Day

**November 23** – Thanksgiving Day

**December 7**– Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (half mast)

**December 25** – Christmas Day

- **State Birthdays and Holidays**
- **All Election Days**
- **Other days proclaimed by the U.S. President or State Governor**

\*Source: [starspangledflags.com/flag-holidays](http://starspangledflags.com/flag-holidays)

## Next Board Meeting

- ▶ June 7, 2023 at 2:00 p.m.
- ▶ In-Person
- ▶ Fort Harrison
- ▶ DMA Conference Room #112
- ▶ Agenda will be emailed to board members in May 2023

Voting Members attending in-person can request hotel rooms and mileage reimbursement by contacting MVADs Budget Analyst, at [taryn.phillips@mt.gov](mailto:taryn.phillips@mt.gov).

## Fort Harrison Memorial Day Ceremony

Fort Harrison’s Memorial Day Ceremony will be held on May 30th at 1:00 p.m. at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery. The American Legion will be hosting this ceremony along side Montana Veteran Affairs Division.

Volunteers are needed to place flags on every veterans grave in Fort Harrison on May 25th at 3:30 p.m. Volunteers will also be needed to help pick up flags and sort through broken ones on June 2nd at 8:00 a.m.

For more information, call 406-324-3742.

## Brochures!

- ▶ Montana Veteran Affairs, Informational Aid
- ▶ Montana State Veteran Cemeteries, Informational Aid
  - ▶ Montana Veterans Cemetery Program

Call (406) 324-3742 to get mailed a brochure

or

Pick up a brochure from:

Montana Veterans Affairs

1956 Mt. Majo, Office 105

Fort Harrison, MT 59636

## Meet one of MVADs Veteran Service Officers

### Krystelle Baranyai, Veteran Service Officer Supervisor, Helena Office



“I graduated from Montana State University – Northern in Havre, MT with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. There I started at Montana Veteran Affairs Division in a work study position until 2012. Shortly after, I moved to Fort Collins, CO and continued my education at Colorado State University. There I interned at Volunteers of America – Support Services for Veteran Families and earned my Bachelor of Social Work in 2015. I returned to Montana in 2016 upon accepting a position as a Veteran Service Officer with Montana Veteran Affairs Division in Helena and later became an office Supervisor in 2021.

I grew up in Havre, MT, where all my family still resides. I pursued Veteran Services because of my family and their military background. Specifically, my father who is a Vietnam Veteran and my older brother, both of whom served in the Marines. I am passionate about working with Veterans and in my free time I enjoy spending time at home with my dog, bingeing TV shows, learning new things, and hiking.”



## Meet one of MVADs Cemetery Employees

**Jeremy Millert, Cemetery Manager, Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery**



“My name is Jeremy Millert, and I was born and raised in Northern California on our family orchard and dairy homestead. I graduated High School in 2012 and right after I enrolled myself into Shasta Community College where I played baseball, met my future wife, and graduated with my Associates degree in History. After graduating I continued at Southern Oregon University, where I graduated with a Bachelors in Science in Outdoor Adventure Leadership. During this time of my life, I got married to my wife then her and I decided to move to Montana then to Idaho. While living in Rathdrum, Idaho I worked as the Parks Supervisor for the City's Parks and Recreation Department. This job shaped me as a person and really helped me find a niche in the things I truly enjoy doing. I realized I really enjoy working outside and with people. After my wife and I had our second baby while living in Rathdrum we then decided it was time to make the jump back over to Montana for good. It was time to be closer to friends

and family. While our two young children are our main priority, we do enjoy spending time outdoors, hiking, camping, playing slowpitch softball, fishing, playing disc golf and spending time together as a family. We do have a family dog as well and her name is Penny.

Currently, I am working as the Cemetery Manager for the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula, Montana. This September will mark 2 years in this position. I have found this position to be very rewarding as I am able to help families through one of the hardest times of their lives. I am happy to be a part of the Montana Veterans Affairs Division and look forward to giving back to our Military families in such an honorable way.”

**Veterans Benefits Office Contact Info**

**Belgrade**  
 (406) 388-4601  
 MVADBelgrade@mt.gov

**Billings**  
 (406) 656-0584  
 MVADBillings@mt.gov

**Butte**  
 (406) 533-0910  
 MVADButte@mt.gov

**Great Falls**  
 (406) 452-2265  
 MVADGreatFalls@mt.gov

**Havre**  
 (406) 265-4225  
 MVADHavre@mt.gov

**Helena**  
 (406) 495-2080  
 MVADHelena@mt.gov

**Kalispell**  
 (406) 755-3795  
 MVADKalispell@mt.gov

**Miles City**  
 (406) 232-1203  
 MVADMilesCity@mt.gov

**Missoula**  
 (406) 542-2501  
 MVADMissoula@mt.gov

## Upcoming Events

- ⇒ **May 20th : Heroes at Home at the Rocky Mountain Museum in Missoula 09:00-15:00**
- ⇒ **Memorial Day Ceremonies at State Veterans Cemeteries**
  - **Fort Harrison : May 30th 13:00**
  - **Missoula : May 29th 12:00**
- ⇒ **June 15th : VFW State Convention at the Grouse Mountain Lodge in Whitefish 09:00**
- ⇒ **June 22nd : The Wall That Heals Opening Ceremony at Glacier High School in Kalispell 10:00**
- ⇒ **June 23rd : American Legion State Convention at the Yogo Inn in Lewistown 09:00**

## Meet One of the Board Members

### Michael A. Stone, Chairman



Michael retired from active duty the United States Army at the rank of Colonel in August 2006 and from the State of Montana as a STEM Educator in May of 2014. In March 2015, Michael accepted a position at Salish Kootenai College in Pablo, Montana, to work on the NASA STEM Educator Professional Development Collaborative project until August of 2018. Michael is also a certified QPR (Question-Persuade-Refer) Gatekeeper Trainer in Suicide Prevention as member of the Veterans Coalition of North West Montana. Michael received his Bachelor of Arts in Education at the University of Montana in Missoula, Montana, and a Masters in General School Administration at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana.

### MVAD Vacancies

- ▶ **Veteran Service Officer—Helena, MT**

## **Welcome MVADs New Employees**

### ***Employees Hired in 2022***

- **Veteran Service Officer, Belgrade Office, Eric Beal, Hired on March 12, 2022**
- **Landscape Technician, Fort Harrison Cemetery, Clinton Williams, Hired on April 11, 2022**
- **Administrative Assistant, Headquarters in Fort Harrison, Karen Grindstaff, Hired on June 22, 2022**
- **Landscape Technician, Miles City Cemetery, Michael Cummins, Hired on July 18, 2022**
- **Veteran Service Officer, Missoula Office, Justin Kendhammer, Hired on July 18, 2022**

## Congratulations!

Kara Blom-Santucci, Veteran Service Officer, located in Helena has recently accepted an IT Systems Support 2 position with the Department of Military Affairs. Kara is currently attending Western Governors University to obtain a Bachelors in Science in Cybersecurity and Information Assurance. Kara served in the United States Navy prior to her employment at MVAD. Her past experience and education has prepared her to excel in the IT position. Although MVAD is sad to lose a valuable employee, we gain an excellent IT Support employee through DMA. Join us in congratulating her and wishing her the best in her new position.

## Burial Equity for Guards and Reserves Act of 2021

“This bill prohibits the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from establishing a condition for a cemetery grant that restricts the ability of a state to inter certain reservists (or their spouses and children) at a state-owned veterans' cemetery solely because such individuals are ineligible for burial in an open national cemetery.

Specifically, as a condition for grants, the VA cannot restrict the ability of a state to inter a

- member of a reserve component whose service was terminated under honorable conditions;
- member of the Army National Guard or Air National Guard whose service was terminated under honorable conditions;
- member of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps of the Army, Navy, or Air Force who died under honorable conditions while a member; and
- spouse, minor child, or unmarried adult child of any member described above.”

**Contact your local State Veterans Cemetery for more information.**

*Reference: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3944>*



## **PACT Act (Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act)**

“The PACT Act will bring these changes:

- Expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and post-9/11 eras.
- Adds 20+ more presumptive conditions for burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic exposures.
- Adds more presumptive-exposure locations for Agent Orange and radiation.
- Requires VA to provide a toxic exposure screening to every Veteran enrolled in VA health care.
- Helps us improve research, staff education, and treatment related to toxic exposures.

If you're a Veteran or survivor, you can file claims now to apply for PACT Act-related benefits.”

**Contact your local Veteran Service Officer for more information.**

*Reference: <https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/>*