



# **2019 Kentucky Military Civic Health Report**

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Kentucky Secretary of State

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Kentucky veterans maintain a solid reputation of being engaged in and supporting their communities. They are the model for the nation. Kentucky veterans should be recognized for leading the way in voting, civic participation, and volunteer service. Yet, we recognize the need to examine critical issues affecting our veteran population such as feelings of social connectedness, community involvement, and post-traumatic stress disorder. This is the first report in the Commonwealth and nation to assess military civic engagement.

With Secretary Grimes' leadership, a roundtable discussion was held in Winter 2018 between the Office of the Secretary of State and numerous Kentucky veteran agencies and organizations for the purpose of studying the needs of Kentucky's veteran population. Tremendous input and insightful knowledge on issues affecting overall military civic health was provided resulting in this Kentucky Military Civic Health Report ("Report").

This Report will be a resource for Kentuckians for years to come. The Report examines Kentucky's national status as a veteran-friendly state, business, civic engagement, and social connectedness opportunities for our veterans, and ways the public can assist agencies that dedicate themselves to veterans. It also highlights Kentucky as a destination for our military to retire and includes ways for businesses in our local communities to be veteran-friendly. Light is also shown on our women veterans who are often hidden in the shadows of our veteran communities.

We are excited about the Report and what it means to our veterans, agencies and organizations working for a better quality of life for our veteran communities, and Kentuckians at large. Please join us in furthering and improving Kentucky's "Welcome Home!" mentality.



Alison Lundergan Grimes  
Secretary of State



Benjamin F. Adams  
Commissioner, KDVA



## **OVERVIEW OF KENTUCKY VETERAN STATISTICS**

### ***The Commonwealth***

Veterans include individuals who served on active duty during peace or war in the Armed Forces of the United States, and who have received honorable discharges from such service.<sup>1</sup> Kentucky is home to more than 304,000 veterans and their families.<sup>2</sup> This includes Kentucky being home to 8,719 current traditional members of the Kentucky National Guard.<sup>3</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, in 2015, Kentucky veterans by age was 42,169 less than 40 years old, 124,298 40-64 years old, and 135,602 65+ years old, and the largest number of Kentucky's veterans served during the Vietnam War. Notably, as of 2017, 8.83% of the Kentucky adult population are veterans and 143,032 Kentucky veterans were enrolled in the Veterans Affairs Healthcare System.<sup>4</sup>

The Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs provides, "Kentucky ranks 12th highest among the fifty states in the number of active duty military personnel stationed there, and 16th in the number of total military personnel (including civilian works, reservists, and National Guard). Kentucky has the 4th highest number of active-duty Army personnel."<sup>5</sup>

Kentucky is veteran-friendly. In 2018, Kentucky ranked 14th out of 50 states and the District of Columbia for best and worst states for military retirees.<sup>6</sup> Data included veterans per capita, the number of veterans affairs health facilities, and job opportunities for veterans. Additionally, in 2018, the cities of Lexington and Louisville ranked 48th and 66th, respectively, out of the 100 largest U.S. cities across 18 indicators of livability, affordability and veteran-friendliness.<sup>7</sup> Indicators included military skill-related jobs, veteran income growth, and availability of veterans affairs health facilities.



<sup>1</sup> KRS 40.310 (4) Duties of Department of Veterans' Affairs.

<sup>2</sup> *Serving Veterans in the Commonwealth*, Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, available at <https://veterans.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx>, last accessed Dec. 21, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> *Economic Impact Report 2018*, Kentucky National Guard & Department of Military Affairs, Office of the Adjutant General.

<sup>4</sup> *Kentucky Summary*, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, available at [https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/State\\_Summaries\\_Kentucky.pdf](https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/State_Summaries_Kentucky.pdf), last accessed Dec. 21, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> *The Economic Importance of the Military in Kentucky, 2016 Update*, Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs, available at <https://kcma.ky.gov/Documents/Final%20Report.pdf>, last accessed Dec. 21, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> *Best & Worst Places for Veterans to Live*, WalletHub, available at <https://wallethub.com/edu/best-and-worst-cities-for-veterans/8156/>, last accessed Dec. 21, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

# Kentucky's Men & Women in Military Uniform

304,000+ Veterans and their families call Kentucky home



8,300 Veteran owned Kentucky businesses



143,032 Kentucky Veterans enrolled in the VA Healthcare System



\$115 million going towards federal training, travel, and pay for KY National Guard



73.8% of U.S. veterans vote consistently compared to 57.2% of non-veterans



U.S. Veterans log 177 service hours per year compared to 132 among non-veterans



## By age

<40	42,169	
40-64	124,298	
>65	135,602	

## Women in the military

2015	23,717	
2020	25,238	6.4% projected growth

Ranks 12th nationally for number of stationed active duty military personnel



14th Best state in the nation for military retirees



Produced by the Office of the Secretary of State Alison Lundergan Grimes, March 2019

## Women

“Did you know that one in six men in this country is a veteran, but only one in every 63 women in this country is a veteran?”<sup>8</sup> In 2015, Kentucky accounted for 23,717 women veterans and, by 2020, this number is expected to increase to 25,238 and every five years thereafter until 2040 while the number of male veterans is expected to decrease.<sup>9</sup> In 2016, women accounted for 7.8% of Kentucky’s state veteran population and are expected to count for 9.7% by 2025.<sup>10</sup>

In large part because of social stigma and civilian perception, historically many Kentucky women veterans have not publicly promoted their veteran status and sought necessary assistance from veterans service organizations. According to the Disabled American Veterans leadership, “Our nation must address and change the culture that ignores or minimizes women’s service and their contribution to [military missions], so that they too can fully benefit from the array of services that have been established for veterans.”<sup>11</sup>



“Women veterans have a “broad range of transition needs [such as] culture change, health care, military sexual trauma, disability compensation, justice, family and community, education, transition assistance, employment and housing.”<sup>12</sup> For more details about women veterans issues visit [dav.org](https://dav.org).<sup>13</sup> You may also contact the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs Women Veterans Program for additional women veterans information as they work to “ensure that Kentucky’s women veterans have equitable access to federal and state veterans’ services and benefits.”<sup>14</sup>

## Entrepreneurs and Economic Impact

Kentucky’s veterans have a huge impact on Kentucky’s economy. In 2018, over \$115 million dollars were funneled into Kentucky’s economy as a result of full-time federal training, travel and pay for Kentucky’s National Guardsmen and women.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, in 2017 alone, the Secretary of State’s office identified 8,300 Kentucky businesses that were at least 50-percent veteran-owned.

<sup>8</sup> *Women Veterans*, United States Department of Labor, available at <https://www.dol.gov/vets/womenveterans/>, last accessed Dec. 21, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> *Kentucky Summary*.

<sup>10</sup> *Women as Share of State Veteran Populations (2016-2025 Projections)*, U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans’ Employment and Training Service, Women Veteran Program, available at <https://www.dol.gov/vets/womenveterans/docs/Women-Veteran-Projections-State.pdf>, last accessed Dec. 21, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> “Women Veterans: The Long Journey Home,” Disabled American Veterans, available at <https://www.dav.org/wp-content/uploads/women-veterans-study.pdf>, last accessed Dec. 21, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> *Women Veterans*, Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, available at <https://veterans.ky.gov/otherprograms/Pages/womenvets.aspx>, last accessed Dec. 21, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> *Economic Impact Report 2018*, Kentucky National Guard and Department of Military Affairs, Office of the Adjutant General.

## Voters

“Veterans are among America’s most dedicated voters: 73.8% of veterans always or sometime vote in local elections compared to 57.2% of non-veterans. In addition, veterans are engaging elected officials and discussing politics at higher rates.”<sup>16</sup> Despite these facts, “[a] large number of military members covered under [the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act] (UOCAVA) are young and have not previously voted. Research conducted by the [Federal Voting Assistance Program] (FVAP) reveals that younger, inexperienced military voters [are unaware they are eligible for absentee voting and those that are aware] may need more explicit instructions on absentee ballot voting. Most military voters who sought assistance from a [voting assistance officer] VAO, [Installation Voting Assistance Office] IVA Office, or FVAP.gov reported successfully receiving the assistance they needed. [Additionally], older, experienced military voters most likely benefit from registration and voting reminders.”<sup>17</sup>

For the 2018 General Election, the Commonwealth received more than 2,400 military and overseas ballot applications. Military voters may utilize the 2018-2019 FVAP Voting Assistance Guide<sup>18</sup> and view Kentucky’s guidelines at FVAP.gov.<sup>19</sup>

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Secretary Grimes has spent the last seven years studying the overall civic health of Kentucky. In 2012, as the Chief Official for Civic Engagement, the Office of the Secretary of State released Kentucky’s first-ever Civic Health Index. A statewide tour regarding the Index allowed input from students, teachers, administrators, activists, elected officials, and citizens across

*“Kentucky’s military uniformed men and women represent the best of the Commonwealth – duty, honor, sacrifice, pride, and love of freedom. Their families make unimaginable sacrifices on behalf of our state and nation.” – Secretary Grimes*

Kentucky.

Released in 2016, the second report indicated 35.1% of Kentucky residents belonged to at least one type of community organization or group membership.<sup>20</sup> Led by Secretary of State’s office, these reports, countless roundtable discussions, and statewide tours are the foundation for the Kentucky Military Civic Health Report.



<sup>16</sup> 2017 Veterans Civic Health Index, Got Your Six and the National Conference on Citizenship, available at <https://gotyour6.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/2017-Veterans-Civic-Health-Index.pdf>, last accessed Dec. 21, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Uniformed Services Voting Assistance Officer Workshop, Federal Voting Assistance Program, Jan. 1, 2018 presentation.

<sup>18</sup> 2018-19 Voting Assistance Guide, Federal Voting Assistance Program, available at <https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/States/eVAG.pdf>, last accessed Mar. 25, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Kentucky, Federal Voting Assistance Program, available at <https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/States/kentucky.pdf>, last accessed Mar. 25, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> 2016 Kentucky Civic Health Index, Office of the Kentucky Secretary of State, available at [https://www.sos.ky.gov/civics/Documents/KYCHI\\_2016\\_JW.pdf](https://www.sos.ky.gov/civics/Documents/KYCHI_2016_JW.pdf), last accessed Dec. 20, 2018.

"In addition to volunteering at a higher rate than non-veterans, America's veterans are also logging more service hours – 177 hours per year compared to 132 among non-veterans. Veterans are both talking to and doing favors for their neighbors at a higher rate than their non-veteran peers."<sup>21</sup>

Kentucky veterans, including many post-9/11 veterans, are strongly engaged in their communities. Kentuckians must continue to help connect them with local services organizations – and the Office of the Secretary of State continues to do just that.



Veterans who volunteer have a significant impact on community needs and provide critical services to society.<sup>22</sup>

"Our veterans demonstrate selfless service and sacrifice not only in combat, but in their communities and our Commonwealth," said Secretary Grimes.



Community engagement involves working with others to make a difference in our communities, and can include volunteerism and service.<sup>23</sup> As Chief Official for Civic Engagement, Secretary Grimes has met the U.S. Army 3rd Recruiting Brigade and the U.S. Army Lexington Recruiting Company commanders to discuss ways in which the Army can make a positive impact in Kentucky communities. "I know our military recruiters share my passion for doing everything we can to strengthen our communities. I am proud to forge a partnership with them and work together on projects impacting not only our active-service members, but the veterans who have given so much in service to our country and Commonwealth," said Secretary Grimes.

### ***Military Voters and Kentuckians Deploying***

In 2012, Secretary Grimes traveled to Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain with the United States Department of Defense to evaluate the status of military and overseas voting. While there, Secretary Grimes met with military members in the field, thanked them personally for their service and discussed with them their experiences voting while on active duty. "I saw firsthand in the Middle East our military's commitment to the Commonwealth and our nation. I respect them deeply, and as Chief Election Official I will continue to work on their behalf to ensure no military or overseas voter ever has to question whether his or her vote counts," said Secretary Grimes.

***"Those who risk their lives on the battlefield must have their voices protected at the ballot box."*** –  
***Secretary Grimes***

<sup>21</sup> 2017 Veterans Civic Health Index.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Upon returning from the Secretary's trip, the Office of the Secretary of State released a *Military Matters: Protecting the Rights of Those Who Protect Us*<sup>24</sup> assessment with recommendations for improving military members' access to the ballot box. The Secretary of State's office continued

the assessment of military voting procedures, conducting roundtable discussions regarding her impressions and proposals with Commanding Generals and voting assistance officers at Fort Knox and Fort Campbell and, at the time, did not hesitate in seeking judicial relief to allow sufficient time for military voters to receive, fill out, and return absentee ballots in special elections.



As a result of her efforts, in 2013, Senate Bill 1 was signed into law, which included Secretary Grimes' initiatives. The law allows military and overseas citizens to register to vote and update their registration online and request and receive absentee ballots via an online portal, ensure that military and overseas voters have sufficient time to vote in special election and extend existing protections to state and local elections and National Guard members.<sup>25</sup>

Passage of Senate Bill 1 also included adoption of the Uniform Military and Overseas Voting Act<sup>26</sup> and creation of the Military and Overseas Voting Assistance Task Force<sup>27</sup> which studied election laws and absentee ballot procedures of the Commonwealth relating to military and overseas voters. Sergeant Major Thomas Chumley, who was deployed in the fall of 2012 in the Horn of Africa, testified before the Task Force stating, "The mail was miserable. I mean, that first six weeks we were there, we did not receive mail."<sup>28</sup>

**Kentucky troops asked Secretary Grimes the hard question,  
"Does my vote really count?"**



"Senate Bill 1 is a step forward in ensuring Kentucky's active military members, their families and Kentucky's veterans' voting rights are preserved. Each and every one of these provisions is necessary to fulfill our obligation to make sure Kentucky's men and women in uniform have the time and means to cast a vote that will be counted," said Secretary Grimes.

<sup>24</sup> *Military Matters: Protecting The Rights of Those Who Protect Us*, Kentucky Office of the Secretary of State, available at <https://sos.ky.gov/secdesk/Documents/Military%20Matters%20Assessment.pdf>, last accessed Dec. 20, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> KRS 117A Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act.

<sup>26</sup> *The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act Overview*, Federal Voting Assistance Program, available at <https://www.fvap.gov/info/laws/uocava>, last accessed Mar. 25, 2019.

<sup>27</sup> <http://lrc.ky.gov/lrcpubs/rm516.pdf>

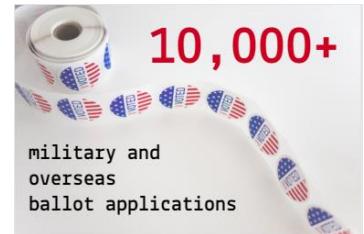
<sup>28</sup> "Kentucky Task Force Considers Military Voting Assistance." Morehead State Public Radio, available at <http://www.wmky.org/post/kentucky-task-force-considers-military-voting-assistance>, last accessed Dec. 20, 2018.

Additionally, in 2013, the Office of the Secretary of State was awarded a \$2 million grant from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP). The monies were awarded as part of the Effective Absentee Systems for Elections 2 (EASE 2) grant program and are funded by the Department of Defense. Using the grant monies, Kentucky developed the electronic ballot delivery system for military and overseas voters and assisted FVAP in exploring technological improvements for military and overseas voters by providing data from the new system.

To date, the Kentucky Secretary of State's office has received more than 10,000 military and overseas ballot applications since its inception. Members of the military and their families and overseas U.S. citizens can find additional information on registering to vote and requesting an absentee ballot via the Federal Post Card Application by visiting [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov). Resources for military and overseas U.S. citizens are also located at the Secretary of State's new one-stop elections website [GoVoteKY.com](http://GoVoteKY.com). Additional statistics on overseas citizens and voting are available at [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov).<sup>29</sup>

Kentuckians are grateful and forever indebted for our veterans' selfless service. Secretary Grimes has met with countless deploying troops on numerous occasions and the impressions that soldiers have left on her motivates her as she fights to ensure that all eligible Kentuckians – especially those in uniform – have access to the ballot box.

Secretary Grimes' message remains the same, "Veterans are not just heroes for today; to each of us, they are always heroes. Our veterans make incredible sacrifices and take tremendous risks to protect our freedoms. I am always honored and humbled to tell others how proud Kentucky is of our veterans, we are with them, and I will continue fighting for their rights."



***"Veterans carry our flag through dangerous battlefields and advance the cause of freedom across the globe." – Secretary Grimes***

<sup>29</sup> *Overseas Citizens and Voting: What We Know*, Federal Voting Assistance Program, available at [https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/FVAP\\_OCPAinfographic.jpg](https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/FVAP_OCPAinfographic.jpg), last accessed Dec. 20, 2018.

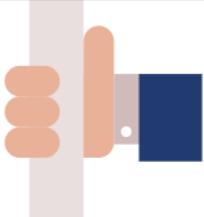
## *Veterans Residing in Kentucky's Veterans Centers*

Kentucky's four veterans centers are home to hundreds of retired military service members in long-term care, offering a broad range of nursing and medical care.<sup>30</sup> Honoring the service of Kentucky's heroes, the Secretary of State's office historic initiative to bring the ballot box to Kentucky's veterans center residents is now a reality. The veterans centers now serve as an official polling place for those veterans living at the facility.



**Polling locations for veterans centers at:**

- Thomson-Hood, Wilmore
- EKY Patton, Hazard
- WKY Ballard, Hanson
- Brashear, Radcliff



This initiative ensures residents of our veterans centers can easily cast their ballots. This initiative is made possible through the partnership of the Secretary of State's office, the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, state veterans centers and local county boards of elections in Jessamine, Perry, Hopkins, and Hardin Counties. "Making sure these veterans – especially those in the care of our state's veterans centers – can easily access the ballot box is the most fundamental way we can honor their service," said Secretary Grimes.

"Our military veterans have dutifully served their country and we owe them a great debt of gratitude for faithfully defending our freedoms. At the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, we work every day to make sure our veterans and their families receive all the benefits and services they have earned," said Brig. Gen. (Ret) Benjamin F. Adams III, commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs. "We are particularly mindful that these veterans' service and sacrifice has helped to protect and enshrine the right to vote for all Americans, so we support any effort that enhances their access to polling locations so they can cast a ballot."



<sup>30</sup> KRS 40.320 Purpose of KRS 40.325; KRS 40.325 Veterans' nursing homes.

Paul E. Patton Eastern Kentucky Veterans Center, Perry County, administrator Neil Napier stated, “We are excited to have our facility serve as a polling site. Our residents take pride in voting, a right that many of them fought for, so the added convenience for them is wonderful. Additionally, this will stimulate interaction with our community, and allow more individuals to see what a beautiful place we have for our veterans, right here in the mountains.”

### ***Vote in Honor of a Veteran Program***

Kentuckians are grateful for those who are serving and have served, as well as our military’s extended family members. Remembering and paying tribute to those who risk their lives to protect us is important. Whether a veteran or a family member or friend of a veteran,

***“Our military stands up for us, and they deserve to have us stand up for them.” – Secretary Grimes***



honor online at [sos.ky.gov](http://sos.ky.gov).<sup>31</sup> The button can be personalized to reflect the name of the veteran in whose honor your vote is being cast.

“Our veterans have given of themselves to protect our rights – especially the right to vote – and many gave their lives. We should take every opportunity to show our respect and gratitude for the sacrifices they have made to protect our rights. We owe it to them to go to the polls on Election Day and cast our vote in their honor,” said Secretary Grimes.

Kentuckians can show their respect and appreciation by Voting in Honor of a Veteran each time they head to the polls. You can request a Vote in Honor of a Veteran button from your county clerk or the Secretary of State’s office.

You can also request a button and leave a tribute to a veteran whom you would like to



<sup>31</sup> *Vote in Honor of Veteran*, Kentucky Office of the Secretary of State, available at <http://apps.sos.ky.gov/secdesk/initiatives/elections/vets/buttons/>, last accessed Dec. 20, 2018.

## *Visit your County Clerk's office in support of Veterans*

Under Secretary Grimes' continued leadership while serving as Kentucky's Chief Election Official, she is proud that Kentucky's veterans are supported by all 120 county clerks across the Commonwealth. They support our veterans by: collecting \$5 from each renewal of a veteran's license plate to go to the Kentucky Veterans Program Trust Fund; collecting \$10 from each purchase and renewal of a "I Support Veterans License Plate" to go to the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs' operating expenses; collecting donations from anyone who wishes to Help A Veteran Everyday by donating to the Kentucky Veterans Program Trust Fund; and collecting donations for license plate birdhouses and giving the proceeds to the trust funds at the Kentucky Department of Veteran Affairs four veterans centers.<sup>32</sup> "Every penny that goes to the Veterans Program Trust Fund, including interest earned, is used to support veteran related programs for which there are no appropriated funds."<sup>33</sup>



The Commonwealth of Kentucky honors our veterans by offering several special military-related license plates including military service, Gold Star family members, 100% disabled veterans, and Medal of Honor Recipients.<sup>34</sup> For more information, contact the Kentucky Department of Transportation or your county clerk's office.

## *Veterans Serving as Installation Voting Assistance Officers*

Under Secretary Grimes' tenure, countless absentee voting trainings have been provided to military leadership including Fort Knox, Fort Campbell, the Wendell H. Ford Training Center, and the Boone National Guard Center to assist military men and women in registering to vote and obtaining absentee ballots by utilizing the military voting portal she launched.



In addition to national recognition, Kentucky's first-ever Military Heroes

Voting  
Initiative won  
praise from  
Kentucky's  
county clerks

and users. "I am grateful for every opportunity to educate military personnel about the current absentee voting procedures, and I look forward to assessing firsthand the challenges confronting military voters and helping to



<sup>32</sup> *County Clerks Supporting Veterans*, Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, available at <https://veterans.ky.gov/otherprograms/Pages/countyclerks.aspx>, last accessed Dec. 19, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> KRS 186.041 Special military-related license plates.

improve the process for the future,” said Secretary Grimes.

Contact local installation or post Voting Assistance Officers (VAO) for information on military and overseas voting and serving as a VAO. You may also contact the federal Voting Action Office at [FVAP.gov](https://www.fvap.gov)<sup>35</sup> for additional support.

### **Veterans Serving as Precinct Election Officers**

Approximately 15,000 Kentuckians are needed to help administer each election in the Commonwealth. Kentucky has not been spared from the nationwide trend of precinct election officers (PEOs) shortages and we need you! Many counties in Kentucky have reported trouble recruiting people to run precincts on Election Day.



*“My office is working every day to make our election processes more efficient and effective.” –Secretary Grimes*

Simply put, veterans are dependable, follow rules and directions, and exude exemplary behavior. “Serving as a precinct election officer is both valuable to our Commonwealth’s election process and is personally rewarding. Precinct officers are on the front lines of the democratic process, and this is an outstanding opportunity to participate in shaping the future of your community and state,” said Secretary Grimes.

Duties include attending mandatory training, arranging the polling location with necessary information and equipment, processing voters, and completing and returning paperwork to the county clerk’s office on election night. For more information or to sign up to become a PEO visit [GoVoteKY.com](http://GoVoteKY.com). You can also contact your county clerk or your political party’s county executive committee.

### **Veterans as Business Owners**

The Office of the Secretary of State’s Boots to Business program honors the service of Kentucky’s veterans through encouraging and fostering entrepreneurship and helping them start a new chapter in their lives. The Boots to Business program was launched to:

- ❖ distinguish and recognize veteran-owned businesses;
- ❖ help veterans transition with an opportunity to grow something of importance to them and their communities; and,
- ❖ say “thank you” to our veterans and their families who sacrifice so much for our country.



<sup>35</sup> Service Voting Action Officers, Federal Voting Assistance Program, available at <https://www.fvap.gov/vao/svao>, last accessed Mar. 25, 2019.

Through the program, after August 1, 2018, new business entities which are 51-percent owned by a military veteran or active-service member, including members of the National Guard, are eligible for fee waivers for the initial business filing and the annual report filing in the next four years of business.<sup>36</sup> Since the Boots to Business program's inception, over 700 active veteran-owned businesses have filed with the Secretary of State's office. CW2 Slaughter was the first veteran entrepreneur to start a business under the Boots to Business program and has shared his testimony before the Kentucky General Assembly's Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection. "Boots to Business is a great program and reduces barriers to small businesses," said CW2 Slaughter. He told the committee he will utilize his background in community development and urban planning to help develop communities in Kentucky.

"I am thankful for Chief Slaughter's service to our country, and his service continues today as he helps to grow Kentucky's economy. Boots to Business is a program that is a small gesture of thanks to our heroes for their selfless service and sacrifice to our country and encourages them to continue giving to their communities when they come home and take off their uniforms," said Secretary Grimes.



Retired Army Capt. Josh Kinsel who owns K&S Customz, a motorcycle engine repair business, has praised the program saying, "As a veteran, it feels good to know that someone is there supporting us. Support for the military – active-duty or veterans – is not what it used to be. [The Secretary of States' Boots to Business program] helps not only with the monetary value, but with emotional value."

The Office of the Secretary of State and several veteran service organizations spent three years lobbying for this legislation. "It has been a long journey [for Boots to Business] and, truly, we have to give the effort to the Secretary for all the hard work she's done to make this come about," said Brig. Gen. (Ret) Benjamin F. Adams III, commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs. "It's service that is the call. There are so few who are able [to serve], and for those who can, we owe everything we have to give them an opportunity to do more with what they want to do in life." Potential new veteran or active-service military business owners can learn more about the program by contacting the Secretary of State's office or visiting [sos.ky.gov](http://sos.ky.gov).

Finally, Kentucky law is favorable to disabled veteran business owners. The Commonwealth provides, "certification of a disabled veteran-owned business in order to encourage growth among businesses owned by disabled veterans within the state and assist those businesses in competing



<sup>36</sup> KRS 14A.1-070 (44-45) & 14A.2-165 Veteran-owned business.

for work in other states that require certification by a statewide body.”<sup>37</sup> For more information, contact the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity Contract Compliance.<sup>38</sup> For information about Kentucky income and property tax laws<sup>39</sup> favorable to veterans, contact the Department of Revenue.<sup>40</sup>

## ***Veterans Seeking Employment***

Veterans and military spouses oftentimes need help in finding meaningful employment and continuing to have an impact upon completing their service.

As Chief Business Official, Secretary Grimes supports Kentucky’s agencies and organizations that connect veterans to jobs and employment training and resources to veterans and their families. The Secretary of State’s office participates in veterans expo job fairs across the Commonwealth such as the annual Eastern Kentucky Veterans Expo Job Fair in Ashland.

For a list of upcoming job fairs in Kentucky and information on the Kentucky Veterans Employment, Training, and Support Program (KyVETS) led by the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as other state veteran employment initiatives you may access the Department’s website at [veterans.ky.gov](http://veterans.ky.gov).<sup>4142</sup>

## ***Veteran-Friendly Businesses***

“A company is ‘veteran friendly’ if it takes deliberate action to recruit, hire, train, and retain military personnel or veterans. Veteran hiring preference, military skills translation, and flexible work schedules to accommodate training and deployments are among a few of the steps companies may take to assist current or former service members.”<sup>43</sup>

As Chief Business Official of the Commonwealth, Secretary Grimes supports employers who value the military service of their employees and encourages Kentucky businesses to adopt veteran-friendly policies. Kentucky law provides private employers may have voluntary veterans’ preference employment policies.<sup>44</sup> If you are interested in hiring veterans, you may access the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Employment Toolkit<sup>45</sup> and post job listings at [hireaveteran.com](http://hireaveteran.com).<sup>46</sup> Additionally, the Kentucky



<sup>37</sup> KRS 42.0146 Oversight of certification program for disabled veteran-owned businesses.

<sup>38</sup> <https://finance.ky.gov/offices/Pages/equalOpportunity.aspx>

<sup>39</sup> KRS 141.01 Depreciation methods and transitional rules; KRS 132.810 Homestead Exemption.

<sup>40</sup> <https://revenue.ky.gov/Pages/index.aspx>

<sup>41</sup> <https://veterans.ky.gov/employmentinfo/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>42</sup> <https://veterans.ky.gov/employmentinfo/state/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>43</sup> “What Does ‘Veteran Friendly’ Really Mean?”, Atlanta Business Chronicle, available at [https://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/prnewswire/press\\_releases/Georgia/2018/11/08/UN62431](https://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/prnewswire/press_releases/Georgia/2018/11/08/UN62431), last accessed Dec. 20, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> KRS 40.345 Private employer may have voluntary veterans’ preference employment policy.

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.va.gov/vetsinworkplace/valuableassets.asp>

<sup>46</sup> <https://hireaveteran.com/veteran-jobs/kentucky-veteran-jobs/>

National Guard's Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve<sup>47</sup> (ESGR) is an excellent resource for employers, as well as all uniformed service members and families of affected service members.

Further, the Commonwealth provides qualified veterans with preference points to veterans' entrance examination scores for classified state government positions.<sup>48</sup> Contractors doing business with the Commonwealth agree to "[ensuring] applicants are employed and that employees during employment are treated without regard to their veteran status."<sup>49</sup> Finally, Kentucky state parks permanently exempt totally disabled resident veterans from overnight accommodation rates for a maximum of three days.<sup>50</sup>

### ***Military Sexual Trauma and Domestic Violence Victims***

Under Secretary Grimes' leadership and in collaboration with the Commonwealth's law enforcement officials, the Kentucky's Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) was created. The program allows victims of domestic violence and sexual assault to have their personal information redacted from publicly available voter registration records. Studies show that "[a]bout one in four women and one in 100 men respond 'yes,' that they experienced [military sexual trauma] MST, when screened by their [veterans affairs] provider."<sup>51</sup>

*"Our work will not be complete until every survivor has access to justice and every Kentuckian is free from harassment." – Secretary Grimes*



Kentucky courts issue tens of thousands domestic violence and emergency protective orders every year. Secretary Grimes believes that no eligible voter should be discouraged from voting out of fear for his or her safety, or the safety of

his or her children. The Secretary of State's office has worked extensively with U.S. Army Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) program managers at Fort Knox, Fort Campbell, and in Frankfort. The Office of the Secretary of State has also met with military Family Advocacy Program victim advocates in discussing ways to encourage prevention such as participating in sexual assault awareness month installation activities, as well as to ensure "Not in our Army" trainings include information about Kentucky's ACP.

To become a participant, the eligible individual (or someone authorized on his or her behalf) must complete the ACP Application.<sup>52</sup> Applicant and



<sup>47</sup> <http://kentuckyguard.dodlive.mil/programs/esgr/>

<sup>48</sup> KRS 18A.150 Preference points for active or honorably or generally discharged members of the active military, military reserves, or National Guard.

<sup>49</sup> KRS 45.570 Contents of contract.

<sup>50</sup> KRS 148.0212 Permanently and totally disabled resident veteran exempt from overnight accommodation rate at Kentucky state parks.

<sup>51</sup> *Military Sexual Trauma*, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, available at [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/mst\\_general\\_factsheet.pdf](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/mst_general_factsheet.pdf), last accessed Dec. 20, 2018.

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.sos.ky.gov/elections/ACP/Documents/Application.pdf>

additional information about the ACP program can be found at [sos.ky.gov](https://www.sos.ky.gov/elections/ACP/Pages/default.aspx).<sup>53</sup> For information about the U.S. Army SHARP program, please visit [sexualassault.army.mil](http://www.sexualassault.army.mil/policy_orders.aspx).<sup>54</sup> You may also find information and help about MST at [mentalhealth.va.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/mst/home/articles.asp).<sup>55</sup>

### **Veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Physical Ailments**

In Kentucky, the veteran suicide rate is 6% higher than the national average.<sup>56</sup> Veterans and their physicians believe that medical cannabis is the most effective treatment for chronic pain and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The Journal of the American Medical Association Internal Medicine reports that opioid overdose deaths have fallen by 25% in states that have legalized medical cannabis. To get help and for more information about PTSD, visit [va.gov](http://va.gov).<sup>57</sup> For additional health support, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, has medical centers, outpatient clinics and vet centers with locations across the Commonwealth.<sup>58</sup>



As a result of these statistics and speaking with countless Kentuckians in need of help, in 2017, the Office of the Secretary of State convened a task force of Kentuckians to focus on a legislative proposal to legalize medical cannabis. It included members of Kentucky's medical community, including doctors, nurses and medical administrators, as well as representatives from law enforcement and state agencies with regulatory oversight, medical cannabis advocates, and military veterans. The group studied and proposed potential implementation and regulation processes.

The military veterans who were a part of the panel attested to the way medical cannabis had greatly benefited them in dealing with mental and physical illnesses. The veterans said PTSD stemming from their military service had impacted their work and relationships.



The veteran suicide rate in Kentucky is **6%** higher than the national average

Opioid overdose deaths have fallen by **25%** in states that have legalized medical cannabis



<sup>53</sup> <https://www.sos.ky.gov/elections/ACP/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>54</sup> [http://www.sexualassault.army.mil/policy\\_orders.aspx](http://www.sexualassault.army.mil/policy_orders.aspx)

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/mst/home/articles.asp>

<sup>56</sup> *Kentucky Veteran Suicide Data Sheet, 2016.*, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, available at [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2016/Kentucky\\_2016.pdf](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2016/Kentucky_2016.pdf), last accessed Dec. 21, 2018.

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.va.gov/opa/issues/ptsd.asp>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/state.asp?STATE=KY&dnum=ALL>



Representatives. In January 2019, the Kentucky Joint Executive Council of Veterans Organizations passed a resolution urging the Kentucky General Assembly, at a minum, to recognize cannabis as a drug with potential medical value. Medical cannabis was again heard in the 2019 House Judiciary Committee and, for the first time, reported favorably out of the committee. Indeed, medical cannabis has garnered the support of Sgt. Dakota Meyer, a Medal of Honor recipient and Kentucky native. Sgt. Meyer released the following statement: “Medical cannabis works. I’ve seen firsthand lives it has positively impacted. I’ve seen how quality of life is vastly improved when a veteran struggling with PTSD can use medical cannabis to quiet their mind and sleep. It’s time we move away from the old-school mentalities that are holding our Commonwealth back and preventing Kentuckians from getting relief. I see legalization of medical cannabis as a huge step in fighting the opioid crisis. Frankfort has to act. There are too many people – especially men and women who have served our country – who need help. I’m counting on legislators and the Governor to make medical cannabis legal in 2018.” Should you wish to join Secretary Grimes in advocating for medical cannabis, contact the Secretary of State’s office.



With the Secretary of State’s support, a Kentucky veterans advocacy group “22 Strong” was formed to tackles issues such as PTSD, suicide, addiction, alternatives to opioid use, and homelessness. The 22 in their name represents the tragic number of veteran suicides each day in the U.S. You may find out more about “22 Strong” on [Twitter<sup>59</sup>](#) and [Facebook<sup>60</sup>](#).

<sup>59</sup> <https://twitter.com/22Strong1>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2225405007686521/>

## ***Educational Benefits for Veterans and Their Families***

Kentucky law provides tuition waivers for veterans and their families.<sup>61</sup> The Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs states, “A waiver of tuition is an education benefit provided by the Commonwealth of Kentucky in recognition of military service of certain Kentucky veterans. The tuition waiver is provided for children, stepchildren, adopted children, spouses, and unremarried widows and widowers. An approved tuition waiver means a student may attend any two-year, four-year or vocational technical schools that are operated and funded by the Kentucky Department of Education. Private or out of state schools do not qualify for the tuition waiver.”<sup>62</sup> For qualification details and the tuition waiver application, visit [veterans.ky.gov](https://veterans.ky.gov).<sup>63</sup> Additionally, the Commonwealth waives the commercial driver’s license (CDL) skills test and testing fees for qualified military personnel.<sup>64</sup>

## ***Teacher Certification for Veterans***

The Kentucky General Assembly finds that, “There are persons who have distinguished themselves through a variety of work and educational experiences that could enrich teaching in Kentucky schools.”<sup>65</sup> Kentucky law provides one-year provisional certificates and entry into the teacher internship program leading to professional teacher certification for veterans of the Armed Forces. The veteran must be honorably discharged, earned his or her Bachelor or Graduate degree, have maintained a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.75 on a 4.0 scale, and possess an academic major or a passing score on the academic content assessment.<sup>66</sup> For additional information, contact the [Kentucky Department of Education](#).<sup>67</sup>

## ***Veterans Supporting Military-Led Youth Organizations***

The Office of the Secretary of State invites you to join in supporting Kentucky’s youth through initiatives such as the American Legion Auxiliary Kentucky Girls and American Legion Kentucky Boys State Programs, the Kentucky National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program, and others located locally in your communities.



<sup>61</sup> KRS 164.479, 164.480, 164.490, 164.500, 164.505, 164.507, 164.510, 164.512, and 164.515.

<sup>62</sup> *Tuition Waiver*, Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, available at <https://veterans.ky.gov/pages/hidpages/tuitionwaiver.aspx>, last accessed Mar. 22, 2019.

<sup>63</sup> <https://veterans.ky.gov/Documents/2018%20Tuition%20Waiver%20Application.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> KRS 281A.165 Waiver of driving skills test for military personnel.

<sup>65</sup> <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=45713>

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> *Recruitment and Retention*, Kentucky Department of Education’s Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness, Division of Certification, available at <https://education.ky.gov/teachers/NxGenProf/Pages/Certification.aspx>, last accessed Mar. 22, 2019.



It is important that our veterans share with our youth their experiences and remain engaged in their communities by volunteering in service and time to others. Both veterans and young people will benefit. “Today’s students are tomorrow’s leaders. It is an honor to be involved with these programs and encourage students to be

*“This is our Commonwealth and our future. It’s up to us to make sure it is bright.” – Secretary Grimes*

active citizens and commit themselves to public service,” said Secretary Grimes.

The American Legion Auxiliary Kentucky Girls and American Legion Kentucky Boys State Programs provide high school students practical education about city and state government by allowing participants to be involved in hypothetical political parties, campaigns, elections, and appointments. For more information about Girls State visit [kyamlegionaux.org](http://kyamlegionaux.org)<sup>68</sup> and Boys State at [kyboysstate.org](http://kyboysstate.org).<sup>69</sup>



The Kentucky National Guard ChalleNGe Academies located at Fort Knox and in Harlan use quasi-military principles to improve life skills, education levels, and employability in 16-to-18-year-olds who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of school. “It’s been a privilege to see firsthand the amazing success of Kentucky’s ChalleNGe Academies. It serves a critical need to make sure the least, last, and lost among our youth are supported.

Preparing our youth to be good citizens of Kentucky is vital to the future of our Commonwealth,” said Secretary Grimes. For more information about the Kentucky National Guard ChalleNGe Academy, visit <http://www.kychallenge.org/>.

### **Veterans Joining Veterans Service Organizations**

“Veterans service organizations [VSOs] are non-government organizations that advocate for and assist veterans, while also providing opportunities for veterans to



<sup>68</sup> <http://www.kyamlegionaux.org/girls-state/>

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.kyboysstate.org/>

get involved in the larger community.”<sup>70</sup> The Office of the Secretary of State has spent countless hours supporting Kentucky’s VSOs (see list of resources on pg. 25). To get involved in a VSO, you may search a list of Kentucky’s veterans service organizations at [veterans.ky.gov](https://veterans.ky.gov).<sup>71</sup>

### ***Spouse Attorneys of Active-service Military***

Active-service military personnel are transferred on average every two or three years, making it difficult for spouses, a disproportionate number of whom are women, practicing law to continue to do so upon moving to other states without passing their bar examinations.

In 2015, Secretary Grimes, as a lawyer herself, led the way for Kentucky Supreme Court Rule 2.113, Military Spouse Provisional Admission, to be successfully adopted. “Military families make tremendous sacrifices in service to our state and nation. Many of those sacrifices are personal, including long absences from their loved ones, but there are also professional sacrifices that often are overlooked. This new rule is an opportunity to recognize and help solve one of them,” said Secretary Grimes.

SCR 2.113 now allows the spouses of active-service members stationed in the Commonwealth to continue to engage in the practice of law. An article about SCR 2.113 is readable at [msjdn.org](http://msjdn.org).<sup>72</sup> For information about military-spouse admission to the Kentucky Bar Association contact the Kentucky Office of Bar Admissions at [kyoba.org](http://kyoba.org).<sup>73</sup>



### ***Kentuckians supporting Veterans***

We, as Kentuckians, must continue to support our active-service military and retirees. The Commonwealth must assist them with issues and difficulties such as helping those coming off active status make solid connections with other veterans through VSOs and transitioning into civilian life as entrepreneurs, job holders and active members of their communities. We must focus on caring for our retirees and connecting them with U.S. and Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities and centers, as well as senior citizen centers in their local communities.



<sup>70</sup> VA & Veteran Organizations, We Honor Veterans: National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, available at <https://www.wehonorveterans.org/va-veteran-organizations>, last accessed Dec. 19, 2018.

<sup>71</sup> <https://veterans.ky.gov/Pages/HidPages/VSOs.aspx>

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.msjdn.org/2015/08/kentuckymilspouserule/>

<sup>73</sup> <https://kyoba.org/>

Help us bridge the gap! Mental health studies show talk for our veterans is helpful. If you are a younger veteran, reach out to an older one, and vice versa for you retirees. Our retirees are very good at showing younger veterans what right looks like. If you are a civilian, reach out to veterans in your community and offer them your support. A good way to get in touch with younger veterans is through social media. Honor a Kentucky military veteran by nominating him or her for the Kentucky Veterans Hall of Fame.<sup>74</sup> Show your support for our veterans by attending an Honor Flight Kentucky<sup>75</sup> or Bluegrass<sup>76</sup> send off or welcome home ceremony from their memorable trip to Washington, D.C. monuments or a Military Freedom Fest Honors Ceremony<sup>77</sup> in central Kentucky. Spend time with Kentucky's older veterans by visiting them at one of Kentucky's four veterans centers<sup>78</sup> located in Hanson, Radcliff, Wilmore, or Hazard. "It is always my privilege to spend time with and thank personally our nation's heroes, whether at home or abroad, active-duty or veteran and I hope Kentuckians will join me in this effort," said Secretary Grimes.



## **CONCLUSION**

Our goal as Kentuckians should be to increase individual and collective well-being through fostering social connectedness and civic involvement.<sup>79</sup> We must support Kentucky's active-service and veteran military members and their families by improving Kentucky's military civic health and working toward a more informed and engaged electorate. Through partnership with civic-oriented organizations on the local, state, and national levels, the Secretary of State's office and the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs passionately support a variety of programs to promote our active-service military and veterans' greater participation in the democratic process, including civic education, legislative initiatives, and voter registration and participation, as well as cultivate relationships and opportunities for them to feel a part of and be involved in their communities.



As Secretary of State, Grimes has focused intently on veterans and military issues, including traveling to meet with Kentucky troops stationed overseas, championing her Military Heroes Voting Initiative, and played an integral role in the establishment of the Kentucky Veterans Hall of Fame. The Office of the Secretary of State continues to advocate on their behalf on a wide range of issues from voting and connecting veterans to job opportunities, to opening businesses and supporting

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.kyveterans.com/>

<sup>75</sup> <https://honorflightky.org/>

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.honorflightbluegrass.org/>

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/militaryfreedom.fest/>

<sup>78</sup> <https://veterans.ky.gov/nursinghomes/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>79</sup> [https://www.sos.ky.gov/civics/Documents/KYCHI\\_2016\\_JW.pdf](https://www.sos.ky.gov/civics/Documents/KYCHI_2016_JW.pdf)

mental health. And the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs continues to focus on civic issues affecting all Kentuckians in one way or another including employment, counseling, and programs for homeless veterans<sup>80</sup> and women veterans<sup>81</sup>.

We encourage military veterans to register to vote and participate in our elections so that their voice is heard. We encourage you to start a business of your own or help another veteran to do so.



Kentuckians, we encourage you to thoughtfully reach out to our veterans and lift up both the men and women of our military in your local communities and their families. To our academic institutions, we encourage you to implore more Kentucky military veterans in your research studies and public outreach efforts.

“Kentucky can achieve its brightest future when Kentuckians embrace fully both their rights and obligations as citizens. We hope you will be a part of this movement to improve our veteran-friendly approach as a Commonwealth,” said Secretary Grimes.



Should you have concerns or suggestions you would like to share with the Secretary of State’s office, please contact her office at [www.sos.ky.gov](http://www.sos.ky.gov).

<sup>80</sup> KRS 40.340 Kentucky Homeless Veterans Program.

<sup>81</sup> KRS 40.600 Kentucky Women Veterans Program.

## **RESOURCES**

The following veterans agencies, organizations, and programs provide additional resources:

Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs

Kentucky Department of Military Affairs

Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs

Kentucky National Guard

National Guard Association of Kentucky

U.S. Army Garrison and Cadet Commands, Fort Knox

Fort Knox Retiree Council

U.S. Army 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Federal Voting Assistance Program

Honor Flight Kentucky

Honor Flight Bluegrass

Kentucky Veterans Hall of Fame

National Association of Black Veterans Kentucky Chapter

Joint Executive Council of Veterans Organizations

Veterans Resources United of Central Kentucky

Women Veterans Connect

Military Freedom Fest

Hershel Woody Williams Medal of Honor Foundation

The Tri Ân Foundation

American Legion Auxiliary Kentucky Girls State Program

American Legion Auxiliary Kentucky Boys State Program

Kentucky National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Academy Program

Eastern Kentucky University Military and Veterans Affairs Department

Western Kentucky University Military Programs

Morehead State University Military Initiatives