



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE VETERAN ADVOCATE
50 BRAINTREE HILL OFFICE PARK, SUITE 108
BRAINTREE, MA 02184

October 22, 2026

The Honorable Michael Rodrigues
Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means
24 Beacon Street, Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

Re: OVA's PAC Request in FY2026 Supplemental Budget

Dear Chair Rodrigues:

I write in strong support of the Governor's provision that was adopted in the House Committee on Ways and Means FY2026 supplemental budget, [H.5699](#), which authorizes a FY2026 Prior Authorization Continued (PAC) of \$90,480 for the Office of the Veteran Advocate (OVA).

Following a reduction of \$1.00M in our FY2027 budget, ensuring the office can continue to meet our statutory requirements is a priority. This funding is only a small relief until more significant funding in the FY2027 Supplemental is secured. Having this PAC approved enables us to continue our important duties on behalf of the Commonwealth's veteran community, while we continue to work with the Governor and the Executive Office of Administration and Finance on a funding request through a FY2027 supplemental budget.

In the past few months, since the start of FY2027, I want to share some of the great work and accomplishments of our team:

- Resumed monthly listening sessions with representatives of the Commonwealth's Veteran Services Organizations (VSOs) to hear their legislative priorities, their feedback, and to identify gaps in benefits and services;
- Helped connect the Office of Business and Consumer Affairs and Department of Telecommunications and Cable with various community stakeholders, state partners, and municipal veteran services agents to inform them of available state veteran-related programs;
- Provided comments and recommendations to the Executive Office of Veterans Services on proposed revisions to 108 CMR 2.00 through 9.00, which governs the Chapter 115, annuity and burial benefits programs;
- Assisted multiple veterans in coordinating transportation to their VA medical appointments;
- Supported municipal veteran service officers by attending a quarterly training of the Southern Massachusetts Veteran Services Officers Association;
Organized monthly meetings for the Central Massachusetts Veterans Coalition, bringing together local, state, federal and non-profit veteran services stakeholders;

Helped coordinate service providers for the Eastern States Exposition Military and Veterans Appreciation Day that over 3,000 veterans attended;

- Filed our FY2026 Annual Report, which provides a thorough review of the Commonwealth's veteran population, analysis and recommendations of strategic issues identified by our team, along with a summary of agency actions in FY2026; and
- Released the OVA's first Strategic Plan, covering the fiscal years of 2027 through 2031, that include five priorities with specific actions to meet the priorities of key stakeholders within the veteran community.

As a result of the cut to our budget, we have elected not to fill a currently open position and reduced other operational expenses. Critically, if we do not receive additional funding, we will need to continue reductions in our operating expenses, including to our staff. As we are already a small 11-person team, any additional reduction to our staff will further impact our ability to meet our statutory mission, including our ability to aid and coordinate with local veteran services officers, collaborate with other state agencies and our ability to investigate critical incidents involving veterans in the care of the Commonwealth.

In addition to impacting our services, these staffing cuts will also directly impact the veterans on our staff, as 8 of our 11 full-time employees are veterans themselves. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support this provision.

Thank you for the Committee's continued support of our Commonwealth's veteran community, and for your consideration of this request that supports our mission on behalf of them. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at (508) 566-3052 or at Robert.Notch@mass.gov.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Notch', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Notch,
Veteran Advocate