Legislation Text

File #: 2020-0958, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors
Department or Agency Name(s): Human Services
Staff Name and Phone Number: Paul Dunaway, 565-3673, Mark Orlando 565-5955
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Recommended Action:
Adopt a Gold Resolution honoring November 11, 2020, as "Veterans Day" in Sonoma County.

Executive Summary:
Veterans Day was established in 1919 as Armistice Day to commemorate the signing of the peace agreement that ended World War I on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918.

Discussion:
In proclaiming the holiday in 1919, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson said: "To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory." In 1938, a Congressional Act made November 11 of each year a legal holiday known as Armistice Day. In 1954, the veterans' service organizations urged Congress to change the word "Armistice" to "Veterans." President Eisenhower signed a bill establishing Veterans Day as a national holiday. He proclaimed, "In order to insure proper and widespread observance of this anniversary, all veterans, all veterans' organizations, and the entire citizenry will wish to join hands in the common purpose…."

There are 22,428 Sonoma County veterans whom we honor on Veterans Day. Many veterans remain unaware of, or do not use, the benefits and services for which they are eligible.

Though a majority of these Veterans may be eligible for medical care from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, only approximately 8,000 are enrolled and accessing health care through the federal agency. Of the total Veteran population in the County:

> The highest population is in the 60-79-year-old age group (Vietnam-era)
>
> Approximately 8% are women Veterans
>
> 78% of Sonoma County Veterans are Wartime Veterans
>
> 24% of County Veterans are receiving some form of disability compensation or non-service disability pension from the VA.

The County of Sonoma Veterans Service Office plays a key role in ensuring that all Veterans in Sonoma County are aware and have the opportunity to receive the services and benefits that they earned through their service to our nation. Over the last 6 months, the Veterans Service Office has continued in the primary role in ensuring Veterans receive these benefits. Though facing many pandemic and fire related challenges during this

six-month time period, the Veterans Service Office served over 2,700 clients remotely via telephone/email and reopened in July for limited in-person services for those who cannot access services remotely. Out of the total clients served, approximately 1,900 of the clients had not previously sought services through the County VSO. In FY 2018-19, the Veterans Service Office helped bring $12.5M in new and retroactive compensation and pension benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Compensation and Pension spending for Sonoma County residents is significant, totaling $90,474,000 in Federal FY 2019.

The Veterans Service Office collaborates with the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs' Community-Based Outpatient Clinic in Santa Rosa and Vet Center; and the Sonoma County United Veterans Council. The United Veterans Council represents over 30 Sonoma County Veteran organizations and various community-based organizations, such as Vietnam Veterans of California. Veterans' organizations and Veteran volunteers in the community work tirelessly along with the Veterans Service Office to help veterans get the benefits they are entitled to receive.

Additionally, many County of Sonoma agencies actively serve Veterans on a routine basis. Highlights include: Regional Parks disabled Veteran day use park access permits; Tax Assessor disabled Veteran property tax exemption; Sonoma County Transit Veterans Ride Free program; Santa Rosa City Bus; Department of Health Services participation in VetConnect outreach activities for homeless Veterans; Human Services Department Economic Assistance eligibility workers helping homeless Veterans access benefits at VetConnect; Employment and Training Division staff helping Veterans find employment; and the significant Sonoma County contribution to establish the Palms Inn as an opportunity to create housing for up to 75 homeless Veterans.

The County Veterans Service Office continues to facilitate a local Veteran ID card program. To date, over 4,500 local ID cards have been issued. These ID cards allow low income or homeless Veterans to access health care and other services with free transportation on Sonoma County transit and Santa Rosa CityBus.

The outstanding support from local government agencies, combined with supportive community-based organizations and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, makes Sonoma County a great place to be a Veteran. The Veterans of Sonoma County are appreciative of the Board of Supervisors' support of the Veterans Service Office and the Veteran community as a whole.

Prior Board Actions:
Each year the Board of Supervisors adopts a resolution honoring November 11, as "Veterans Day" in Sonoma County.
November 5, 2019
October 23, 2018
November 7, 2017
November 1, 2016
November 10, 2015
November 4, 2014

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 20-21 Adopted	FY 21-22 Projected	FY 22-23 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	**0**	**0**	**0**
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	**0**	**0**	**0**

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

N/A

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	**Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)**	**Additions (Number)**	**Deletions (Number)**

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):
N/A

Attachments:
Attachment #1 - Veterans Day Resolution

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:
None