

# HOUSE RESEARCH

## Bill Summary

**FILE NUMBER:** H.F. 371  
**Version:** As Introduced

**DATE:** March 4, 2013

**Authors:** Newton

**Subject:** Veterans; CVS0 grant program modified; money appropriated

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### Overview

This bill would modify the structure of, and increase funding for, the County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) grant program, being administered by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA), and would appropriate \$1,005,000 for this purpose.

**Current law provides** that the state grants to County Veteran Service Offices be made on a three-year rotating cycle, with one-third of counties becoming eligible each year. **The bill would** repeal that three-year funding cycle, and make the grants annually.

**The bill would also** restructure the grant amounts, as follows. Current law provides four tiers of grants, ranging from \$1,400 to \$5,600 per county, based on the size of the veteran population in the county.

**Under the bill,** each county would receive a **base grant** in the amount of \$7,500. **In addition to the base grant,** each county would be eligible for an **additional grant** based on the size of the veteran population in the county as determined by the USVA, with the grant amount to be determined by the commissioner, but not to exceed:

- \$0, if the county has under 1,000 veterans;
- \$2,500, if the county has 1,000 to 2,999 veterans;
- \$5,000, if the county has 3,000 to 4,998 veterans;
- \$7,500, if the county has 5,000 to 9,998 veterans;

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**\$10,000**, if the county has 10,000 to 19,998 veterans;

**\$15,000**, if the county has 20,000 to 29,998 veterans; or

**\$20,000**, if the county has 30,000 or more veterans.

**The bill also would require** that CVSO grants be used:

- to provide outreach to the county's veterans;
- to assist in the reintegration of combat veterans into society;
- to collaborate with other social service agencies, educational institutions, and other community organizations for the purposes of enhancing services offered to veterans;
- to reduce homelessness among veterans; and
- to enhance the operations of the county veterans service office.

## **Background**

County Veteran Service Offices exist throughout the nation and generally date to 1945, initially to assist veterans returning from WWII service, and later from any military service, whether during times of war or peace.

CVSOs are the primary point of contact for veterans and their families who seek assistance with federal, state, and local veterans benefits. CVSOs collaborate with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, and the various Veterans Service Organizations (e.g., Disabled Veterans of America, VFW, AMVETS, and others) in securing benefits for veterans. More specifically, CVSOs:

- disseminate information on veterans benefit;
- assist in the application for state and federal benefits;
- facilitate the referral process to appropriate outside agencies; and
- help obtain relevant military records.

From the beginning, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs has had some responsibility and limited authority to ensure that the CVSO system is working well for Minnesota Veterans. Recent legislation clarified that role as working with CVSOs to create a certification process as a means of establishing training standards for newly hired County Veteran Service Officers (also called CVSOs).

The MDVA is also tasked with administering a training grant program for CVSOs.