Good Morning and thank you for the opportunity to discuss our recent accomplishments and the how the DMAVA budget allows for continued improvement into to 2020.

Last week was National Volunteer Week, and it is very important week to our department.

I mean $1.5 million dollars important. That is a conservative estimate how much the 86,507 hours donated to our veterans is worth.

Every hour given by these volunteers is worth dozens of smiles on our residents faces. To make our homes seem more like home for our veterans.

All three of our Veterans Memorial Home held volunteer luncheons to say Thank You to the veterans service organizations, community groups, businesses and individual volunteers.

Now add in the $185-thousand dollars in monetary prizes for more than 1,700 bingo games plus nearly $400-thousand in other goods or services. You're looking at a substantial gift to our veterans.

These donations make our outstanding facilities even better. When I say outstanding, I mean 5-star good. That is the rating that the Vineland Veterans Memorial Home earned from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

CMS created the Five-Star Quality Rating System to help consumers and their caregivers compare nursing homes more

The South Jersey Professional Chefs Association hosted a Veterans Day Brunch called "Operation Serving Those Who Served" at the Vineland Veterans Memorial Home on November 11. The residents were served a full brunch complete with prime rib carving station, omelets made to order and decadent desserts. (Courtesy photo)

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Our 2019 goal is an ambitious $37.5 million. It might be reach to get there, but certainly worth the effort as every dollar goes back into the New Jersey economy and greatly improves the veterans quality of life.

We have a new initiative to garner community support called the “We Value Our Veterans” award program. Supported by the DMAVA website, there is online enrollment for local governments to be recognize for their support of veteran residents.

It could be as simple as a designated parking space at the municipal building or an annual recognition of veterans. Every effort made to support veterans is important in the “We Value Our Veterans” award program.

You can look at these efforts to see DMAVA’s renewed and expanded outreach to veterans and their families. In 2018 our Veterans Service Officers were at 150 events, a new bar we want to keep edging higher.

This year we are looking to hopefully start awarding a new state medal for the Global War of Terrorism, this GWOT medal will open a new group of veterans to be honored by the state for their service.

It also gives us an opportunity to speak with them, many for the first time and explain their benefits available to them. We are looking to interact with five-thousand veterans, their families or friends in 2019.

In-person outreach still remains our most successful method to serve the 340-thousand veterans in New Jersey.

This outreach gives our DMAVA VSO’s a chance to talk about federal Veterans Administration disability compensation. Last year we saw just shy of $34-million federal dollars awarded to 19-hundred New Jersey veterans.

Most of that money went for compensation for service-connected ailments, which includes Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, Agent Orange Exposure and hearing loss.

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We continue to make progress in getting the New Jersey’s Veteran Diversion Program running statewide to support justice system involved veterans.

The resource directory was published on-line in the fall of 2018 and the first class was conducted to train mentors. With a second class completed this year, more than three dozen mentors are ready to assist county prosecutor offices.

Mentors will work with justice system involved veterans to make sure they are getting the proper federal Veterans Administration support from drug and alcohol treatment, mental and behavior health programs or other potential VA benefits that can support the veteran.

This year we look to train more mentors and work to get an on-line mentor training program up and running. Because the more mentors we have, the more veterans we can assist.

When it comes to Information consolidation, DMAVA wants to coordinate other state agencies to publicize the many military skills that are transferable to state licenses. Licensing agencies have made accommodations to use military training in lieu of some requirements.

An example is how the Motor Vehicle Commission waives the CDL Skills Test, that is, the behind-the-wheel exam to qualified military applicants. Those truck drivers or 88-Mikes in Army speak would no longer have to provide a commercial vehicle in order to obtain a New Jersey CDL license.

It is benefits like this that need to be consolidated to give veterans easier access to licenses that could lead to employment.

I have one more 2019 highlight to share with you. In December I hope you can join us in the graduation of New Jersey National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Academy Class number 50.

This is quite the mile-stone, a quarter century in the making.

As fifty classes of 16- to 18-year-olds have completed the 22-week program.

This program to assist at-risk youth located on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, remains an innovative and cost-effective partnership between the state and federal governments. The feds pay 75 percent.

The educational goal is to prepare cadets for the GED exam and raise math and reading scores a minimum of two grade levels. The program has a return on investment unmatched among similar organizations.
When it comes to giving back to the community those classes of Youth ChalleNGe cadets provided hundreds of thousands of hours to government agencies and nonprofit organizations. That community service has been worth millions of dollars in donated time.

Soldiers and Airmen around the world in support of such operations as Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Spartan Shield, Operation Freedom Sentinel, and supporting the missions of the U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD).

Our missions range from peacekeeping, security, and airspace surveillance. Our men and women are well-trained, well-prepared, and committed to service, not only to our state, but to our nation as well.

With the same level of commitment to service of our deploying Soldiers, this leadership has the same level of commitment to servicing our Guard families and ensuring that their needs are taken care of as they wait for their Soldier to return home.

The National Guard Family Program exists for the sole purpose of supporting and educating families through programs and services that assist Family Members before, during, and after deployments. They can be a vital support-center to help families through the difficult times.

Even with these historically high levels of mobilizations, be assured that the New Jersey National Guard is prepared for any domestic mission that calls for our response.

Our Guard members live in the community and are ready to assist civilian emergency management before, during, and after natural disasters.

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**Current DoD Budget FY19**

**ARMY**

- $55,476,000
- $86,907,900
- $60,973,400

**AIR**

- $31,076,226
- $66,754,700
- $26,574,400

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Now let me switch from commissioner to The Adjutant General and talk about the nearly 8300 members of the New Jersey Army and Air National Guard.

Since January of this year, we have deployed 25-hundred

We take our preparedness very seriously, because we all know another potential Super Storm Sandy could strike. The New Jersey National Guard Training Center in Sea Girt suffered extensive losses from that storm.
I am happy to report that the six Super Storm Sandy projects at Sea Girt, which were federally funded in the amount of $20 million through the Disaster Appropriation Act, are completed.

There are two Air National Guard military construction projects underway. The first, is a $9.9 million fuel cell and corrosion hanger at the 177th Fighter Wing at Atlantic City International Airport. The other project is the nearly one-million dollar replacement of the 40-year-old control tower at the Warren Grove Gunnery Range.

Solar energy continues to grow in importance and DMAVA has been leading the way since 2009. We have used the sun to avoid nearly $2.3 million dollars in electric utility costs. In FY 2018, the Department’s alternative energy projects generated 2.8 million kilowatt hours of electricity for a cost avoidance of nearly $375,000.

The operation of the New Jersey Army and Air National Guard is responsible for a large amount of federal dollars to flow back into the Garden State.

In Fiscal Year 2019, the Army Guard will received nearly $148 million for operations, maintenance and salaries for its traditional drilling Soldiers and its military technician force. An additional $55.5 million is provided to pay Active Guard Reserve (AGR) Soldiers.

The Air Guard received more than $93 million for Fiscal Year 2019, for operations and maintenance and to pay its traditional drilling Airmen and military technician force. The Air Guard also received $31 million for salaries for its AGR Airmen.

Those Federal dollars are directly tied to our efforts to keep the New Jersey National Guard as a strong, viable and modern force. Our Air National Guard is currently at 107 percent strength and our Army Guard is at 97 percent.

Everyday, the DMAVA Team is working to make New Jersey better for veterans and service members. We do not take that responsibility lightly.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation before your distinguished committee. My staff and I will be happy to answer any of your questions.

**COVER PHOTOS**

*Top: New Veterans Memorial Home at Vineland residents competed against residents from Inspira Life Center and Millville Center Genesis Healthcare homes in the Vineland Home’s 2018 Winter Olympic Games Feb. 9, 2018. (New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs photo by Mark C. Olsen) Middle: U.S. Army Sgt. Bless Sherrill, second from right, Sgt. Raheem Rowell, right, both with the New Jersey Army National Guard, carry a flag and an urn containing the cremains of a veteran during the 28th New Jersey Mission of Honor ceremony at the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Memorial Cemetery at North Hanover Township, N.J., June 21, 2018. (New Jersey National Guard photo by Mark C. Olsen) Bottom: Brownies place American flags on graves at the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Memorial Cemetery at North Hanover Township, N.J., May 25, 2018. More than 1,900 New Jersey Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, and Brownies placed nearly 60,000 American Flags on the graves for the state Memorial Day ceremony. (New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs photo by Mark C. Olsen)*
Dear Citizens of New Jersey and State Legislature,

As Service Members, we always hear "Thank you for your service." Let us thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

The Veterans and Service Members of New Jersey