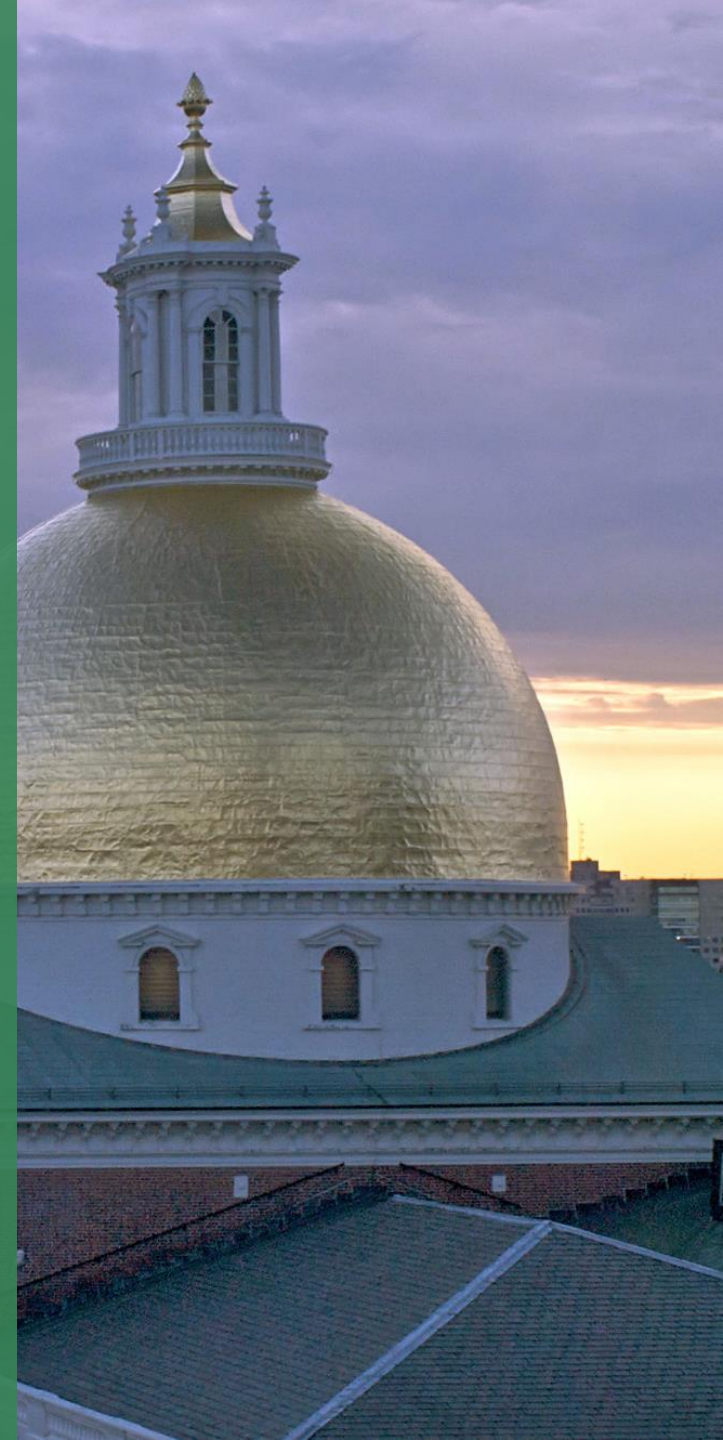


Office of the Veteran Advocate (OVA)



www.mass.gov/OVA

05/18/2026





AGENDA

Introduction to the OVA

OVA Responsibilities

Regional Liaisons

Q&A Session



Introduction to the OVA: Veteran Advocate

(Ret.) Colonel
BOB NOTCH

The Commonwealth's First
Veteran Advocate





Introduction to the OVA: Our Origin

[Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 144 of the Acts of 2022](#)

AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE GOVERNANCE,
STRUCTURE AND CARE OF VETERANS AT THE
COMMONWEALTH'S VETERANS' HOMES

Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 115B



Introduction to the OVA: Our Mission and Vision

OUR MISSION:

The Office of the Veteran Advocate (OVA) is dedicated to safeguarding the well-being and upholding the rights of veterans under the care of the Commonwealth. OVA ensures veterans and their families receive compassionate, timely, and effective services while advocating for their rights, benefits, and dignified treatment. We strive to foster collaboration among state agencies, facilitate access to federal and state benefits, and conduct thorough investigations to enhance the quality of care provided to veterans.



OVA Seal



OVA Logo

OUR VISION:

Every veteran in the Commonwealth receives the highest standard of care, enjoys the full spectrum of available benefits, and is treated with unwavering respect and dignity.



Introduction to the OVA: Responsibilities

Liaisons – Ground level

- aid and coordinate with local veterans' service officers to ensure veterans receive all available state and federal benefits;
- act as a liaison to relevant federal agencies to advocate on behalf of the veterans of the commonwealth; and
- advise the public and those at the highest levels of state government about how the commonwealth may improve its services to and for veterans and their families.



OVA Resources: Regional Liaisons



Northeast Region
CLIFF COY

Clifford.Coy@mass.gov



Western Region
CHRISTIAN DILUZIO

Christian.DiLuzio@mass.gov



Southeast Region
TRUC DECOSTE

Truc.DeCoste@mass.gov



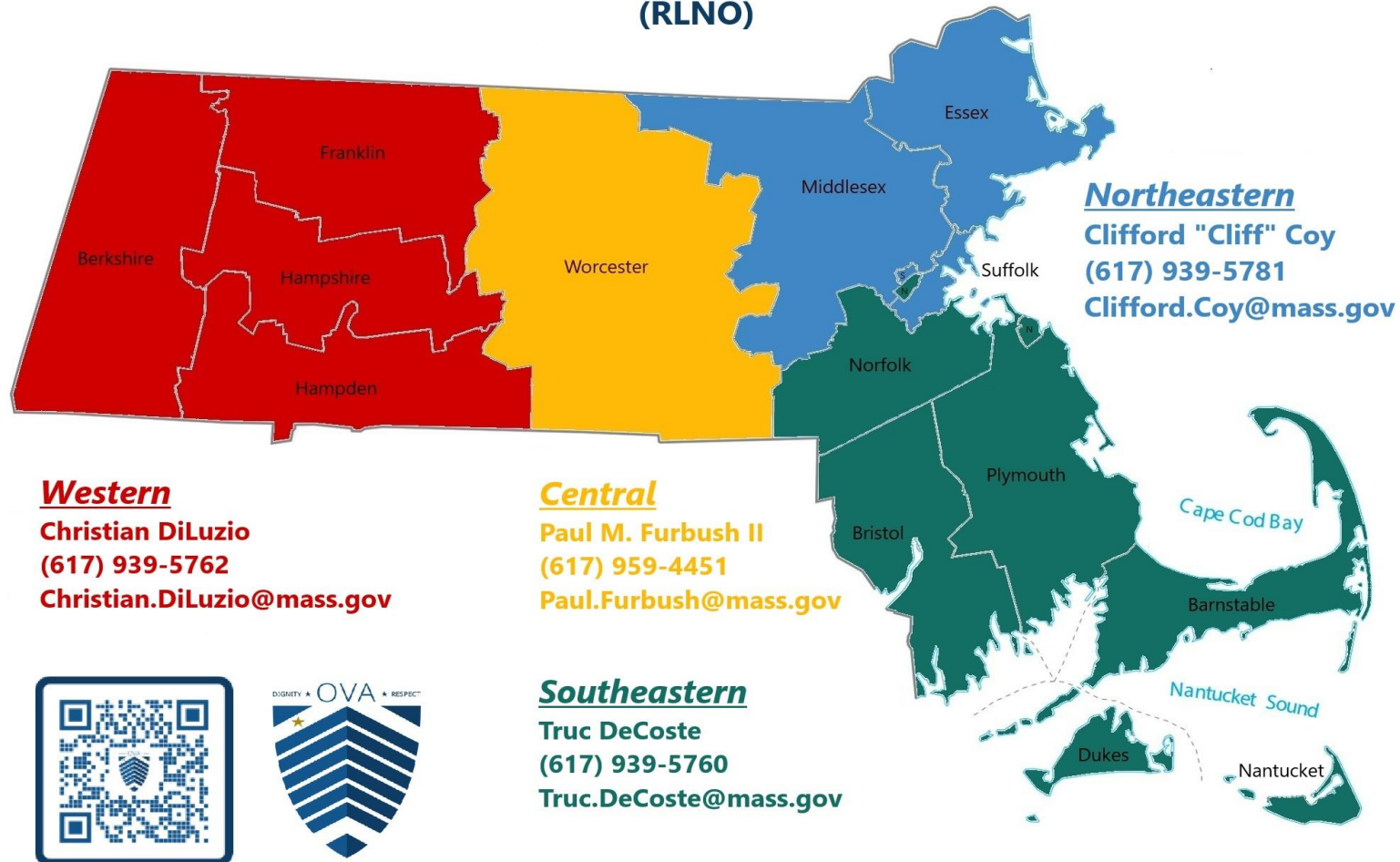
Central Region
PAUL FURBUSH

Paul.Furbush@mass.gov



OVA Resources: Regional Liaisons

Regional Liaison Officers (RLNO)





Veterans and Disability: A More Accurate Conversation

- Disability does not mean inability
 - VA Disability is a misnomer
- Many veterans with service-connected disabilities maintain highly successful professional careers
- Invisible disabilities such as PTSD, hearing loss, or chronic pain often coexist with strong workforce participation
 - Reasonable accommodations are a key element of participation
- Statutory & Regulatory efforts should focus on accessibility, accommodation, and removing unnecessary barriers



Key Services Available to Veterans

Not Every “Veteran” Qualifies For Services!

- Disability compensation for service-connected conditions
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) services
- Education benefits including the GI Bill
- Housing assistance, caregiver support, and suicide prevention resources
- Employment assistance and workplace accommodation support
- VA Healthcare services including primary care, specialty care, mental health, and prosthetics
- Massachusetts law provides veteran services at the local level
 - Largely focused on indigent veterans



Military Training and Professional Licensure

- Veterans often leave service with extensive technical and leadership training
- Military competencies are not always fully recognized by civilian licensing systems
- Some veterans are forced to repeat training they have already mastered
- Licensure barriers delay workforce entry and reduce economic mobility
- Massachusetts has opportunities to expand recognition of military experience and credentials
- Improved credential recognition strengthens workforce participation and economic growth



Opportunities for Collaboration

- Expand employer understanding of veteran workforce strengths
- Improve accessibility and workforce retention strategies
- Coordinate around credentialing and workforce-entry barriers
- Increase awareness of VA and state veteran resources
- Support veterans not as a vulnerable population alone, but as long-term community contributors and leaders



Closing & Discussion

- Veterans are not defined by disability alone
- Most veterans continue serving their communities through careers, leadership, and public engagement
- The goal is not dependency—it is access, opportunity, and successful participation
- Removing unnecessary barriers strengthens both veterans and Massachusetts communities
- Questions & Discussion



OVA Tip Line: (781) 664-9034

Office of the Veteran Advocate

Connect with the OVA!



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