



THE UTAH

A PUBLICATION OF THE UTAH DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

VETERANS VOICE

VETERANS.UTAH.GOV • JANUARY 2016

2015 *in Review*



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

GARY R. HARTER
Executive Director, Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs

First off, Happy New Year to everyone! We wish you a terrific 2016. In this issue of *The Voice*, you will find our regular items as well as a review of 2015 — a summary of notable accomplishments and happenings.

We were honored to have many dignitaries visit Utah during the year, including President Barack Obama, Mr. Robert McDonald, Secretary of the VA, Ms. Deborah James, Secretary of the Air Force, General Mark Welsh, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Herbert "Hawk" Carlisle, Commanding General of the Air Combat Command and Lieutenant General James Jackson, Chief of the Air Force Reserve. It was great to have them here!

We saw huge gains in veteran employment, dropping our veterans unemployment rate to 3.6%, sixth best in the country. I applaud the efforts of the business community, Workforce Services and many others who helped make this happen. There are over 1,000 more veterans in school today than last year. Davis Applied Technology College and Westminster College both opened Veterans Support Centers. The VA is processing

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Korean War Medal Recognition Ceremony.



Ribbon cutting on Sept. 11, 2015.



Governor Herbert presents Proclamation to General Mark Welsh.

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WORLD WAR II/KOREAN WAR • VIETNAM WAR • COLD WAR/PEACETIME • GULF WAR/OIF/OEF • FAMILY





DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE CONT.

claims quicker and more Utah veterans are receiving compensation now than ever before. The VA Medical Center continues to be a national leader in healthcare with the first ever prosthetic implants. Veterans organizations, both large and small, are flourishing throughout the state. There were events to honor World War II veterans, Korean War veterans, Welcome Home ceremonies for Vietnam veterans, and 500 World War II veterans participated in Honor Flights this year to DC. Our veterans nursing homes are all five star-rated, the only state in the country to achieve that distinction.

On the military side, some of the highlights include the F-35 Joint Strike Fighters are now stationed at Hill Air Force Base, the first operational units to receive them. The workforce at Hill AFB continued to be recognized for their outstanding performance and the workload continues to grow. Tooele Army Depot, with ever increasing support for the deployed forces, made great strides towards their efforts for net-zero energy independence. Dugway Proving Ground welcomed in

Colonel Sean Kirschner as their new commander.

What we sometimes forget is that service members across all of the units in Utah, continue to be deployed worldwide, and 2015 was no different. The Utah National Guard, both Army and Air Force, deployed units and personnel throughout the year, and as this is being written, another group just left. They, like their counterparts at Hill AFB and Fort Douglas, and armories and posts across Utah, are being sent to defend our freedoms and way of life, and to help those that need our assistance. We wish them all to be safe and return to their families very soon.

Most of all though, it is you that has made this year great. We truly enjoy interacting with veterans, military members and their families throughout our great state. We have tremendous partners at federal, state and local levels who work tirelessly to ensure great outcomes. We are all here to serve and work with you. Here's to an even brighter 2016! 🇺🇸

National Veteran Wheelchair Games in SLC are Fast Approaching!

By Jill Atwood, Salt Lake Regional Health Care Hospital

Mark your calendars for the last week in June. If you are a Veteran interested in participating or a member of the community wanting to volunteer please visit:

<http://wheelchairgames.org/>

Wheelchair games clinics and training are happening right now. For more information contact Recreation Therapist Heather Brown at 801-582-1565 ext. 1559. 🇺🇸



We need volunteers and fans to fill the stands in support of these extraordinary Veteran Athletes — *get involved today!*

Outreach, Websites, Claims Assistance, Events, and Resources



UTAH DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

veterans.utah.gov

Register your information with the Veterans Information System:
uvisreg.utah.gov/vtsreg/public/Register



CLAIMS ASSISTANCE CALENDAR

veterans.utah.gov/outreach-calendar

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

veterans.utah.gov/events-calendar



COORDINATION OF VETERANS SERVICES

veterans.utah.gov/coordination-of-veteran-services

Transfer and Lodging Center Update

Mileage eligibility changes for short-term lodging: Veterans are entitled to an overnight hotel stay if they are traveling at least 75 miles for treatment at the medical center (the old policy was 50 miles).

Veterans Choice Program Who Is Eligible?



Eligibility requirements as of
December 1, 2015

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Call **1-866-606-8198** to make sure
you qualify.

Visit www.va.gov/opa/choiceact for
more information or to chat live
with a VA representative.



A Veteran must be enrolled in VA healthcare and meet one of the criteria listed below:

1

Wait Time

A Veteran is told by his/her local VA medical facility that they will not be able to schedule an appointment for care:

- Within 30 days of the date the Veteran's physician determines he/she needs to be seen; or
- Within 30 days of the date the Veteran wishes to be seen if there is no specific date from his/her physician



2

Distance

The Veteran lives more than 40 miles driving distance from a VA medical facility with a full-time primary care physician.



3

No Full-Service VA Facility

The Veteran lives in a state or territory without a full-service VA medical facility and lives more than 20 miles from such a facility. This applies to Veterans who live in Alaska, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or the U.S. Virgin Islands.



4

Unusual or Excessive Burden

The Veteran faces an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to a VA medical facility based on geographic challenges, environmental factors, a medical condition, the nature or frequency of the care needed, and/or whether an attendant is needed. Staff at the Veteran's local VA medical facility will work with him/her to determine if he/she is eligible for any of these reasons.



5

Unique Travel

The Veteran has to travel by air, boat, or ferry to the nearest VA medical facility.



HAFB 2015 *in Review*

By Micab Garbarino
Media Relations, 75th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

JANUARY

2015 marked the 75th anniversary of Hill AFB. On Jan. 12, 1940, roughly 200 civic and government leaders, and other interested parties participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for Hill Field.

FEBRUARY

The Ogden ALC's 570th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron took on additional workload to help the Marine Corps. The squadron, which maintains A-model F-35 Lightning II aircraft, was focused on modifying two B-model F-35s for five months to help the Marines achieve their initial operational capability. The Marines landed at Hill AFB on Feb. 2 and work began the next day.

MARCH

The 775th Explosive Ordnance Flight's Tech. Sgt. Gabriel Wasnuk was presented with the Purple Heart during a commander's call at Hill AFB March 25. Wasnuk was awarded the Purple Heart for brain injuries he sustained during two deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan as an Explosive Ordnance Technician, where he was in the area of six improvised explosive blasts.

Community leaders affiliated with the Utah Defense Alliance and the Top of Utah Military Affairs Committee, received a close-up look Feb. 13 at progress in F-22 Raptor maintenance. The event was an effort to familiarize community leaders with the Ogden ALC mission. The visit culminated with an overview of the recent F-22 rapid improvement event focused on reducing F-22 depot flow days by 30 percent.

APRIL

President Barack Obama visited Hill AFB April 3 to talk economy and solar industry jobs during his first visit to the state of Utah as commander in chief. The president addressed a group of Utah elected officials, base leadership, and news media at Hill's solar array to announce a program called Solar Ready Vets, which seeks to train veterans for jobs in solar energy.





JUNE

Col. David B. Lyons took the reins of the 388th Fighter Wing during a change of command ceremony June 19. The ceremony was presided over by Lt. Gen. Chris Nowland, 12th Air Force and Air Forces Southern commander.

JULY

Secretary of the Air Force, Deborah Lee James, visited Hill AFB July 23-24 for the first time since taking the job. James' visit included updates on the transition from the F-16 to the F-35, the total force integration of the active-duty 388th and Reserve 419th Fighter Wings, F-35 and missile depot maintenance, Hill's global munitions-deployment capability, and cost effectiveness programs helping the Air Force "Make Every Dollar Count."

AUGUST

The Air Force's trusted trainer, the T-38 Talon, received a new lease on life thanks to a robust structural-modification program. Technicians in the Ogden ALC's 575th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at Randolph AFB, Texas, completed the first aircraft in the program. The program, tabbed "Pacer Classic III," will extend the life of the T-38 Talon to 2029.

OCTOBER

The Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, wrapped up a visit to Hill AFB by holding a town-hall-style meeting with the base's Airmen. During his visit, Welsh received an overview of several Hill AFB facilities and operations. He also visited with Utah Governor Gary Herbert. 🇺🇸

Fallen Warriors Memorial Camp

DATC 2015 *in Review*

*Dina Nielsen, Ph.D., Director of Student Services and Financial Aid
Davis Applied Technology College*

This past year at the DATC we committed to creating a more seamless transition for our veterans. We created a designated Veterans' Center with an advisor, meeting or study space, and a place to simply escape the busyness of campus. Daniel Czech is the new Academic Advisor who will assist veterans transitioning to civilian life. Daniel is a 22-year veteran of the U.S. Army and has also worked in Weber State University's Veterans Upward Bound program. He just finished his master's degree in Education. His thesis focused on the veteran experience of returning to civilian life and pursuing education. We are excited to have him as part of the DATC team. 🇺🇸



SLCC 2015 *in Review*

*Darlene Head, Manager veteran Services, Salt Lake
Community College*

SLCC continues to expand services for student Veterans and dependents on campus and work with local and national Veteran communities. Events this year included our 9th annual Valentines-4-Veterans campaign. We collected over 3,000 messages of love and support for Service members and Veterans which were delivered to patients in the SL VA hospital, all Utah VA nursing homes and three Veteran Homeless shelters.

At SLCC, 186 Veteran and Service members graduated this year and were honored at the annual Veterans Graduation dinner and given a special Veterans Honor cord.

In September Rear Admiral Rick Snyder from Washington D.C. and Lt. Cmdr. J Apollo Burgamy, U.S. Navy Reserve, Utah visited our campus. Admiral Snyder requested to visit our Veterans Center to learn how we serve our student Veterans.

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DUGWAY 2015 *in Review*

By Aaron Goodman, Director Family and MWR at Dugway Proving Ground

SLCC CONT.

Every Veterans Day, we hold flag raising ceremonies on three SLCC campuses to honor our Veterans. This year the Utah Battleship Naval Sea Cadets, the VFW Post # 3586, and Veteran Staff and Faculty members assisted with our Flag raising ceremonies.

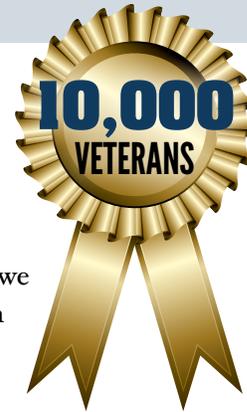
VAHC Women's Services, under the direction of Coordinator, Gina Hemma, honors our Utah Women Veterans each year. This year the "Grit To Glamour: Warrior To Woman" Fashion Show was held. The 13 women Veterans were treated to custom-designed gowns from the SLCC Fashion Institute. Participants included a 23-year-old soldier and an 84-year-old Korean War vet modeling their gowns.

SLCC will be opening a second Veterans Center located on the South City Campus with an open house held in March. In addition, a new employee will provide Veteran outreach to four additional campuses. We continue to proudly serve our veterans and dependents. 🇺🇸

- In July, Dugway Change of Command occurred from Colonel Ronald F. Fizer to Colonel Sean G. Kirschner on the Parade Field, United States Army Dugway Proving Ground Dugway, Utah.
- Dugway held the dedication ceremony for the \$19 million high school in December. This is a major investment in the education of our children. The school will house all K-12 students. The Department of Defense provided a \$16.1 million grant specified for a new high school and Tooele County School District contributed \$3.3 million.
- Family and MWR hosted a range of community events that contributed

to the resiliency and quality of life for our soldiers, their families, and the community. One of the most significant events was the Dugway Trail and Ultra Run held in October. The mission of the annual family event is to promote community outreach, build resiliency, and encourage fitness and well being. The run is held on Dugway at 5 Mile Hill and participants can choose courses from a 5K, 10K, 20K, 30K, and 50K with varying degrees of desert terrain. This was their most successful year to date and was a fun event for the entire community. 🇺🇸





Million Veteran Program Celebrates Milestone

By: *Jeremy Laird, PAS, VASLCHCS*

The Million Veteran Program (MVP) at the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System recently enrolled their 10,000th Veteran. It is the largest clinical study ever done at the VA Salt Lake City.

MVP is a completely voluntary program headed by the VA Office of Research and Development. The goal is to see how genetics affect the health of Veterans in order to improve care down the road.

“If you build a big enough biobank of DNA linked to Veterans records,” said Dr. Larry Meyer, VASLCHCS Associate Chief of Staff, Research and Development, “you can learn things about the way genes affect disease and health.”

Researchers hope the program and subsequent studies may lead to new ways of preventing and treating illness, and answer questions like “Why does a treatment work well for some Veterans but not for others?”; “Why are some Veterans at a greater risk for developing an illness?”;

and “How can we prevent certain illnesses in the first place?”

50 VA Medical Centers are currently enrolling Veterans in MVP. 420,000 Veterans have volunteered to be part of the program, and genotyping of 200,000 Veterans is already complete. Soon this data will be made available to VA researchers for studies that will eventually help improve health care.

VASLCHCS will also play another major roll in MVP. A new high-tech storage facility the samples will be built here. Robots will fetch the samples from freezers to be sent out to researchers around the nation. Construction for the building should start next fall.

If you would like more information on MVP, go to <http://www.research.va.gov/MVP/>, or if you are interested in enrolling, call 866-441-6075. 🇺🇸

Are You Eligible for In-state Tuition?

Blair Carruth, Assistant Commissioner Utah System of Higher Education

Over the last couple of years, the Utah State Board of Regents has made revisions to its tuition policy to enable more veterans and military service members and immediate family members of veterans and military service members to qualify for in-state tuition.

Under conditions established by policy, veterans and immediate family members of veterans may receive this benefit. Military service members serving active duty within Utah and their immediate family members may also qualify for in-state tuition. Additionally, other individuals who are entitled to benefits under Title 38 U.S. Code Chapter 30 Montgomery GI Bill- Active Duty Educational Assistance Program or Chapter 33 Post 9/11 Education Assistance Program are covered under this policy. The policy may be viewed at higher.utah.org/pdf/policies/R512_2015-5-15.pdf 🇺🇸



UTAH AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE



By Lt. Col. Steve Fairbourn, State of Utah National Guard

The Utah Air National Guard base located on the east side of Salt Lake City International Airport was renamed the Roland R. Wright Air National Guard Base November 18 2014 in honor of Retired Brigadier General Roland R. Wright, a combat pilot with a distinguished military career spanning more than three decades. General Wright, who was in attendance at the ceremony, flew 200 combat hours in the P-51 Mustang with the 357th Fighter Group. He is credited with the destruction of three enemy aircraft in aerial combat – one “kill” short of the “ace” designation.

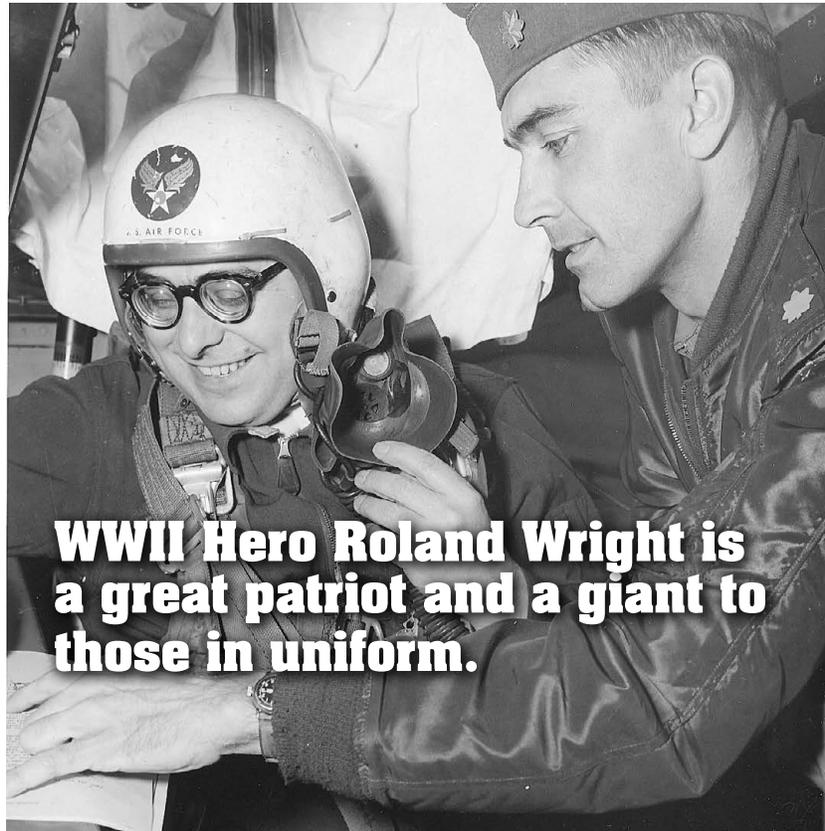
After his active duty service, he was one of the first pilots to enlist in the 191st Fighter Squadron when the Utah Air National Guard was created in 1946. A command pilot in multiple aircraft, he logged 7,800 flying hours during his military career, approximately 4,000 of which are in various types of fighter aircraft. As an Air Guardsman, he served as a fighter-aircraft flight lead, squadron operations officer, squadron commander, and group commander, to include flying a number of missions to Vietnam. He also served as the first Chief of Staff for Air (Utah) from 1969 to 1976. In 1972, he was appointed to the Air Force Reserves Policy Committee, which included four meetings annually with the Secretary of the Air Force, Air Force Chief of Staff, and other distinguished leaders.

In his civilian career, he graduated from the University of Utah College of Law in 1958 and practiced in Salt Lake City until 1991. General Wright passed away in 2015 but his family still reside in Salt Lake City.

“Brigadier General Roland Wright is a great patriot who has served this country with distinction during times of war and peace,” said Major General Jefferson Burton, Utah Adjutant General. “As a fighter pilot during World War II, he represented the best America had to offer demonstrating great skill and valor in the face of danger. Following the war, he was an aviation pioneer here in Utah

providing tremendous leadership in the Utah Air National Guard for decades. To those of us in uniform, Roland Wright is truly a Giant; and it’s only fitting that this Air Base where he so faithfully served our state and our nation was named in his honor.”

The ceremony in November 2014 was important as it represents the day in 1946 when the Utah Air National Guard and its 191st Fighter Squadron were established. Over the past 60 years, members of the Utah Air National Guard have fought in every major conflict the United States has entered. Today, more than 1,400 Airmen continue to serve in a professional capacity at the base and via deployed locations around the globe. 🇺🇸



VA Healthcare, VA Benefits Facts and Stats

VA Salt Lake City Healthcare System FY 15 Data

UNIQUE PATIENTS

 **55,891**

 an increase of 1,420 from FY 14



OUTPATIENT VISITS

687,233

an increase of 50,697 over FY 14 

COMPLETED APPOINTMENTS = Average Wait Times for Established Patients at the George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center

Primary Care: **3.47** days

Specialty Care: **6.87** days

Mental Health: **3.21** days



OEF/OIF/OND/GWOT VETERAN ENROLLMENT

20,087 Veterans — 2,376 are female

Salt Lake City VA Regional Office

25,850 Utah Veterans receiving compensation and pension

\$433 million paid annually



SALT LAKE CITY VETERANS BY SERVICE PERIOD

(Vet Pop. 9/14)

11,515 female  **140,204** male

SLC VSC (UTAH VETERANS)

Claims backlog (>125 days)  **96%** since 4/13 (9,471 to 381)

Percentage of Backlog (of total inventory)  **75.8%** to **20%**

Rating Inventory  **84%** since 4/13 (11,942 to current 1,875 claims)

Average Days Pending  **41%** (165 days to 98 days)

Improved claims accuracy/quality  **82%** to **98%** past 2 years

SALT LAKE CITY APPEALS

Notice of Disagreements (NODs) pending decreased **54.1%** (553 to 255)

Timeliness for processing initial appeals = **89 days** (397 days nationally)

Timeliness for processing formal appeals to BVA = **154 days** (622 days nationally)



VOC. REHABILITATION & EMPLOYMENT (VR&E)

1,950 Veterans enrolled

\$90 million in VR&E benefits paid

VSOC locations – U of U and SLCC

Out-based VR&E Offices located in **Ogden and St. George**

SLC NATIONAL CALL CENTER (NCC)

Average of **3,000** calls daily



UDMVA Facts and Stats

Dept. of Veteran and Military Affairs



VETS IN UTAH



7,030

WWII Veterans



14,253

Korean Veterans



46,268

Vietnam Veterans



33,102

Cold War/Peacetime Veterans



56,814

Current Conflict Veterans

9% female



91% male

Total Veterans in Utah
FY 2014

151,719

MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

\$3.3 billion

HAFB total annual economic impact 2014
• 20,461 personnel



\$235 million

Dugway Proving Ground economic impact 2014
• 1,900 personnel

\$63.8 million

Tooele Army Depot FY2014
• 510 Department of Army civilians and one soldier

VA HEALTHCARE DATA

VA compensation and pension increase • State of Utah

\$351,000,000

FY2013

\$433,000,000

FY2014

23%

FY2014

34,062

unique patients

57,373

enrolled patients

EMPLOYMENT



1,424

May 2015

1,545

Nov. 2015

Unemployment rate for **veterans:** **3.3%**

Sept. 2015



816 Sept. 2014 **607** Nov. 2015
Veterans on UI

EDUCATION



8,706

of Vets

466

of Family Members Utilizing

95

of Institutions

CEMETERY

368

Veterans

40

Family



47%

Increase



VETERANS' HOMES (Residents January 2016)

368

Veterans

40

Family

408

Total

97%

Occupancy

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can I receive full military retirement and VA disability compensation?

Concurrent Receipt or Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) is a benefit managed through the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) that allows qualified military retirees to receive full military retirement and VA disability compensation. This law phases out the VA disability offset, thus military retirees with 20 or more years of service and a 50% (or higher) VA rated disability will no longer have their military retirement reduced by the amount of their VA disability compensation. This program is run by the Department of Defense; it is not a VA program. If you are qualified for concurrent receipt, you should have automatically received and increase in your military retirement. Under these rules, you may be qualified for CRDP if:

- You are a regular retiree with a VA disability rating of 50% or greater.
- You are a reserve retiree with 20 qualifying years of service, who has a VA disability rating of 50% or greater and who has reached the age of retirement. (In most cases the retirement age for reservists is 60, but certain reserve retirees may be eligible before they turn 60. If you are a member of the Ready Reserve, your retirement age can be reduced below age 60 by three months for each 90 days of active service you have performed during a fiscal year.)
- You are retired under Temporary Early Retirement Act (TERA) and have a VA disability rating of 50% or greater.
- You are a disability retiree who earned entitlement to retired pay under any provision of law other than

solely by disability, and you have a VA disability rating of 50% or greater.

For more information please contact the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) at 800-321-1080.

Can I, as a dependent, continue to receive my Veteran's compensation benefit after they are deceased?

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments are available for un-remarried surviving spouses, surviving spouses who remarry after age 57, children under age 18, and children ages 18 to 23 (if attending a VA approved schools).

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is a tax free monetary benefit paid to eligible survivors of military Service members who died in the line of duty or eligible survivors of Veterans whose death resulted from a service-related injury or disease.

DIC payments may also be authorized for surviving dependents of Veterans with a permanent and total service-connected disability at time of death but whose death did not result from service-connected disability, if the Veteran was continuously rated totally disabled for 10 or more years immediately before death. 🇺🇸





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(801) 326-2372
<http://veterans.utah.gov>

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550 Foothill Drive, Suite 200
Salt Lake City, Utah 84113
1 (800) 827-1000

VA Salt Lake City Health Care System
George E. Wahlen Veterans Affairs Medical Center
500 Foothill Drive
Salt Lake City, Utah 84113
(801) 582-1565
<http://www.saltlakecity.va.gov>

American Legion Service Office
550 Foothill Drive, Suite 105
Salt Lake City, Utah 84113
(801) 326-2380

Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
550 Foothill Drive, Suite 105
Salt Lake City, Utah 84113
(801) 326-2375

Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)
550 Foothill Drive, Suite 105
Salt Lake City, Utah 84113
(801) 326-2471

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
550 Foothill Drive, Suite 105
Salt Lake City, Utah 84113
(801) 326-2385

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
12953 South Minuteman Drive
Draper, Utah 84020
(801) 432-4536

Utah National Guard
Bart Davis, Transition Assistance
12953 South Minuteman Drive
Draper, Utah 84020
(801) 432-4937

U.S. Department of Labor
Veterans Employment and Training Service
140 East 200 South, Suite 209
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111
(801) 524-5703