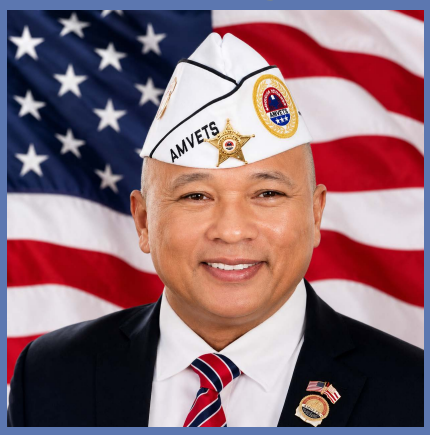
AMVETS Hawaii

Legislative & VA Affairs Update

November 2026 /Vol1

Commander's Message



Donovan Andrew Lazarus
US Army, Retired

Veterans Day 2026 — A Legacy of Service, A Lifetime of Commitment

Aloha AMVETS Family, Fellow Veterans, Military Families, Community Partners, and Friends,

As we prepare to observe Veterans Day on November 11, we honor the men and women who wore the uniform of the United States Armed Forces. Veterans Day is more than a national holiday. It reminds us that freedom has been defended through courage, sacrifice, and service across generations.

From World War II, Korea, and Vietnam to the Persian Gulf, Iraq, Afghanistan, and missions around the world, Veterans answered our nation's call. Here in Hawaii, Pearl Harbor and the Ewa Battlefield remind us that this history is close to home. To every Veteran, regardless of branch, rank, or era: thank you. Your service matters, and your contributions continue to strengthen our communities.

Honoring Veterans Through Action

At AMVETS Department of Hawaii, gratitude must extend beyond ceremonies. Our West Oahu Veterans Center provides fellowship, adaptive fitness and sports, wellness, youth activities, and community service. Our FY2027 Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant award of $683,905 strengthens outreach, peer support, case management, and connections to care, with a goal of serving 150 Veterans in Honolulu County, particularly those not connected to VA health care.

We also honor military spouses, caregivers, surviving families, Gold Star Families, wounded warriors, and those living with visible or invisible wounds. We will continue advocating for timely health care, fair disability compensation, survivor support, and meaningful mental health services. Your service mattered. Your life matters. Your mission is not over.

Looking Ahead: Ewa Battlefield Commemoration

On December 5, 2026, we will host the 85th Annual Ewa Battlefield Commemoration Ceremony, an official Pearl Harbor and America250 commemoration, with Colonel Gregory D. Gadson, U.S. Army (Retired), as keynote speaker. We will honor the service members and civilians whose courage on December 7, 1941, shaped our nation's history.

This Veterans Day, reach out to a fellow Veteran, assist a surviving spouse, volunteer, and share a story of service with the next generation. To our Posts, Auxiliary, volunteers, partners, and families: mahalo for carrying this mission forward. May God bless our Veterans, our military families, Hawaii, and the United States of America.

- Donovan Andrew Lazarus
State Commander, AMVETS Department of Hawaii

www.amvetshawaii.org / donovan@amvets-hawaii.org / 808.382.6835

Legislative & VA Affairs Update

VA Disability Claims and Accountability

VA reported processing more than three million disability claims by September 18, 2026, with improvements in its reported backlog and processing time. AMVETS Hawaii will continue to advocate for accuracy, fair ratings, timely appeals, and accessible representation—not speed alone.

PACT Act and Toxic Exposure

The PACT Act expanded benefits and health care eligibility for many Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxins. Veterans should review their eligibility and consider whether new presumptive conditions support a supplemental claim. Learn more at www.va.gov/PACT.

GRACE for Military Survivors Act

The bipartisan proposal identified in the October newsletter as S. 5445 would extend from one year to three years the period for eligible survivors to contribute qualifying military death gratuities and life insurance proceeds to certain tax-advantaged accounts. This is proposed legislation, not an enacted benefit change.

VA Mental Health Informed Consent

VA announced additional informed-consent requirements for certain psychotropic medications planned for implementation in 2027. AMVETS Hawaii supports informed decisions and will watch for implementation that preserves timely access to care. Veterans should consult their clinicians before changing prescribed treatment.

Community-Based Suicide Prevention

Our $683,905 FY2027 SSG Fox award supports outreach, screening, peer support, case management, education, and warm connections to VA and community resources. The program targets 150 Veterans in Honolulu County, with particular attention to Veterans outside VA care.

FY2027 Funding and Oversight

We will monitor federal funding and oversight for Veterans health care, disability benefits, suicide prevention, adaptive sports, caregivers, and transportation, with attention to the unique access challenges of Hawaii and the Pacific.

Veterans Resources

VA benefits: www.va.gov | PACT Act: www.va.gov/PACTVeterans Crisis Line: Call 988, then Press 1; or text 838255.AMVETS West Oahu Veterans Center: 5001 Iroquois Avenue, Building 612, Ewa Beach, Hawaii 96706 | (808) 888-0410

Chaplain's Message



Dr. James Kimo Walz, Sr.
USN, Ret. • Department Chaplain

The Courage to Remember, the Grace to Give Thanks"November is a month that invites us
to remember, reflect, and give thanks. For veterans, those words carry a meaning that goes deeper than a holiday on the calendar. As we enter November, we are reminded of two important occasions: Veterans Day, when our nation honors those who have served, and Thanksgiving, when we pause to recognize the blessings we sometimes take for granted.

Remembering Those Who ServedEvery veteran carries a story. Some stories are filled with pride and accomplishment. Others carry memories of hardship, loss, separation, or experiences that are difficult to put into words. Some of our brothers and sisters returned home to warm welcomes. Others returned to a country that struggled to understand what they had experienced. And some never made it home at all.

This November, let us remember that honoring veterans means more than displaying a flag or attending a ceremony. It means listening to one another, checking on a fellow veteran, supporting military families, and making sure no veteran feels forgotten. Sometimes the most meaningful act of service happens long after the uniform has been put away.

Finding Gratitude in the Ordinary
Thanksgiving reminds us that gratitude is not dependent on having a perfect life. We can be grateful even when we carry burdens, face uncertainty, or miss someone who is no longer with us. For veterans, gratitude might be found in a friend's phone call, a family member's embrace, a peaceful morning, or the simple privilege of gathering around a table with people who care. We may not be able to change every chapter of our past, but we can choose how we care for one another today.

As chaplain, I encourage each of us to look beyond what is missing and recognize the good that remains. And when gratitude is difficult to find, may we have the courage to reach out rather than carry our burdens alone.

A Challenge for This November
I invite every AMVETS member to do three things this month:

Remember someone. Reach out to a veteran or military family member who may be struggling, grieving, or feeling isolated.

Thank someone. Express appreciation to a fellow veteran, caregiver, spouse, or friend who has made a difference in your life.

Serve someone. Find one practical way to make another person's day a little easier.

These simple actions reflect the best of our veteran community: loyalty, compassion, sacrifice, and a commitment to leave no one behind. As people of faith, we can also remember the words of Psalm 107:1: "Give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endures forever." Gratitude does not erase our struggles, but it can remind us that even in difficult seasons, we do not have to face life alone.

A Closing Thought
Military service teaches us that courage is not always displayed on a battlefield. Sometimes courage is asking for help. Sometimes it is beginning again after a difficult season. Sometimes it is reaching out to a fellow veteran who has become quiet or withdrawn. And sometimes the greatest expression of gratitude is making sure that the sacrifices of those who served are honored through the way we treat one another.

This November, may we remember with honor, give thanks with humility, and serve with compassion. May God bless our veterans, strengthen their families, comfort those who grieve, and guide AMVETS as we continue to serve those who have served our nation.

My prayer for you,
Heavenly Father, thank You for the men and women who have served our nation and for the families who have stood beside them. Comfort those who carry painful memories, strengthen those facing new challenges, and encourage those who feel forgotten. Help us to honor our fellow veterans not only with words, but through acts of kindness, friendship, and service. As we celebrate this season of thanksgiving, teach us to recognize our blessings and share them generously with others. May Your peace guide our hearts and Your grace sustain us. Amen.

- Your AMVETS Hawaii Chaplain
- Dr. James Kimo Walz, Sr. (USN, Ret.)Chaplain, AMVETS Department of Hawaii

AMVETS DEPARTMENT OF HAWAII | AMVETS HAWAII SERVICE FOUNDATION CORP

FEATURED: NOVEMBER 2026 | VETERANS DAY & COMMUNITY EVENTS

VETERANS DAY CEREMONIES

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11

8:00 AM • Mayor's Ceremony — Punchbowl

Governor's Ceremony — Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery, Kaneohe

Governor's ceremony time to be confirmed.

NIGHT WAVE NIGHT MARKET

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11

6:00–9:00 PM • FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

West Oahu Veterans Center, Ewa Beach

5K THANKSGIVING TURKEY TROT

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26

6:00 AM Rally • 7:00–9:00 AM Run/Walk

Help Combat Suicide • FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

West Oahu Veterans Center, Ewa Beach

ADDITIONAL VETERAN EVENTS

NOVEMBER 5–26

Nov 5: Medicare Update, 10 AM

Nov 5–12: KOA 2026 Challenge

Nov 11: Medicare Education, 10 AM–12 PM

Nov 26: Veterans Thanksgiving Luncheon, 10 AM–12 PM

WEST OAHU VETERANS CENTER • 5001 Iroquois Ave. (JBPHH), Ewa Beach, HI 96706 • (808) 888-0410

AMVETS WEST OAHU VETERANS CENTER | PROGRAM REGISTRATION

5001 Iroquois Ave. • West Loch Annex (JBPHH) • Ewa Beach, HI 96706 • (808) 888-0410

BIG TIRE BOOTCAMP

Adaptive Sports & Fitness • Workout sessions

Tue–Thu 5:30–7:30 PM | Sat 6–8 AM

Alim Shabazz • alim@amvets-hawaii.org

bigtirebootcamp.com

SCOUT TROOPS 316 & 613

Scout troop meetings • Hall

Mon 6:30–9 PM

Veronica Chinn • (808) 206-6799

BASKETBALL HAWAII YOUTH ACADEMY

Basketball clinics/games; girls volleyball

Basketball Mon–Thu 4–9 PM | Volleyball Sat 10 AM–12 PM

Coach Mario "Al" Alfaro • (808) 220-7889

alfaros85@yahoo.com

WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT HAWAII

Peer support meetings • Hall

3rd Wednesday monthly • 5:30–7:30 PM

Lonatana Ala • (808) 754-3079

ISLAND ATHLETES GIRLS SOFTBALL

Girls softball clinics & games

Mon–Fri 4–8 PM | Sun 8 AM–4 PM

Earl Fernandez • (808) 699-9690

earlzsealcoating2@gmail.com

OKINAWA KENPO

Martial arts training • Hall, Bldg. 612

Tue & Thu 4–6:30 PM

Sensei Marcus DeValentino • (808) 451-8295

okinawakenpodssi.com

Program schedules and contacts are subject to change. Contact each program to confirm participation.

Physical Address:

AMVETS West Oahu Veterans Center
5001 Iroquois Ave., West Loch Annex (JBPHH)
Ewa Beach, Hawaii (U.S.A.) 96706

Mailing Address:

AMVETS HAWAII
P.O. Box 2865
Ewa Beach, Hawaii 96706

Membership Visit www.amvets.org
Website:https://amvetshawaii.org