

State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



JOEY STRICKLAND
SECRETARY

Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs

January 22, 2019

VIA Electronic Mail to:

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RE: *January 2019 Military Family Assistance Fund Annual Report*

Dear Members:

Please accept this as the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs January 2019 Military Family Assistance Fund (MFA) Annual Report, required per R.S. 46:121-123 to be sent to members of the Louisiana Legislature's Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget.

BACKGROUND

In 2005, the Louisiana Legislature passed R.S. 46:121-123, establishing the Military Family Assistance Fund (MFA) as a state treasury fund, funded solely by donations. The MFA was created to help members of the Louisiana National Guard (LANG) and Military Reserves and their families, providing LANG members one last bus trip home to see family and loved ones just prior to deployments overseas, and to assist with undue financial hardships considered eligible under the statute.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, the legislature passed Act 185 (2016), effective August 1, 2016, opening up the MFA to claims from all Louisiana veterans and their families. Thereafter, the MFA saw a greater number of applications coming in from individual veterans, and under the direction of the MFA Board, the fund became more responsive to the practical needs of our Louisiana veterans eligible for such assistance.

Per the Louisiana Administrative Code, for MFA need-based claims of up to \$1,500, the MFA Administrator can approve or deny payment, provided that the claims and supporting documentation meet statutory requirements. For claims ranging from above \$1,500 through \$2,500, the three-person MFA Fund Committee meets to approve or deny payment. Payment of claims greater than \$2,500 must be approved by the full MFA Board. The MFA Board consists of 11 members designated appointed as provided for in R.S. 46:123 (A)(2)(a). The current MFA Administrator is LDVA Executive Management Officer Holly Talley, available at holly.talley@la.gov.

In 2018, the MFA Fund approved 55 applications awarding a total of \$95,276 in need-based claims to Louisiana Veterans and their families. Twenty-three applications were approved by the third party administrator, thirteen by the three-person fund committee and nineteen applications were approved by the MFA Board. The rest of the money expended during 2018 went to LANG pre-deployment trips.

FY18 MFA FUND ACTIVITY

On July 1, 2017, the MFA Fund balance was \$429,833. During the FY18 year (ending June 30, 2018), the MFA Fund received a total of \$118,769 in donations to the fund, through license plate renewal donations, state income tax return voluntary donations, and other private donations.

In FY18, based on historic spending authority numbers, the legislature granted the MFA Fund a total of \$115,528 in spending authority from the fund for the year. From July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018, the MFA Fund disbursed a total of \$107,202. Of this amount, \$52,035 was awarded to aid in the LANG pre-deployment trips, and a total of \$55,167 was awarded to Louisiana veterans and their families who demonstrated eligible undue financial hardships.

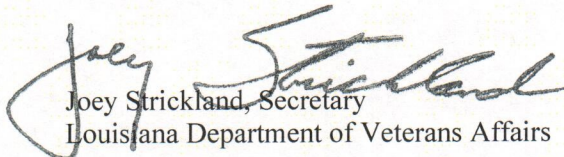
FY19 MFA FUND ACTIVITY TO DATE (through January 1, 2019)

On July 1, 2018, the MFA Fund began the fiscal year with a fund balance of \$441,401. From July 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018, the MFA Fund received a total of \$25,543 in donations. Once again, the legislature granted the MFA Fund \$115,528 in total budgeted spending authority for the FY19 fiscal year. Of that amount, through January 1, 2019, the MFA Fund disbursed a total of \$65,092 in need-based claims to Louisiana veterans and their families. LDVA notes here that since January 1, 2019, LDVA was notified of three upcoming Louisiana Army National Guard deployments to take place before June 30, 2019.

In line with the historical purpose of the MFA Fund, the MFA Board on January 15, 2019 voted to fund two pre-deployment trips already requested by LANG: one 70-soldier transport costing \$15,984 and one 56-soldier transport costing \$11,919, for a total cost of \$27,903. With the need for one additional LANG pre-deployment trip expected to arise before the end of the fiscal year – a 163-soldier transport in April, projected to cost roughly \$25,000 – the MFA Board voted on January 15, 2019 to hold on considering for funding any further individual MFA applications until the pending LDVA request to the legislature for \$60,000 in additional spending authority from the existing MFA account balance is approved. This approval would allow the fund to cover the cost of the currently-anticipated LANG pre-deployment trips this fiscal year, and would still leave some funds (roughly \$55,000) under the current spending authority to address undue financial hardships assistance in individual veteran claims up through June 30, 2019.

Should you have any further questions regarding the Military Family Assistance Fund, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Very Truly Yours,


Joey Strickland, Secretary
Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs