

# THE CLAYTON E. MONEYSMAKER AMERICAN LEGION POST 237

## DEPARTMENT OF ALABAMA

### STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

#### VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

August 28, 2024

**Purpose:** Provide the Executive Committee and the membership knowledge of the duties and responsibilities of the Veterans Service Officer (VSO) of The Clayton E. Moneymaker American Legion Post 237, Department of Alabama.

**Scope:** This SOP applies to most of the facets of the duties and responsibilities of the VSO of The Clayton E. Moneymaker American Legion Post 237, Department of Alabama. However, it is not all encompassing as there may be situations and emergencies that arise that require immediate attention that are not spelled out in the American Legion Officers Guide, or the Constitution and By-laws of the Clayton E. Moneymaker American Legion Post 237, Department of Alabama.

**Authority:** American Legion Post Service Officers Guide, and the Constitution and By-Laws of the Clayton E. Moneymaker American Legion Post 237, Department of Alabama, dated November 21, 2022.

#### **References:**

The American Legion 2022 Post Service Officer's Guide;

<https://www.legion.org/sites/legion.org/files/legion/publications/04VAR1020-Post-Service-Officer-Guide.pdf>

American Legion Service Officer Code of Procedures;

<https://www.legion.org/publications/236325/service-officer-code-procedures>

The Constitution and By-Laws of the Clayton E. Moneymaker American Legion Post 237, Department of Alabama, dated November 21, 2022;

<https://americanlegionpost238.org/index.php?id=86>

IF AT ANYTIME THIS DOCUMENT CONFLICTS WITH THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS, THEN THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS TAKE PRECEDENCE.

The American Legion has supported and actively participated in the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) program since it began in 1946.

### **VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER (VSO):**

1. Shall keep themselves informed of the rights of all veterans and shall advise and assist any veteran, veteran's surviving spouse or other family member, in securing any benefits which may be due any such individuals
2. Shall be in charge of the welfare of all Post members and their families.
3. Shall serve as Chairman of the Rehabilitation and Service Committee and the Child Welfare Committee.

#### **A. Introduction:**

1. The Post 237 Post Service Officer is referred to as the Veterans Service Officer (VSO) in this document. The VSO is a position appointed by the Commander and Post Executive Committee.
2. From The American Legion 2022 Post Service Officer's Guide:
3. "The duties of the Post Service Officer call for a competent and dedicated person, preferably one who can serve indefinitely, and should have a deep interest in fellow veterans, the Post, and community. If the Service Officer is readily available to those needing assistance, it will be helpful. Electing someone that works and lives close by will likely improve effectiveness. A good Service Officer should be retained. The value of a Post Service Officer increases with the length of service. As the Service Officer's reputation grows, so will the prestige of the organization in your community."

4. The Post Service Officer Guide prepared by the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division provides the Service Officer with basic information.

**B. Responsibilities of the VSO:**

1. The VSO will render aid and assistance to veterans and their dependents.

2. He or she will maintain contact with the State Service Officer and the National and Department Rehabilitation Commission so that he or she is kept informed of laws regarding aid to veterans and their dependents.

3. He or she may request disbursement from the Welfare Fund, under supervision of the Commander, and will report all expenditures from this fund to the Post membership in addition to a written monthly report of assistance activity at the next regular General Membership meeting.

4. He or she will submit a year-end report to the Department Rehabilitation Commission Chairperson.

5. The purpose of Veteran's Affairs and Rehabilitation is to assist veterans in obtaining needed hospitalization, the pursuit of claims and in obtaining other veterans' rights and benefits. Alone or along with the Post Chaplain, the VSO may also visit veterans who are ill or disabled and visit their families during bereavement.

6. Necessary claims forms can be secured from the VA or the Department Service Officer. Information will come through Department publications, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Bulletins, memorandums, and VA pamphlets.

7. Training schools for VSOs are held periodically in many Departments to increase their knowledge and contacts.

8. The VSO is responsible for bringing to the attention of all veterans and their dependents the rights and benefits granted them by law – laws for which The American Legion can accept a major share of credit.

9. The VSO must know how to utilize the expert services available through Legion channels, as well as those of other agencies in his/her community. It takes a

dedicated person to get the information to the full-time professionals to make certain that all veterans and dependents are adequately represented.

10. There are five parts of a VA Claim. Each part has sub steps that can determine the speed of processing your claim. The VSO is available to assist in every step of the process.

### **C. The Claim Process Responsibilities of the Veteran and VSO:**

1. The VSO is responsible for:

- Duty to assist – to provide guidance and assistance of general information, claims preparation, and claims development and appeals.

2. The Veteran is responsible for:

- His/her own well-rounded claim. Steps 1, 2, and 3 of the five steps below. The VA is responsible for Steps 4 and 5 of the five steps to a VA Claim.

a. Step 1. The veteran's claim must be service connected: An injury, disease or illness that occurred or was aggravated while on active duty. Must have been treated on active duty and records in your medical file.

b. Step 2: Must have an existing disability: You must provide VA medical proof of a diagnosis of an existing disability that was an injury, disease or illness that occurred or was aggravated while on active duty.

c. Step 3. Must prove the bridge (nexus) between Step 1 and Step 2. In-service medical records, DD Form 214, civilian health care records, VA health care records, and/or buddy statements (witness) to the event that occurred on active duty.

d. Step 4. VA develops the claim:

- 1) Orders files/records.
- 2) Orders necessary examinations.
- 3) Follows the law set forth by Congress for claims development.
- 4) Requests any additional information from the claimant.

e. Step 5. Adjudication of the claim:

- 1) Awards benefits.
- 2) Denies benefits.

#### **D. Local and Other Resources:**

The VSO should maintain a list of the contact information for various resources in their local area that could be beneficial to veterans and their dependents. These resources can include, but are not limited to:

- American Legion Department Service Officer (DSO)
- County/local representatives with American Legion accreditation
- Agencies for senior citizens
- State and local nursing homes
- Homeless shelters
- State and national cemeteries
- Department of Veterans Affairs contact information, including phone numbers and website addresses.
- Dependent upon location, state and municipal governments may provide benefits to disabled veterans; VSOs should contact DSOs and/or local accredited representatives to gather information that could be provided through state government programs.

#### **E. Locating a VSO:**

For information concerning individual or Post VSO participation, the Veteran or family member may contact the chief of voluntary service at your nearest VA medical center. He or she will arrange an initial screening and help you choose the program that best fits your time and interests. Information is also available at [www.volunteer.va.gov/](http://www.volunteer.va.gov/).

#### **F. Participation in Additional Committees:**

The VSO is Chairperson of the Rehabilitation & Service Committee and the Child Welfare Committee. See separate SOPs for those committee responsibilities