

History of the VA

Pre-1775

The idea of the U.S. providing care for its soldiers dates back to 1636, when the pilgrims of Plymouth Colony were battling the Pequot Indians.



"Washington Crossing the Delaware," a painting by Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze, depicts a famous scene of the American Revolutionary War.

1776

In an effort to encourage enlistment during the American Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress provides pensions to soldiers who became disabled as a result of service. In addition, individual states and communities provided medical care to soldiers during the war.

1917

When the U.S. enters World War I, Congress creates a new system of benefits for soldiers and veterans. This system includes disability compensation, insurance and vocational rehabilitation.



1930

Congress authorizes the president to consolidate government activities affecting veterans into a single administrative body. The then-director of the Veterans Bureau, Brigadier Gen. Frank T. Hines, is named administrator of the newly formed Veterans Administration. He will hold this post until 1945.



March 15, 1989

President George H.W. Bush establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs as a cabinet-level position. Says Bush: "There is only one place for the veterans of America, in the Cabinet Room, at the table with the President of the United States of America."

1775

1811

The federal government authorizes the first medical care facilities for veterans.

1815

1834

The first federally funded medical facilities for veterans open.

1855

1865

After the conclusion of the Civil War, many states begin establishing homes for veteran care.



The Battle of Gettysburg, a major battle in the American Civil War.

1915

1920

At this point, benefits for veterans are handled by three separate agencies: the Veterans Bureau, the Bureau of Pensions in the Department of the Interior and the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers.

June 22, 1944

Congress passes the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, a key move that creates additional benefits for veterans.

1955

1973

The U.S. switches to an "all-volunteer force," ending conscription. Meanwhile, the Veterans Administration assumes control of the National Cemetery System from the Department of the Army (with the exception of Arlington National Cemetery).

1995

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