

# DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER JUDITH L. MORALES

I would like to extend my sincere heartfelt gratitude to Department Commander Dan Channel, and the leadership for entrusting me to serve as Department Service Officer following the tutelage of Mr. Kenneth K. Connors.

Mr. Connors served tirelessly, advocating in the best interest of Veterans to secure their earned benefits serving this great Republic, a mission that has always existed. I will persevere to maintain that goal.

Although there have been major changes, one aspect that has not changed is being proactive by streamlining our workflow to stay aligned with the changes by the Department of Veterans Affairs. This is especially critical considering the importance of the inclusion and impact of artificial intelligence in the phases of claims development.

The following statistics show the Service Office workload for the period of June 1, 2025-April 1, 2026:

Office file reviewed	10762
Mail/E-mails received	3202
Mail/E-mails sent	24412
Telephone calls (incoming/outgoing)	10930
Power of Attorney	640
Favorable Appellate decisions	845
Value of recovered benefits	\$22,450,175.00

## Veterans Legislation

The American Legion legislative agenda for veterans' benefits continues to be the bedrock of our organization. The 2026 annual Washington Conference focused on several legislative priorities, including passage of the Major Richard Star Act for combat-injured veterans, improving VA healthcare for women, enhancing mental health services, and improving the compensation and pension processes.

A full list of the American Legion legislative agenda for the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session is on the American Legion national website.

### **Instructional Activities**

This year's session of Post Service Officers Training was held April 24-26, 2026, at the New Jersey National Guard Training Center in Sea Girt. The enrollment has remained steady at 16-18 students out of 30 for the last several years in attendance. Our goal is to increase that number. I believe the Post Service Officer is a vital initial link to the veteran that walks into a post seeking assistance.

I also attended the national convention in 2025, held in Tampa, FL, as the Assistant Department Service Officer. The National VA&R Commission/Committee focused on ensuring timely benefits, reviewing VA budgets, and addressing veterans' claims processing.

Bergmann & Moore, who conducts the Veterans Service Officer training, updated the committee on several favorable cases that were successfully appealed to the United States Court of Appeals for Veteran Claims. Coming soon is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advance Service Training Symposium which is tentatively scheduled for October 2026 which I will be attending.

### **In appreciation**

It has been and continues to be an honor to serve with New Jersey Legionnaires, the Auxiliary, the SAL, and the ALR who always benevolently and unhesitatingly go above and beyond to assist veterans and their families. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the stellar work performed by our Adjutant John Baker, and his staff, Lois McNulty, Tammie Abdrabou, Tricia Grunewald, Steven Fisher, and Larry Platt. I thank you wholeheartedly and salute you. It is my privilege to work with such dedicated people.