

Veterans Corner

New Support, New Access

Oregon Expands Help for Veterans Statewide

Story by Scooter Brown



For Oregon's veterans, the close of the year brought practical progress rather than headlines or politics. In December, the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs announced new statewide funding aimed at strengthening Veteran Resource Centers, expanding access to services where veterans already live, work, and attend school.

The funding, totaling several hundred thousand dollars across Oregon, is being directed to colleges, universities, and community-based veteran programs. While often associated with education, Veteran Resource Centers have evolved into access points for a wide range of services, including benefits navigation, mental health referrals, housing assistance, employment support, and peer connections.

Access has long been a challenge for many veterans, particularly in rural areas. VA facilities can be hours away, transportation limited, and benefit systems difficult to navigate. Resource centers help close that gap by serving as a local entry point where veterans can ask questions, receive guidance, and be connected to appropriate services without being shuffled between agencies.

ODVA officials say the strategy focuses on strengthening existing, trusted networks rather than creating new bureaucratic layers. That approach is especially important for older veterans and those reluctant to seek help until they have personal support and clear direction.

The investment also reflects the diversity of Oregon's veteran population. Veterans range from Vietnam-era service members to post-9/11 veterans balancing

careers, education, and family life. Needs vary, and locally based centers are better positioned to respond, whether assisting with claims, healthcare options, or basic peer support.

Housing stability remains a pressing concern statewide. Veteran Resource Centers often serve as early intervention points, helping veterans access rental assistance, legal aid, or temporary housing before issues escalate. In partnership with counties and nonprofits, these efforts have helped prevent housing loss during periods of economic stress.

Employment support is another key focus. Veterans bring valuable skills to the workforce, but translating military experience into civilian careers can be difficult. Résumé assistance, career counseling, and employer connections continue to play an important role, particularly for veterans changing careers later in life.

The impact extends beyond individual veterans. Stable housing, steady employment, and connected support systems strengthen families and communities while reducing reliance on crisis-driven interventions.

As January begins, ODVA encourages veterans and their families to explore local resources, many of which rely on word-of-mouth rather than advertising. Help may be available through local veterans' service offices, campus centers, or community partners.

The message entering the new year is straightforward: Oregon continues to invest in its veterans with tangible support, expanded access, and local people ready to help.

Oregon in the Middle of a National Guard Legal Fight

Courts, Constitution, and Common Sense

Story by Milo Banks

Oregon has found itself at the center of a national legal dispute over presidential authority, state sovereignty, and when — if ever — the National Guard can be federalized and deployed inside U.S. cities without a governor's consent. What began as a federal deployment announcement last fall has since unfolded into a multi-layered court battle with implications well beyond the Pacific Northwest.

The conflict began in late September, when President Donald Trump announced plans to federalize and deploy roughly 200 members of the Oregon National Guard to Portland. The stated purpose was to protect federal personnel and facilities, particularly the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in the South Waterfront area. Oregon officials objected immediately, arguing that the move crossed constitutional lines.

Governor Tina Kotek and Attorney General Dan Rayfield filed suit, asserting that the president lacked the legal authority to seize control of Oregon's Guard absent a genuine emergency. Under the Constitution and long-standing federal statutes, National Guard units operate under state control unless specific conditions — such as invasion or rebellion — are met.

In early October, a federal district court agreed with Oregon's position. U.S. District Judge Karin Immergut issued a temporary restraining order blocking the deployment, finding that the circumstances in Portland did not rise to the level required for federal military intervention. In her ruling, the judge noted that protests and intermittent unrest did not constitute a rebellion under federal law and emphasized that the Guard's primary mission is to serve state needs under gubernatorial authority.

The ruling underscored a principle often taken for granted: the National Guard is not a standing federal police force. While the president can federalize Guard units under certain conditions, courts have historically required clear, urgent justification.

The case then moved to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, where procedural turns added complexity. The appellate court initially vacated the restraining order and signaled it would consider the case more broadly. Meanwhile, Oregon continued pressing its claims, arguing that allowing the deployment would set a dangerous precedent for federal overreach.

In early November, Oregon secured a permanent injunction reaffirming limits on federal authority and barring Guard deployment absent lawful justification. The ruling strengthened the state's position and sharpened the legal questions heading into the

winter.

As Oregon's case moved through the courts, a similar dispute emerged in Illinois. In December, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to allow the Trump administration to deploy National Guard troops in the Chicago area over objections from state officials. While the court did not issue a full opinion, its order rejected the administration's broad interpretation of federal authority and signaled skepticism toward expansive claims of presidential power.

The Supreme Court's action did not settle Oregon's case directly, but it reinforced a key legal principle: federalization of the Guard requires more than generalized concerns about unrest or public order. Courts, including the nation's highest, appear unwilling to loosen constitutional guardrails without clear evidence of necessity.

Attorney General Rayfield described the Supreme Court's decision as affirmation that constitutional limits still matter. He noted that the federal government relied on nearly identical legal theories in both Illinois and Oregon, suggesting the cases are closely linked in their implications.

On the ground in Portland, circumstances have shifted as well. Protests near the ICE facility have diminished in intensity compared to earlier months, and local law enforcement reports largely peaceful conditions. City and county officials have repeatedly stated they did not request National Guard assistance, further weakening arguments that extraordinary measures were required.

From a practical standpoint, many Oregonians are asking a basic question: if local police, elected leaders, and courts say military deployment is unnecessary, who benefits from it? That question sits at the heart of the legal fight now playing out.

Historically, the use of military forces for domestic law enforcement has been tightly restricted, shaped by the Posse Comitatus Act and decades of precedent aimed at preventing abuse of power. Courts reviewing Oregon's case have repeatedly returned to that history, weighing not just legality, but restraint.

Oregon's lawsuit is not yet fully resolved, but recent rulings suggest a judicial reluctance to grant sweeping authority where facts do not support it. Judges have shown they expect clear threats, narrow justifications, and respect for state control.

For Oregon, the case represents more than a procedural dispute. It touches on the balance between federal power and local autonomy — and on whether constitutional boundaries still hold when tensions rise. As the courts continue their work, that balance remains very much at stake.

