



## news

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### **MINNESOTA CREATES NEW TRIBAL VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE**

TOWER, Minn. – About twenty five percent of able bodied, adult American Indians enlist in the armed forces compared to two to three percent of the general population, according to an estimate by Clark Dyrud, Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. Yet a recent state study revealed that 50 percent of eligible Indian veterans in Minnesota do not apply for or receive the benefits they are entitled to.

Now Minnesota will step up its outreach to American Indian veterans through a new Tribal Veterans Service Office. The \$170 million Agriculture and Veterans Omnibus Bill signed last Friday by Governor Tim Pawlenty included \$750,000 to create and staff the new office.

“American Indians have a long and proud tradition of protecting this land,” said Bois Forte Tribal Chairman Kevin Leecy, a U.S. Army veteran. “We honor all our warriors, past and present, and we are delighted the state will increase its efforts to serve those who have served this country.”

The Bois Forte Band recently hired its own veterans service officer, Band member Ernie Steele, to help veterans and their families get the benefits they deserve.

#### **About the Bois Forte Band**

The Bois Forte Band of Chippewa is a sovereign, federally recognized Indian tribe located in northern Minnesota. The Band provides a wide variety of programs and services to its approximately 3,000 enrolled members.

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