

SD Veterans Commission Meeting  
14-15 October, 2004                      Aberdeen, SD  
VFW Post Home

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bill Locken at 1:05 and then he led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance. Dennis Foell had three announcements. He gave notice of a tour of the Aberdeen CBOC set up by Tom Gohn, Brown County Veteran Service Officer, to take place just before noon on 15 October, 2004. The meeting would adjourn about 4:30 today to allow time for General Gorman, Dennis Foell and Andy Gerlach to make a presentation of a bonus check to the family of a deceased soldier at their home. They chose to have a private presentation and not before the Veterans Commission. The third announcement was that Phil Ringstrom has been transferred to Minnesota and the new acting team leader in Sioux Falls is Jerry Muhs.

A motion to approve the minutes as published passed after a motion by Murphy, second by Clarke.

Major General Gorman, Secretary of Military & Veterans Affairs had the first order of business. He reported that the Department has been very busy. There are still approximately 800 deployed in Iraq; 75 deployed in Afghanistan; 3 Artillery personnel (special training in intelligence) will be deploying with a unit in Louisiana; 80 personnel are still providing security at Joe Foss Field and Ellsworth AFB; all Air Guard personnel are home. These last will be done prior to Christmas. By the first part of March-barring any extensions-our people should be home from Iraq. By April the engineer unit should be home from Afghanistan. The 109th is in charge of all engineers there. This is a multinational force as well as having several states' units as well. The people are the important factor. They are workers. The efforts they are willing to put forth make the work worthwhile. Removing land mines is one of the big jobs they are doing.

The teamwork to meet and work with the newly returned veterans has been great-M&VA, VA, DOL, Vet Center, Guard, etc. It appears the veterans are taking advantage of the varied forms of assistance.

The Veterans Bonus Program is up and running as of August 16, 2004. There are two persons managing the program. To date there have been 854 bonus checks issued and the average amount is \$467.

The annual Benefits School was held August 29 - 1 September in Pierre with 60 Service Officers attending.

The Purple Heart Memorial has been the subject of concern for a number of people, especially the location. Some history of this project is that Keith Goodhope and Bob Henley both of Winner presented the information to the Department/Division about a year ago and so it was decided to put in to get one of these Memorials for South Dakota. The location was designated by the Beautification Committee to be at the Soldiers and Sailors War Memorial Building, which is the World War Memorial and it is also the location of the Liberty Bell, a gift that came from France as the "inspirational symbol of the United States Saving Bonds Independence Drive" in

1950. The other problem about the dedication was notification. The site was ready but the dedication could not really be announced because the Memorial Stone did not arrive on time. 48 hours is all the notice we had before the date of the dedication, which was to coincide with the National Purple Heart Dedication Day, August 7th.

The Korean War Memorial Dedication was a total success. Howitzers, fly-overs, balloons, fireworks, everything worked together to provide a memorable day for everyone.

There was also a Veterans' Day Program at the SD State Fair.

For Legislative information, the SD Veterans Bonus is the only one across the US to date. There was also a change in the definition of veteran--legislation to end the period beginning 8-2-1990 by a "date to be determined by SD Legislature". On the federal level full concurrent receipt for qualifying retirees rated as 100% disabled by the VA; the "widow's tax" is to be phased out over 3 1/2 years; a 3 1/2 % pay raise for military including Guard and Reserve and some work on housing programs, too, has been passed; and it is now permanent that there is eligibility for TRICARE coverage for 180 days for those just off active duty and families, includes Guard and Reserve. There is more talk about changes in insurance, which would be great for recruiting and retention tool, this is even a plus for employers.

Last November was the first Veterans Summit. It is being put off partly due to elections this year and is tentatively being rescheduled for mid-summer of 2005, after the several state veteran organizations have held their State Conventions. This will be another opportunity for these organizations to share details on their plans, hopes, projects, goals and hopefully find the common ground for the purpose of serving the veteran community. The plan is to have that in conjunction with the July Veterans Commission Meeting.

Don Clarke as one of the honored guests, wanted to go on record with thanks for a wonderful experience at the Korean War Memorial Dedication. He is in support of the Veterans Summit and next summer is a good idea.

Gene Murphy too felt that the Korean War Memorial Dedication was well set-up and wanted to commend Dennis Foell and Staff as well as all others, including the Governor for seeing that it happened.

Motion made by Clarke, second by Benson that a letter be drafted to Governor on behalf of the SD Veterans Commission thanking Governor Rounds for all the work and effort. D Foell will prepare for Commission.

One concern voiced was that those activated personnel stationed in the States and soon to be demobilized need to be treated just like those who returned from overseas. Question was asked if any more mobilizations are scheduled. General Gorman said the overall plan is one of every five years. May not apply to those stationed stateside, however. The doctors will probably be tapped again as they are subject to only a 90-day mobilization.

SD Veterans Commission Meeting, October 14-15, 2004 in VFW Post Home, Aberdeen, SD

Tom Gohn also commended General Gorman and all those who are working with demobilized individuals. He had some further information on the concurrent receipt.

The Dakotas Regional Office report was given by John Smith, the Director. Please see attached report. He encouraged those assembled to notify his people of any special circumstances (Iraqi veteran, cancer, family situations, etc.), and these persons' claims can be pushed through. He too wanted to be sure his appreciation is expressed to the SD network for the care of South Dakota veterans.

Joe Dalpiaz, Director of the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center had his report. Please see attached. There were questions about budget shortfalls, number of primary care doctors and filling prescriptions. "Window filled" has gone away except for new prescriptions, short term supply. They are encouraging as many as possible to switch to consolidated mail-out pharmacy. Some have problems with that due to phone service, hearing, etc. Mr. Dalpiaz also expressed his appreciation to Division Staff and Commission for all that is done for veterans of South Dakota.

Peter Henry, Director of the VA Black Hills Health Care System, had a report, please see attached. He had questions about budget shortfalls and "VRAH" through CARES. Murphy wanted to know if veteran organizations would have any input on criteria being set. Quality versus Quantity would be an issue, fewer veterans but quality of care must be maintained.

The VISN 23 Network report was given by Rob McDivitt, Deputy Director. He brought greetings from Dr. Petzel who is in meetings in Utah. Mr. McDivitt had a handout-see attached. He wanted to mention also that as a secondary mission there were 150 VA employees from this Network who volunteered to help in Florida VA facilities in the aftermath of the hurricanes there. Mr. McDivitt felt this had been a very successful year. Through consolidated orders of large expense items a great deal of radiological equipment acquisition especially was accomplished. A question to him from Murphy in regard to mental health care-there will be increasing need for mental health care for the returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. Bill Locken had a note for Dr. Petzel; Bill is still concerned about growth.

Maeve King from Senator Daschle's Office had a report, please see it attached. Of special note was the federal charter granted to the National American Indian Veterans, Inc. The first NAIV National Commander is Don Loudner of this Veterans Commission. Ms. King was asked to pass on thanks to Senator Daschle for his work for the military and veterans through legislation.

Katie Bachmeyer had a report from Senator Johnson's Office, please see it attached. Of special note was the Senate Bill 50 to establish Mandatory not Discretionary Funding of the Veterans Health Care System. Also of special interest was the Veterans History Project to promote a legacy of recorded interviews and other documents chronicling veterans' wartime experiences. She also reported on the American Veterans Disabled for Life Commemorative Coin Act which will serve to raise awareness of and funds toward a National Memorial for these veterans when the coin is minted in 2006.

Scott Herreid had a report from Representative Herseth's Office, see attached. Of special note is the support of retirement benefits (HR 303) and health care needs (HR 3474 and 4200) of the American veterans. She is serving on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Earl Schultz had a report as Director of the VETS. November will be "Hire A Veteran" Month which is being promoted also by SD DVA and the Governor's Office. He has a new Program Assistant, Sandy Dosch, who comes to the position with extensive and valuable veteran employment knowledge and experience. Schultz reported that Senator Johnson's Office has indicated an interest in SMOCTA (for Iraq and Afghanistan) and a plan for legislation for the upcoming session.

Todd Kolden of the SD DOL reported further on "Hire A Veteran" Month, which is a national and state initiative for the month of November. He has a poster that can be forwarded to any who would request it. He reported, too, that there have been calls coming in from persons who have the "Welcome Home" booklet. The State Training Session held at the SD Veterans' Home was successful and it was a fine location for them. He also attended the SD DVA Benefits School as a resource person and for information. His work is now under the continuing resolution. The DOL has asked for more funding and will then be able to continue fully staffed. A new program is "Lifeline" which has monies also through the Department of Labor to help wounded veterans re-enter civilian life and the work force.

Jerry Muhs is the new Acting Team Leader of the Sioux Falls Vet Center. He brings greetings from Phil Ringstrom now in Duluth, MN. He reported that the new GWOT employee, Dennis Quigley, an Iraqi veteran, will come on board on October 18th. The Outreach Worker position is still on hold. The Vet Center helped host a Stand-Down with over 300 homeless veterans or veterans in need attending. There is another scheduled in Ft Thompson sponsored by Vet Center and Black Hills Health Care System. This is for the Crow Creek, Lower Brule and Yankton Sioux Tribes. The Vet Center has been seeing more of the new returnees with early symptoms of PTSD as well as marital and relationship issues. The latter are often the younger, short-term married persons. D Quigley will be trying to get out to the drill weekends for outreach. Muhs feels the demob briefings are of value, but these returnees are in sort of a haze by their comments. Readjustment issues of returnees are their primary focus. Mike Dafoe in the Rapid City Vet Center is registering similar business/activity.

Murphy moved with second from Clarke that a letter be prepared from the Veterans Commission to Chris P. Lujan, MSW Regional Manager, Central Region Readjustment Counseling Services, in Hines, IL, voicing concern that the Team Leader position at the Sioux Falls Vet Center be filled as soon as possible, with courtesy copies to the Congressional Delegates. Motion passed.

The general comment about the Stand-Downs is that there are meals and lots of information on dental care, health issues, and benefits provided for these veterans.

The meeting was adjourned just after 4:30 PM to be reconvened on October 15th at 8:00 AM.

Bill Locken reconvened the meeting at 8:05 on October 15, 2004. Dennis Foell had his report as Division Director.

The Bonus Program information is that John Fette is the manager of it and the clerical support is Kayla Trebesch. They are advertising world-wide through the military news media, but they are going at it branch by branch to avoid a huge backlog. This way they can "keep up" with the applications and the waiting period is not such an issue. The Purple Heart Memorial has created feelings of contentment and discontent with location and notification about the dedication as well. This issue is not closed to discussion.

Foell also reported that there have been some changes in the Division. Larry Person will be field staff supervisor and will not have a designated territory. He will be in charge of training and public relations. Steve Oliva, the new Field Officer will take Larry's territory.

On the subject of the demob briefings, South Dakota has gained the reputation of being the model state. Wisconsin is establishing a similar program to brief their returnees. Feedback from the American Legion Conference held in Indianapolis, is that leadership questioned why South Dakota is the only state with such a program.

The Emergency Loan is just that, and many times loans are denied because it does not meet criteria of an emergency, i.e. major medical or home fire, etc. This fund was started after Vv-WII with an appropriation of \$50,000 and a loan maximum of \$50.00. After Korea it was raised to \$500 maximum. The last appropriation was about 1964.

For State Legislation for the upcoming session there will be some salary supplement recommendations which are being considered by the C/TVSO Association. This will affect the DVA budget.

The Veteran License Plate is now under the organizational plate, with a decal purchased through the Veteran Organization. There is a push for a distinctive "veteran" license plate and since 2006 is the year for a new design, this issue must be addressed now to allow time for implementation. One other related issue to be addressed is use of the Disabled Veteran license plate to allow parking in handicapped zones.

Also of concern are the Gulf War Bonus applications that are on file in SD DVA. Right now these bonuses are not being picked-up as has been the precedence set in other bonus programs. This issue must be addressed and Foell will have the Attorney General's Office give us an opinion on this issue and how to best reopen the bonus for these veterans. Motion by Murphy, second by Clarke, motion passed, to go ahead on this issue, especially if it can be authorized by only a "word change". This is necessary to make it fair to all veterans. Applications will still be received while a ruling and course of action is being determined.

Todd Kolden also told of upcoming State DOL Legislation which will be positive for veterans' employment.

Dave Wherry gave a report on the SDDVA Claims Office highlighting a briefing to the 185th in Sioux City about South Dakota benefits; American Legion District Meetings-SDDVA represented by Helen Van Laecken; Gloria Brown and Julie Stern attended the SD Women

SD Veterans Commission Meeting, October 14-15, 2004 in VFW Post Home, Aberdeen, SD

Veterans Conference on 1 October; the Benefits School appeared to be a success with 58 C/TVSO's or assistant VSO's attending of whom 13 had perfect papers on the test; TRIP Training will be held soon by a number of Division Staff. After completing this training a person can be authorized to "read only" case files, this should streamline the claims process.

Wherry also noted that Julie Stem had been hired to replace Don Kniffen (2" a retirement). She is a service-connected Air Force veteran and a very quick learner. The Office is very busy and Wherry expects it to stay steady with the newly returning veterans added to the former veteran community.

Murphy went on record to thank D Wherry and his staff for their work for veterans.

George Summerside had a report on Veterans Education. He talked about agency workload; Chapter 35 benefits; federal funding for Summerside, Murphy and Fratzke in the SAA; the ELR concerns and the contacts he has made to work through complicated issues and questions; outreach; technical letters to C/TVSO and DVA Staff to update on changes, etc.; attending Benefit Briefings, Demob and Family Support Meetings; updated brochures and handbooks available for the asking.

Congratulations and thanks to George and Tom on their work with veterans education efforts.

Wayne Vetter is the new president of the C/TVSO Association. They had a meeting just prior to the Commission Meeting and one goal is to get the County or Tribal Veteran Service Officer known in their areas-i.e. each VSO urged to run an ad in the local newspaper with picture and a job description. Their discussion also covered salary compensation information for the upcoming legislative session. A meeting in early November will be used to get that material ready for presentation. He is also encouraging veteran groups to become involved with the Veterans Forums being held across the State as well as the area service officers. Warren Aas has a powerpoint presentation that will be used at the American Legion District Meetings. He felt C/TVSO's deserve thanks for their care of the South Dakota Veterans.

Larry Wilcox, Superintendent of the South Dakota Veterans' Home had a report. Please see attached. There are several renovation projects underway and application for new Chapel has been approved. Other projects include Hero's Park, a greenhouse, and a 5-year building plan for the Home. Request from the Commission to be kept notified of what is not "up to standard". The cemetery issue has mixed input; some of the residents wish to be buried there and some would like to have it in a natural state, so sinking a well for upkeep purposes would not be important to them. On the other hand, some would like it upgraded and a well would be needed.

The Veteran Organizations had input and Gene Schumacher, State Commander of the American Legion brought greetings and this organization's intent to host a Veterans' Forum in each District-possibly 2 in some of the larger area districts. He wants to be sure to "do them right!" by advertising and coordinating with the location C/TVSO's and the SD DVA Field Service Officers. Forums are being set up now in McIntosh and in Winner. Through these events the hope is to reach out to the regular enlisted service members, who may be missed in the efforts

SD Veterans Commission Meeting, October 14-15, 2004 in VFW Post Home, Aberdeen, SD

that are undertaken with the Guard and Reserve demob, but which is also open to any returning veteran.

Gene Murphy had a report for the DAV highlighting a number of items from the State newsletter which he had passed out to those assembled. Vice President Cheney was a guest speaker at their National Convention in Las Vegas. General Motors has given 8 new vans to the DAV for their transportation program SDleads in membership and also District 14 (MT, SD, ND, MN). Murphy reminded everyone that volunteer drivers are always being sought-any organization can supply volunteers and be recognized for that. The next State Convention will be in the Hills from May 12-14, 2005. H.G. Krosschell and G Murphy from DAV have both been named to Interim Committees. Just a note, the Home Depot supports military, retirees, veterans with a 10% discount there.

For the North Central Chapter of PVA, please see the attachment. They are pleased to be co-sponsoring the Veterans Park in Sioux Falls and are planning to sponsor the entry hall. This is not just for Sioux Falls but the whole region, covering from the Civil War forward. Uniformed statues for all conflicts are planned, and one bronze statue already donated should be incorporated into the entry plaza. The National Wheelchair games are to be held in Minneapolis. They are also promoting a "get out and vote" campaign. 90% of the Afghanistani people voted and they are under death threats. We have less than 50% voter turnout for some elections...

Future meeting dates have been set.

February 7-8, 2005 at the Holiday Inn Express in Pierre/Ft Pierre-this is a date change. April 12-13, 2005 at TREA Club Home in Rapid City-also will try to visit CBOC there. July 20-21, 2005 at PVA in Sioux Falls-Veterans Summit in conjunction, different site. October 12-13, 2005 at Ft Meade, Black Hills Health Care System

Elections for Chairman and Vice Chairman were held. Nomination of Gene Murphy as Chairman was made and he was elected. Nomination of Paul Evenson as Vice Chairman, who automatically moves into Chairman position, was made and he was elected.

Under Miscellaneous Business Todd Kolden spoke to the State Legislation from DOL dealing with proposed unemployment insurance legislation. First an employer must reinstate the returnee. However at this point the employer is out the new salary plus he must pay against the unemployment insurance tax fund for the employee that is displaced by the reemployment. The new legislation would have that tax go against a general fund, not the employer's fund. Motion was made by Murphy, second by Benson for the Veterans Commission to go on record in support of this legislation. Motion carried.

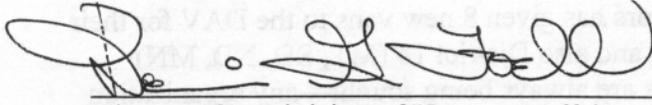
The American Legion Legislative Meeting is in Pierre on November 1St, should anyone have input.

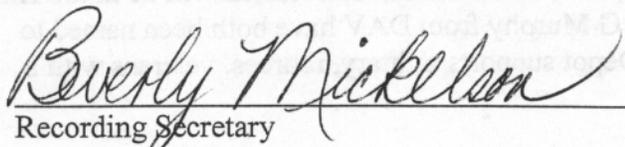
Thank you expressed to Bill Locken for leading the Veterans Commission. B Locken would encourage pursuit of a Veterans plate-not an organizational plate with a decal. With the new process of license plate production it might be easier. D Foell was asked to get pictures or plates to view for ideas for the next meeting. Also should get requirements of a SD license plate. A

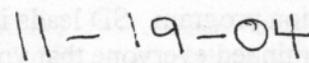
SD Veterans Commission Meeting, October 14-15, 2004 in VFW Post Home, Aberdeen, SD

question about any fund-raising possibilities-could any profit be used for the C/TVSO Association. Profit would not be a goal, the purpose is to recognize veterans.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 AM and several took advantage of a tour through the Aberdeen CBOC at 11:00.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director, SD Division of Veterans Affairs

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Recording Secretary

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Attendees of the SD Veterans Commission Meeting, 14-15 October, 2004, VFW Post Home in Aberdeen, SD.

Roland Benson	Veterans Commission
Donald Clarke	Veterans Commission
Mike Gorman	Secretary, Military & Veterans Affairs
Dennis Foell	Director, SD Division of Veterans Affairs
William Locken	Veterans Commission, Chairman
Gene Murphy	Veterans Commission
Lucky Benewald	Veterans Affairs
Andy Gerlach	Military & Veterans Affairs
George Summerside	Veterans Affairs
Todd Kolden	SD DOL
Kathy Schlecht	Brown County VSO
Thomas Gohn	Brown County VSO
Lionel Torgrude	Brookings County VSO
Wayne Vetter	Cresbard, SD (C/TVSO Association President)
Larry Wilcox	SD Veterans' Home, Hot Springs, SD
Warren Aas	American Legion DSO, Watertown
Robert McDivitt	VA Midwest Health Care Network (VISN 23) Minneapolis, MN
Dave Wherry	Supervisor, Claims Office SD DVA, Sioux Falls
Jim Foster	PVA, Sioux Falls
John Smith	Director, Dakotas VA Regional Office, Sioux Falls
Joe Dalpiaz	Director, Sioux Falls VAMC
Peter Henry	Director, Black Hills Health Care System, Ft Meade
Earl Schultz	Director, VETS (DOL)
Maeve King	Senator T Daschle's Office
Katie Bachmeyer	Senator T Johnson's Office
Scott Herreid	Representative S Herseth's Office
Jerry Muhs	Acting Team Leader, Sioux Falls Vet Center
Gene Schumacher	American Legion State Commander
Beverly Mickelson	Recording Secretary (DMVA in Pierre)
Not Attending due to Conflict	
Don Loudner	Meetings in Washington, D.C.
Paul Evenson	American Legion Conference in Indianapolis, MN