



A question posed by Commissioner Evenson regarding Veterans Education was referred to George Summerside for an answer. George advised the Commission that during this transition period staff is being cross-trained in veterans education duties and responsibilities. Steve Olivia is assisting with educational claims, John Fette with publication review, and Mike Holzhauser will receive training in approval/supervision of training programs.

It was the consensus of the Commission, Veterans Organizations and others present that General Gorman had been an exceptional leader during his period as Department Secretary. Specifically, his efforts in the establishment of a very comprehensive reintegration effort which will ensure our returning veterans are aware of the services available to them. General Gorman was praised for his compassionate and progressive approach to serving our state's veterans.

Andy Gerlach gave a report on the Department Budget and on the procedures that must be followed and timelines that must be met during the budget process.

Mike Birnbaum reported on the VSO Task Force which is a result of the Legislative Review Committee Study during the summer of 2006. The Task Force was requested to address the need for increases in the VSO Supplemental Salary program and to study options to improve the delivery of services to our state's veterans.

The meeting was adjourned for a lunch break at 11:45, to reconvene at 1:00 PM.

Chairman Loudner reconvened the meeting at 1:00 PM. The afternoon session began with reports on the veterans' organizations' various programs for veterans and their family members and on legislative issues presented at the recent state conventions.

The American Legion provided legislative information handouts to the Commission and those in attendance. Information included the state/national resolutions and national legislation that is impacting our veterans and their families. Ron Boyd presented the Legion's position supporting a state veterans' cemetery (Resolution 003), supporting a study to elevate the Division of Veterans Affairs to cabinet level department (Legislative Committee Resolution 2007-001) and supporting sufficient funds for LVER and DVOP positions (Employment Committee Resolution 2007-001).

The DAV provided legislative and program information handouts to the Commission and those in attendance. Information included State Convention overview, Department Newsletter outlining organization programs and issues, national legislative overview, and an invitation to the Roger Andal Appreciation Day/Memorial Dedication. Gene Murphy presented the DAV's position to support a study to elevate the Division of Veterans Affairs to cabinet level department. Gene gave a comprehensive report on the DAV transportation program, outreach effort to wounded veterans of Iraq, offering free lifetime membership/organization polo shirt, and a brief overview of national legislative concerns.

Bill Locken expressed concern that the DAV van sets up in a community and signs veterans up, then leaves town without providing them any local contact person for assistance with their claim. They need to involve the local Veterans Service Officer and refer the veteran to him or her.

George Summerside asked Gene if there is a way SDDVA personnel and C/TVSOs can receive training from the DAV? Both the VFW and American Legion allow this. Gene said he would talk to their National Service Officer to see what accommodations can be made.

The PVA report was presented by Jim Foster. The Commission and those in attendance were provided an informational brochure outlining the PVA programs. Jim discussed in detail their legislative and advocacy programs which promote and advocate to improve the lives of paralyzed veterans and individuals with disabilities.

The VFW provided legislative and program information to the Commission and those in attendance. Information included state and national resolutions which have been approved. Rick Barg presented the VFW's position to create an independent cabinet level agency for the Department of Veterans Affairs and supports sufficient funds for LVER and DVOP positions to ensure one full-time DVOP or LVER position per local employment offices. The VFW does not support the state cemetery issue.

Chairman Don Loudner presented the views for the American Indian Veterans Organization. He reported that the Woodrow Keeble Medal of Honor should be awarded in the near future and the Code Talker Bill continues to be pursued with additional legislative efforts required.

Dale Bertsch from Governor Round's Staff raised a question on separating the Division of Veterans Affairs from the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs. The DAV provided their position that by being a cabinet level position it would give veterans a stronger voice.

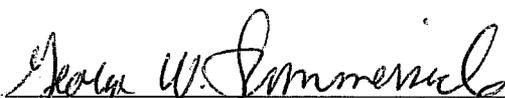
George Summerside presented an overview of his Congressional Testimony concerning the State Approving Agency funding issue. He stated if this funding solution is not resolved, South Dakota's contract would be reduced by 32% next fiscal year. This would be a reduction of over \$66,000 dollars. This will have a negative impact not only on our state but across this nation. The many things that we are doing in outreach and customer service would no longer be possible.

Larry Person presented a report on the initial study done regarding the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) application process and projected costs of a state cemetery. Based on data provided by the VA personnel, the start up cost for a cemetery would approach \$3.5 million. While a large percentage of the start up costs can be reimbursed by VA, it could take up to eight years for the state to receive the reimbursement due to the large number of requests they have to construct veterans' cemeteries and the limited budget they have to meet these requests. Additional expenditures, which are not reimbursable by the VA, are the annual costs for personnel and maintenance which are estimated at \$350,000.

Future Meeting dates are 16-17 July, 2007 in Sioux Falls at the PVA North Central Chapter Home and 22-23 October, 2007 in Hot Springs at the SD Veterans' Home.

There were no items for open discussion, unfinished, or future business.

The motion to adjourn was made by Murphy, second by Locken. The Meeting was adjourned at 4:10 PM.

  
Acting Director of Division of Veterans Affairs

  
Recording Secretary

July 16, 2007  
Date