



South Dakota Department of the Military
 South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



SOUTH DAKOTANS GATHER IN SIOUX FALLS TO WELCOME HOME THE 114TH

Community leaders, families and elected officials gathered in Sioux Falls last Saturday to extend a welcome home to members of the 114th Fighter Wing division of the South Dakota Air National Guard. The 114th Fighter Wing recently deployed to the Pacific Theater as part of a rotational support mission.

This Yellow Ribbon event also provided an opportunity for our heroes and their families to learn more about the services, benefits and resources that are available to them to assist them in their reintegration.

SDDVA's State Veterans Service Officer Caitlyn Engbretson, pictured below, was one of those heroes recognized and thanked!

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U.S. SENATE PASSES MILITARY CONSTRUCTION BILL

U.S. Senator Mike Rounds, a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee and the Senate Armed Services Committee, released the following statement on the Senate's passage of its first appropriations bill for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, H.R. 2029, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (MilCon/VA). It passed 93-0.

"I am pleased that the Senate is finally doing its job to pass appropriations bills, especially the Military Construction/VA bill to support our veterans, service members and their families," said Rounds. "We have a duty to take care of our men and women who wear the uniform of the United States, during and after their service. This bipartisan appropriations bill recognizes the needs of a changing veteran population by providing specific funding for health care for female veterans, care for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and treatment for traumatic brain injury. It also includes specific funding provisions for construction and renovation of VA facilities and prevents the Department of Defense from using funds to close the terrorist detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The Defense Department construction portion of the bill includes a project at our own Ellsworth Air Force Base."

The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act is one of 12 appropriations bills that are needed to fund the government in FY 2016. The bill includes \$23 million to construct a new dormitory at Ellsworth Air Force Base near Rapid City.

TRI-STATE DELEGATION REQUESTS EXTENDED PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

U.S. Senator Mike Rounds, a member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, led his colleagues from South Dakota, Wyoming and Nebraska in a letter to United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Robert McDonald to request an extension of the public comment period in the wake of the VA's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed reconfiguration of the Black Hills Health Care System (BHHCS). The letter was signed by U.S. Sens. Mike Rounds (SD), John Thune (SD), Mike Enzi (WY), John Barrasso (WY.), Deb Fischer (NE) and U.S. Representatives Kristi Noem (SD), Cynthia Lummis (WY. and Adrian Smith (NE).

"The time constraints imposed by the current 60-day comment period may present a significant challenge for veteran stakeholders given that many may be traveling or spending time with family throughout the holiday season," wrote the members. "The VA's public comment meetings also overlap the holiday season, which may further limit stakeholder involvement. For these reasons, we respectfully request that the VA extend the comment period to February 5, 2016."

"As you know, we continue to have concerns about the impact the VA's proposal to reconfigure the BHHCS will have on access to care for our region's rural veterans, veteran mental health services, the assumptions made about a future partnership with the Fall River Hospital, and data used to support this proposal," wrote the members. "Unfortunately, there also remains an underlying distrust among veterans and Hot Springs stakeholders that the VA has proceeded with a predetermined decision to vacate the Hot Springs VA hospital and domiciliary."

BULTJE PARTICIPATES IN VETERANS DAY PROGRAM IN PARKER

SDDVA's State Veterans Service Officer Erin Bultje served as a presenter for the Elementary School Veterans Day program in Parker.

With the support of her co-workers, Bultje brought with her uniforms, maps, currency and head gear that could serve as a "show and tell" for the Pre-K and Kindergarten classes.

This is the second year that Bultje has addressed the Parker school and focused her message on the contributions made by all veterans of the respective eras.



CODE TALKERS EXHIBIT DISPLAYED ON VETERANS DAY AT CRAZY HORSE MEMORIAL

South Dakota Code Talkers were honored Wed., Nov. 11, at Crazy Horse Memorial. The exhibit was previously displayed in Pierre, Watertown and Sioux Falls.

At 11:11 am, a blast of the Crazy Horse Memorial left a cloud of smoke for spectators to take in. 11:11 was chosen to signify the day World War One ended, at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918.

"The significant contributions of our South Dakota Code Talkers has gone unheralded for far too long," said Timothy Reisch, adjutant general of the South Dakota National Guard. "It is absolutely fitting and proper that we finally acknowledge their significant accomplishments and celebrate their great service to our nation."

"These great heroes served in a secret capacity and saved the war!" said SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman. "Our state and tribes can be proud of this recognition for Code Talkers. It was a very humbling experience being a part of this statewide exhibit."



LT GOV. MICHELS ATTENDS KIMBALL VETERANS DAY CELEBRATION

Lt. Gov. Michels served as the keynote speaker for the Veterans Day program in Kimball.

Ron and Nancy Falor, county veterans service officers for Aurora, Brule and Buffalo Counties and Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, served as coordinators for the event and were honored to have Michels share his message with veterans, community leaders and youth.

Michels stressed the importance of educating our youth on what service to our country is and what is truly meant by “land of the free.”



SDDVA SECRETARY ZIMMERMAN KEYNOTES THE PIERRE VETERANS DAY PROGRAM

SDDVA presented four challenges to the Pierre Governors during his Veterans Day presentation Wednesday. His first challenge was for the Pierre Governors to develop their own “Battle Cry.” For those who have heard him speak — you know that Zimmerman is all about the “Hooah”!!!!!!

His other three challengers were: find our veterans — thank them for their services, visit the war memorials that you have located in this community and to send care packages to our heroes that are serving.

He recalled that when he was deployed those packages gave you a sense of home — you could smell it, see it and taste it!

In his challenge to find the veterans and thank them, Zimmerman noted that it is important that we not only thank them for their service but also for our freedom.

At the conclusion of the program, Sec. Zimmerman asked those in attendance to thank and recognize Jay Mickelson for coordinating this outstanding program. The crowd rose and gave Mickelson a standing ovation.



Upcoming Events

- Nov. 13—VABHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Hot Springs—10:00 am
 Nov. 16-17—SD Veterans Commission Meeting—Redrossa—Pierre 1:00 pm (CT)
 Nov. 17—Women Veterans Honoring Ceremony—SRST Admin Bldg—Ft. Yates, ND 11:00 am
 Nov. 18—Veterans Council Leg. Round Table—Sioux Falls—(DAV —1519 W. 51st St) 11:30 am (CT)
 Nov. 19—Veterans Council Leg. Round Table—Watertown—(Amer. Leg. Post—1412 9th Ave. SW) 1 pm (CT)
 Nov. 21—Veterans Council Leg. Round Table—Rapid City (VFW Post 1273—420 Main Street) 10 am (MT)
 Dec. 1—SDDVA Mini Conference—Rapid City TREA—1981 Centre Street—10:00 am (MT)
 Dec. 2—SDDVA Mini Conference—Pierre—American Legion Post 8 —520 W. Pierre Street (CT)
 Dec. 3—SDDVA Mini Conference—Brookings—American Legion Post 74—1229 Western Avenue (CT)
 Dec. 7 Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony—Capitol Lake—Pierre—11:00 am (CT)
 Dec. 8— Governor's Budget Address—Pierre

2016

- Jan. 4—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
 Jan. 12—SD Legislative Session Opens—Pierre
 Jan. 14—Veterans Legislative Breakfast—Pierre
 Jan. 27-28—State Tribal Relations Days—Pierre
 Apr. 4—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
 April 15-17—DAV Convention—Rapid City
 Jul. 11—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
 Oct. 3—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)

A big KUDOS, THANK YOU and THUMBS UP to all veterans service organizations, county and tribal veterans service officers, school officials, and community leaders for the outstanding job you did in recognizing and thanking our veterans. The programs throughout this great state were fantastic!!!! Thank you all!!!!



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