

UNITED VETERANS LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF MINNESOTA

Veterans Service Building

2nd Floor • 20 West 12th Street • St. Paul, MN 55155-2079



Army



Air Force



Marine Corps



Coast Guard



Merchant Marines



Navy

“A Consortium of Veterans, Military, and Auxiliary Organizations to exchange information and support issues relating to Entitlements for Veterans, Military Retirees, the National Guard and Military Reservists, their dependents and survivors.”

UVLC Website – www.mnuvlc.org

UVLC Minutes – Wednesday, December 3, 2008

- **Call to order – 09:30**
- **Invocation – Chaplain Lt Vince Hokkanen**
- **Pledge of Allegiance – Howard Wilson**
- **Recognition of visitors and guests and Commander’s of VSO’s- Senator Norm Coleman, Sid Schmuckler, Jewish War Veterans.**
- **Reports from: Chairman, Jerry Kyser- Vice Chairman, Ralph Donais – Calvin McNeal and his Intern were recognized for the wonderfully drawn mural of the Capital and the US Military Seals.**

US Senator Norm Coleman-The blessings that we have are due to the sacrifice that each of the Veterans in this room have made. Election is the power of the single vote. There are a few Counties left to count for the recount. He gave thanks for the leadership of the United Veterans Legislative Council. The public reaction is to take care of the men and women who are serving. The public is supporting the new legislation that is across the board. All boats rise with the rising tide. Funding has increased over the past six years. I have walked the halls of the VA as a son, senator and a citizen. The Senator said he was here to applaud us for what we do as Veterans and that it does make a difference. A plaque by Plymouth Rock states “ That which our Father’s hath at such great price procured let us not idly let slip away”. With that statement we have a commitment to the Men and Women in the Military to do what should be done to thank them for their sacrifice. (Questions) There are a large number of backlogged claims and VA is working to get them reduced. However, Systematically there are not a lot of complaints about the VA. The VA is responding to the needs and we clear up the individual situations as fast as we can. Don’t ever hesitate to call when there is an issue.

1. State Agencies and MN Veteran Assistance Organizations

- **MN Dept of Veteran Affairs - Commissioner – Clark Dyrud- Governor is having a conference call concerning budget issues today. Tomorrow there will be budget numbers that will come out. Legislative auditors did a financial audit. They came through to the Mpls Home and discovered that some of the 2005 audit issues had not been resolved. Dept of Justice Team will come back in January dealing with issues that date back to 2004. They have been free and clear of all care issues since last June. The VA is in the Mpls home doing a yearly study. Survey that examined the Mpls is the same team that examined Fergus Falls. Fergus Falls came out with a perfect audit. Work has gone into replacing building 9, yet there is legislative language that calls for a Committee to look into selling the Mpls Home after Millions have been put into renovating and replacing buildings**

- **MN Veterans 2008 Legislative Info – Communications Director - Anna Lewicki Long-Sunday, December 7, 2008 - 9 a.m. Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day event. 5th floor of the veterans building. New case manager program has been introduced. Feedback from CVSO's concerning multiple issues. We want to make sure that no one was slipping through the cracks. Funding was requested to follow up with the cases. The funding was received. Lutheran Social Service was selected to work with this programs. The Minnesota Service Corps will bring help and resources to rural areas and those whom do not have access to other services. Family, in home counseling. Caseworkers will be sent to the families. There will be more of this in the media in the near future. Informational forum on depleted uranium Friday January 30 8-11:30 a.m. at the History Center.**
- **MN Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV)- Kara Cornils- A letter of support from UVLC was given to Kara. A Legislator is authoring a bill for funding for MACV. They are looking for letters of support to follow through with this bill. Friday December 5- Building 47 - 12-4 Open House.**
- **MN Veterans Initiatives Center and Research Institute – Jack Scharrett -Jimmie Lee Coulthard -VICTRI- 952-913-3931 and web site victri.org. A Legal education program is being worked on to go statewide. VICTRI is advocating for families of incarcerated veterans in March. Building 11- open house, January 3, 2009.**

2. Federal Agencies

- **VA Regional Office – Julie Carie, Expected to reach 580 staff members. The VA home Mortgages are not experiencing the same kind of foreclosure issues as general public.**
- **VISN 23 – Business officer-Jim Dank-Monthly update was distributed. Hospice Care is now exempt from co-pays. Increase in Beneficiary Travel Reimbursement. VA Expands protections for Veterans with missing paperwork. Identity Theft For practical and tips on guarding against Internet fraud and protecting your personal visit <http://www.wonguardonline.gov/topics/identity-theft.aspx> <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/index.html> To learn more log on to VA's My Health Vet web site at www.myhealth.vagov and read the featured article written by Dr. Kathleen Stack.**
- **Mpls VA Medical Center – Mike Rosecrans, Patient Advocate Center –The OIF/OEF Office is now outside the Med Center to the left of the Visitors Entrance. Mike reiterated That any questions about Veteran Advocacy or needs please contact him.**
- **St Cloud VA Medical Center – Cheryl Theschafer- continue with construction, three big projects (1) specialty care 2010(2) moving of lab services is expanding (3) Renovating mental health space to provide more privacy.**
- **Vets Center – Jennifer is back from Iraq and is working at the new facility in New Brighton. Mobile outreach vehicle will be going out into the rural areas. Expansion of staff to provide more outreach to the veterans. The new office is located in New Brighton 550 county Road D Suite 10 -just off of 35W.**
- **Ft Snelling Cemetery – Art Smith – Director-A letter of appreciation was written by the UVLC to the arborists that help volunteer their services for the cemetery. Total interments for November was 351, current FYTD 735, Total to Date 182,020. January 20th is the date that all wreaths are removed from the headstones. Projected to be in the open status until the year 2050. December 13, Wreath Ceremony in the morning at the flagpole.**

- **Vets Employment & Training Service [VETS] – Director-Kevin Nagel-Veterans Job fair. 134 employers and service providers. Over 1,000 veterans from all eras. They are vendors ready to offer positions. The second part is to move the job fair to May. They investigate the employments rights act. Investigate federal hire. There are two direct hiring authorities. The first follow-up was 17 were placed in jobs. There is an increase in retirees going back to work.**

3. Federal Congressional Senators and Representatives

- **Senator Amy Klobuchar – Martin Ludden-Mid Nov service academy interviews. Vet Days they were at Inver Grove, Elk River. Martin will be deployed in the near future to either Iraq or Afghanistan.**
- **7th District Representative Collin Peterson- Al Loehr-Pres Elect Obama wants a 2-year appropriation instead of a continuing resolution. There will be many changes due to the new leadership. He pledged to fully fund the VA system. VFW has been advised to bring forth the budget for the next fiscal year. The entire congressional delegation should place more attention on the backlog claims.**
- **2nd District Representative – John Kline - Chaz Johnson-Farmington will be named the first yellow ribbon city.**
- **3rd District Representative –Jim Ramstad – Margaret Cavanaugh-This was Margaret's last representation at the UVLC.**
- **4th District Representative- Betty McCollum- Connie Haddeland.-Met with many veterans on Veterans Day. Academy nomination is complete. Josh Straka will return in January.**
- **5th District Representative –Keith Ellison – Mike Siebenaler-Outreach in the district involved Air Force reserve deployment. British families had a program to honor WWII veterans. The academy interviews will be done on the 11th of December.**

- ### **4. Announcements – Chairman – The next Honor flight is full and will be on May 30, 2009. Ralph will send inquiry to the committee or to the members when a piece of legislature has been authored. Encourage every veteran to serve only one hour to volunteer to do something for veterans. It was recommended that the bills will be placed on to the website and e-mail to say that it is posted on the website.**

5. Meeting in Recess for 10 minutes

- ### **6. Old Business –General business, Treasurers report: \$3,689.51; A 990 needs to be done for 2007 for the IRS. All members have paid. In January there will be a presentation of the emergent fund. Report card for Legislature: Discussed at the last meeting that there is not the need to put this out at this time. January 9th is the new legislative session.**

7. Legislative Ideas to support:

- **Economic Development Program or Workforce Development: This is an approach to tack on an improvement to the MN Military Income Tax Exemption by having an incremental lowering of the amount taxed. An example would be the raising the amount of income the retiree can earn before the state tax on Military retirement pay goes into effect.**
- **New hiring preference for Veterans for State jobs only.**
- **Mandatory 3% use of service disabled vets business in state contracts.**

- **Veterans Paramedic Apprenticeship Program:** Paramedics who have served in a combat environment should have credit for their work in the military when they become accredited.
- **Include military widows from property tax reduction from 2 years from the death of the veteran to the same as the 70% – 100% disabled vets.**
- **These suggestions will be coordinated with MAG and the Commanders Task force and the Dept of Veteran Affairs. Combining the efforts is of utmost importance. A motion was made to put forth these suggestions to the other. It was seconded.**

8. New Business

1st Vice Chairman and Secretary of UVLC – Election to be held at the January 7th UVLC meeting. Ralph Donais was nominated as the 1st Vice Chairman. Jana Kyser was nominated for the Secretary position for 2009. Dues will be the same amount for 2009. There will be a breakdown of the amount of the dues for the next year at the next meeting. Encourage the participation of other organizations that are not present at the business meeting.

Adjournment/ Next Meeting 9:30AM, Wed, Jan 7th 2009 at Building 9 Auditorium on the VA Medical Center Campus – Attached to VISN 23 Building

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS

There were 51 people in attendance