

# UNITED VETERANS LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF MINNESOTA

Veterans Service Building

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor • 20 West 12<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.mnuvlc.org)

## UVLC Minutes – Wednesday, September 2, 2009

- **Call to order – 09:30**
- **Invocation – Joe Schimmers- St Cloud VFW**
- **Pledge of Allegiance – Howard Wilson – Merchant Marines**
- **Recognition of visitors and guests and Commander’s of VSO’s**
  
- **US Congressman John Kline-MN is leading the way in how we are reintegrating our soldiers. Many communities have created their own reintegration efforts, connected with the VA hospitals; introducing resources in the community. There is continued stress on our veterans who are still in uniform. Afghanistan has proven to be particularly problematic. In Iraq fatalities were due to explosive devices. In Afghanistan there is more action and shooting. They are fundamentally different areas and strategies. It is tough fighting for them with rising casualties. Our men and women continue to need our support. There is a lack of confidence and trust in the country of Afghanistan. During a recent visit it was noted the mistrust between all Afghan people.**
  
- **US Congresswoman Betty McCollum: Betty came to the meeting sporting an arm cast. She broke her arm when she was in Japan for her son’s wedding. GI Bill will cover children of deceased Veterans. 3.4% pay raise for our troops. The appropriations committee will be investing 15% more in benefits and claims. Health Care: All know that the VA strives for perfection, but there are times that it falls down. There is always work to be done to improve. There has been both transparency and accountability. VA has some of the best health care in the world. She does not believe in the government taking over health care. There are individuals who do not promote health care reform and they talk down the VA; we need to stand up for the VA. People will begin to believe that the VA is not good health care. Health care reform is nonpartisan. If you are for health care or not, do not allow the mix of the VA and the health care reform system. Ralph Donias made the following comment: Free medical for life was promised to retirees; this was not fulfilled due to the co-pay requirement. Anything that could be done would be greatly appreciated. Why the rush on the health care reform. There is much discussion about the ideas and the concepts. The Congresswoman will do her level best to have the discussion that will make this program work.**
  
- **Reports from: Chairman, Jerry Kyser- The Veterans Tribute Wall will be dedicated on Friday, September 11, 2009- 7 PM at the Veterans Tribute Stage inside TCF Bank Stadium. Please join military, veteran, corporate, political, and University leaders as they dedicate the Veterans Tribute Wall. The program will feature a WWI airplane flyover, color guards, entertainment, and the historic first raising of the American flag over the stadium. The POW/MIA Vigil Opening Ceremony is returning to the UMN Campus after 8 years the MN State Capitol grounds. The program will be held on Sunday, September 20, 2009 -1:30 PM at the Veterans Tribute Wall Stage inside the TCF Bank Stadium. The combined UMN ROTC Dept will Lead the program which includes a T-6 Missing Man Formation, WWII Ex POW UMN Graduate, Wreath Laying Ceremony, Bagpiper, Rifle Volley and Bugler.**

## 1. State Agencies and MN Veteran Assistance Organizations

**MN Dept of Veteran Affairs - Commissioner – Anna Long-** Fergus Falls project is underway. There are construction projects at all of the home sites. Building 9 has been demolished. Annual Dedication to Veterans at the state fair will be presented by Mike Pugliese who will be honoring the Veterans of WWI at the flagpole. Check out the new website [MNVeteran.org](http://MNVeteran.org) covers benefits all over the states and the veteran home options. This is also tied into the veteran's link vet line. Booth is set up at the south side of the 4 H building at the MN State Fair. There has been an initiative with Globe University; veteran of the month feature. This is an exciting partnership on WCCO. Upcoming event: MN Women's event summit for women veterans or wives of veterans. The summit will take place at the Ramada Inn at the Mall of America. Brochure updates of veterans preference program. Sara Graves will be helping while Anna is on maternity leave. Her number is 651-757-1550

**MN Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV)- Kathy Vitalis-** successfully completed the Duluth stand down. Seventeen veterans were helped with complicated legal issues. It is difficult due to the decrease in funding. There were 40 families that were not able to be helped. September 16<sup>th</sup> the comedy show is at the Depot that will provide fundraising money. In July, MACV Staff and Bld. 47 Vets helped prep and paint houses along with VA employees for some St Paul Veterans.

**MN Veterans Initiatives Center and Research Institute (VICTRI) – Jimmie Lee Coulthard**  
The mission is to help veterans with projects or businesses; currently working with 24 different veterans. Brochure was available for the Valley Forge Project. VICTRI has united with Women's Veterans Initiative in helping both Men and Women Business owners apply for Micro Loans.

**Other MN Veteran Organizations- Maria Wetherall, Director- Ramsey Co Veteran Service Office.** She has been working for Ramsey County since February. Main purpose is to explain that we are here to serve veterans. New facility is on 90 West Plato Blvd, Suite 210. Plato Blvd is south of Harriet Island and West of Wabasha St. The hope is to give Veterans the opportunity to know and understand the benefits they have earned.

**MN National Guard Museum- Dick Sundby - MN Air Guard Museum Honors Veterans and their Families "Open House", Saturday, September 26, 2009 11-4** Open Cockpits, Refreshments and Entertainment. Have a free picture taken in the famous Photo Phantom!! [www.mnangmuseum.org](http://www.mnangmuseum.org)  
[msp04332@isd.net](mailto:msp04332@isd.net) Phone 612-713-2523 The Museum is located on the 133<sup>rd</sup> Airlift Wing Base at 631 Minuteman Drive, Fort Snelling, Saint Paul, MN 55111

## 2. Federal Agencies

**VA Regional Office – Sue Malley-** The office is moving, but the location will not be determined until next year at this time. The pension center is doing work for multiple states. There is word out that the claims department has a million claim back log. This is not correct. On the average a claim is processed within 120 days. The million claim accounts for everything that is in inventory. There will be a new way of calculating the backlog. The backlog will be calculated when the 120 days has passed. There is no deadline for claims of ALS. Everyone has until Feb 3, 2009 to go back to the date to receive this benefit. In Saint Paul there is no backlog. The Tiger Teams located in Ohio take care of backlogs for Vets over the age of 70. There was a 14% increase of claims nationally.

**VISN 23 – Jim Dank, Chief Business Officer – Dr Petzel** will be in Wash DC for few months at his temporary job. Consolidated Patient Account Centers (CPAC) are changing where VISN 23 revenue functions are located by 2011. 200 VISIN 23 jobs will be lost but the employees will be assimilated into other positions in VISIN 23s System. The VA Sec. will be visiting SD in Aug. He is very concerned about Rural and American Indian Vets healthcare issues and the Telahealth Program. The "Your Life, Your Choices" Planning Tool is an educational resource and is have some parts of the resource questions revised.

**Mpls VA Medical Center – Steve Kleinglass, Director- A request for proposal for the Northwest Metro Community Based Outpost Clinic is now under final consideration along the Hwy 10 corridor above the Mississippi River and between Elk River and Anoka. The Fisher House is beginning construction this season. There were 1,800 C&P exams administered by the VA Medical Center last month. There is a mandate to do these in 30 days. The Mpls Med Center has booth at the state fair in the education building. The new parking lot should be done this fall.**

**St Cloud VA Medical Center – Barry Bahl – There is major construction going on in St Cloud. The road on the East side of the campus is now open. Brainerd clinic is open. Alexandria will see their first patient in two weeks. 1 out of 10 patients are now from out current conflicts. Urgent care was introduced several years ago. They are working in conjunction with the Saint Cloud Hospital. The VA system cannot advertise, however they can educate. Each facility has a registry exam coordinator.**

<b>Ft Snelling Cemetery – Art Smith – Director</b>				
<b>August 2009</b>		<b>Current FYTD</b>	<b>Total to Date</b>	<b>Female Veterans 1400</b>
<b>Total Internments</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>3902</b>	<b>186959</b>	
<b>Caskets</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>1634</b>	<b>14254</b>	
<b>Cremations</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>1813</b>	<b>36315</b>	
<b>Columbarium</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>1619</b>	

**Art introduced Raymond Miller who will be graduating in April after his internship. Art has been working without an assistant director for some time. Budget will be similar next year to the budget prepared for this year. The VA is opening a new National Cemetery in Philadelphia. There was a monument dedicated to those who sacrificed their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan at the Ft Snelling Cemetery.**

### **3. Federal Congressional Senators and Representatives**

**Senator Al Franken – Nate Arch will be in Southern MN 651-964-5531 he will be working with health care issues. Nicole Ly will be the Vets contact in the Twin Cities 651-221-1016**

**7<sup>th</sup> District Representative - Collin Peterson- Al Loehr- They are looking forward to the dedication of the new CBOC Bldg in Alexandria. Oct 5<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> will be the date of dedication. MSgt Beilke (Ret) a 9-11-2001 Pentagon Causality has been nominated and indorsed by the UVLC to have the facility named after him.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> District Representative –Erik Paulsen – Noah Jacobson-There is language that would describe that funds in the bill cannot be used to create a health care system that will interfere with the VA health care system.**

**4<sup>th</sup> District Representative- Betty McCollum- Connie Haddeland-There was a list of the bills that are supported by Congresswoman McCollum that was distributed. New regional passport agency has opened. Academy evenings will be taking place soon.**

**4. Announcements – Ralph has a question about the CBOC and why it is attached to the Mpls Hospital rather than the St Cloud.**

**5. Meeting in Recess for 10 minutes**

6. **Old Business –Treasures report, \$3,369.95 - Dues Owed- \$100 each from 40 & 8 and MNANG Museum was received and from FSMM; \$50 There needs to be a nominating committee for the officers for next year. Sid Schmuckler, Faye Hesse and Don Rask have agreed to be on the committee. Chairman, Second Vice and Secretary are all offices that need to be filled.**
  
7. **New Business- 34 out of 67 bills were passed in the legislative session. Ralph shared all of the data for the military retirees and the income that they bring into the state. Currently they bring in a quarter of a billion dollars into the state each year. There are several organizations that do not show up at the UVLC. We would like everyone who is a part of the organizations to encourage those members to attend the UVLC.  
Roger Ball, 40 & 8 Vets Org and Chairman of the American Legion Dept Legislative Committee made encouraging comments that a good working relationships between Veterans organizations is necessary in dealing with Legislative issues. He guaranteed that the Legion and the UVLC will be working together at the legislative session. Both of our purposes are to work at the Capitol for our veterans.  
Tom Boland has been meeting with a liaison from the Wounded Warrior Battalion.  
Contact information is MSgt Roger D Rands office 612-467-4222 [roger.rands@va.gov](mailto:roger.rands@va.gov)  
He encouraged the UVLC to extend an invitation to this organization.**
  
8. **There are many questions about the Whipple building. The best way to get a response is to write a letter to Congressman Walz asking the status of the moving of the Regional Office. Recognition to Doug Bekke for his work on the Museum at Camp Ripley.**

**The Chairman will be attending the MDVA Leadership Conference at the Whipple Building for the New Commanders on Thursday Sept 10<sup>th</sup> and speaking on Friday to the new commanders about the UVLC. I intend impress upon them their responsibility to have their UVLC Representatives attend the our monthly meetings every month to receive the great information we receive from the presenters and participate with their presence at the legislative sessions.**

**On Monday Sept 14<sup>th</sup> the Chairman will be speaking at the Annual Conference of the MNCVSO at Grandview Lodge about the interdependence the UVLC, MNCVSO and the Commanders Task Force have in getting Veteran Legislative Initiatives passed and make MN more Veteran Friendly.**

**Adjournment/ Next Meeting 9:30 AM - Wed, Oct 7, 2009 Building 9 Auditorium  
Mpls Medical Center Campus, Mpls, MN**

**There were 51 people in attendance**