

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, April 2, 2008

- Call to order
- Invocation – Chaplain – Lt Vince Hokkanen
- Pledge of Allegiance was lead by Howard Wilson
- Recognition of visitors and guests and Commander’s of VSO’s.
- Reports from:
 1. - Chairman, Jerry Kyser – Vice Chairman, Ralph Donais

There was recognition of Rep Larry Howes and Senator Dan Skogen for authoring the bill designating March 29th as Vietnam Veterans Day in Minnesota. Minnesota is the fifth state that has honored Vietnam Veterans with a specific date. Forest Lake was the first MN City to Honor Vietnam Vets with a Ceremony on March 29th. Diane Finneman was the person who asked for this bill. The last official Combat Soldier in Vietnam was also one of the first victims of the War on Terror when the Airliner crashed into the Pentagon. He was from Alexandria, Mn. Rep Howes would covet your prayers for his son who was just deployed to Afghanistan.
 2. State Agencies
 - MN Dept of Veteran Affairs - Christine handed out a budget bill comparisons sheet that indicates a budget request, the MDVA, House and Senate support. It also reflects the policy impact. The session is moving rapidly. Anticipate that things will be wrapped up possibly by May 1st. As an agency, the Mn Dept of Veteran Affairs brings forth the governors initiatives.
 - MN Secretary of State –John Kingry was introduced. He is the active legal support for the Army Reserve officers Chief of legal assistance. He talked about getting soldiers to register to vote. The difficulty is that the primary is late and it may not get back in time to count. It takes 8-10 days for mail to get over seas. Voting electronically is the option. The group remains non-partisan. It is very important for Contractors, Service Members and Family members to be allowed to vote.
 - MN Military Affairs – Col Eric Ahlness- The annual report was distributed. Upcoming 34th Combat Aviation Brigade will have a deployment ceremony on May 31st. They will train for two months and then are deployed to Iraq. Sixty percent are experiencing their first time deployment. NG supported Voting Rights Bill is going through the Legislature.
 - WWII Woman Veterans: On Thursday, May 8th, 2008, Vets are invited to be recognized and honored for their services during WWII. The event is being held at the 934th Airlift Wing Officers Club located off of Highway 5 and Post Road, across from the MSP. Airport. Over 100 invitations have been sent out. Please make sure that names are submitted to Julie Eszlinger Jensen, Col (Ret). 651-297-8818 or esz-j@juno.com
Kathy Vitalis has a contact who will help fund the women’s event.
 - MN Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV)- -Kathy Vitalis-MACV Presents “Honoring Minnesota’s Veterans...Dedicated to our freedoms. Featuring the American Veteran Traveling tribute at Canterbury Park on June 18-22, 2008. For more information on ways to contribute please call...J Murphy & Associates 612-379-3580

- **Harry Wisdom-Tee it up for the troops.** In the past three years they have raised \$780,000. Many have stepped forward for this success story. \$10,000 will start the initiative in recognition of the Vietnam Veterans. May 21st all proceeds will go to the welcome home event for Vietnam Veterans. The ceremony starts with a bagpiper/ honor guard/ Gold Star Mothers and Wives,/Taps/God Bless America. At one of our holes there is a direct communication with Iraq. There is an American flag at each hole. The Website is www.teeitupforthetroops.com

3. Federal Agencies

- **Mpls VA Hospital – Chris Erickson – Director, Patient Family Center-The spinal cord injury building is ahead of schedule.**
- **St Cloud VA Hospital – Joan Vincent-public affairs officer.** St Cloud VA hosted 29 former prisoners of war at a recognition program on Friday, April 4. Seventeen of the former POW's received their WWII medallions from the state of MN at the ceremony. The former Mental Health director, Dr. Sherrie Herendeen accepted a position at the Reno VA. Rose Blesener is now the acting Administrative Director. Kurt fox and Shashi Prakash are serving as co-directors for Mental Health clinical activities. The approval has been given for additional space in Brainerd. St Cloud is in the process of developing an Urgent Care service, but has submitted a request to Washington for extra time needed to hire staff for urgent Care coverage.
- **St Paul Vets Center – Ernie Boswell- Relocation is in the technical and legal departments.** There will be an open house when the move is complete. There is a push on outreach to the rural areas. Rapidly closing the gap which will close the gap with personnel. 70% increase with services to returning veterans. There are more and more referrals going out to veterans. The current address is 2480 University Avenue. The new location will be 35W and County road d in New Brighton. (NW corner)
- **St. Snelling Military Museum- Tim Boland -May 16-17 Military Expo.** 16th will be for school children. The Museum is one of 5 in the US that has tanks. There are 72 military vehicles. There are volunteer opportunities for the expo.

4. Federal Congressional Representatives and Senators

- **Senator Norm Coleman – Greg Gorham-busy month for meeting and travel visiting American Legion posts and CVSO's, Al Loehr center in St Cloud, Project new hope for Vietnam Veterans. Vets for Freedom, Blue star mother event.** Met with Chaplain Morris concerning the reintegration efforts. Legislative updates with the budget more funding to help with the backlog of review for benefits. Andy Davis will be coming on board because Greg will be helping with the campaign.
- **Senator Amy Klobuchar – Martin Ludden-signed on to Senate bill 292.** Welcome home in Fargo. Forest Lake Vietnam Veteran Day.
- **7th District Representative – Collin Peterson - Al Loehr-The House and Senate have both approved their respective versions of the FY09 federal budget.** The two versions are similar. Notably, they bump up VA funding by \$3.2 billion over the President's request, which is in line with the veterans healthcare recommendations that were laid out in the independent budget. The process is not complete until the President signs the Appropriations bill. There is a need for the Montgomery GI bill to be improved.

- **2nd District Representative - John Kline – Chaz Johnson- Discussed the Patriots act. Rep Kline was given a Heritage Painting Award by the Nat. Guard Bureau. It is the highest civilian award to be given by the NG. His support for the NG and the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon program was the reason for the honored award. He participated with Joe Repya at a Scoops for troops- Ice cream event in Eagan ,MN.**
 - **4th District Representative – Betty McCollum – Josh Straka-US Service Academy information night-Students interested in applying for an nomination to a U.S. Service Academy. Betty just returned from Afghanistan. She met with some 4th district soldiers.**
 - **5th District Representative – Keith Ellison – Mike Siebenaler-Senate and members of the house talk about the education assistance act. Senate bill HR 2702. Co-sponsor for this bill. The provisions are the same for active duty, guard or reserve. It pays it out on a tiered basis. This would help out the returning soldiers. It also extends the time period to use the benefits to 15 years. Tri-care has to cover pain care services. Signed onto a bill to Honor and support our wounded soldiers act. Commitments to provide health care to veterans. Military Retired Pay: cannot be reduced if receiving service-connected disability. Wipes away the timeline. HR 5332 suicide prevention act. Provides resources and mandates outreach.**
 - **6th District Representative – Michele Bachman – Jack Tomczak-Letter was read from the Congresswoman concerning her co-sponsoring of H Res. 111, legislation to establish a Select committee on POW and MIA Affairs in the US House of Representatives. This committee would be tasked with conducting a full investigation of all unresolved matters relating to U.S. personnel unaccounted for from past military operations. SSGt Maupin's body was recently found in Iraq. He was the first MIA in Iraq.**
 - **8th District Representative – James Oberstar- Melissa Jabas-Congressman had hip replacement 10 days ago.**
- 5. Announcements – Chairman – Vice Chairman-Keep the retirees in mind when discussing Benefits for Veterans. Thank National Guard for their efforts in the voting effort. Pear Harbor Day Survivors, Richard Thill and Floyd Nagler are recovering from broken Hips. Keep them in your Prayers for a successful recovery
Jim Hasselgrave- Adjutant for the VFW introduced Jamie Vale who is the new assistant adjutant.**
- 6. Meeting in Recess for 10 minutes**
- 7. Old Business –General business, Treasurer Report-\$5,712.78. The membership list is being updated.
Tom Shaw made a motion to waive the Per Harbor dues; it was seconded. Waves National 10,000 Lakes Unit #37 has been added to the membership list. Military Order of the Cootie has been taken off of the list.
Up to \$500 was put into the budget concerning the report card for the 12 pages of the 2007 bills. Final vote was taken for the final budget approval. Al Loehr made moved to approve the budget for 2008.
The main thing that need to be added to the bylaws is: Who is the person who can vote at the elections. Each organization needs to give a primary, secondary person to vote. Three should be enough from each organization. Each person can only vote for one organization. This is the proposed system. Commander, Adjutant and the Legislative chair. This condition was put forward due to the fact that there were some people who voted for more than one organization.**

8. A letter will be written to the senators and congressman concerning HR 579 from the UVLC. It was recommended that the message be given to the Reps and Cong that are present at the next meeting instead of mailing it out. This information needs to be taken back to their people.

Al Loher suggested that each of the Reps and Congressmen need to tell UVLC what they have done for the veterans. It is not as much concern for the travels of each of the rep. A follow up would be to lie out the expectation of the concerns for veteran. One-piece document given sent to each of the reps & congressmen. This will be an expectation of how they are to respond to the issues.

Ralph Donais -Who do we hold responsible for taking out or adding things to the bills? When the bills are dropped in the committee, who is held accountable? Only one person can pull a part of the bill and that is the Chairman. All of the bills are in specific interest of those who author them. the Chairman of the committee is the one who decides what to do with the bill. We must be better persuaders in the support of the bills.

9. New Business – Veterans should try to have a stand alone Committees instead of being with Agriculture and Economics in the House and Senate.

Adjournment/ Next Meeting 9:30 am, Wed, May 7, 2008 at Building 9 Auditorium on The Campus of the Mpls VA Hospital

There were 52 People in attendance.