

UNITED VETERANS LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF MINNESOTA

Veterans Service Building

Second 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 Minutes December 6, 2006

Next meeting will be on Wednesday, January 10, 2007 @9:30 in Building 9 VA Medical Campus

- Call to order by the Chairman, Jerry Kyser
- Invocation – National Guard Chaplain-MAJ John Morris read the names of the fallen heroes from Minnesota.
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Recognition of visitors and guests and Commander's of VSO's
- Reports from:
 1. Chairman-Jerry Kyser Recognition of Rob McDivitt. Special recognition was given to Rob McDivitt for over 20 years of service in Minnesota. He is now the Director of the Fargo,ND VA Medical Center. Rob thanked the crowd for all of the support and said that Minnesota will always be his home.
 2. State Agencies
 - MN Dept of Veteran Affairs- Commissioner Dyrud stated that it has been a great year. At 2:00 the Dept of Military Affairs will meet with the Governor to discuss the initiative. “We’re going to finish the job.” A Vets Center is being set up in Brainerd. The younger generation is using “my space” to communicate. The campus reps are becoming very effective. We have a working model. A one stop website. It is a work in progress. Should be available on December 15. Mike P. said that in 10 days there were 400 hits to the website. Julie Carie wanted to thank the VA Med Center for the town hall meetings. The license plates are down in sales. As of November it was at \$39,000. Make a push: ½ goes to the Veteran Affairs and ½ going to the National Guard. June 9th, 2007 will be the WWII Memorial Dedication. The new informational website is www.minnesotaveteran.org Mark Lowe of AM 1280 (The Patriot) is working with Jerry Kyser and MNDVA about a Saturday Veterans Talk Show. Sponsors are being developed along with the programming.
 - State Legislative Report-Rep Haws and Rep Severson-MAG-Military Action Group. Initiatives survey at the State Fair concurred that 58% of the people surveyed believed that military retirement pay should be tax exempt. The initiatives listed by the MAG group were posted and a motion was made to support their agenda. (attached item)
 - MN Military Affairs-LTC Eric Ahlness-mnnationalguard.org 3,000 troops will be returning in March. 450 will be deployed to Iraq between February and May.
 - MN Veteran Home- Jeff Johnson, Vets Homes Board Chairman, - It has been a year of transition. It's a growth pattern and beneficial to the future. The board and staff have been extremely busy. There is now a permanent management team in place. Bob Wicken is the new administrator. We all work to serve the residents compassionately. Networking is what we need to get the Veterans these services that they deserve.
 - MN Assistance Council for Veterans-Kathy Vitalis- MACV will have their annual open house at Building 47 from noon to 4 It is an honor to be a part of the MAG. MACV will be a part of the integration meeting, housing, medical, legal, and assistance. There are 11 units in the Mankato facility and 8 of them are currently occupied for disabled

veterans.

3. Federal Agencies

- **VA Regional Office-Sue Ihrke-Our Veterans Service Center and Regional Loan Center** received outstanding awards for completing performance goals established by the Under Secretary for Benefits. We remain on the continuing resolution. Nationally, our compensation and pension workload is nearing 400,000. St Paul currently has 4,600 claims pending, due to returning soldiers. We were at the Standdown in Mankato in November and I attended a town hall meeting in St Cloud Monday evening along with staff from VA Medical Center, Fargo and the MN Dept of Veteran Affairs. We are hoping to do additional hiring this year, but have not received final word from our Central Office. Our office also has an outreach person who is scheduled for 3-4 briefings a month for our returning soldiers. This is expected to continue through 2007.
- **VISN 23-Paul Bockelman-The network delivers VA's comprehensive benefits packages** through an integrated system of medical centers (8), community based outpatient clinics(35), domiciliary(4), and nursing home care units(7).The Network has prepared preliminary budget estimate of \$1.6 billion representing an 8.2% increase from FY2006. Preliminary figures may change. The following Outreach Clinics will soon open: Williston, ND in Dec 2006-Dickinson, ND in Jan 2007-Jamestown, ND in Feb 2007-Western Wis. In May 2007-Holdrege, Neb. Spring2007-Spirit Lake, Iowa, Summer 2007. Through October 31, 2006, there have been 11,953 combat veterans enrolled in VISN 23. Of those, 8,324 received health care benefits and 3,629 enrolled only. Construction Projects: \$20.5M 30-bed spinal cord injury unit is expected to begin soon with completion set for fall 2008. Central Iowa- Request for proposals for construction for an extended care facility is to be submitted by 12/6/06. Planning has started for the design of \$6M consolidated outpatient services addition. Saint Cloud VAMC-The \$4.3M expansion of ambulatory care space is complete.
- **The initiative to replace old VIC cards is under development.** We encourage veterans to stop by the Intake Section of their VAMC so a new card can be made. An added feature of the new VIC card is inclusion of former POW, Purple Hear Medal recipient and Service-Connected designators. Advocates will soon learn more on hoe they can help us reach our goal. Your assistance and cooperation is supporting this initiative is needed and appreciated. For more information call VA Midwest Health Care Network Office at 612-725-1968 or visit www.va.gov or www23.med.va.gov
- **Mpls VA Hospital-Brian Steller-There is a strong commitment to quality.** There is new equipment. All of the beds are going to be replaced. Vacular labs were replaced. Ten new Operating suites. Halls and walls project to freshen up the environment. There is a new visitors entry, patient education library area, discharge lounge and waiting area. There are infection control kits around and about the hospital to help reduce flu's. There are stations throughout the hospital with masks and alcohol rubs. Please be aware...a simple sneeze is more to someone who is fighting an illness. The wit lists are down. 15,000 flu shots have been given and another 15,000 are planned. Friday is always Blood donation day by the Red Cross.
- **St Cloud VA Hospital-Joan Vincent-There was an internal VA review; in preparation for the accreditation.** They recently were awarded a perfect score for a supported employment Program. Currently working with the integration program. It to be the largest in the state. Dental clinic is 90% complete, new elevator in building 28, Hospice unit is under construction. There are still several positions that are in need of candidates (2internists and 1 psychiatrist, 1 geriatric specialist)
- **Ft Snelling Cemetery-Art Smith-November numbers: Total interments -373. Caskets 183. Cremations -190. Current FYTD 756,Caskets-355, Cremations-401. Total to date: 172,757. Caskets-142,756 Cremations-30.001. Total Female Veterans 1,220.**

- 88th Regional Readiness Command USAR-Janet Jones-In 90 days the 79th Military Police from Rochester will have 40 leaving. January 27 is the Winter Carnival Parade. January 27-28 at MOA Government on display. Hearts for Heroes Post Cards sent to troops. Video messages to soldiers. May 19-20 Expo at Fort Snelling. In October of 2006 there was 100% retention of the troops.
 - Other Organizations-LTC (retired) Joe Repya -MN Military Appreciation Fund. I am happy to report that the soldiers that are now in service are our greatest generation. The Military Appreciation fund gives “THANKS” to Minnesota military personnel and their families who are making the sacrifices in defense of our freedoms in the war. MMAF provides cash grants to MM military personnel who have served in combat since Sept 11, 2001. Larger grants are issued to MN wounded in the war and to those families of Minnesotans killed in combat. www.thankmnttroops.org or phone 1-877-MN Thanx
4. Federal Congressional Reps
- Senator Coleman-John Halverson and Greg Gorman-Currently involved in the academy nomination. There are some stellar candidates. Working with some atomic veteran issues. Reorganization of the office in underway.
- Senator Dayton-Nate Arch Accepted A Certificate of Appreciation for Senator Dayton for all of his efforts. The casework is now being taken care of by Gutknecht’s office. Nate is going to be going to work for the new 1st District Representative Wahl.
- 4th District – McCullum-Jeremiah expressed condolences to the families of the fallen soldiers.
- 2nd District – Kline-Interviews have taken place for academy candidates for the Merchant Marine and the Air Force.
5. Announcements –Jerry Kyser presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Governor Tim Pawlenty for his work with the Veteran’s initiative on behalf of the UVLC. Governor Pawlenty is the first Governor since the inception of the UVLC in 1965 to receive an award. No other Governor has had the initiatives to the extent of Governor Pawlenty. His passion toward Doing What Is Right for our Soldiers and Veterans is to be commended. We gave him a standing ovation. He was deeply moved by our gratitude and recognition. The Governor stated that the issues are bipartisan. The Veterans Summit was a success to reach veterans. He takes the Veterans issues very seriously. He vowed to continue to be a partner with the Veterans in Minnesota and to make Minnesota Veteran friendly. On behalf of Jimmie Lee Coulthard, Jerry presented the Governor with memorabilia from the Cruise Miller-Garrison and Al Loehr Veteran and Community Housing developments in Mpls and St. Cloud. It was the Governor’s bill in 2001 that made it possible to develop these two housing developments.
6. Meeting in Recess for 10 minutes
7. Old Business- financial report was submitted. Total amount available is \$4,017.71. January 1, 2007 the CD will come due and it will be presented to the hospital.
8. New Business-Dick Carroll, will establish a bylaw committee. It was recommended by the nominating committee that the chairman, 1st vice and 2nd vice be re-appointed for another term. The 2nd vice chair is resigning from his position. Larry Deans will take Bob Smith’s position.
9. It was recommended to develop a budget for 2007. Jerry and Ralph will put this together for the January meeting.
10. Adjournment- *The next meeting will be on January 10th* NOT on the 3rd, at Building [9@9:30](#)
11. 83 people were in attendance. Respectfully submitted by Jana Kyser