

**ARIZONA VETERANS' SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION**  
**Director's Conference Room, 3839 N. 3rd St., Suite 209, Phoenix, AZ 85012**  
**Thursday – February 11, 2010**

**M I N U T E S**

**Call to Order** - The meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m. by Chairwoman Fulkerson.

**Present**

Advisory Commissioners

Linda Fulkerson, Chairwoman  
Gary Fredricks, Vice Chairman  
George Cushing  
Terrie Gent  
Larry McKim  
Jeffrey Olson  
Lionel Sanchez  
Kenneth Yamanouchi

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Joey Strickland, Director  
Mike Klier, Assistant Deputy Director  
Gabe Forsberg, Strategic Planner  
Homer Rodgers, Assistant Deputy Director  
Brad Bridwell, Homeless Vet Services Coord.  
John Scheuer, Troops to Teachers Prog. Mgr.

Guests:

R. Gregg Maxon (Retired Brig. General - Arizona Army National Guard)  
Monica Cabrera, Public Information Officer, VA Regional Office  
Nelson Ladd, West Valley - Korean War Veterans  
Ray Thomas, Adjutant - Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Corey Harris, Veterans Outreach Coordinator - Congressman Harry Mitchell's office

The minutes of the January 14 and 16 meetings were both approved as published. There was a correction to the list of attendees for the November 14, 2009 meeting in Yuma, AZ. That correction will be made and posted to the website.

**Communications** - Gabe Forsberg received four letters prepared by Chairwoman Fulkerson to notify key VA contacts about the change in meeting times and dates for the Commission:

- Sandra Flint, Director of the VA Regional Office
- Monica Cabrera, Public Information Officer for the VARO
- Gabriel Perez, Director of the Phoenix VA Medical Center
- Paula Pedene, Public Information Officer for the VAMC

**Agency Announcements and Updates**

Governor Janice Brewer will participate in a Valentine's Day celebration in Prescott on February 12. ADVS was tasked with putting together the Southwest Defense Alliance (high-ranking officials from military installations in a 5-state region) focused on preserving military presence and protecting against base closures. The Phoenix StandDown was held February 5 through the 7th at the Arizona Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

## **State Veteran Home Program**

The Phoenix Home continues to do very well after its last survey. The census was around 140 a year ago and is now hovering around 165. Its 19 issues identified in the VA survey a year ago have been reduced to 4 minor infractions in the most recent survey.

The Tucson Home groundbreaking ceremony will be held March 19 and architect's drawings were passed out to the Commissioners. The first resident will be admitted around September 11, 2011. Invitations to the event will be sent to all Commissioners. There will be approximately 20 individuals who can sit on the stage, but the rest of the Commission will be seated in an area near the stage secured for dignitaries.

## **Troops to Teachers**

John Scheuer, Manager for the Troops to Teachers (TTT) Program, briefed the Commissioners on Troops to Teachers. There has been an increase in military personnel wishing to transition to teaching after their military careers, but frequently they are not eligible for the TTT program.

The House and Senate versions of the Post 9/11 Troops to Teachers Enhancement Act (HR 3943 and SB 1932) both expand eligibility for TTT participants. Currently, registrants must have 6 years of military service before they are eligible. If Arizona were able to provide this expanded eligibility, it would increase the number of participation an estimated 60%.

The TTT participant is obligated to teach at targeted "high needs" schools. The Post 9/11 TTT legislation makes it easier for a school to qualify as a "high needs" and the TTT participant can receive a stipend of up to \$5000. A letter will be written to support the legislation and John Scheuer will assist with the appropriate contact information for the bills' sponsors.

Col. Strickland also suggested that the Commission recommend moving the TTT program to the US Department of Veterans Affairs instead of a part of the US Department of Education. DOE administrators are not veterans and do not understand the unique needs of veterans who would be entering the TTT program. Corey Harris, the Veteran Representative from Congressman Harry Mitchell's office, was interested in learning more about the TTT program. Larry McKim moved to prepare a letter recommending the transfer of the program to the VA by writing a letter to Secretary Eric Shinseki. The motion was seconded by George Cushing and was unanimously supported.

## **State Legislation**

There is one piece of legislation that Terrie Gent has been monitoring very closely (HB 2330). The intent was laudable, but the bill was not artfully crafted and created procedural problems for the court. Gen. Gregg Maxon, Chair for the State Bar's Military and Veterans Commission, reported that Rep. Cecil Ash was interested in making changes to the bill.

ALIS (the Arizona Legislative Information System) is the best way to monitor the state legislature. The website [www.azleg.gov](http://www.azleg.gov) provides users from remote locations to log in and converse with the committee in the normal order of business by computer, just as though they are attending the hearings in person. The Commissioners are highly encouraged to become familiar with the website and were reminded that all of the Commissioners should be reviewing the bills.

Vicechair Fredricks mentioned HB2315 - Veterans solicitation, noting that the department seems to be getting the task without the funding to review organizations raising money in the name of military veterans. ADVS is opposed to it. Jeff Olson asked why this isn't part of the Attorney General's office instead of ADVS.

Commissioner Olson asked if there were a specific date when the Advisory Commission is expected to comment on state legislation of importance to the veterans of Arizona. There is no specific timeframe specified and the Commission is able to prepare a letter to provide feedback to the Governor as necessary.

Commissioner Sanchez asked his Veterans of Vietnam Veterans State Council to provide feedback on the list of bills. He suggested that all of the Commissioners do the same with their own organizations.

### **AVSAC Meetings**

Gary made changes to the cover page for the official guidelines for operations of the Arizona Veterans' Service Advisory Commission, leaving the body of the guidelines as published. When the budget issues have been resolved and the Commission resumes its normal meeting schedule, the guidelines will be correct as written.

### **Initiative by the State Bar**

Gen. Gregg Maxon is the chair of the State Bar standing committee for military personnel, veterans and their families. There are 20 attorneys on the committee, the regional counsel from the VA, Margy Bons from Operation Homefront (and mother of a Marine who was killed in action), Joan Sisco from Veterans First, and Kathy Pierce with Heroes to Hometowns (and mother of a severely disabled vet). Gen. Maxon has broken the committee into various subcommittees and will be calling them back together in the next couple of months:

1. Legislation
2. Programs & services
3. Special emphasis vets (non-citizens, women, minorities)
4. Family Law
5. Veterans Courts
6. Education & Training (what kind of training do judges and lawyers need )

He took 16 attorneys to the Phoenix Stand Down so they can see first-hand how the veterans receive legal advice and how their court worked. Deb Dominick has been invited to talk to his committee about the most critical issues for returning troops. He is also having two of the attorneys who had been helping at the Stand Down also speak to his group about what they can do to help.

He hopes to develop a list of attorneys willing to provide free or low-cost services for veterans, crossing all disciplines and areas of law. This will not cost anything, but would be an invaluable resource to veterans who are struggling with legal issues.

The State Bar wants to work with the Phoenix School of Law to support the Military and Veterans Clinic. Steve Gonzales hopes to have the clinic open by the fall semester. Before the law students can work with active duty and veterans, the students need some education on VA law. If you have anyone who comes to you with a legal problem, the clinic can be used as a single phone number where they can get advice.

Vicechair Fredricks wanted to thank the State Bar for establishing the Standing Committee and focusing on helping veterans. The motion to draft a letter with copies to the Attorney General and ADVS passed unanimously. Vicechair Fredricks will write the letter.

### **Good of the Order**

Brad Bridwell indicated that there were 804 total veterans (40 of whom were women). The number of homeless women is increasing. The number of at-risk veterans had consistently been 25% (currently in housing, but near homelessness) for the past few years. The at-risk population was 38% this past year. He is collaborating with various other agencies to develop a plan to end homelessness in Arizona. His focus is capacity building, making more beds available so that no veteran ever has to sleep on the street. His planning meetings will be held Feb. 18 & 19 to develop a state-wide plan.

How do we harness the energy that was demonstrated during the StandDown (a huge public event that occurs once a year)? Brad will provide a final report to the Commission at a future meeting.

Vicechair Fredricks mentioned an open item from the December meeting regarding the Auditor General's report. The Commission requests that the department provide a report regarding its policies that ensure the agency is in compliance with recommendations.

**Adjournment** – Chairwoman Fulkerson adjourned the meeting at 2:37 p.m. The next meeting will be held at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 11, 2010, in the Director's Conference Room, 3839 N. 3rd Street, Suite 209, Phoenix, AZ 85012.