

Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission
3839 N. 3rd Street, Phoenix, AZ 85012

July 13, 2023

MINUTES

Advisory Commissioners Present

Kathy Gallowitz, Chairwoman (virtual)
Charles Byers, Commissioner (in person)
Andrew Meshel, Commissioner (virtual)
Matthew Kenney, Commissioner (virtual)
Philip Cushman, Vice Chair (in person)

Michael Noble, Commissioner (virtual)

Chris Gibbs, Commissioner (virtual)

AZ Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS)

Dana Allmond Director (in person)
Jessica Roza, Legislative Liaison (Virtual)
Lupita Santellano, Executive Assistant (in person)
Valen Harris, Administrative Assistant (virtual)
William Glennon, Central Region Manager (in person)

Guest Speaker

Hon. Judge Donald Watts

Absent

Kirk Loving, Commissioner

Call to Order – The Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission (AVSAC) meeting, via Google Meets: <https://meet.google.com/jgq-vm-sc-uux>; Dial-in: (US) +1 475-222-5532 PIN: 275 244 224#

Chairwoman Gallowitz called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Chairwoman Gallowitz led the commission in the pledge of allegiance.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Chairwoman Gallowitz called for a motion to approve the AVSAC meeting minutes from May 11, 2023. Vice Chair Cushman motioned to accept the meeting minutes. Commissioner Byers second the motion. Chairwoman Gallowitz noted one change to the minutes. She asked to correct the Advisory Commission meeting date mentioned in the minutes, from July 15, 2023 to July 13, 2023. No other objections or corrections were noted; the motion to approve the minutes was carried unanimously.

Presentation: Hon. Judge Donald Watts

Judge Watts briefly covered the purpose of Veterans Treatment Court. Judge Watts explains that the mission of the Maricopa County Justice Court- Veterans Treatment Court is to provide a personalized program that holds persons that have served our country in the past or are currently serving, accountable for their actions while helping him or her overcome the challenges he or she personally faces. Veterans Treatment Court strives to not only address legal struggles but also assist service members with their issues, which can take the form of health care, substance abuse, mental health and employment.

Judge Watts further explains the success that Veterans Treatment court has had. Explaining that 87% of Veterans participate in the program and only 13% of veterans opt out. Veterans Treatment Court is about more than just a veteran's return to wholeness. It is about collaboration and partnership. It is investing in helping others succeed. It is extending a helping hand. It is harnessing the desire of many and focusing it on one at a time.

Judge Watts briefly overviews the VetSix program and how it strives toward providing guidance to Veterans facing unique legal challenges. Similar to Maricopa County Justice Court, Vet Six further explains how this non profit provides mentorship, assist with VA Screening. Judge Watts recommends to the Advisory Commission that he continue to be a speaker on an annual basis to provide updates on VetSix and the continued success of Maricopa Counties Treatment Court. Commissioner Byers asked what the success rate of the Veterans Treatment Court is. Judge Watts explains that nationally, the recidivism rate is 87%. Commissioner Kenny poses the question, if data collected is being posted onto Maricopa County's website and is being published for the public to see? Judge Watts explains that publishing data is an ongoing project and it will be eventually posted to the website. Commissioner Cushman also wanted to find out more information regarding issues of active duty funding issues. Chairwomen Gallowitz suggested updating the list of Veterans Court and other legal resources, Judge Watts explained that the City of Glendale is developing a Veterans Court. In addition, Chairwomen Gallowitz encouraged Judge Watts to utilize the ADVS Veterans Donation Fund and apply. Judge Watts was encouraged to be connected with various veterans organizations such as the VFW and other local groups. Judges Watts's contact email is as follows: Donald.Watts@jbazmc.Maricopa.gov. Lastly, Chairwomen Gallowitz recommended that Judge Watts continue to be a guest speaker so that he can provide updates in regards to Veterans Treatment Court.

Presentation: William Glennon (ADVS)

William Glennon, provided a brief overview of the ADVS Veterans Service Division, and its leadership. The mission statement of the Veterans Service Division is to "provide the best advocacy and services in Arizona for Service Members, Veterans and their families in obtaining federal and state benefits". William Glennon, elaborated further on how this mission applies to its various teams under the Veterans Service Division. Some of the teams Include the Memorial Cemeteries, Veterans Benefits Counselors and the State Approving Agency. His presentation can be found [here](#).

Mr. Glennon, updated the Commission on the ongoing project occurring within the Veterans Service Division(VSD). The Cemeteries in Marana and Camp Navajo are undergoing an expansion. VSD is working on establishing a web based calendar appointment system that would allow Veterans to schedule their own appointment with a VBC.

Commissioner Mike Noble asks for clarification of the Prescott National Cemetery asking if it is run by ADVS. The Prescott National Cemetery is not part of the ADVS. In addition, Commissioner Noble explains there is a need to establish another state run cemetery in the

Prescott Valley. Director Allmond and Mr. Glennon further explained that there are currently no pending projects to establish a cemetery in that area at this time. Jessica Roza recommended that the need to further expand the current National Cemetery in Prescott Valley should be brought to Senator Crane's attention.

Executive Session

The Advisory Commission went into Executive Session at 10:59 am and returned from Executive Session at 11:16 am.

General Session (11:16 am)

Ratification - Chairwoman Gallowitz requested a motion to ratify the action taken on June 14, 2023, when the Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission mailed a letter to Governor Hobbs in support of SB1454, which may have violated Open Meeting Law. SB1454 allocates a one-time appropriation of \$10 million from a \$50 million State Parks Revenue Fund to acquire State Trust Land near the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona to design and construct a state park to honor veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. Vice Chair Cushman moved to ratify the action taken by the commission on June 14, 2023. Commissioner Byers second the motion. Commissioner Gibbs and Commissioner Kenney support the ratification. Vice Chair Cushman states the ratification allows the Commission to be compliant with Open Meeting Law, as well as allows the commission to stay compliant with statutory responsibilities. Vice Chair Cushman states this was the best course of action due to the last minute legislation that was introduced. Chair Gallowitz states that based on who the request came from and the value to the larger veteran community is the reason she took the course of action she did. She states she has taken legal advice on a more prudent course of action, should she be in a similar situation in the future. There being no objection from the Commission, the motion to ratify the action taken on June 14, 2023, carried unanimously. (Notice of Ratification found [here](#). Public Body Deliberations found [here](#).)

Agency Announcements

Director Update- Our Veteran Benefit Counselors (VBC's) have established 15 itinerant sites throughout the State and continue to do claims virtually, over the phone and in person with a 96% approval rate. They are now leveraging \$75.3 million a month in federal funds coming into the state for our clients. ADVS is also looking to hire VBCs in Northern Arizona in the Hopi and Navajo Region, as well as in Southern Arizona near Sells.

Earlier this spring, the Missing In America Project laid to rest over 30 previously unclaimed Veterans remains at two of our cemeteries. The purpose of the MIAP is to locate, identify and inter the unclaimed cremated remains of American Veterans and provide honor and respect to those who have served this country by securing a final resting place for these forgotten heroes. MIAP laid to rest 14 Veterans at Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery at Camp Navajo on April 6, 2023. MIAP laid to rest 19 Veterans at Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery at Marana on April 22, 2023. All three Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemeteries in Sierra Vista, Marana, and Camp Navajo held

Memorial Day remembrance ceremonies. ADVS estimates between 600-700 people attended ceremonies across all three locations.

The Arizona State Veteran Home - Yuma (ASVH-Y) held a Grand Opening Ceremony on June 24, 2023. Nearly 200 people attended the ceremony. ASVH-Y is home to nearly 30 residents. Arizona State Veteran Home - Flagstaff (ASVH-F) is currently hiring staff in preparation of opening to Veterans later this year. Medical openings include: Assistant Director of Nursing, Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Certified Nursing Assistants. A full list of jobs can be found on AZStateJobs.gov.

Women Veterans Day - Commemorating 75 years since the signing of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, granting women the right to serve as regular, permanent members of the armed services for the first time. The Governor proclaimed June 12th as Arizona Women Veterans Day. Women Veterans had the opportunity to meet with Governor Katie Hobbs. The group included Director Allmond and several other current ADVS employees who are also women Veterans.

Veteran Donation Fund (VDF) - Small grant applications re-opened on July 1, 2023. Small grants are \$4,999 or less. These grants fund 501(c) charitable organizations who are providing projects/programs/events for the benefit of Arizona Veterans. Anyone can donate to the VDF by going online on our website azdvs.gov or by purchasing an Arizona Veteran, Women Veterans, or Freedom Arizona license plate. \$17 of the \$25 annual fee goes directly to the VDF.

ADVS outreach teams have joined other agencies, services, and organizations all year long at different StandDown events across the state in 2023. Veteran StandDowns provide a "one stop shop" for Veterans and service members experiencing homelessness or hardships to connect with benefits and services. For example, at this year's Maricopa County StandDown in Phoenix back in April, our VBCs sat down and assisted 41 Veterans with benefits claims. Upcoming Veteran StandDowns:

- **White Mountain StandDown** - August 12, 2023, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm, at the Show Low City Gym - 620 E. McNeil, Show Low, AZ
- **Cochise County StandDown** - August 18, 2023, 9:00 am - 2:00 pm, at the Ethel Berger Center in Sierra Vista
- **Rim Country StandDown** - August 19, 2023, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm, at the Greater Payson Moose Lodge #852, 4211 E. Hwy 260 in Star Valley, AZ
- **Yavapai County StandDown** (*two day event*) - September 15, 2023, 8:00 am - 5:00 pm; September 16, 2023, 8:00 am - 12:00 pm, at 1040 Whipple Street, Prescott, AZ
- **Pinal County StandDown** - October 14, 2023, 9:00 am - 2:00 pm, HOHP Veteran Transition Center in Coolidge, AZ

Legislative Update- Jessica Roza provided the Advisory Commission her legislative report found [here](#). In this report, she provides information regarding agency proposals to the legislature.

Old Business:

Strategic Policy Objectives - Chairwoman Gallowitz states the Advisory Sub-commission met June 30, 2023. Minutes from that meeting can be found [here](#). The Advisory Commission reviewed the June 30, 2023 meeting minutes. Jessica Roza will provide the Commission ADVSs strategic plan as well as the Director's priorities. The final Sub-commission report will contain positions on issues as well as specific policy recommendations. The next meeting is September 8, 2023. Vice Chair Philip Cushman motioned to accept the meeting minutes from the Sub-commission meeting on June 30, 2023., Matthew Kenney second the motion. There being no objections, the motion passed unanimously.

Update on Annual Governor Letter Response - There is no response from the Governor's office other than they have received the letter.

Request to speak- Chairwoman Gallowitz is the only Commissioner that filled out a request to speak form. If Commissioners would like more information they can reach out to Legislative Liaison, Jessica Roza. Information regarding the request to speak form may be made to jroza@azdvs.gov and/or adminsupport@azdvs.gov.

Nominations for Chair & Vice Chair

Chairwomen Gallowitz leads the discussion in regards to the nominations for the Chair and Vice chair positions. Chairwomen Gallowitz nominated Philip Cushman as the next Chairman. No other nominations were provided by the Commission. Chairwoman Gallowitz motioned for Philip Cushman to be the next Commission Chair. Commissioner Kenney second the motion. The Advisory Commission voted unanimously in favor of Commissioner Cushman for Chair. Chairwoman Gallowitz called for nominations for the position of Vice Chair. She nominated Commissioner Matthew Kenny for Vice Chair. No other nominations were brought forth by the Commission. Chairwoman Gallowitz motioned for Commissioner Matt Kenny to be the next Vice Chair. Commissioner Cushman second the motion. The Advisory Commission voted unanimously in favor of Matt Kenny for Vice Chair.

Letter of Support for Director Allmond

Chairwomen Gallowitz led the discussion in proposing a letter of support from the Commission toward Director Allmonds senate confirmation. The purpose of this letter is to have the commission submit a formal letter on the Advisory Commission letterhead, this letter of support would be submitted to the legislature. Jessica Roza's recommendation to the Commission is to draft a letter and then vote on the content of the letter of support, prior to sending it to the legislature. Chairwomen Gallowitz recommended Vice Chair Philip Cushman write this letter and then present a draft within the next two weeks of the legislative session, to the Commission.

Upcoming Meeting Locations:

Chairwomen Galowitz recommended postponing the meeting location discussion until the next Advisory Meeting scheduled for September 14, 2023. Commissioner Byers and Vice Chair Cushman recommended heading up north for the next meeting, to the Arizona State Veteran Home- Flagstaff. Chairwomen Gallowitz proposed the Commission meet at ADVS- Headquarters, as usual, for the next meeting in September and plan to schedule off-site meetings for the 2024 calendar year. Off-site location planning will be added to the September 14, 2023, meeting agenda.

Regional Outreach Representative list

Chairwomen Gallowitz and Advisory Commissioners previously discussed creating a contact list, which contains ADVS outreach staff contact information, as well as Be Connect contact information. This contact list was shared via email with the Commissioners prior to the Advisory Commission meeting. The purpose of this contact list is for Commission members to collaborate with these various teams when conducting outreach within their regions.

Outreach activities.

Mike Noble - The mid-summer Department of Arizona Marine Corps League was held in Tucson. Twenty-three detachments were in attendance. At the Commander's Council, a discussion was held on the tax benefits for Arizona veterans. In particular, property tax benefits and license tags were discussed. One pertinent comment was made that an Arizona veteran probably wasn't able to afford owning property and using the Arizona veteran property tax benefit at the income threshold currently in place. New officers were elected/appointed to liaison with other veterans' groups and the Marines Assisting Marines. An effort will be made to acquaint them with the Be Connected program.

Kathy Gallowitz - On the board of the Southwest Veterans Chamber of Commerce, which includes Chairing the Marketing Committee and facilitating a monthly luncheon. She is a member of the Glendale Chamber of Commerce Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. In June they launched the Military Transition Support Program. Chairwoman Gallowitz attended the Gary Sinese sponsored program _Last Out: Elegy of a Green Beret. Monthly volunteer activities she lead:

- Military Ministry: [VetConnect](#)
- [Women who lead](#)

Philip Cushman - Outreach report found [here](#).

For the Good of The Order

Advisory Commission member Terms- Chairwomen Gallowitz led the discussion regarding Commissioner terms. Chairwomen Gallowitz, Commissioner Gibbs and Commissioner Loving's terms have expired. Chairwomen Gallowitz clarified that Christopher Gibbs term has expired;

however, he is still able to renew his commission for three more years, should he choose to. Commissioner Noble and Chairwomen Gallowitz have both re-applied and are waiting to hear back from Boards and Commissions. Commissioner Kirk Loving will not be renewing his commission. Commissioner Gibbs will reach out to Boards and Commission for clarification regarding his term. He will keep ADVS and the Commission informed of his final decision to renew or not renew his commission. As it stands, there is one commission vacancy.

Adjournment

Chairwoman Gallowitz called for a motion to adjourn the Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission Meeting. Commissioner Byers motioned to adjourn the meeting. Vice Chair Cushman second the motion. The motion was carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 12:08 pm.

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Donald Watts

Justice of the Peace

Maricopa County Justice Court

Presiding Judge Manistee Justice Courts

Chair Specialty Court

12 JUN 23

Judge Watts Video Bio?

Project 13K: Judge Donald Watts - YouTube

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What types of cases are heard in Justice Courts?

- ▶ Criminal misdemeanors 1, 2 & 3
 - ▶ Max six months jail
 - ▶ DUI
 - ▶ DV
- ▶ All civil and criminal traffic
- ▶ Civil Lawsuits
- ▶ Evictions
- ▶ Liquor Violations
- ▶ Small claims
- ▶ Orders of protection
 - ▶ Protection order
 - ▶ Injunctions against harassment
 - ▶ Injunctions against workplace harassment

Case filings

- ▶ Twenty Six Justice Courts in Maricopa County
- ▶ Jan thru May is 83 working day
- ▶ 111,811 cases filed
- ▶ 1,347 cases filed each day as a county

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What is VTC

- ▶ [What is a Veterans Treatment Court? - YouTube](#)

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Mission Statement of VTC

- ▶ The mission statement of the MCJC VTC is to provide a personalized program that holds persons that have served our country in the past or are currently serving accountable for their actions while helping him or her overcome the challenges he or she personally faces. This is done by "breaking the cycle" that led the veteran to where he or she is today. The veteran is treated with the dignity and respect that has been, and continues to be earned. This is accomplished by a collaborative effort of family, other veterans, volunteers, community partners, and the court. Each of these groups has a personal commitment in the success of the veteran.
- ▶ Judge Donald Watts

Veterans Treatment Court Begins

- ▶ Started in 1 FEB 2021 (AO from Superior Court)
- ▶ One VTC court for all 26 courts
- ▶ Expanded in 3 FEB 2023 (AO from Superior Court)
- ▶ Now divided into four regions for 26 courts
- ▶ I chair the committee that oversees all the VTC for proceedings, policy and training

Overview

- ▶ It is said that through confronting your weaknesses, you build strength.
- ▶ The Maricopa County Justice Courts are stronger than ever now after identifying a weakness, developing and executing an action plan, and watching *others* reap the rewards.
- ▶ It comes in the form of Veterans Treatment Court- a specialty program that did not exist in our court system. The goal is to help former service members overcome not only their legal struggles, but also in many cases their challenges with all forms of wellness: health care, substance abuse, mental health, employment and more.

Overview

It is well-documented that veterans returning from military service- in Vietnam, Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc- can have trouble adjusting to civilian life because of the experiences encountered in combat situations. When left untreated, their mental and physical scars can spiral into much larger problems, the first symptom of which may be a run-in with the law (Absher, 2022).

- ▶ The nation created its first Veterans Court in 2008 with the goal of plucking these at-risk veterans out of the everyday court dockets and providing them an individualized approach at resolving not only their legal issues, but also their social issues and restoring a “wholeness” to their life. It is a worthy aspiration which has been slow to gain ground.

Overview

- ▶ Veterans Treatment Court not only requires commitment. It requires participation. It requires success.
- ▶ When a veteran has a criminal misdemeanor citation in the Maricopa County Justice Courts, he or she becomes eligible for VTC. Anyone- a judge, the vet, a caseworker, may request the defendant's entrance to the program. Proof of service is verified, appropriate applications and waivers are completed, and the case is transferred to VTC.
- ▶ From that point on, a team of employees and volunteers attend to the veteran. They make a promise- develop a bond- to break through the stigma of what may be mental illness, drug or alcohol abuse, a court conviction, or even family estrangement. It is a system of trust.
- ▶ The veteran promises to be there for every court appearance. The staff promises to support the veteran at every step. The team will find out if the veteran qualifies for counseling or assistance of any sort through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ("the VA"), other service providers, or community agencies or events.
- ▶ There is no "going easy" on VTC participants. If the veteran misses a court date, they risk being dropped from the program and having their case transferred back to "regular" court. Remaining in, they receive the same sentence a non-participant would receive. The difference is that the VTC team members go out of their way to connect the veteran to services earned through their own service to the country, but in most cases have never stepped forward to receive.
- ▶ Veterans Treatment Court holds two kinds of celebrations. The first is a semi-annual graduation ceremony for those who complete the program and clear their court obligations. The second is a yearly picnic to honor all participants: veterans with court cases both active and closed, volunteers who bring energy and determination, and court staff who interact with all the parties to ensure full resolution of every legal matter.

Overview

- ▶ The internal team consists of designated attorneys from the county prosecutor's office, judges, and court staff. Watts designated one person from the court staff to coordinate VTC cases and events, just as if it were any other case type.
- ▶ Most of the external team are volunteers: people with military backgrounds who commit to every veteran's success. There is the Department of Veterans' Affairs, which checks eligibility and for extra services available. There are other organizations, both for-profit and non-profit which support the program with time or resources.
- ▶ Once the process and people were in place, Veterans Treatment Court proceeded seamlessly. Each person involved in the program was either a salaried employee or volunteer so there was no additional cost to run the program. Donations paid for celebratory expenses of food, drink, awards and the like. Social media and traditional media publicized the achievements- an estimated earned value worth thousands of dollars.

Success

- ▶ Soon after launch, it was clear the Maricopa County Justice Courts' Veterans Treatment Court would be a success. The interest and energy were there. The necessary support was there. And the demand was there- in spades. One judge would not be able to handle the anticipated growth.
- ▶ Now, a mere 24 months later, the program has expanded to *four regional VTCs*, each with a committed judge of their own to personally attend veterans who struggled to meet their obligations.
- ▶ Statistics are outstanding: only 13% of veterans opt out of the program, leaving 87% who agree to fully participate:
 - ▶ • 119 veterans entered the program
 - ▶ • 16 veterans did not comply; cases transferred back to originating court
 - ▶ • 5 cases dismissed by prosecutors
 - ▶ • 73 veterans currently working toward completion
 - ▶ • 25 veterans graduated
- ▶ Judge Watts now fields questions from other court systems around the state asking how they can replicate his success.

Overview

- ▶ The goal of a criminal justice and public safety program is to improve justice systems, make the community better, and serve the underserved. Veterans were notoriously underserved for decades, resulting in years of years of debt to them which society only recently began to repay.
- ▶ But Veterans Treatment Court is about more than a veteran's return to wholeness. It is about collaboration and partnership. It is investing in helping others succeed. It is extending a helping hand. It is harnessing the desire of many and focusing it on one at a time.
- ▶ Case in point: the very first VTC graduate. Navy veteran Jeremy Hernandez for years worked "under the table", doing odd contracting jobs for family and friends. Until, that is, the state caught on and cited him for contracting without a license.
- ▶ "I've always worked hard in my life," Hernandez said at his graduation ceremony after months of taking part. Hernandez' rewards for completion were a plea deal with the lowest fine possible, and a restored faith in the court system. "This shows that there are people that really care," he grinned.
- ▶ It's what a civilized, enlightened society does- fills the gaps to solve shared problems through cooperation.

What does the non profit VetSix do?

This is independent of MCJC

- ▶ Mentors (more volunteers needed)
- ▶ Screening (VA and Sage determine what type of counseling is needed)
- ▶ Counseling (Grants from VetSix if VA is unable to help)
- ▶ Picnics
- ▶ VetSixAZ.com
 - ▶ Still under construction
 - ▶ Please join our e-newsletter (send message)

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How can you help?

MCJC

- ▶ List MCJC VTC on your web page
- ▶ Recommendations for funding sources
- ▶ Share this with others in your circle
- ▶ Recommend speaking venues
- ▶ I would be happy to come back on an annual basis to provide an update to this committee.

VetSix - A non profit

- ▶ Recommendations for funding sources

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Thank you for the opportunity to present!

- ▶ Questions?
- ▶ 602-372-2563 (Desk)
- ▶ Donald.Watts@jbazmc.Maricopa.gov

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Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

For Arizona veterans and those who care for them.



Introducing the Veterans' Services Division (VSD)

**Presented by:
William Glennon
Central Region Manager**



Overview



- VSD Mission Statement
- VSD Leadership Team
- Memorial Cemeteries – Sierra Vista, Marana & Camp Navajo
 - Mission Statement
- Veterans Benefits Counselors (VBC) and Quality Review Team (QRT)
 - Mission Statement
- State Approving Agency (SAA)
 - Mission Statement
- VSD Projects
- Legislation



VSD's Mission Statement



To provide the best advocacy and services in Arizona for Service Members, Veterans and their families in obtaining federal and state benefits.

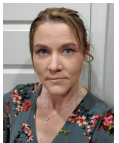


VSD Leadership Team

ADD
Gary Ochoa



Quality Review
Team (QRT)
Chrissy Hawn



VBCs - Northern
Region
Reghan Stuller



VBCs - Central
Region
Bill Glennon



VBCs - Southern
Region
James Louis



SAVMC Sierra
Vista
Joe Larson



AVMC
Marana
Carla Arcenaux



AVMC Camp
Navajo
Judy Dillman



State Approving
Agency (SAA)
Jeff Escobar



Memorial Cemeteries' Mission Statement



The Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemeteries will provide a lasting benefit in honor of Veterans and their families with a final resting place in appreciation and gratitude for their service and sacrifice to our nation.



National Cemetery Administration (NCA)



National Cemetery Administration (NCA)



The Veterans Cemetery Grants Program complements the VA national cemetery system by funding state, territorial and tribal Veterans' cemeteries, increasing access to burial benefits for Veterans and their eligible family members. Since its inception in 1978, the program has awarded more than \$959 million to establish, expand, improve, operate and maintain 121 cemeteries in which Veterans are currently interred. In fiscal year 2021, these cemeteries conducted more than 45,000 burials.



Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemeteries



Mohave County



AVMC at Camp Navajo

Yuma County

AVMC at Marana

★ Current Sites

SAVMC at Sierra Vista

★ Proposed Future Sites

Southern Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery



1300 S. Buffalo Soldier Trail Sierra Vista, Arizona 85635
Open daily from dawn to dusk



Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery at Marana



15950 North Lockett Road, Marana, Arizona 85653

Open daily from dawn to dusk



Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery at Camp Navajo



14317 Veterans Drive, Bellemont, AZ 86016
Open daily from dawn to dusk



Committal Shelters



Columbarium Walls



Burial Gardens



Scatter Garden



Burial Benefits



- Gravesite
- Opening and closing of the grave
- Perpetual care
- A headstone or marker
- A burial flag
- Presidential Memorial Certificate
- Eligible spouses and dependents may be buried, even if they predecease the Veteran.



Military Funeral Honors



- Honor guard team will fold the burial flag and play taps
- A United States flag is provided by the funeral home or can be picked up at a post office



National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

Expansion Grants for AVMC at Marana



- VA Grant Awarded - \$3,366,333.15 for the expansion and improvement of Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Marana.
 - The funding will provide the cemetery with 2,400 columbarium niches, ADA improvements, grading and drainage, landscaping, irrigation, and supporting infrastructure of approximately .85 acres of land.



National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

Expansion Grants for AVMC at Camp Navajo



- VA Grant Awarded - \$2,086,205.83 for the expansion and improvement of the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Camp Navajo.
 - The funding will provide the cemetery with 880 columbarium niches, and concrete slab, rain gutters, landscaping, irrigation and supporting infrastructure on approximately .53 acres of land.
- VA Grant Awarded - \$1,5888.000 for the expansion and improvement of the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Camp Navajo.
 - The funding will provide the cemetery with 340 pre-placed crypts, 450 in-ground cremains, landscaping, irrigation, and supporting infrastructure.



VBC and Quality Review Team's Mission Statement



To serve the Veterans of Arizona and their families by providing information and assistance in securing their rightful benefits as provided for by state and federal law.



Veteran Benefits Counselors



- **Veteran Benefits Counselors (VBCs)** are accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and advocate for Arizona's Service Members, Veterans and their families with receiving federal and state Veteran benefits. VBCs also advocate for American Legion clients and NVLSP assists with dockets before the US Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.
- **VBCs assist claimants by:**
 - Educating claimants on eligibility requirements for benefits
 - Preparing and submitting VA Compensation and Pension Applications
 - Appealing VA Decisions
 - Representing Claimants at VA Hearings
 - Filing for Survivor's Benefits
 - Referring claimants to other agencies for potential benefits
 - Requesting military service records and certifying DD-214s (discharge paperwork)
 - Discussing State Veteran Benefits
 - Assist with request to correct military service record / Review discharge status
- **Virtual VBC**



Virtual VBC



- **What is Virtual VBC?**

- Convenience for our clients and VBCs .
- We can assist clients without an office appointment by using electronic media.

- **Virtual VBC Appointment**

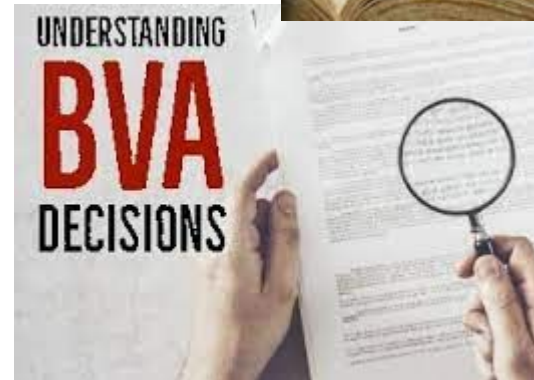
- For a virtual VBC appointment, the client will need an electronic device with a camera, mic., internet connectivity and the ability to receive emails.
- A staff member will send a link to the virtual appointment via email.
- If clients do not have access to the equipment needed for a virtual appointment, a VBC can still provide services over the phone or via email.
- For an appointment please call (602) 535-1215



Quality Review Team



- **Reviews VA Decisions:** QRT representatives review VA decisions for our clients and provides recommendations.
- **BVA Hearings:** Assist with the development and representation during BVA and VARO hearings.
 - NVLSP MOU
- **Track VBC and QRT metrics**
- **Training:** Provide training for all VBCs in accordance with VA and OGC requirements to obtain VA accreditation



State Approving Agency's Mission Statement



The primary responsibility and focus of the State Approving Agency (SAA) is to promote and safeguard quality education and training programs for all Veterans and other eligible persons as well as to ensure greater education and training opportunities that meet the changing needs of Veterans and to protect the GI Bill® resources available for those programs.



State Approving Agency and VA Partnership



In Arizona, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) contracts with the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS) and the State Approving Agency (SAA) to assess and approve Arizona education and training programs that qualify to provide Veterans education and training.

Currently, Arizona has over 300 approved institutions that accept GI Bill education benefits with over 24,000 GI Bill users.



The Role of the SAA

- Approvals

- New Institutions (Public, Private, Not for Profit)
- Apprenticeship and On-the-Job Training Programs
- Flight Schools
- Programs leading to a high school diploma
- Licensure and Certification tests offered by a federal, state or local government

- Risk Base Surveys (RBS) are administered to ensure the training establishments are in compliance with federal law.

- School Assistance

- Initial program approval
- Renewal application
- Addition of a new program or programs
- Addition of an extension or branch campus and
- Change of the Institutions name, ownership, or location



VSD Projects



- Cemetery Expansions (NCA Cemetery Grants)
 - Marana – Columbarium Expansion (2,400 Niches)
 - Camp Navajo – Columbarium Expansion (880 Niches)
 - Camp Navajo – In Ground Crypts (340 Pre-Placed & 450 in-ground cremains)
- Inspection and Compliance Survey Visit for CN and Marana (FY2023)
 - All critical elements passed 100%
 - SAVMC (Jan 2024)
- Web Based Appointment System for VBCs (Calendly)
- Identify Veterans from AZ Death Certificates
 - Traumatic Deaths with Arizona Department of Health



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DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

Your Partner For A Stronger Arizona



Legislation



- Legislation Passed - \$2,200,000 and 20 FTEs from the state GF in FY 2023 to ADVS to hire veteran service officers to provide services in rural tribal nations in Arizona that have communities that are located 100 miles or more from the nearest U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs service center and exempts the appropriation from lapsing.
- Legislation Proposed - National Guard and Reserve Equity Act
 - \$15,000 appropriated for FY2024



Questions and Contact Information



Cemetery Administrators:

Joe Larson @ Sierra Vista (520) 458-7144

Carla Arceneaux @ Marana (520) 638-4869

Judy Dillman @ Camp Navajo (928) 214-3474

Regional Managers:

Reghan Stuller @ Northern Region (928) 460-3232

Bill Glennon @ Central Region (602) 540-7745

TUB-BEE' Louis @ Southern Region (520) 349-3268

SAA Program Director:

Jeff Escobar (602) 677-6562

QRT Training Officer:

Chrissy Hawn (480) 262-0396

VSD ADD:

Gary Ochoa (520) 437-9366



Notice of Action to be Ratified

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING OF THE ARIZONA VETERANS' SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF RATIFYING PAST ACTION TAKEN IN VIOLATION OF OPEN MEETING LAW

Pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.05, notice is hereby given to the members of the Arizona Veterans' Service Advisory Commission and to the general public that the Arizona Veterans' Service Advisory Commission will hold a meeting open to the public on July 13, 2023 at 10am at Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, 3839 N. 3rd Street, Suite 201, Phoenix, AZ 85012. Virtually, via Google Meet link: <https://meet.google.com/jgg-vmsc-uux>; Dial-in: (US) +1 475-222-5532, PIN: 275 244 224#.

The purpose of the meeting is to ratify an action of the Arizona Veterans' Service Advisory Commission that may have been taken in violation of the Open Meeting Law. This action involved:

Letter dated June 14, 2023 mailed to Governor Hobbs in support of SB 1454, to allocate a one-time appropriation of \$10 million from a \$50 million State Parks Revenue Fund to acquire State Trust Land near the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona to design and construct a state park to honor veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.

The public may obtain a detailed written description of the action to be ratified, and all deliberations, consultations, and decisions by members of the public body that preceded and relate to this action to be ratified on July 13, 2023 at 10am at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting. Information may be obtained at <https://dvs.az.gov/about/advisory-commission>

Dated this 9th day of July, 2023.



Arizona Veterans' Service Advisory Commission
By Kathryn L. Gallowitz, Chair

Notice of Action to be Ratified

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING OF THE ARIZONA VETERANS' SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF RATIFYING PAST ACTION TAKEN IN VIOLATION OF OPEN MEETING LAW

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Request for letter of support for State Veteran Park from Colonel (Ret) Wanda Wright: June 13, 2023 at 7:24pm.

From: Wanda Wright <wwright3@cox.net>
To: t.sheets@swvcc.org, Kathy Gallowitz <kathy@vanguardveteran.com>, Gabe Forsberg <gabeforsberg@gmail.com>
Date: 06/13/2023 7:24 PM MST
Subject: State Veteran Park

Kathy, Tom and Gabe

I am hoping you will indulge me on this ask.

Yesterday the legislature put \$10 million dollars aside for a state veteran park that would be located near the VA Cemetery in Cave Creek. I think it would be a wonderful addition.

Please support the bill by sending a letter from your organization.

Unfortunately, there is a time crunch. The letter would need to be sent to the Governor's office before Friday.

I put a draft letter together for your edit. See the attached letter.

I assume you have to get permission from the membership, which may take some time. Let me know if it is possible to get done in time.

You can call me at 480-250-8305 if you need more info.

Thanks so much
Wanda

**Commission Gallowitz Email to Commissioners:
June 13, 2023 at 8:14pm.**

From: Kathy Gallowitz <kathy@vanguardveteran.com>
To: "genecrego@gmail.com" <genecrego@gmail.com>, "Chris.Gibbs.21B@hotmail.com" <Chris.Gibbs.21B@hotmail.com>, "m.d.noble@msn.com" <m.d.noble@msn.com>, "loving@phoenixunion.org" <loving@phoenixunion.org>, "andy@rpmlawaz.com" <andy@rpmlawaz.com>, "matthewjkenney85@gmail.com" <matthewjkenney85@gmail.com>, "seagb@cox.net" <seagb@cox.net>, "pdcushman@gmail.com" <pdcushman@gmail.com>
Cc: Lupita Santellano <lsantellano@azdvs.gov>, "wwright3@cox.net" <wwright3@cox.net>, Dana Allmond <dallmond@azdvs.gov>, Jessica Roza <jroza@azdvs.gov>
Date: 06/13/2023 8:14 PM MST
Subject: Respectfully Request Your Support - NOW!

Greetings Commissioners -

Kindly review the messages below - the original one from Col Wanda Wright asking for our support and the proposed letter to place on Commissioner letterhead and send to the Governors office before Friday.

Please weigh in now!

Best,
Kathy

Governor Hobbs,

The Arizona Veterans Services Advisory Commission is in support of establishing a State Veteran Park. There are currently only five state-established parks dedicated exclusively to Veterans in the United States(Georgia, Idaho, New Mexico, Rhode Island and Washington state).

Arizona has the 13th highest number of Veterans in the country. Over half of the state's Veteran population lives in Maricopa county. The Commission represents Veterans across Arizona and believes that the park would be a testament to the unique legacy of all those who have served and a testimonial for those who gave the final sacrifice.

It is only fitting that this park will be located near the Veteran Affairs National Memorial Cemetery. The park can be used for regular events, educational purposes and we hope to provide Veterans and their families an opportunity to reflect.

We request that you sign SB 1454. By doing so you will create a park that will be a lasting monument reminding us of our gifted inheritance and why we cherish our hard earned freedom.

Warm regards,
Kathy

Commisioner Gallowitz Emails with Lupita Santellano AZDVS:

On 06/13/2023 8:27 PM MST Kathy Gallowitz
<kathy@vanguardveteran.com> wrote:

Hi, Lupita -

Hope you are well

If I we are able to obtain majority support from Commissioners in time, can you assist by getting the letter on our letter head and getting it in the may before Friday?

Five YES' is majority, right??

Thoughts?

Kath

6/14/2023 10:22 AM To Lupita Santellano

I have called everyone - mostly left messages but don't have Andys phone number

Also, kindly resend most current roster.

Thanks,

Kath

On 06/14/2023 2:27 PM MST Kathy Gallowitz

<kathy@vanguardveteran.com> wrote:

Re: Majority of Commissioners supported endorsing the Veterans Park

To Lupita Santellano **Copy** Dana Allmond Jessica Roza

Lupita - Kindly put this note on Commission letter head for my signature and your delivery/posting tomorrow. Thanks so much

Governor Hobbs,

The Arizona Veterans Services Advisory Commission is in support of establishing a State Veteran Park. There are currently only five state-established parks dedicated exclusively to Veterans in the United States(Georgia, Idaho, New Mexico, Rhode Island and Washington state).

Arizona has the 13th highest number of Veterans in the country. Over half of the state's Veteran population lives in Maricopa county. The Commission represents Veterans across Arizona and believes that the park would be a testament to the unique legacy of all those who have served and a testimonial for those who gave the final sacrifice.

It is only fitting that this park will be located near the Veteran Affairs National Memorial Cemetery. The park can be used for regular events, educational purposes and we hope to provide Veterans and their families an opportunity to reflect.

We request that you sign SB 1454. By doing so you will create a park that will be a lasting monument reminding us of our gifted inheritance and why we cherish our hard-earned freedom.

On Wed, Jun 14, 2023 at 3:58 PM Vanguard Veteran LLC <kathy@vanguardveteran.com> wrote:
Kindly send letter.

Sent from mobile device, all error self inflicted.

On 06/14/2023 4:43 PM MST Lupita Santellano <lsantellano@azdvs.gov> wrote:

Kathy,

I was advised to wait. I cannot send the letter until I receive approval from my team.

Respectfully,
Lupita Santellano

Commissioner Gallowitz emails with Jessica Roza at AZDVS:

On 06/14/2023 2:43 PM MST Jessica Roza <jroza@azdvs.gov> wrote:
To Kathy Gallowitz **Copy** Lupita Santellano, Dana Allmond

Hold on Lupita before you do this--

Which commissioners support this? How was the decisions of this body made? How/when were the commissioners consulted? Advisory commission official business needs to be conducted in a public meeting and "meetings" include telephone and email communications.

Please respond via email. Thank you.

Respectfully,
Jessica C. Roza
Legislative Liaison

On 06/14/2023 3:38 PM MST Jessica Roza <jroza@azdvs.gov> wrote:
To Vanguard Veteran LLC

I am unavailable for a phone call.

If there is a recommendation concerning a decision to be made, considered or a course of conduct to be taken or considered by the public body, such as this body regarding supporting and sending this letter, then open meeting law must be followed with an agenda and notice, etc. The open meeting law requires at least 24 hours notice of meetings to the members of the public body and the general public (A.R.S. § 38-431.02(C)), agendas must contain information reasonably necessary to inform the public of the matters to be discussed or decided (A.R.S. § 38-431.09) and agendas must be available at least 24 hours before the meeting (A.R.S. § 38-431.02(G)).

If there is expediency required in this matter, then you should take the route of writing a letter in a personal capacity.

Thanks.

Respectfully,
Jessica C. Roza
Legislative Liaison

Emails between Commissioner Gallowitz and Director Allmond:

On 06/16/2023 9:59 AM MST Dana Allmond <dallmond@azdvs.gov> wrote:

Thanks Kathy.

Dana

On Fri, Jun 16, 2023 at 9:31 AM Kathy Gallowitz <kathy@vanguardveteran.com> wrote:

Good morning -
Sorry to miss your call. I called at 0645 but no way to leave VM.
Please try back after 1030.
Kathy

On 06/15/2023 8:42 PM MST Dana Allmond <dallmond@azdvs.gov> wrote:

Hi Kathy.
Please give me a call.
I left you a voicemail message.

Commissioner Communication:

Commissioner Phil Cushman

Voicemail: Returned my phone call June 14, 2023 11:03am

“Thinks it’s a great idea but we need to consider how to approach procedurally.”

Phone Calls: We spoke twice 14 June 2023 on the phone - one early afternoon to explore options and in the evening when I told him I would write the letter.

Commissioner Chuck Byers Voicemail Message June 14, 2023 11:04

“I did not receive your email. I support the project, but I have some questions. Will respond back with my confirmation.” (Email not received.)

Commissioner Kirk Loving Email

On 06/14/2023 12:45 PM MST Loving, Kirk MAJ

<loving@phoenixunion.org> wrote:

Hi Kathy,

I got your voicemail. You have my vote in favor. Sounds like a great idea.

Thanks,

Kirk

Commissioner Mathew Kenny Text June 14, 1:59pm

In response to my voicemail.

“I am in support. It sounds great.”

Commissioner Andrew Meschel Email

On 06/14/2023 4:48 PM MST Andy Meshel <andy@rpmlawaz.com> wrote:

Concur - in support.

Best regards,

Andrew P. Meshel, Esq.

Commissioner Chris Gibbs Email June 15, 2023 9:56am

Per our phone conversation, count me in.
Chris Gibbs

Commissioner Mike Noble

Believe we spoke on the phone. My notes have him recorded as a “yes” but could not find documentation of how/when we communicated.

On 06/15/2023 8:10 PM MST Mike Noble <m.d.noble@msn.com> wrote:

Kathy,

Good job on the letter. I should mention that again below my name, I am referenced at belonging to the Military Officers Association of America. I do not know this organization nor have I ever belong to it. I was sponsored by the Department of Arizona Marine Corps League.

Commissioner Gene Crego - No contact

Commissioner Gallowitz Emails to Commissioners:

From: Kathy Gallowitz <kathy@vanguardveteran.com>

On 06/15/2023 6:31 PM MST Kathy Gallowitz

<kathy@vanguardveteran.com> wrote:

To: Dana Allmond

<dallmond@azdvs.gov>, genecrego@gmail.com, Chris.Gibbs.21B@hotmail.com, m.d.noble@msn.com, loving@phoenixunion.org, andy@rpmlawaz.com, matthewjkenney85@gmail.com, seagb@cox.net, pdcushman@gmail.com

Cc: Jessica Roza <jroza@azdvs.gov>, Lupita Santellano

<lsantellano@azdvs.gov>, Wanda Wright <wwright3@cox.net>

Subject: Veteran Park Letter

All -

Kindly see attached letter mailed to Governor Hobbs today, in time to meet the recommended deadline.

----- Original Message -----

From: Kathy Gallowitz <kathy@vanguardveteran.com>
To: genecrego@gmail.com, Chris.Gibbs.21B@hotmail.com, m.d.noble@msn.com, loving@phoenixunion.org, andy@rpmlawaz.com, matthewjkenney85@gmail.com, seagb@cox.net, pdcushman@gmail.com
Date: 06/26/2023 10:33 AM MDT
Subject: Fwd: Veteran State Park

Greetings -
Knew you would want to see the good news below.
Best,
Kathy

From: wwright3 <wwright3@cox.net>
To: carol culbertson <carolculbertson@earthlink.net>, Kathy Gallowitz <kathy@vanguardveteran.com>, Tom Sheets <tsheets@stonewall-group.com>, Gabe Forsberg <gabeforsberg@gmail.com>
Date: 06/25/2023 8:28 PM MDT
Subject: Veteran State Park

Hi all,
Wanted to let you all know, the Governor signed the Veteran Park bill into law.
Thank you again for your support. I will keep you updated on progress as I get information.
Hope you are are having a great weekend.
Wanda

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathy Gallowitz". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Arizona Veterans' Service Advisory Commission
By Kathryn L. Gallowitz, Chair
July 10, 2023

Veterans Advisory Board Meeting – Thursday, July 13th

Legislative Update

- The Legislature returned Monday, June 12th after their four-week break, passed a handful of bills and are on another extended break until July 31. While the Legislature isn't scheduled to come back for two more weeks, it is anticipated that the majority of the work for this session has been completed. The historically lengthy session delays the effective date of legislation passed this year. Specifically, legislation becomes effective 90 days after the adjournment of the session.
- Our Agency Bill sponsored by Rep. Travers- HB2670 went through Senate Rules, COW/Third Read PASSED voting: (28-0-2-0) , but the House had already adjourned for recess. The bill needs to have a final vote in the House to provide these service members and veterans services and burials in our state cemeteries-- we are hopeful House Leadership will put this important veteran bill on the board before sine die. Several important bills and confirmations for Governor Hobbs' Agency Directors remain outstanding. One of which is our agency bill Sponsored by Rep. Travers.
- HB2670 will do 2 things for the population that we serve:
 - 1) Amend the definition of Armed Forces to include Space Force, which will allow us to provide services to these members.
 - 2) Amend statute to include Arizona National Guard and Reserve member eligibility for burial in our state cemeteries.
- Both parts of this bill are required to be in compliance with federal law and will prevent the state from denying eligibility to state benefits and services due to technicalities in language.

Session Statistics

- Bills Introduced – 1562
- Transmitted to Governor – 345
- Measures Signed by Governor – 202
- Bills Vetoed by Governor – 143

Update on State Legislators

- Both of the state's top two legislative Democrats from the beginning of the legislative session have now resigned. Former Senate Minority Leader Raquel Terán resigned on April 13 to pursue a Congressional bid. She was replaced by Sen. Flavio Bravo, D-Phoenix, who switched chambers from the House. Former Republican Rep. Liz Harris was expelled from the House on April 12, and former Republican Sen. Steve Kaiser resigned on June 22. House minority leader Rep. Andres Cano, resigned last week to attend a graduate program at Harvard, creating the fifth legislative vacancy this session. The new House Minority Leader is Rep. Lupe Contreras, D-Avondale.

- The replacement of vacant legislative seats process is held by the LD Precinct Committeemen and the County Board of Supervisors. The committee must choose three nominees to send to the board as potential replacements and the board will appoint one of the three.

Update on Director Nominations

- The Governor retained 5 previous directors. That leaves 23 agency directors that needed to go through the confirmation process.
- Hobbs sent names to the legislature of appointees to various boards, agencies and commissions, but in six months, only five agency directors have been fully confirmed, and 11 nominees in total have had hearings.
- Executive orders have been given on abortion, conversion therapy and gender-affirming health care. Members of the Senate Committee on Director Nominations said they refuse to consider any more of Hobbs' nominees until she rescinds her order—Hobbs said she will not, which means this will likely result in a court battle.
- The legislature passed a resolution this year which, if approved by voters in 2024, would limit the governor's power to issue executive orders. However, they'll still have to deal with Hobbs' current authority for at least another year.

Local News:

- The City of Glendale City Council voted in favor of rezoning an area close to 63rd and Grand avenues for the purposes of creating a Veteran Village. This project was also provided funding in the FY24 State of Arizona Budget, supported by Mayor Jerry Weiers, and will be managed by the Veterans Community Project (VCP), a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving homeless veterans nationwide. In addition to providing 50 family-friendly transitional housing units, the veteran community will be provided case management services which will help connect veterans to appropriate benefits, services, and resources.

Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission
Strategic Policy Update Subcommittee

Virtual Meeting

June 30, 2023

M I N U T E S

Advisory Commissioners Present:

Kathy Gallowitz, Chairwoman

Phil Cushman, Vice Chair

Charles Byers, Commissioner

AZ Department of Veterans' Services Staff Present:

Jessica Roza, Legislative Liaison

Call to Order: Chairwoman Gallowitz opened the meeting at 9:32am.

I. Commissioner Gallowitz informed the subcommittee that the intent of this first meeting is to:

- A. Identify and organize the major issues currently facing Arizona's Veterans, evaluating the "TOP THREE" issue concerns provided by Commissioners at the January 2023 Commission meeting and the Commission's January 18, 2023 policy recommendation letter submitted to Governor Katie Hobbs.
- B. Establish what (if) additional information is needed.
- C. Consider how to format and organize the final document.

II. Commissioner Gallowitz presented a spreadsheet of the issues from 1A. for discussion. Key points/decisions included:

- A. Commissioner Cushman suggested that some of the issue concerns listed are single action, "easy win" suggestions and others have broader policy implications. Making these distinctions is important. We should consider how/who implements the recommendations.
- B. Jessica reinforced that offering administrative and legislative policy recommendations are appropriate and suggested providing specific actionable solutions for each broad issue category.

III. Commissioner Byers reported the priority concerns of Arizona' Veteran Service Organizations as:

- A. Suicide prevention
- B. Amending the statute to raise the income and property tax exemption thresholds
- C. Affordable housing for Veterans - including senior housing and homelessness
- D. Improving access to rural healthcare including tele-health and transportation to VA and community care appointments
- E. Jessica informed the committee that:
 1. Funding and a pilot has been approved for suicide prevention training for Veteran Service Organizations leaders and claims representatives.
 2. Digital literacy continues to be a concern for Veterans. Advocating for this might be helpful.

IV. Jessica reinforced the Commission's value in providing the Governor policy priorities pertaining to Arizona's Veteran community and shared the Governors priorities as:

- A. Improving Education
- B. Economic Growth and Workforce Development
- C. Immigration and Border Security
- D. Affordability and Housing
- E. Water and Environment
- F. Expanding Health Care

For more information, visit <https://azgovernor.gov/governor/priorities>
 Commissioner Gallowitz suggested aligning Commissioner issue concerns with the Governor's priorities.

V. Commissioner Cushman expressed interest in sharing Commission issue concerns with the Governor and suggested we start by meeting with the Policy Advisor. Commissioner Gallowitz asked the committee to consider when it would be most helpful to conduct this meeting, possibly after we determine our top policy recommendations. Jessica reminded that the policy advisor has been invited to attend Commission meetings.

VI. Veteran-community issue concerns aligned with Governor Priorities:

A. Improving Education

Jessica explained that these priorities include increased teacher pay, supporting school repair infrastructure projects and providing adequate funding for public schools, K-12. The Governor's position is that there is not

a teacher shortage but a teacher retention problem due to pay, curriculum and working conditions.

1. One Commissioner listed education as a top three concern in the Issues Report.
2. Commissioner Cushman explained that rural Arizona has a teachers' shortage and would like to see more assistance helping transitioning military become K-12 teachers.
3. Jessica offered the Commission might want to ask for more funding for *Troops to Teachers*.
4. Commissioner Gallowitz explained the goals of *Purple Star Schools* as a K-12 program are to support the identification, support and recognition of military children and is separate from the Military Child Education Coalition. Funding this program is in the best interests of military families.

B. Economic Growth and Workforce Development

1. In the Issues Report, Four Commissioners listed employment as a top three priority concern, describing these specific solutions:
 - Educating employers on Veteran-hiring best practices
 - Supporting
 - Arizona Coalition for Military Family's (ACMF) *Arizona Veteran Supportive Employers (AVSE)* program
 - *DOD Skillbridge*
 - ACMF's "*AZHires Vets,*" to employ more Veterans in state government jobs
 - Creating hiring preferences for able/disabled Veterans in state and local government jobs
 - Drawing Native Americans back to Arizona after their military service
 - Establishing 3% state contract set-asides for Veteran Owned Businesses
 - Attracting Veterans/Military Spouses to Arizona's workforce
 - Developing a State Veteran Employment Council
 - Incentivizing small business and local governments to hire Veterans
 - Expediting military medics into civilian healthcare jobs
2. Commissioner Buyers suggested placing the issue of Property Tax and Income threshold elevation in this section.
3. Veteran Benefit Counselors (VBC): Although aligning VBC and

“Benefit Restoration” could have an economic impact on Veterans’ finances, the committee determined to remove it from this section in the final document and make it a separate item. Jessica explained that:

- All VBC’s have been hired.
- Assisting with Discharge Upgrades is beyond the current scope of VBC services. Changing this would be an administrative and/or possible legal response.
- The VA supports Discharge Upgrades and provides mental healthcare up to 90-days for those with “Other Than Honorable Discharges.”
- We might want to recommend making the twenty Tribal/Rural VBC’s a budget line item.

C. Affordability and Housing

1. In the Issues Report, Four Commissioners listed housing as a top three priority.
2. Jessica explained that 70% of homeless Veterans are over 55 years old and that homelessness is a major concern in Arizona.
3. Commissioners agreed that supporting the *Arizona Veteran Homeless Action Plan* is a priority.
4. Affordable housing options and overall financial stability of military families are broad issue concerns.

D. Expanding Health Care

1. In the Issues Report, Five Commissioners listed suicide prevention as a top three concern.
2. In the Issues Report, Three Commissioners listed mental health as a top three concern.
3. Committee adopted Jessica’s recommendation to broaden this Veterans’ issue to “mental and healthcare access.”
4. Commissioners agreed to include these aspects:
 - Broad support of suicide prevention strategies.
 - Expanding tele-health into rural communities, including extending broadband and fostering digital literacy.
 - Offering Veterans paid transportation to healthcare appointments, especially rural Veterans.
 - Support Veterans Treatment Courts, to include:
 - Increased funding
 - Develop more of these courts and share best practices

- Support organizations that provide legal assistance to Veterans
- Simplifying credentialing of health care providers as TRICARE providers.
- Fund *Star Behavioral Health* to educate civilian behavior health providers about military culture and learn evidence-based intervention best practices.
- Advocating for *Fisher Homes* in Phoenix, Prescott and Tucson even though all the funding is federal.
- Support the needs of Aging Veterans to include:
 - Veterans' widows, by providing better communication and coordination of benefits.
 - Foster collaboration of Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) and Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) to better support Veterans aging in rural communities.
 - Protect and grow the cemetery trust fund with the intent to build more Veteran cemeteries across the state.
 - Provide memorial grants for private and municipal cemeteries.

VII. Other Veteran issues:

- A. Remove these concerns from the list:
 1. Organizational support from younger Veterans for VSO's because the committee did not view this as a legislative or administrative policy.
 2. Free special license plates for Purple Heart recipients since it was recently passed by the state legislature.
- B. Keep "*Ask a Veteran: Have you or family served in Armed Force?*" as an administrative recommendation to see what is feasible for agencies. This is an important suicide prevention strategy.
- C. Support funding of *Be Connected*.
- D. Keep needs of Veteran subgroups top of mind, including: Minority, Native Americans, Women, Disabled, Rural

VIII. Other sources of information:

- A. Jessica will provide committee members the recently updated ADVS Strategic Plan and Director Allmond's priorities.
- B. Jessica provided the "Violent Death Report" link during the meeting for committee members to review.
- C. Jessica reported that the State Legislature's Veteran's Caucus priorities are:
 - Housing

- Suicide
 - Access to Services and Benefits
 - Employment
- D. Jessica reported that the Community Housing Coalition report is dated 2017 and that it's important to support the Arizona Veteran Homeless Action plan. For additional information contact State Veteran Homeless Program Administrator, Nisha Dorsey.
- E. Commissioner Gallowitz will follow up with the Arizona Coalition for Military Families to obtain survey results.
- F. Should the Commission like updates on issues, Jessica encouraged Commissioners to invite subject matter expert speakers to Commission meetings.
- IX. Final document format considerations:
- A. Commissioner Gallowitz asked the committee if we wanted to describe the current state of broad issues and if so, how that would be accomplished. Jessica reported that these descriptions are not part of the updated ADVS Strategic Plan. That if we wanted data, ADVS staff could facilitate connections to experts.
- B. Commissioner Gallowitz asked whether we wanted the final report to contain Commission positions on issues as well as specific policy recommendations for each broad issue, similar to how the current document reads.

Next meeting: September 8, 2023 from 9:30am-11:30am.

Adjournment: Commissioner Gallowitz concluded the meeting at 11:12am.



Kathryn L. Gallowitz
Chair, Arizona Veterans Service Advisory Commission
July 4, 2023

13 July 2023

To: Arizona Department of Veterans' Services Commission
From: Commissioner Cushman

Subject: Outreach to Veterans 12 May 2023 to 13 July 2023

The following is a summary of outreach to Veterans performed between Commission meetings. I chair several committees at my local VFW and American Legion Post to include Bylaws Committee, Naming Committee, Executive Committee, and the Quartzsite Masters Charity Desert Golf Tournament.

- Attended AZDVS Commission Meeting, Yuma, Arizona (11 May 2023)
- Attended VFW Post 769, Quartzsite, Arizona monthly membership meeting (13 May 2023) Provided update on Commission activities, planning efforts for new Post Sign, and process for Legion Post 113 naming.
- Attended Legion Post 113, Quartzsite, Arizona monthly membership (20 May 2023) Provided update on Commission activities, planning efforts for new Post Sign, and process for Legion Post 113 naming.
- Substitute Teaching, Parker High School, Parker, Arizona (22 to 26 May 2023). Inspired the next generation to consider careers in the U.S. Military.
- Provided *pro bono* services to American Legion Post 113 Riders to develop their bylaws (26 May 2023).
- Attended Memorial Day Ceremonies co-hosted by VFW Post 769 and American Legion Post 113 at the Hi Jolly Cemetery in Quartzsite, Arizona.
- Attended Farewell Reception for Cookie Shannon, VFW Post 769 Auxiliary President and long-time local volunteer in the Quartzsite, Arizona Community (5 June 2023).
- Attended VFW Post 769, Quartzsite, Arizona monthly membership meeting (10 June 2023) Provided update on Commission activities, planning efforts for new Post Sign, and process for Legion Post 113 naming.
- Attended Flag Day Ceremonies at VFW Post 769, Quartzsite, Arizona (14 June 2024)
- Attended Legion Post 113, Quartzsite, Arizona monthly membership (20 May 2023) Provided update on Commission activities, planning efforts for new Post Sign, and process for Legion Post 113 naming.
- Attended International City Managers' Association Veterans Advisory Committee meeting (20 June 2023)
- Attended Grand Opening of the AZDVS Veterans' Home in Yuma, Arizona (24 June 2023)
- Attended Legion Post 113, Quartzsite, Arizona Finance Committee Meeting (30 June 2023)
- Attended Commission Strategic Policy Meeting (30 June 2023)
- Attended Independence Day Ceremonies at the Quartzsite Branch Latter Day Saints Church and VFW Post 769, Quartzsite, Arizona (4 July 2023)

Respectfully Submitted,

Philip D. Cushman
Commissioner