

**Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission**  
3839 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Phoenix, AZ 85012

**September 12, 2024**

**MINUTES**

**Advisory Commissioners Present**

Philip Cushman, Chairman (in person)  
Charles Byers, Vice Chair (virtual)  
Chris Gibbs, Commissioner (in person)  
Gene Crego, Commissioner (in person)  
Kathy Gallowitz, Commissioner (virtual)

**AZ Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS)**

John F. Scott, II, Director (in person)  
Dana C. Allmond, Deputy Director (in person)  
Lupita Santellano, Executive Assistant (in person)

**Absent**

Julia Gusse, Legislative Liaison  
Lupita Santellano, Executive Assistant  
Matthew Kenney, Commissioner  
Andrew Meshel, Commissioner

**Call to Order** – The Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission (AVSAC) meeting, was held at the Prescott Police Department, 222 S. Marina St., Prescott, AZ 86303 and via Google Meet: [meet.google.com/jgq-vm-sc-uux](https://meet.google.com/jgq-vm-sc-uux); Dial-in:(US) +1 475-222-5532; PIN: 275 244 224#.

Chairman Cushman called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

Chairman Cushman led the Commission in the pledge of allegiance.

**Guest Introductions-** Chairman Cushman Introduced the Mayor of Prescott, Phil Goode, and Joan McDermott, a previous AVSAC member.

Mayor Goode provided historical information regarding the city's name and lineage which can be tied directly to the revolutionary war. He states the city of Prescott has the largest percentage of veterans in a city across the country at 18%, excluding cities surrounding military bases.

Joan McDermott states the Veterans Caucus will be starting up soon and transportation continues to be an issue among veteran communities. She states the Jerry Ambrose vet council in Kingman, AZ, has a transport van, which has transported 56 veterans locally and even across state lines into Las Vegas, Nevada. They are looking into acquiring a second van. Transport such as Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and the VA cannot assist with similar transports due to rules they must follow, such as they cannot drive more than 8 hours. They also have rules about going past state lines.

She reports Be Connected is helping veterans who need housing assistance.

She states Veterans Court in Lake Havasu is doing well. Joan volunteers as a mentor coordinator. She has 23 mentors assigned to her. She helps veterans with community services to reduce fines and connects them with wholesome components in the community. There are a few upcoming veteran resource fairs: Lake Havasu on October 19, 2024, Bullhead city on March 7, 2025, and Kingman on March 2, 2025.

Joan states the Vet Center has a new newsletter, created by Stacey Lee, which contains more than just Vet Center information. She states veterans court holds a meeting once a month, not only for court personnel but also the community. This team is also known as the veteran resource team. The veteran resource team assists veterans in need of resources by filling out a form that is reviewed to connect the veteran with the proper resource. The form is then sent out to individuals who can take care of the veterans needs in a timely manner; at times within 24 hours.

In six months there were three veteran suicide threats, two through court and one in the community. Veteran Court Mentors will be trained through the VA. None of the suicide threats happened. The Lake Havasu VA Clinic, or CBOC, had some delays in opening. It is scheduled to open this September. Stacey Lee was involved in a program with younger veterans. Judge Kalauli decided to start a community resource team. There have been some issues starting this resource team.

The VFW commander started a veterans memorial wall, you can purchase a brick for the wall. Joan asked Director Scott the status of the Mohave County veteran home. Director Scott states the Mohave County Veteran Home money will not be available until 2030, possibly; by then a new feasibility study would need to be conducted.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Cushman called for a motion to approve the AVSAC meeting minutes from July 11, 2024. Commissioner Crego motioned to accept the meeting minutes. Commissioner Gibbs second the motion. The commission moved to approve the minutes unanimously.

Chairman Cushman called for a motion to approve the AVSAC minutes from August 1, 2024. Commissioner Gibbs motioned to approve the meeting minutes. Commissioner Crego second the motion. The commission approved the minutes unanimously.

Chairman Cushman called for a motion to approve the AVSAC Subcommittee minutes from August 23, 2024. Commissioner Crego motioned to approve the meeting minutes. Chairman Cushman second the motion. The commission approved the minutes unanimously.

### **Agency Announcements and Updates**

**Department Update** - Sierra Vista received an excellence award from the VA National Cemetery Association. The expansion project at the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Camp Navajo is not complete, the drainage pipe is negatively graded and must be corrected

before this project is considered complete. The Arizona State Veteran Home - Tucson (ASVH-T) continues to be a 5 star facility. ADVS has hired Camaron Farr as the Administrator of the Arizona State Veteran Home- Flagstaff. Cameron has been working on hiring personnel for the ASVH-F. So far he has hired a facilities manager, Director of Nursing, Social Worker Supervisor, and Admissions Coordinator. These key roles have to be in place before the ASVH-F can open. Resident applications may be submitted to ASVH-F, you may find the admissions form on the ADVS website (dvs.az.gov). ADVS plans to open ASVH-F in October of 2024. The Arizona Department of Health will come in and do a life safety inspection. ADVS must first have 20 residents admitted before the VA can come out for an initial recognition survey.

Vice Chair Byers asked if anything is being done in regards to the structure for compensation. Director Scott states ADVS has asked for a geographical stipend, this was approved contingent on a budget that will allow for it, which cannot be done when a profit is not being made at the moment. ADVS is currently hiring at the higher end of the salary range allowed for all ASVH-F positions. The minimum wage in Flagstaff has gone up, so ADVS will have to adjust again. ADVS plans to use registry nursing staff if it is short of core staff to open ASVH-F.

ADVS purchased fifty Starlink kits for the tribal connectivity project. There is an application form on dvs.az.gov, for those organizations who would like to manage this project for ADVS. The hall of fame grants solicitations have gone live on the ADVS website as well. Director Scott is currently working with the State Purchasing Office (SPO) on a contractual project of \$600,000 for a pinal county resource center, \$500,000 for trauma treatment training , and 1 million dollars for tribal ceremonies. Tribal ceremony costs vary depending on the tribe. The Korean Veteran Valor Act, signed by President Biden, which allows Korean Veterans who fought along USA personnel in Vietnam may receive the same benefits as US Veterans. ADVS helped a couple Korean Veterans receive their veteran plates. The Yuma home is open and currently has a census of 43 residents. Arizona State Veteran Home -Tucson is full. The Arizona State Veteran Home -Phoenix is not full. ADVS has converted shared rooms into single occupancy rooms at ASVH-P. The residents are happier. ASVH-P has an occupancy of 104 beds, where before it was 200.

**Legislative Update** - Deputy Director Allmond provided the legislative update on Julia Gusse's behalf. The powerpoint presentation may be found [here](#).

### **New Business**

Commission Positions and Recruitment, Boards and Commission Meeting Update - Chairman Cushman and Deputy Director Allmond met with the Boards and Commissions Director. There are two vacancies on the Advisory Commission currently. There may be some applicants that can fill those two vacancies. Boards and Commissions requires, by statute for a veteran applicant to be nominated by a veteran service organization. There are two people who have applied. Renewals must go through the application process again. The process takes a while, begin working on your renewals if you expire next year. If the commissioner term expires and the commissioner is not planning to renew, Chairman Cushman suggests the commissioner reach out to VSO's in their local area to find a veteran who can apply and replace the commissioner. ADVS may provide a letter for veterans who are not part of a VSO but are helping veterans through another organization that is not a national charter.

## **Old Business**

**Annual Letter to the Governor, Subcommittee Update and Edits** - Chairman Cushman provided the commission with a draft of the annual letter to the Governor. The commission members provided edit suggestions, redactions, and additional topics to be included in the letter. Chairman Cushman will update the letter and send out a revised draft when completed. The first draft of the letter to the Governor may be found [here](#).

**Strategic Policy Objective Reassessment and Edits** - This topic was tabled for the November 14, 2024 AVSAC meeting.

## **Outreach Activities and Updates**

Commissioner Gallowitz - None to report.

Commissioner Crego - The Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame Ceremony will be held on November 1, 2024. The early bird special for tickets to attend the ceremony has been extended to September 30, 2024.

Commissioner Gibbs- The Safford Standown is scheduled for October 25, 2024. Also, the town of Pima, received a \$160,000 grant from United Way to build a veterans memorial display at their cemetery. There will be approximately 620 flags at the Safford field of honor on the 7th or 8th of November.

Vice Chair Byers - None to report.

Chairman Cushman - Is a trustee for his local VSO. Nothing more to report.

## **For the Good of the Order**

### **Action Item Recap**

- None

### **Open Floor For Comments**

None.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Cushman adjourned the Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission meeting at 11:49 a.m.



## ARIZONA VETERANS' SERVICES ADVISORY COMMISSION

3839 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Suite 200, Phoenix, AZ 85012

Tel: (602) 255-3373 FAX: (602) 255-1038

Website: [www.azdvs.gov](http://www.azdvs.gov)

**November 19, 2024**

**Katie Hobbs**  
Governor

**The Honorable Katie Hobbs**  
Governor of Arizona  
1700 West Washington Street  
Phoenix, AZ 85007

### COMMISSIONERS:

Dear Governor Hobbs:

As you approach the end of the second year as our Governor, your Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission continues to provide you and your staff the best, most informed, non-partisan advice on policy issues involving your Veteran constituents and your Arizona Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS). Since 1951, your Commission promoted public awareness and enhanced the well-being of past and present Arizona service members, Veterans and their families. This broad mission is articulated in A.R.S. §41- 602, "The Commission shall provide policy advice to the Governor and the Director of Veterans' Services regarding Veterans' issues."

Summarized in the attached memorandum, is your Commission's strategic policy objectives and legislative ideas that address prevailing issues facing Veterans and their families. We pleased to report to report that after consultation with your policy planning staff that these objectives align with your priorities. These are loosely grouped into four themes:

- I. Promote sustainable employment, talent development and the economic security of Arizona's Veterans
- II. Improve Veterans' access to mental, physical, spiritual, and legal support
- III. Ensure Access to Affordable Housing and Services
- IV. Improve Educational Outcomes for Veterans and their families
- V. Monitor, Evaluate, and Influence How Water Shortages and Immigration Policies affect Veterans

We continue to recommend that your administration place a high priority on Veterans' issues. Veterans are powerful economic, financial and social influencers that positively shape Arizona's workplaces and communities. Indeed, research shows that Veterans strengthen the workforce and community. With more than 500,000 Veterans living in Arizona, it is estimated that nearly \$2.5 billion dollars comes to the state from federal Veteran benefits. The economic impact of Veterans spending from their disability compensation, pensions, educational benefits, military retiree pay and Veterans' Employment funding is considerable. One way the State can help Veterans is through amending Proposition 130 to raise the income thresholds for property tax exemptions for Veterans and their survivors.

There are several emerging issues and concerns that your Commission will be examining over the next year:

First, we are concerned with the dwindling number of Commissioners currently on your Commission. By statute, we can have nine. We currently have seven of which two have serious health issues, three may term-limit out, and one may be elected to County-level office which may require resignation from the Commission. One challenge is the slow

onboarding process that all your Commissions have due to personnel shortfalls in the Office of Commissions. Your Commissioners will be contacting other qualified candidates throughout the State to ensure a pool of qualified, diverse candidates exists for your Commission. Exploring administrative processes to expedite onboarding and term extensions. Quorum concerns.

Second, we are concerned that the resources that are provided to the Veteran Treatment Courts will be reduced to the point that they will be either closed or reduced to the point of ineffectiveness. This will most likely affect the rural and tribal regions of the State before the urban areas first. Your Commission will be monitoring the Veteran Courts across the State during the year to determine impact of funding reductions, if any.

Third, we are very concerned with Gun Violence and Veterans and the Commission will be exploring this very serious issue during the next year. On one side of this issue, we have the gun violence done to Veterans and on the other side, we have the gun violence done by Veterans. This controversial issue must be dealt with dignity, sensitivity, and tact with due respect to Constitutional rights and prudent safety measures.

Fourth, we are concerned with the actual budget allocated to the Commission for our administrative operations. Until recently, Commissioners were provided with business cards and were reimbursed for travel expenses while on Commission business. Now, we are expected to self-fund our travel expenses and we are not provided business cards, even when we offered to buy them ourselves. Arizona is an extremely large state and travel expenses can accumulate quickly for your Commissioners who are your eyes and ears in the Veterans community across the State. This is a volunteer, non-paid Commission and if the expectation is that Commissioners are to self-fund, then you are limiting future Commissioners to only those who are independently wealthy enough to afford to do so and will therefore limit the diversity and value of the advice that your Commission provides.

Fifth,

In conclusion, your Commission is your brain trust on all concerns affecting the Veteran community and we are proud to be on your team. The seven members of your Commission represent Congressionally Mandated Veteran Service Organizations and reside within one of the three Veterans Administration regions within Arizona. Your Commissioners have served our Nation with distinction while in the military and afterwards; continuing their extraordinary service to all Arizonians. They have meaningfully served their communities as elected or appointed officials, industry leaders, small business owners, board members, advocates and are solvers of difficult problems. Enclosed please find the biographies of your Commissioners to provide insights into their qualifications, abilities and influence.

In addition to our responsibilities to you, we advise the Cabinet Executive Officer of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services in the execution of her duties which includes the supervision of Veteran Benefits Counselors (VBC); the management of the State Veterans' Homes and State Veteran Cemeteries; services to Women Veterans and other Veteran subgroups; and planning ceremonies and memorials honoring Veterans. Most important, we advocate for projects that address the needs of Arizona Veterans and endorse pro-military/Veteran legislation. We welcome an opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss your priorities and legislative ideas. We are eager to partner with you to address them.

Thank you for supporting Arizona's Veterans!

**Philip D. Cushman**

Chairman, Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory  
Commission Quartzsite, Arizona

Enclosure (1): Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission Strategic Policy  
Document

Enclosure (2): Biographies: Members of the Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory  
Commission

The logo for the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services. The word "ARIZONA" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letter "O" is replaced by a red circle containing a white outline of the state of Arizona.

ARIZONA

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE AUGUST 2024

JULIA R. GUSSE, LEGISLATIVE LIAISON



# Legislative Proposals

## ▶ ADVS; Veterans Donation Fund

-Problem: funding

-Solving Problem; 15% of VDF allowed for AZDVS use by formal committee approval (items for the homes, mattresses, kitchen items, maintenance, etc..) including admin fees (\$ amt TBD)

-Potential Bill Sponsor; TBD, last session SB1685 (Gowan) increase use of 2Million

-Cost Savings to state; TBD

# Potential Legislative Proposal/Support

- ▶ Ambulance Inter-facility Transfers

Proposed by the AZ Hospital and Healthcare Association

- ▶ Initiative to Reduce Unemployment amongst veterans

TBD, reviewing notes and discussing potential

# Potential Legislative Bills/Returning

- ▶ Sharks Bill; suggestion was made to provide an overview of VSAFE to local legislators
- ▶ Housing Bill Criminalizing Homelessness
- ▶ Justice Involved Veterans Study Committee
- ▶ Vietnam Era Plates (no funding sponsor identified)

# Adjourned; 160 Session Days



**The Arizona House of Representatives adjourned sine die at 9:55 PM on Saturday, June 15th, 2024.**

**The Arizona Senate adjourned sine die at 9:46 PM on Saturday, June 15, 2024.**

# 2024 Fifty Sixth Legislative Second Regular Session

**Governor Signed 5 Veteran/Military Related Bills**  
**Governor VETOED 3 Veteran/Military Related Bills**  
**Governor Signed Senate Joint Resolution 1001**

**1663 Bills Posted**  
**332 Bills Passed**  
**73 Bills Vetoed**  
**259 Bills Signed**

**43 Veteran/Military Related Bills Introduced this Session**

# HB2246 Purple Star School Program

The Purple Star School program established within the Department of Education is to identify schools in the state that provide transition support to military students and their families. Includes any school in the state that offers instruction to students K-12 may apply to the Department to participate.



**Signed by Governor Hobbs**  
**04/08/2024**



# SB2304 Buffalo Soldiers Arizona Territory Monument

Pursuant to section 41-1363, subsection A, Arizona Revised Statutes, this act authorizes the department of administration to provide for the placement in Wesley Bolin plaza of a memorial dedicated to the commemoration of Buffalo Soldiers. Signed by Governor Hobbs on 03/29/2024.



<https://www.azfamily.com/2024/04/06/buffalo-soldiers-monument-be-built-phoenix-thanks-part-mesa-couple/>

**Legislative Council Met on July 8<sup>th</sup> and postponed detailed discussion for the next meeting.**

# SB2548 Military Installation General Plans; land

Each planning agency shall prepare and the governing body of each municipality shall adopt a comprehensive, long-range general plan for the development of the municipality. The planning agency shall coordinate the production of its general plan with the creation of the state land department conceptual land use plans under title 37, chapter 2, article 10 5.1 and shall cooperate with the state land department regarding integrating the conceptual state land use plans into the municipality's general land use plan. The general plan shall include provisions that identify changes or modifications to the plan that constitute amendments and major amendments.

**Signed by Governor Hobbs on 03/29/24**





## **HB2818** Display of flags; notification; state agencies; state buildings; military service members

All state agencies, on notification from the Governor of the death of a military service member of the United States Armed Forces who was killed in action and who claimed this state as the military service member's home of record or who was stationed in this state, shall fly all 10 flags displayed on or in front of all state buildings at half-staff. **Signed 4/10/24.**



# SB1174; Tuition, Family, Posttraumatic, Stress, Suicide

The Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR), after verification form AZDVS that a person is a child or spouse of a person who meets the requirement prescribed, shall provide the person who qualifies, for admission with a tuition waiver scholarship at any University under the jurisdiction of ABOR.

**Signed by Governor Hobbs on 6/21/24**



# Senate Joint Resolution 1001

**SJR1001; Private property; sale; veterans affairs**

**Property sale to the Department of Veterans Affairs;**

**(723 East Devonshire Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona)**

**Signed by Governor Hobbs on 6/21/24**



# House “Voting” Bills - **VETOED**



HB2393 Presidential preference; parties; voting methods

**VETOED** by Governor Hobbs on 4/10/24; Political party shall provide for a method of voting that allows all of the following to participate; persons who are uniformed services or overseas citizens.

HB2404 Voter Registration Cards; mailing information

**VETOED** by Governor Hobbs on 4/10/24; The County Recorder shall not provide an initial or updated voter registration card to a person whose mailing address is outside this state except for; persons who are on active duty military service outside this state and their family members.

SB1570; Psilocybin services; regulation; licensure

**VETOED** by Governor Hobbs on 6/18/24; Relating to the department of health services and veteran participants. Advisory board; an active member or a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces.

# Appropriation Bill (SB1735/HB2897)

## **Bill Title: General appropriations act; 2024-2025**

- ▶ Attorney General; Veteran Substance Abuse treatment grants
- ▶ Department Veteran Services 24-25 appropriations
- ▶ Lump Sum Reductions FY 2024-25
- ▶ General Council Veteran Services

# Appropriation Bill (SB1737/HB2899)

## Appropriation Reductions and Reappropriation

11. Reduces by \$25,000,000 the appropriation made from the GF in Laws 2021, Chapter 406, for the veterans' home facility. (Sec. 6)
12. Appropriates \$25,000,000 from the GF in FY 2028 to Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS) to construct and establish a veterans' home facility in the northwestern portion of this state: a) States that the appropriation is intended to be this state's share of the costs and is not subject to expenditure for any purpose unless the ADVS has irrevocable commitments from the United States government to fund at least 65% of the total cost. (Sec. 6)
13. Requires ADVS to submit the proposed site location in the northwestern portion of this state to the Arizona Veterans' Service Advisory Commission (Commission) for approval and to provide the Commission a feasibility analysis of suitable sites to consider when approving the site location. (Sec. 6)
14. Directs ADVS, before spending the \$25,000,000 appropriation, to submit the scope, purpose and estimated cost of the capital improvements to the JCCR for review. (Sec. 6)
15. Exempts the \$25,000,000 appropriation from lapsing. (Sec. 6)
16. Reduces the following amounts from the GF appropriations mad